

Gashouse Radio

9/18/15, By Robert Fulford

URL: <http://gashouseradio.com/category/reviews/>

Nervous Germans – From Prussia With Love

Though virtually unknown among American audiences, the Nervous Germans experienced significant success across continental Europe and included renowned UK DJ John Peel among their supporters. Their original run ended in 1984, but there's no sense of lost time on this new release. Instead, the Nervous Germans appear to have a firm grasp on the irrevocably altered music landscape and emerge with their musical creativity completely intact. This isn't a reunion primed for nostalgia and sentimentality. While the Nervous Germans never run from their past, even a brief listen to this collection reveals a band intent on adding onto what came before. Though self-described as a "pop rock" band, there is a lot going on here. They mix things up and develop a good progression of ideas from track to track. As far as formula goes, forget it; Nervous Germans do what they want, when they want. One minute you're in mega-pop bliss with "Superstars (And Superheroes)" and "Living the Dream," and the next you're getting rocked by the full volume riff assault of "Liberation Day" or the punchy, bluesy slam of "Summer Rain." They're not afraid to break it down acoustic like a poppy Led Zeppelin on cuts like "Hey Mister Sunshine" and "Sailing Blind," nor are they afraid of gothic, new wave on light flickering jams like "Modern People" and "In My Mind's Eye."

Some of the band's strongest stuff materializes when they completely reach outside of boxes and boundaries and nail a smooth, whiskey-soaked rocker like "On Fire," which has a blistering lead guitar line and steady rhythmic backing. That guitar line is intoxicating and truly showcases the talents of Gary Schmalzl's composition and performance. There's plenty of rock n' roll fire on "Happy Birthday Major Tom," a groovy kraut-rock song plunged headfirst into 80s riff rock, but fortunately lacking the irritating overproduction of that era to hold it back. This isn't a retro act; they rifle through past and present alike for compelling elements without ever sounding schmaltzy. When Nervous Germans rock, they rock hard and when they die down the mood for a ballad, they hit all of the right notes. Everything leads up to the epic, cavernous "Paradise Lost," a jam of biblical proportions that seems to rise and swell in volume with each passing musical motion. Cymbals decorate the bass density and atmospheric guitar chording, while singer Grant Stevens pushes his register as high it will go for a captivating piece of music that is far beyond the limits Nervous Germans set earlier on the record.

From Prussia with Love is a kingly album that leaves a dedicated listener a lot of work to do. Multiple spins are practically demanded to pick on all of the subtle time changes, song structure shifts and compositional variety, so this is a disc to hear from start to finish without interruption. You will be happy you took the time, because this is a pleasure to hear; an original, exciting record in 2015 with a genuine, if not surprising, timelessness.

9 out of 10 stars.

