

CONCERT REVIEW

Sleep Study Ushers in New Album at James Ballentine VFW

 by Scott Bryan

 0
SHARES

 Share

 Tweet



Sleep Study- Photo by Elli Rader

Sleep Study presented songs from their new album to a somewhat sedate crowd at the James Ballentine Uptown VFW on Friday night. After a long hiatus, in which the band took time to perfect the tracks on their sophomore effort, it may take some time to reestablish themselves in a thriving music scene.

On this night, in particular, Sleeps Study's show was up against the record release show of the popular group **Last Import** and the opening of a new venue in **Rochester**, just to name a couple.

But Sleep Study were up to the task. Armed with a stellar set of new material and the same calm authority that helped them build their loyal following in the first place, they presented their new album, *Miss America*, with enthusiasm and gratitude to all who have supported them.

Singer/songwriter Ryan Plewacki was the perfect visual representation of his band's sound and ideology. His calm demeanor, slim frame, knit cap, denim Grateful Dead jacket, and Beatle boots reflected the influences and aesthetics he has used to craft his own brand of throwback psychedelia. He and the group presented tracks like "Yourself Around" and the title song from the album without pageantry or ego, and the appreciative audience seemed accepting of the new material.

The highlight of the evening, however, was the mysterious and enjoyable openers, **Black Widows**. A goth surf-rock band from the Cities, these ladies display awesome chops and inventive reworking of classic sounds that could easily find its way onto the soundtrack of *Spider Baby*, a Halloween dance party, or a David Lynch road movie. That sound is paired with macabre tongue-in-cheek lyrics, choreographed movements, uniform miniskirts and instruments, and throwback hairdos.

Of course, the entire look of the band is crafted to set the stage for the presentation of sharp, enjoyable rock which contains just enough surprises to keep the audience dancing. Even when the band descends into noise-rock and declares the song "Motorvader" a 'crowd deterrent,' their charm and enjoyment of a self-indulgent moment is still intriguing.

Sleep Study acknowledged the difficult task of following excellent opening acts when they took the stage, giving a nod to Black Widows and Midwest melancholy rockers Farewell Milwaukee before closing the night and starting the task of alerting the world to *Miss America*.

You can read **[Music in Minnesota's full review of the album here](#)**, and it is now available on vinyl through the **[band's website](#)**.