

Mp3 Spike Priggen - Stars After Stars After Stars



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Moody Power Pop Meets Alt Country 11 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, ROCK: 60's Rock Details: Spike Priggen's debut solo album *The Very Thing You Treasure* was widely acknowledged by discerning critics and adventurous fans as one of 2001's below-the-radar gems. A finely-crafted, personally-charged collection of raw yet melodic guitar rock, the album established the New York-based singer/songwriter/producer/multi-instrumentalist as both an unmistakable original and a diligent student of popular-music tradition. It also achieved an impressively high mainstream profile for an independent release, with the Priggen tune "Every Broken Heart" appearing in an episode of TV's *Felicity* and his song "Outtasight" even getting a nod in the first-ever iPod TV commercial. On the new *Stars After Stars After Stars*-released in Australia via Dave Graney Clare Moore's Cockaigne Label and Priggen's own Volare Label in the states-Priggen takes his lifelong musical obsession a step further, delivering customized readings of 11 songs by other artists. In the playfully passionate tradition of such classic covers-based albums as David Bowie's *Pin-Ups* and John Lennon's *Rock 'n' Roll*, *Stars After Stars After Stars* explores a combination of classics and obscurities as a vehicle for the artist's own deeply personal vision. "Some people might think it's weird for a songwriter's second album to be all other people's songs," Priggen acknowledges. "But a lot of the artists I really admire were known as great songwriters and equally as great interpreters of other people's songs." "I've been wanting to make a covers record for a long time," he continues, adding, "At the beginning of my career I thought that doing other people's songs was pretty lame, and unlike a lot of young musicians I was never in a cover band. When one of my early groups, the Excerpts, would do entire sets of covers, I was allowed to sit out for those sets. Later on, I started to see the advantages of learning other people's songs as a way of expanding my own songwriting palette." Priggen's credentials as an interpreter of outsider material stretch back more than a decade, when he

augmented his then-band the Hello Strangers with a parallel incarnation that performed a broad array of classics and obscurities drawn from the catalogues of his country, '60s rock and punk/new-wave heroes. According to Priggen, "After spending three years writing and recording *The Very Thing You Treasure*, I wanted to try something kind of experimental. But didn't want to experiment too much on my own songs as I'm not that prolific. So I thought I could use this all-covers thing to try out some new production and arrangement ideas, and then if it sucked I wouldn't have to put it out. As it turned out, I liked it a lot, so here it is." *Stars After Stars After Stars*-which borrows its name from the legendary "J and H Productions" underground tape-finds Priggen tackling an assortment of tunes originally recorded by the likes of the Ramones, Big Star, Alice Cooper and the Zombies, as well as such lesser-known but no less notable acts as the Pontiac Brothers, the Jacobites and Hot Bodies, local legends from Priggen's hometown of New Haven, Connecticut. Although written by others, the artist imbues the songs with the same sonic adventurousness and emotional commitment that he applies to his own compositions. The self-produced album was recorded with an array of vintage gear and a musical cast that includes Cheap Trick drummer Bun E. Carlos, a longtime Priggen pal who plays on six of the album's songs and whose last non-Cheap Trick studio credit was with John Lennon. *Stars After Stars After Stars* also features a virtual Who's Who of the NYC music scene, including guitarists Ivan Julian (Voidoids/Matthew Sweet), Mark Spencer (Blood Oranges/Jay Farrar), Jon Graboff (Beat Rodeo/Laura Cantrell), bassists Danny Weinkauf (They Might Be Giants/Fountains of Wayne) and Scott Yoder (Kevin Salem/Amy Rigby), drummer Brian Doherty (They Might Be Giants/XTC), keyboardist C.P. Roth (Blessid Union of Souls) and mixer/engineer Adam Lasus (Clem Snide/Helium). Although *Stars After Stars After Stars* is Spike (nee Michael) Priggen's second full-length release under his own name, his lengthy musical resume encompasses numerous highly-regarded bands and notable recording projects. Growing up, Priggen was imprinted early in life by the energy and attitude of the original New York/London punk/new wave explosion as well as the hard-edged power-pop of Cheap Trick, Big Star and the Dwight Twilley Band. By his early teens, he'd already been swept into New Haven's thriving underground scene, where he played in a series of bands with such future notables as Miracle Legion founders Mark Mulcahy and Ray Neal, Dumptruck co-founder Kirk Swan and noted producer/sideman Jon Brion. Moving to New York to study photography at the School of Visual Arts, Priggen worked at the legendary club Danceteria and formed a minimalist pop outfit, the Blue Period, with fellow Danceteria employees Nicole Willis (subsequently lead singer of

Repercussions) and Dmitry Brill (later DJ Dmitry of Deee-Lite). That group eventually evolved into the Hello Strangers, an eclectic and ever-mutating Priggen-led ensemble whose lineup would play host to a virtual who's-who of alt-rock royalty, including members of Miracle Legion, the Blood Oranges, Beat Rodeo, the Individuals, the Wygals, Pulsallama, the Go-Betweens, Yo La Tengo, Dumptruck and Blonde Redhead. The 1987 edition of the Hello Strangers released a well-received album, Goodbye, on the independent Incas label. In 1985, Priggen moved to Boston, where he served two non-consecutive stints as bassist in the seminal Beantown combo Dumptruck; that period is chronicled on the archival live disc of the 2001 Dumptruck release, Lemmings Travel To The Sea. Subsequently returning to New Haven and eventually to New York, he relaunched the Hello Strangers while lending his instrumental talents to a variety of ensembles, including the Liquor Giants, the Pussywillows, the Schramms, Big Louise, the Caroline Know and the Streams. He also launched an independent label, #1 Records, to release singles by several of those bands, and began dabbling in behind-the-scenes studio work, producing and/or engineering records by the Mad Scene, the Caroline Know and Containe. During an extended busking jaunt through Europe, Priggen played gigs in London and Glasgow, put together a well-received cover band that played in pubs around Edinburgh, and played and sang on an Edwyn Collins-produced album by former Orange Juice/Aztec Camera member Malcolm Ross. Upon returning to New York, an abortive liaison with a major label convinced Priggen to pursue his recording career on his own D.I.Y. terms. But The Very Thing That You Treasure's birth cycle was complicated by a series of interruptions, first a serious auto accident that sidelined Priggen for several months, and then a mysterious voice ailment that kept him from singing for several more. While recovering, Priggen (using the pseudonym Patrick Prophette) took on his first film-soundtrack assignment, composing music for the acclaimed indie film Chutney Popcorn in collaboration with longtime cohort Adam Lasus. Having reexplored his roots with Stars After Stars After Stars, Priggen is now eager to get back to recording his own material. "I think I'm taking things a step further," he says of his next album of originals, "with bigger arrangements and some different kinds of songs than I've done on record before." But, he adds, "After my next album of originals, I might just make another covers album."

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