

CD Reviews

OVERGROUND UNDERGROUND



News and reviews of the best mainstream and independent music

The Cat House Dogs fondly recall Tom Petty's ticked-off early work

July 14, 2008 by kyrbyraine
Reviewed by Kit Burns
Cat House Dogs/That Was Now

The Cat House Dogs' second album *That Was Now* opens with a thick layer of jangling guitars, raspy vocals, and the most guttural roots-rock since the heyday of Jason & the Scorchers. While many of today's Americana acts play it twee and safe, the Cat House Dogs aren't afraid to get drunk and burn the barn down. Pass the whiskey, please.

If you fondly recall Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers in their ticked-off late '70s/early '80s period, before their midtempo numbers started creeping up the charts and followed by duets with Stevie Nicks, the Cat House Dogs are definitely bowling in your alley. The first track, "Fine Line," is what the Jayhawks would've sounded like if they woke up with a hangover and then discovered that their tour bus was stolen. It is Americana delivered raw with brass knuckles. "Do It" marries the downward grunge of Soundgarden with the raunchy blues of Reverend Horton Heat. "Beautiful Rays," "Far Away," and "Never in a Million Years" are cut with Petty's flannel but delivered without the watered-down studio gloss. Then, just when you think you have the Cat House Dogs pegged, they leave you with the reggae-inflected "Lost Again" just to mess you up. The uptight critics might pull their hair; that's just too bad, ain't it?



'Cat House Dogs' 'That Was Now'

Genre: 'Alt/Country' - Release Date: '2008'

Our Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

It's a known fact that Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers broke in the U.K. first. By the time they smashed the American charts, they already had a vast following of Britons worshipping at their altar, a bizarre combination of classic rockers and New Wavers. If America doesn't wake up soon, they might end being behind in catching the Cat House Dogs (<http://www.cathousedogs.com>).

Hailing from Ontario, Canada, the Cat House Dogs unite the best of classic and modern rock. They're as indebted to Petty's Byrdsy jangle ("Fine Line," "Never in a Million Years") as they are to the warm, boyish harmonies of the Jayhawks ("Beautiful Rays"). Even the punchy pub rock of Elvis Costello, Marshall Crenshaw, and Graham Parker is given a nod on "Melissa Tuesday." The guitars are crisply ringing throughout, and the solo on "Fine Line" is quite a flame thrower. Singer/guitarist Todd Sharman echoes Petty's Southern discomfort at times but when hits the choruses, or gets irked, he sounds as if he's riding off the rails, and those are the CD's most thrilling moments.

Canada continues to remain an underrated region for solid rock and roll (as opposed to the quirky indie stuff from Montreal). Hopefully, a group like the Cat House Dogs can finally gain Canada respect for kicking ass.