

Mp3 The Xviii Century Greats - Pardon Our Appearance



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Ultra-literate, minimal, catchy pop for fans of Pavement, Magnetic Fields, the Unicorns, or Le Tigre. 12 MP3 Songs ROCK: Punk, POP: Quirky Details: Writes rock mag Splendid: This just might be the soundtrack to your inner life -- that is, if you are a male born in the mid-'70s who was probably a bit too smart for his own good and suffered in school because of it, who enjoys both teen sex comedies and art films, who sees nothing wrong with worrying one moment about his own mortality and laughing the next upon hearing a song in which "the words are lewd", who wants to be sensitive to feminism but also doesn't like to be made to feel like a sex offender, who believes in free love as a fun concept but worries too much about STDs to be a real swinger, and who is currently deeply wondering about the world and his place in it. Others not fitting this description might be a bit confused by Ari Atari's highbrow/lowbrow lyrics, but those of us out there who get it (and, despite the lack of music addressing us, there are more than one might think) will experience the "shock of recognition" usually associated with reading good literature. For a band whose name places them in the 18th century, the Greats are a quintessentially 21st century band. In addition to deftly tackling confusing modern concerns through lyrical simplicity, the band dish out pure 2K music. Featuring a simple instrumentation of guitars, vocals and loops, they sometimes sound like Le Tigre, and at other times like pure Pavement. Also, according to the band's website, Pardon Our Appearance was "recorded in less than a week (four days at a computer and two frenetic sessions in a SoHo studio)" -- truly a feat only possible in modern times. Atari's voice isn't especially tuneful -- okay, it's nearly atonal -- but what he lacks in melody he makes up for in rhythm, speak/singing right in time like a smarter Beck or a much smarter guy from Cake. Song highlights include "Sex Offender", which deals in a highly personal way with the difficulty of reconciling post-modern political issues and gender power struggles with old-fashioned love and lust. It's highly difficult subject matter handled exceedingly well, but

the melodies are strong and the backing music catchy. "Last American Virgin" is pure fun -- a homage to the movie of the same title, with goofy yet sincere lyrics. "Lost Inside" is a slow, minor key moping number that perfectly captures the emotion of someone who'd "rather live in another time." There is other music like this out there -- "literate rock" like Silver Jews and their peers -- but rarely is a band able to so finely walk the line between intellectualism and snobbery, and to so neatly capture the strange world of nascent adulthood in the 21st century. Even if the Greats weren't able to set the lyrics so well to such fun, sad, and occasionally beautiful music, I would recommend this. The fact that they are able to pull it off proves that they deserve to call themselves Greats. -- J. Berk

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