

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8TH



We Will Rock You: Local Review Roundup feat. The Lovely Dark and And The Professors

by Jon Hunt



We Will Rock You



And The Professors, *Our Postmortem*

If I could call a do-over for my Top Ten Local Albums of 2013, I'd place this magnificent album right near the top — somehow, I missed hearing this surprising little masterpiece from Honeydogs frontman Adam Levy and a group of super-talented collaborators — and more fool me, as *Our Postmortem* is a damn gorgeous record, full of perfectly-constructed melodies and sprightly psychedelic songs that sound like they belong on the XTC record Andy Partridge would have recorded after the *Apple Venus* pair. Yeah, it's *that* kind of thing — Beatlesque (or really, McCartney-esque, in *Ram* mode), with magnificent string arrangements courtesy of a group of deft players borrowed from the Minnesota Opera, the kind of gorgeous pop record that comes around once in a blue moon and is ever more special for it.

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It's a bit of a switch-a-roo for Levy, who is known for a kind of straightforward, frequently groovy songwriting you'd probably throw in the "Americana" bucket (think: Poco, the better bits of Little Feat, Elvis Costello, Dylan in 70s mode). But it's not really a surprise if you spent quality time with *What Comes After*, the Honeydogs' 2012 album that was already showing a restlessness with the 'dogs sonic limitations and pushed envelopes all over the place with the inclusion of brass sections and organs and god knows what else, but ultimately ended up back in rural territory with the Dylan influences to the fore. Clearly, though, Levy has been spending even more quality time with the tripper side of his 60s influences — I detect music-hall-isms from *Sgt. Pepper*, strings borrowed from the Hollies' most confectionary pieces, tons of piano bounce courtesy toytown psych, and quite a lot of psych-era Byrds thrown in for good measure.

Our Postmortem is almost, in fact, a "Pepper Try" in miniature. I'm quite certain I've mentioned my love of albums that aim squarely for *Sgt. Pepper* in terms of range and everything-including-the-kitchen-sink influences (classical! rock! eastern! folk!), and if this wasn't so carefully and perfectly constructed, I'd think this was that — if anything, it so easily achieves its high-shooting ideals that it doesn't sound remotely "ambitious failure." Rather, it just sounds "ambitious" and "quite interesting and pretty and really, really good." And that's something, frankly — usually what makes the exercises interesting (*Around The World In A Day*, *Satanic Majesties*) is their sense of ambitious failure. *Hm*. It strikes me that this says something about Levy's (prodigious) abilities as a songwriter, no?

Favorites? Aye, plenty. Bethany Larson duets with Levy on the waltzy "Two Weeks," which sounds equalmuch like the Beatles and the jazz-psych-era Byrds. "We Are" is the perfect first single (was it? *it should have been*), full of marvelous XTC-ish strings and a McCartney-esque bass rumble, and propelled by an insistent organ figure and a perfect hook. And "Turn Of The Century Recycling Blues" either sounds like Beatle Paul in music-hall mode or (at a pinch) Rufus Wainright, all world-weary and snotty. And boy, do I love the title track, a guitar-heavy bit of rock that sounds oh-so-very George Harrison, with a marvelously open melody and a hopeful chorus that digs in its heels and sticks like a bastard.

Levy is a treasure to begin with, but *Our Postmortem* finds him working at the absolute top of his game — better even than the best of the Honeydogs records (and that's saying something), this thing is just stellar from top to bottom. So very curious what's next for him — will he bring this sense of eclecticism back to the Honeydogs and push them even further into weird baroque directions? Or is this just a one-off, a sidestep into a brightly colored world before back to the warm and gorgeous sepia-tone? Whichever — don't miss this absolute gem of a pop record, folks, like I did.



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