Mp3 Free Soda - Thirteen-pack



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An eclectic brew of effervescent pop songs awash in incisive lyrics and understated musicianship. 13 MP3 Songs POP: Pop/Rock, POP: with Electronic Production Show all album songs: Thirteen-pack Songs Details: Free Soda comprises Eamon Doyle and Peter Lauterborn, who began collaborating on music in Lauterborn's makeshift bedroom studio in the fall of 2001, while both were juniors at a high school in San Francisco. "Before sophomore year," says Doyle, "neither of us had played an instrument more complex than the triangle. But it had been my boyhood dream to become a gawky, unrefined guitarist, and Peter had always wanted to be a bumbling, amateurish keyboard player. It was a match made in clueless heaven." After three years of finding their musical feet, the guys took what Doyle calls "that all-important next step": they gave themselves a name, one chosen for its intimation of universal appeal. "After all," asks Lauterborn, "who doesn't like free soda?" Armed with a well-oiled drum machine and what the Welsh rock group Stereophonics called "just enough education to perform," they were ready to call themselves a band. THIRTEEN-PACK, released in December 2007, represents the best of the duo's eclectic pop songcraft and DIY production. Lead track "Pants Are Pants" kicks off with a snarling garage-rock riff and a deadpan recollection of the horrors of middle-school mores, and in the rest of its 2:14 running time packs in frantic keyboards, backward percussion, a stick-to-your-brain sing-song chorus, and strategically placed lyrical allusions to King Missile and The Smashing Pumpkins. Explains Doyle: "I wanted to write about my ongoing frustration with the myriad unwritten social rules that become apparent around sixth grade or so about the unpleasant realization that if you're wearing the wrong pants or using the wrong vernacular or hanging out with the wrong people, you will be crucified and having the common sense to see through all that superficiality and just say 'Fuck it, pants are pants.' We apply the same pragmatism to our music. I can't imagine a more appropriate opener." Next up is "Fireplace," a

stark acoustic lament about the fear of skeletons in one's closet being uncovered. "That particular brand of paranoia is all but universal," says Doyle. "It's ambiguous what the speaker in the song is so desperate to cover up, because whether it's a felony or just the bad poetry he wrote in high school, the panic is the same." The disparate nature of the love songs on THIRTEEN-PACK demonstrates Free Soda's disinclination to tread the same sonic or thematic ground twice. "Pomegranate" is a spirited anthem about the "sweet and complex" human equivalent of the titular fruit; "One and a Half Men" is a slow-burning epic of romantic betrayal with an explosive coda; and "Love and Math" is a droll nerd-rap pun-fest. "Even within the confines of the most conventional song subject," notes Lauterborn, "we can't help but mix it up. Repeating ourselves is just as boring as repeating someone else." Two complementary songs form the center of the album. The provocatively titled "I'm Not on Drugs" is neither pro- nor anti-drug, but rather "about the altered state of chronic frustration," says Doyle. "During my second and third semesters of college, I was essentially a contemporary embodiment of the narrator of Green Day's 'Longview,' but with digital music instead of TV and root beer instead of weed. So I wrote this really personal, introspective mini-epic to say, 'Hey, I can screw up my life on my own. I'm not into mind-altering substances, but I've become such a slacker, I might as well be." Where "Drugs" is jagged, rambling, and angsty, "Nowhere, CA," its musical and autobiographical postscript, is smooth, efficient, and self-assured. "It's your classic 'I'm getting out of this town before it kills me' song," says Doyle. "The lyrics don't mention California, but I gave it that title because so many people who have never been to California romanticize it as some kind of carefree, neverending beach party, when in reality it has as many soul-deadening bump-on-a-log towns as any other state." Then there's "Stung by a Bee," a demented folk ditty that combines Jack Johnsonesque strum-thwack guitar with dashes of banjo, egg shaker, and subtle gallows humor. "It's about a guy who's too timid and stoic to really stand up for himself," says Doyle. "Any similarity to me is purely coincidental and unintentional." In between stretches of recording and mixing, Lauterborn discovered Morgan Neiman, a local indie-pop artist who records under the name Ducky. Impressed by her precocious songwriting and vocal skills, he invited her to complete a long-abandoned Free Soda instrumental. The result was "Dear Boy," in which Ducky sings of a tremulous relationship over a rich soundscape of synth strings and jangly guitars. "Ducky brought amazing energy and enthusiasm to the project," says Lauterborn. "And boy, can she ever belt it out." "Eleanor Please," an ominous piano ballad about a detrimental imbalance of power, also benefited from a guest appearance: that of Jack Piskorski,

who joined the duo on lead guitar for their inaugural live performance and was subsequently invited to shred all over the song's protracted coda. "For someone who's so modest about his abilities, Jack has a great instinct for how to make a song five times better," says Lauterborn. "His contribution to 'Eleanor' was no exception." The inclusion of a relentlessly snotty number called "Your New Album Sucks" at the end of Free Soda's debut album begs the question: How can a couple of guys stringing songs together in a bedroom studio afford to be so preemptively cocky? But Doyle insists that the message isn't as straightforward as the title might lead listeners to assume: "In the bridge, I sing: 'I don't want you to grow or reinvent or explore / You're out of print, so take the hint / And just do what you did before.' Many devotees of popular music develop that sense of entitlement to immediate gratification. The song argues both sides of the issue, one explicitly, one implicitly. That said, it's a lot of fun to play, and hopefully a lot of fun to hear."

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