Mp3 Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir - Fighting And Onions



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The traditions from the Mississippi delta and the Kentucky mountains get warped by a quartet that hollers, clangs, and pounds the life back into those acoustic styles like their originators intended. The punks, rockers, and indie-hipsters like them too. 18 MP3 Songs BLUES: Acoustic Blues, ROCK: Americana Details: There's a buzz on the Agnostics. Did they expect it? Hell, no. After all, the band was thrown together on a week's notice for their inaugural gig. St. Hubert, their 2003 debut recording, was self-financed, self-produced, and self-released. Yet it cracked numerous Canadian campus radio top 20 play lists, got them invited to roots music festivals, was spotlighted on several CBC radio shows, garnered them an appearance on Much Music despite that they didn't fit the demographic audience's tastes, was nominated for a Western Canadian Music Award, and, in the end, gave them the incentive to record a follow-up, Fighting and Onions. The Delta blues and mountain music still kicks something fierce, just like the people who invented them, but the styles get warped in a way that bucks at conservative traditionalism or quaint stereotypes. Slide guitar and banjo collide with a clanging drum kit and weighty stand-up bass. Devil's music? Sureif the Agnostics believed in that mumbo-jumbomaybe. It's two years since St. Hubert. They're two years better as a band. Fighting and Onions was recorded in their rehearsal space during a harsh cold snap that ushered in 2005. Though there are a few more overdubs than their debut, the quartet recorded in the same room at the same time, like a good band should. At least half of the session's 18 songs are strictly live performances mixed through ambient room microphones. The brooding interpretation of Reverend Gary Davis' "Death Don't Have No Mercy" or the may-as-well-be-a-hardcore-band rendition of Son House's "Preaching Blues" display exactly what went down in the room. No embellishments. Understand? What you hear is the energy of a band playing, not a

producer cutting and pasting. If musicians in the 1930s could pull off that kind of recording, then what is the excuse for many of today's musicians coddled by studio technology? Is Fighting and Onions pristine? No. Big deal. That isn't the point. There's no doubting the intensity, emotion and, at times, weirdness on originals like "Oh Sorrow" and "Lousy Drunk". As much as the likes of Dock Boggs and Skip James are mentioned as ingredients in the AMGC sound, Judd Palmer's unusually tuned guitar and banjo, Jay Woolley's unorthodox drum kit outfitted with metal implements, Bob Keelaghan's two-in-one guitar parts, and Vlad Sobolewski's string slapping help garner frequent references to roots music mutants like Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart. Therein lays the AMGC's appeal. As music critics note, the band's performances make people crane their necks at folk festivals and holler at the top of their lungs in crowded, rock bars. The AMGC often scratch their heads, stumble on a few phrases, then shrug their shoulders when asked how to describe their style. Let's just say it's part reverence for the source, part indifference for getting the notes perfect. Are they really from Calgary? They don't sound like it. Whatever that means, you'll get the drift. Outside the Agnostics, Palmer busies himself with the Old Trouts - his puppet troupe from the bizarro world - and writing children's books that piss off literary reviewers while getting nominated for Governor General's Awards. Around Calgary, it is regarded as a rite of passage for local indie-rock bands to have Woolley sit in on drums; he keeps time with pop-punkers Hot Awesome on the side. Keelaghan is a sought-after hired gun on the guitar, playing on recent discs by Falconhawk (those are his hands and licks in the video for "Olympia") and Vail Halen. Sobolewski's ambition is to play bass in as many groups as possible, including Edmonton theatrical band The Dead Rats and RV with Rodney Brent.

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