

Mp3 Johnny Headband - Happiness Is Underrated



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Post Dance Hop Scotch Lovers Rock. 11 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Dance, ROCK: Psychedelic Details: Johnny Headband By Keith N. Dusenberry | photos by David Dominic, Jr. Dec 6, 2006 REAL DETROIT WEEKLY I could sit here and try to explain Johnny Headband to you. I could tell you about how twenty-something brothers Chad and Keith Thompson grew up outside of Flint, sort of in a world unto itself, one of their own creation, where they made weird music and even weirder home movies, and how those pursuits eventually evolved into the performance art group-come-band-come-multimedia-artistic juggernaut that is Johnny Headband. I could mention how the album theyre about to put out their first full-length LP, entitled Happiness Is Underrated will probably rank highly on many smart peoples lists of the best local records released this year. I could do all of that, but it wouldnt matter. You either get Johnny Headband, or you dont. Maybe get is too severe a word. The band members themselves (Chad and Keith, along with longtime friend Rob RGS Saunders) wouldnt be brash enough to put it that way. If youre standing on a street corner and you see an accident, everybody describes it differently, Chad says of the labels others employ when describing Johnny Headbands music, but he might as well be talking about peoples varying reactions to the groups concept as a whole. Some bands, everybody says the same things. Id rather everybody not say the same things (about Johnny Headband). Some people are passionate about what we do and some people could care less. Some people defend us; some people bash us. You cant worry about it too much. If the concern as a band is, Is it gonna go over everyones head? or Do we have to water it down? We operate under the policy of Less explanation is better; you figure it out. More than anything else, Johnny Headband as it is today the impossible-to-accurately-describe music that sounds like hyper-modern Prince-infused bedroom electro and 80s/90s basement four-track experiments a la early Ween with a touch of Wesley Willis earnest

energy all at the same time; the wildly weird and energetic live shows that are both spontaneous and heavily rehearsed; the carefully cultivated image of self-referential and self-interested oddness; the consistently funny rock-band-as-corporation Web site videos; the bizarre side project where they don foreign personas and Keith irons clothes on stage while Chad sings all of this essentially exists as it does because of three things: teddy bear-costumed toddler dance classes, nonlinear video editing and coffee.

Chad and Keith fight sometimes, as brothers will do. Over what? Nothing, basically, Keith says. Petty bullshit: shoes, pants, drumsticks, man-dannas (male bandannas). The biggest thing we fight about is directions to venues, Chad continues. And we get all-out warfare over sock choices. Like sometimes [Keith] wants to wear full one-piece jumpsuits, and Im like, This doesnt go in line with what we wanna do. Then he does it anyway. But it works, Keith explains, because rules have to be broken. If [Chads] going to make rules like that, someones gotta break em. This goes back to our days as three-year-olds and we had to go out on stage because our mom was in dance class, so she signed us up for dance class because we had to go along, Chad says. So thats where [Keiths] costumes come from. We wore like teddy bear uniforms and stuff like that. I hate that song, the Elvis song at this point Chad starts singing, Your teddy bear cause we had to do that song. Both the costumes and the surreal stage show aspects of this early childhood routine have found their way into the current groups concerts. [Johnny Headband] is an extension of performances we didnt necessarily sign up for and have seeped back into our lives, Keith says. I guess thats what life is, though. You dont sign up for any of the stuff you get cast into, you know? Its very similar, Chad continues. If our parents ever get mad at us for crossing the line in public, we can always just blame that: Well, youre the ones who signed us up for those classes. That the primary members of Johnny Headband are brothers helps the band more than the occasionally petty fights might hurt it. They have similar childhood experiences and influences, yes, but they also have a blood bond that allows them to push one another without fear of breaking up the band, so to speak. But they didnt set out to be a band. The Thompson brothers have always played music together. In the early days, this was mostly, it seems, because the other was there and it was something to do, a way to have fun and be funny, make music and one another uncomfortable by pushing for ever-increasing levels of experimentation. They didnt think of themselves as a band. After college, Keith moved south to suburban Detroit for a job. It was then he learned about how to be in a band while playing guitar for groups around town (including a stint in The Beggars). We didnt know how to get a show, Chad says of Johnny

Headbands knowledge of being a band before his brothers experiences with local groups. Didn't know anything, didn't care, until [Johnny Headband] decided to be a band, I coulda cared less. And then one day, Chad continues, Hey, there's this structured environment for making an ass out of yourself. Sign me up! Keith interjects. In front of people, Chad continues, with what we've been doing our whole lives. I knew from the day I started air-guitaring Cinderella in my bedroom til now what my vision was, Keith says. And when it's your brother, that vision's not identical, but when I go out and play or whatever, it's based on being in a lot of other bands and getting sick of how they do stuff and thinking, I don't want to offend any of them, I like them, I'm friends with them all, most of these people have improved and all this other stuff. I wanna do it my way, and [Johnny Headband] is our chance to do that. Even if [Chad] tells me not to do something, I'm still gonna go and do it and piss him off at the last second, and then hell go along with it. There's not a lot of other places in our lives where you can do that, and not a lot of other people you can do that with, either. When you're related, you can get away with that. A lot of people can't handle it, Chad continues. They're like, What do I do? You just messed me up; now I'm fucked up for the next hour. It doesn't bother us. A big part of Johnny Headbands appeal is the package. Sure, the individual parts of the package could stand on their own as driving reasons behind the band's success: the creatively dynamic music, the unpredictable live shows, the better-than-a-lot-of-televised-sketch-comedy online videos, but as a multi-faceted unit, they're almost transcendent. Johnny Headband becomes a world unto itself. In the videos, this might be a world where Chad and Keith appear as corporate drones slaving away at Headband Headquarters, diligently working to increase the Headbands (completely factitious) Crowd Turnout Analysis. They've been making videos like these, though far less coherent or cohesive, for years. We got a video camera at a certain age and that was it, Chad says. I explain it like, what you see now, in some form or another, we were doing [as kids]. It's the same mentality of right brain or just freeform thinking: I wanna do this and then you go and do it. That's kinda the concept behind our videos. It's basically bringing our living room to wherever we're playing. That's what we did for the camera, or for our parents, or for our friends. Friends come to our shows now that were a part of those videos and they look around at the people and say, [This audience has] no idea that they've been doing this since they were 13 or 14. The videos then were not based on the brothers music. The music and the videos were separate entities because there was no easy way for them to combine the pursuits. We didn't have nonlinear editing, Chad explains. We had to do it all in-camera, so it was just all random. You couldn't go and shoot

it and then put a soundtrack behind it. Once they got better video editing equipment (both Chad and Keith have day jobs in the video production industry) and could combine the pursuits, the multimedia world of Johnny Headband was born. Chad and Keith tend to dislike how people describe their music. They wouldnt like if you called it danceable, off-kilter indie rock with heavy leanings toward darker electro and even touches of keyboard pop but that its still kinda dirty feeling. But dirty in a good way, like Prince or something. They would not like this. I dont like to listen to the positive or the negative, Chad says. Not really, cause its just kinda all over the map. Ive heard people say certain words I like about it, Keith offers. Words like? Bold. Advanced Search

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