

DANCING ON THE EDGE

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRINGES OF ROCK & ROLL KULTURE...

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008

American Speedway - Ship Of Fools CD review

Random observation: listening to *Ship Of Fools*, American Speedway's debut album, is a lot like getting kicked in the head by a mule. Not your mundane, run-of-the-mill mule, mind you, but some sort of fire-snortin',

iron-hoofed, juiced-up, steroidal, genetic mutant of a pseudo-equine. Due to the startling response on the part of our control group (my two kitty-cats, Bean Bag and Fluffy the Impaler), we decided to move *Ship Of Fools* into our research facility for further testing in a lab environment.

Once in our test kitchen, we hooked *Ship Of Fools* up to the AKM 2000*, a nifty little gadget that we picked up from a NASA bake sale. Cranking up the volume, we let 'er rip with the album's title cut. The song's opening barrage yanks-and-cranks like the Nuge of old with notes flyin' everywhere; monster riffs wandering the streets menacingly, kicking over garbage cans; and leather-lunged vocalist Michael Thursby sounding like he's getting a tonsillectomy. In the end, "Ship Of Fools" measured an impressive 3.46 kpm on the Jung/Young scale (as in Carl Jung, the respected psychiatrist and Angus Young, the revered guitarist).

The album's second song, "American Speedway," is a



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locomotive-leaping-from-the-tracks rave-up that is conveniently named after the band. It's always a good idea for a band to include a song of this sort on an album lest the listeners with shorter attention spans bang their heads into the wall one too many times in unison and think that they're actually spinning a new Mariah Carey CD.

It'd be hard to mistake the blistering axework, unrelenting rhythms and torch-the-village vocals of "American Speedway" for Carey's felinesque screeching, but with Thursby reminding you just who you're messing with on every chorus, we're probably all OK...well, at least I am. Dunno about you. In all fairness, though, I have to guess that Carey probably has nicer breasts than any of American Speedway's members. I have the charts and graphs to prove this, if necessary. However, I'd rather freebase one of Fluffy the Impaler's hairballs than ever be forced to listen to Ms. Carey's caterwauling....

But I digress. Back to *Ship Of Fools*, which has been careening across traffic lanes in the background throughout my tangent...well, hell, folks if you haven't figured it out yet, I'll share with you all just what all of this expensive electronic gear (a CD walkman and two tin cans with rusty barb wire tying them together) has revealed. Listening to *Ship Of Fools* really is like getting kicked in the head by a mule. Thursby's hard rock vox sound like he's being probed by alien visitors for rare minerals. Guitarist Johnny Griswold grinds the strings like he was taught advanced fret torture techniques at the School of the Americas. The rhythm section of bassist Billy Angry - great rock & roll name, BTW - and drummer Chris Callahan are less skilled technicians than an armor-plated bulldozer keeping a steady metallic drone beneath the songs here.

All of the tests and lab reports in the world won't change the fact that *Ship Of Fools* is a world-class stompfest, and American Speedway is hardcore punk/metal geniuses. This is probably the logical end result of letting AC/DC, Motorhead, Zeke, H2O and Black Flag all share the same real estate in your local music store. There's nary a song on *Ship Of Fools* that runs more than three-anna-half on the clock, which means that every single one of 'em - from the blood-on-the-asphalt rocker "Drinkin' And Drivin'" and the remarkably un-PC druggie anthem

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"Cocaine" to the radioactive cheap thrills of "Don't Tread On Me" - simply muscle their way into the room, do their nasty bidness, zip up and bolt in search of a better party. (MVD Audio)

In other words, buy or die, fool....

(Click on the CD cover to buy a digital download of *Ship Of Fools* from Amazon.com)

** Asskickometer, a device that measures the exact number of times that a song kicks your ass during a 60-second interval. Seriously. We're scientists here, so you can trust us with your ears, your cash and, yeah, even your girlfriends....*

Labels: American Speedway

POSTED BY REV. KEITH A. GORDON AT 7:46 AM 

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