

No More Division

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3.9 out of 5

"Living the dream/just like I'm in fashion," sings Grant Stevens on the moody, ruminative "Living The Dream."

Berlin's Nervous Germans are finally living their dreams, following a 32-year hiatus.

Reunion/comeback albums are curious things. One must wonder how much of the attraction is pure nostalgia, or a by-product of our hyper-saturated digital world. With 99.9% of new media being made immediately upon release, or sometimes earlier, we're left with a yen for the unknown, the mysterious, the under-represented. Look at the thriving re-issue culture we're living in for proof of this.

The other, more exciting and optimistic side, is that a lot of bands (or art and media in general) could've been bigger, better and more popular if they'd had a wider audience or better gear and access to quality recording equipment. A lot of the bands we now worship, even up to mega-popular acts like The Jesus And Mary Chain and The Pixies, were still underground, alternative phenomena in their first run.

Many great bands from the '70s and '80s are being given a new lease on life, thanks to the hungry hearts and minds of younger listeners, looking for unknown roots and influences of their favorite musicians, or just scouring for something obscure and interesting. One of the most striking live music moments I've experienced was during Rocket From The Tomb's brief-lived (and utterly awesome) reformation in the early 2000s. On the song "Ain't It Fun" bald-headed guitarist Cheetah Chrome sings the line "Ain't it fun/when you know you're going to die young." When that line was written in the late '70s, it was a nihilistic anthem from a bunch of self-destructive proto-punks. They obviously didn't die young, as they're still singing those words 40 years later. Instead of a "don't give a fuck" fingers in the air, instead it came across as a Memento Mori for all the fallen soldiers; a reminiscence on the pain and fury of addictive lifestyles; and simply assessing ALL of the water under the bridge.

It was a passing and life-changing moment.

You get a similar feeling, listening to From Prussia With Love. Half of the material was written in the early '80s for an early, influential recording session for John Peel, with the other half being contemporary. There's a feeling of gratitude, mixed with a bit of bitter cynicism, and, of course, a lifelong love of rock n' roll that never ages.

From Prussia With Love will appeal to fans of darker-edged, moody rock n' roll, a la The Chameleons, The Church, or mid-era The Cure. Psychedelic flourishes abound, mostly in the gloopy, chorus-y guitars, which were particularly popular during that era. I don't hear as many bands, these days, mining that psychedelic post-punk seam, so it's a welcome addition for that alone. There's also a bit more of a relaxed feel in the delivery that people in their 20s often aren't capable of, giving the record a mellow feel, even while being driving and energetic.

The more you listen, the more you realize you're dealing with a seriously talented group of

musicians. The guitars are expertly arranged; featuring more intricate, melodic chord changes than your average Pop record, augmenting the complex, layered emotions.

All in all, the excellent songwriting and production invites you to lean in and listen further. When you do, Nervous Germans tell you their story - a story of decades of frustration and success and, ultimately, a lifelong love of music.

Good on the Nervous Germans for not giving it up, for giving it another chance. People will listen, now, if they're wise.

Great stuff, that gets better with every listen!