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TOXIC LAB RATS - Intoxicated {*Spectra*}

Looking at the cover photo of a vested chest, masses of tattoos and the band's name, I thought I was in for some full-on AGNOSTIC FRONT cloning. How wrong!! This is the debut album from this new band outta Sweden and you can't ignore the parallels with SOCIAL DISTORTION. The LAB RATS add to that some QUEERS snotty Punkage, down 'n' dirty ZEROS rocking and a bit of TURBONEGRO humour. I'm sure the band would be the first to admit that this is not a new sound, but these four fellas do it well - the choruses are big and anthemic, the guitars growl and the songs are tight and captivating although some of the lyrics are a tad cliched. Highlights? The RANCID-esque bile of 'Shut Up', the closing acoustic meander of 'Chasing Memories', the cruising guitar lead of 'Barroom Brawl' and both 'Because I Love You' and 'Bedtime Stories' that could've been lifted off 'Prison Bound'. Surprisingly excellent stuff aided by clear and bombastic production. Just sort out the lyrics!! (14.10.10)