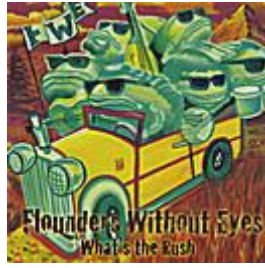


Mp3 Flounders Without Eyes - What's The Rush



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Few bands have as much inherent ability and variety as Flounders Without Eyes, the magnetic jam-rock band from Austin, Texas. Many bands are lucky to have one singer or songwriter Flounders has six talented singers and songwriters that take the band far beyond the jam. A band of multiple musical colors rocking Texas since 1993, Flounders Without Eyes boasts stellar musicianship, strong songwriting, excellent group harmonies and the powerful, soulful vocals of Jenny Mier. Flounders new CD, Whats the Rush, their stellar fourth album is arguably their best to date, produced by legendary producer, Lloyd Maines (Dixie Chicks, Uncle Tupelo, Robert Earl Keen). In an age where so much music is digitally created using other musicians previously recorded parts, its highly welcome to see a large rock ensemble create stirring music both live and in the studio. Few bands have as dense a history as Flounders, with musicians coming and going amid the percolating, vibrant music scene of Austin. The band features the brother and sister team of bassist Joe and vocalist Jenny Mier, guitarist Don Baker, guitar/bassist Mike Morgan, drummer Andy Markoff and keyboardist Sam Hendricks. The bands origins stretch back to the early 1990s when Joe and Don relocated from Houston to Austin and began jamming with many like-minded musicians at various Austin bars and parties. They soon had a weekly gig at the old Austin haunt, Nastys, and then were playing every Thursday at another famed 6th Street club, The White Rabbit (now The Troubadour). Co-founding guitarist Mitch Derrick told Joe and Don that hed always wanted to be in a band called Flounders Without Eyes, the term for an oversized Texas mushroom, and so the band was named. As Joe recalls, thats when we became Flounders Without Eyes. In their typically friendly

fashion, Joe, Don and Mitch were always sharing the stage with a constant influx of musicians and it wasn't long before Joe's younger sister, Jenny, had moved up from Houston and began singing in the band. Neal Hampton walked into the White Rabbit one night and proclaimed to the band, I'm your new drummer, and so he was. Soon after, another drummer, Andy Markoff, answered an ad Mitch had placed in the Austin Chronicle for a percussionist, and he showed up with bongos in hand and immediately became a permanent member of Flounders. Also originally from Houston, Andy had been in Los Angeles in the late 80s playing hard rock and moved to Austin in 1993. The band's gig at the White Rabbit had become billed Grateful Dead Thursday Nights and a rabid scene was born. Flounders became known for their lengthy shows, indeed few bands can play four sets without repeating songs and while the crowds may have initially showed up to hear Dead songs, we always did originals, remembers Andy, we did 50/50 originals and covers. The band was born out of this heady, popular scene but changes were on the horizon. In 1995, drummer Neal Hampton was fired for personal issues and Andy took over. It was about this time that studio owner/musician Mike Morgan had become friends with the band, having seen them at the Rabbit. I heard about Flounders, says Mike, so I went out and caught a couple shows, introduced myself to the band. What appealed to me about the band at the time was, even though they were doing Grateful Dead Thursday Nights, they had a lot of great original songs. I approached the band about recording. I said, I'm definitely the guy to record you guys, I totally understand what you all are doing. Mike and Mitch then co-produced the first Flounders CD, Movin On, at Mike's studio, The Zone Recording Studios. Mike remained close, doing sound for the band at some of their shows. The group was on and off over the next few years and when Mitch moved back to Houston in 1997, Mike took over on rhythm guitar (and occasionally swapping bass duties with Joe), creating the lineup they have today, along with keyboardist Sam Hendricks (David Allen Coe, Jay Boy Adams). The band produced What Will It Bring in 2000 and continued to perform around Texas, playing the annual Old Settlers Music Festival and, in keeping with their roots, hosting the annual Jerry Garcia Birthday Bash every August in Austin, bringing in such nationally recognized acts as Peter Rowan, David Nelson and Caroline Wonderland. Flounders performed sporadically around the turn of the century and two side groups branched out from the mothership Rhythmic Statues and Hip Shaking Mamas. By 2004, the combination of the bands had recorded the CD, Rhythmic Statues, which became Flounders third album. With the group focused more than ever on new material and performing, Flounders set out to make their new album, What's the Rush.

The Zone had become one of the top studios around Austin with one great act after another coming through, many produced by legendary producer/pedal steel guitarist Lloyd Maines, so Mike approached Lloyd about producing the new album. Known for his painstaking and masterful approach to recording, Maines led them through the recording of Whats the Rush, a record full of crisp, tight and fluid songs, many acoustic-based and brimming with great vocals and harmonies. I love it, says Don, its different from what weve done in the past, its an evolution in itself and keeps changing in a positive direction. The songs are more enjoyable to play now, they lend themselves to playing live. Whats the Rush is a natural hybrid of modern American roots music melding bluegrass, folk and country with big, bluesy rock grooves and irresistible choruses (Run Dog for example). The album effortlessly sails from the bright-eyed bluegrass of Hills of Carolina to the deep, bluesy power of Drift Away to the folksy rock of Set A Place. Intelligent, soulful songs that cross genres willfully, it is great songwriting combined with expert instrumentation and that innate ability to keep the live spirit in the recording studio that is so definitively Flounders. Wonderful and dynamic guest appearances come courtesy of Leeann Atherton, Zhenya Rock, Pat Manske, Lloyd Maines and members of Green Mountain Grass. Id call Whats the Rush a new sound, says Andy, the vocal possibilities in this band have always been one of my favorite things about the band. Fifteen years into it, were taking our best step forward. Im blessed to have everybody in my life and Im proud of us. Flounders Without Eyes are excited to spread the word about Whats the Rush at the many shows and festivals they will be playing and after seeing this uber-talented band in concert, one is likely to be a fan forever. Whats the rush, indeed. --Roger Len Smith, Austin, August, 2008

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