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The New Whole Usuals, Martin Moeh



Chris Goebel 24.JAN.08 Rating: 3 Pulses

The new release by The New Whole Usuals is anything but usual. In fact, this album is different in about every way possible.

It begins strangely, goes through a series of odd changes, and then ends strangely. Instrumentation in Martin Moeh shifts wildly. So, it is difficult to frame the musical style within standard genera. However, drums, guitars, bass and vocals are found in most songs. Sometimes these instruments are used in distorted, heavy, somewhat punkish manners; other times the songs are beautiful and melodic with strings of all sorts, and lots of different horns used randomly. Other songs are characterized by heavy layering of background vocals and strong acoustic guitars.

Another aspect that makes this album different is the variety of production styles used within the album. In song 4, "The Ballad of Richie Cash," a thick acoustic bass comes in with a very smooth organ, and a swell of female voices singing Ohh's and Ahh's. The tones are clear, defined and carry a wide range of frequencies. At other times, like in song 7, "See Jane vs. The Pleiades," the album seems to focus into a smaller frequency range and emphasize a lower fidelity feel. This shift in recording texture adds to the somewhat chaotic musical feel.

Overall, the album never really finds a specific theme other than in the chaos itself. The one thing you can be sure of is the album will change feels from whatever you are listening to at any given moment. At times, the album falls into some really musical moments that leave you wishing the whole thing was built around a much smaller fraction of the music. The constant changing makes the album hard to listen to, and certain parts of the album are good enough that they could have been emphasized more.

People I played this album for commonly said "this is weird," or asked "where do you get this crazy stuff?" I felt the same way, even though I consider my tastes to be a bit odd, so I give this album an average rating. There are places that are really interesting musically, but there are an equal number of places that don't make sense, or are just plain abrasive.

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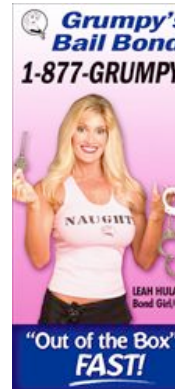
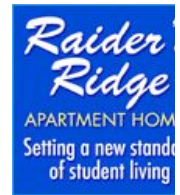
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