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The Residents - "Coochie Brake" CD Review (MVD Audio)



Coochie Brake is the latest CD from the Residents and this disc marks a clean break from the band's recent "Bunny Boy" and "Talking Light" related output. To put this disc in context with the band's recent releases, The Residents toured as a three piece on their "Talking Light" tour with long-time vocalist "Randy, "Chuck" on keyboards and "Bob" on guitar. During the "Talking Light" live shows, Randy announced that, while the Residents had been a four piece, the drummer "Carlos" had retired to Mexico to take care of his mom. With "Randy" touring solo late last year with his *Sam's Enchanted Evening* project, Carlos has returned to the band on drums and vocals.

Coochie Brake is an actual place – it is a swamp located in southwestern Louisiana and its 800 acres is totally unrelated to the surrounding terrain. According to the CD liner notes "A million years ago, a big rock fell out of the sky and landed right in the middle of Louisiana. Well, it wasn't Louisiana at that time. But that rock fell, and it hit hard making a giant dent. It gradually filled in but no matter what, it still left a dent. And that dent held just enough water that it became a primeval swamp known as Coochie Brake...Some young guys used to camp in Coochie Brake. They climbed the massive granite boulders that common sense said should not be there. They explored the caves that some said still hid a fortune in Spanish gold. Most importantly, they sat still and let the Brake speak to them as only the Brake can. Those teens grew up to become The Residents. Their music is full of memories. Memories of misty fog, dark shapes and the unexplained sounds of Coochie Brake."

The album is predominantly comprised of dark and uneasy instrumentals and it sounds heavily influenced by Spanish Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) music. Carlos' "vocals" are all in Spanish and consist of spoken word and murmured phases. There is also a very brief smattering of vocals in English which sound like Randy may have 'snuck' in some brief contributions. Like many of the Residents' instrumental releases, there are "songs within songs" as the band drops light piano, jazz and rock guitars, mariachi horns, complex percussion, crickets, birds and other swamp noises and chanted/ritualistic backing "vocals" into some of the songs. Cohesively weaving all of this together must have been a herculean feat but the end result is that The Residents push the boundaries further than I've heard them do so in years and a comparable reference point would be *Eskimo*.

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