



Shoreworld: by John Pfeiffer

Horse Feathers And Animal Crackers- A Tribute To Queen Main Man Records

Ice cream mogul Burt Robbins of Baskin Robbins fame once said of their 33 flavors of ice cream, “Not everyone likes all our flavors, but each flavor is someone’s favorite.” And that’s a pretty good analogy to scoop on top of New Jersey independent label Main Man Records. Their 33 unique flavors come in the form of 33 CD releases to date and while I’m sure there’s other independent labels somewhere that can boast of putting out lots of product, I don’t really know who might be doing it with the believable quality and consistency that these guys do. Main Man Records is made from the wholesome (or unwholesome) ingredients of real musicians and candy-coated fans of old school rock and roll music and the releases are all sprinkled with lots of diverse participants all over the top. Main Man is as colorful as a neighborhood popsicle wagon on a hot summer day and as the years have rolled on the label seems to have become unstoppable, scooping flavor after flavor of unique rock and roll style at the general public without selling themselves short or succumbing to dull popular trends of hip-hop and countrified bubble gum. Their latest releases demonstrate originality and tongue-in-cheek charm so sorely missing from most music offered nowadays.

The latest is the brand new Queen tribute, *Horse Feathers And Animal Crackers*, a mother load of Queen hits and misses from artists as diverse as Cheetah Chrome from The Dead Boys, Riotgod, Dennis Dunaway from Alice Cooper’s band, The Tuff Darts, and Deena Shoshkes. Yea, the CD name might be based off of the Marx brother’s movies of the same names, but besides that it’s all Jersey. This disc features one of Main Man’s most ambitious groupings to date and when you heap that on top of the fact that this is a double record, you have a veritable trove of musical oddities to dig through. I especially love the artwork for this double disc, featuring the Main Man logo dude sporting the Freddie Mercury mustache and posing inside of a big gold “Q.” Campy and over the top, it completes the visual of what’s to come on *Horse Feathers And Animal Crackers*.

The first standout track comes from Deena And The Laughing Boys who take the hit “Crazy Little Thing Called Love” and wrap it in a simple country swing, laid back guitars, and spray the whole thing with Deena’s appetizing candy cane voice. Lazy and hazy, “Crazy Little Thing Called Love” is a pure Deena Shoshkes shuffle at its best. Christian Beach also scores big with his rendition of “All Dead, All Dead” done in its Louisiana dirge-meets-Wilco style and once again demonstrating one of the area’s most powerful vocalists using their brain.

I liked the pure 1982 metal resurrection of Blue Fox. Blue Fox—even the name spells spandex. Their cover of “Modern Time Rock And Roll” is fast, high harmonized, double-bass drummed and tight, tight, tight! I can smell the hairspray and rosewood burning of the necks of those Kramers, man! FSK 3000’s “Tenement Funster” puts you back in Max’s Kansas City with the ‘70s grit of Keith Roth’s crew, from vocals to guitars, it reigns down smoky, dirty and original. The turbo powered rhythm section of Clint Gascoyne and Eric Hoagland are the perfect pair for this gritty funhouse group. Veteran guitar guy Shawn Mars does his Ziggy Stardust-meets-Mott The Hoople thing with class on “Spread Your Wings” as does Rob Tanico and his version of “Sail Away Sweet Sister.”

Side two features the cool tunage from Riotgod (these guys were just at the Stone Pony with The Parlor Mob) and their choice of “Death On two Legs” sounds expensive—and probably is. Riotgod is comprised of Monster Magnet’s Bob Pantella and Jim Baglino and guitarist Garrett Sweeny. Eerie newcomer vocalist Sunshine cuts a healthy swath out of the original fare, getting a lot of the authentic Queen tone into this tune. It’s good stuff for the Queen cover fan and one of my all-time Queen favorites. Dennis Dunaway proves that experience brings arrangement savvy. Yeah it’s “We Will Rock You” and you can’t go too far left or right, but he manages (along with Dimma) to steer this monstrous beast into an interesting direction. I could seriously hear this tune playing if I drove through deserts like in Mad Max. Matter of fact, this would be my theme song as I blew up approaching tanks, lunatics with doll heads and various four wheel drive vehicles. The Tuff Darts standout immediately with their rendition of “Somebody To Love” highly original and reminiscent of Springsteen, Zevon and Meatloaf, the Darts demonstrate why they’re still around after all these years. A great version from an underrated band! Cheetah Chrome takes his dirty shot at “Tie Your Mother Down” and plays no fancy schmancy production games here. This is rough and raw rock in it’s absolute purest form. There’s nothing pretty about this track as Chrome growls, guitars swirl, and the band regurgitates analog glory all over itself. It’s mean, it’s evil, it’s the middle finger in the face and I loved it.

Frankenstein 3000 takes turn number two and blows out “Sheer Heart Attack” with over the top Destroyer attitude. The track launches fast and catches you right off guard in the best of ways. Rebellious and full of angst, this is a version that will get you pulled over for speeding down the Parkway.

Whether you agree with my ramblings or you’re a fan of one of the bands, *Horse Feathers And Animal Crackers* is definitely worth adding to your boiling cauldron of rock and roll soup. For info go to mainmanrecords.com.