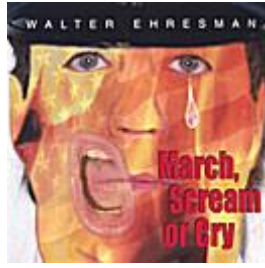


## Mp3 Walter Ehresman - March, Scream Or Cry



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Music for freaky Burning Man parades, protest songs that scream into the night, songs of love and death, and a reggae song about the importance of Dude Elimination. Oh, and a dirty penguin song. 13 MP3 Songs

**WORLD: Reggae, URBAN/R&B: Funk Details:** The three years since his last album have been tumultuous at best for the long-time solo artist and ex-leader/founder/multi-instrumentalist of the Austin band Snipe Hunt. An old relationship withers and grinds to an overdue halt. Unexpectedly, a new one flairs brilliantly only to end in sudden tragedy. And through it all, the country goes through its darkest days in memory-igniting a songwriters outrage, no matter one mans situation. And then there is the beacon of Burning Man, sending Ehresman time and again into the studio no matter his state of mind, to find the muse once again...and to be lifted up in the process. Heavy shit, huh? Raucous electronic beats mix with MIDI guitar and world percussion. Bouzoukis and mandola commingle with strange custom mandolins in waltz time. Mandocello locked in unholy congress with vocoder. Biting electric guitars battle with sounds whose origins are elusive. Melancholy ballads and protest songs. And, as usual, seditious lyrics nestle in a blanket of black humor. Ehresmans 10th solo album carries a weighty backstory. Much of it is nobodys business but his own, but some helps put these recordings into context: Track #1, Too Many Dudes, starts things off on a humorous note. Taking a cue from tongue-in-cheek white boy 70's 10cc reggae (and NOT from 80's diluted London reggae-lite, ala UB40), Ehresman crafts a funny, breezy summer song on a subject near and dear to his heart. I have felt very strongly for a long time that there are too many dudes around.....You cant kick a Coors Light can out of your path without hitting one (hopefully knocking the baseball cap around the right way).....Despite fashions of the moment, I have been a staunch and consistent advocate in this matter, he asserts. Ehresman puts his money where his mouth is, not only in the composition of this, his lead-off track, but in his philanthropic work as well. In recent months, he has

been a major supporter of the D.E.M.s (Dude Eliminators of Minnesota). Word of their good works reached me all the way down here in Austin and, though I've never been to the land of cheese and Pabst, I felt compelled to lend my support to their endeavors, he states matter-of-factly. Why does he stretch his limited resources in this way? It's just too important NOT to. It's hard to disagree. Note the song's chorus: Too many dudes-in my neighborhood; Too many dudes-in my town. Our wallets would grow fat selling backwards baseball caps; Procreation could make do with less around. *Res ipsa loquitur*. Track #2, Get Your Hand Outta My Pocket, shows a real Todd Rundgren influence. Funky, relentless and wild, this is a tightly-arranged burner with layer after layer of synth and percussion overlaid by full-speed whammy bar guitar. Definitely a creature of the studio, though I'd love to get a 7-piece band to play it live, Ehresman enthuses. Originally inspired by a negligent (and never-corrected) employer error that cost him hundreds of dollars in health insurance expenses, the song speaks more globally to betrayal by institutions that we should be able to trust. It also revisits one of Ehresman's continuing songwriting themes: the subjugation of the individual in favor of corporate greed, and the public's apparent willingness to swallow any hypocrisy along the way: It is the Age of the Reptile, with mankind in exile, and the corporation ruling the day; Where is your sense of absurd for actions louder than words?-because the chasm swallows everything they say; And when all fruits of the kitchen go to some legal fiction while the middle class begs crumbs from the table, we see the poor of the world ground down to grist for the mill to buy some CEO a platinum bidet. Tracks #3-5 were written and recorded by Ehresman in his capacity as Musical Director for the SCARAB (Society for Creative Arts and Radio at Burning Man) theme camp at the Burning Man arts festival in Black Rock City, Nevada. Each year our camp has an art theme that serves as a focus for many of our art pieces and events, one of which is our annual parade, he says. 2004 saw a costumed alien parade, which led to Alien Processional. According to Ehresman, When the time was coming up where I needed to get the piece done, I dreamed one night of an alien ship being launched, with mission control communicating musically with the crew inside.....This ended up being the intro, with the synth patches played on MIDI guitar modulated with a breath controller.....After lift-off, my approach to the various sections of the piece was to try to make every musical decision alien.....tempos would change slightly from section to section, by increments that did not make traditional sense and which formed no discernable pattern.....the repeating sections would be very slightly elongated or clipped each time they re-appeared. The end result doesn't really sound as odd as all that would imply. It's the damndest thing,

Ehresman muses, I think the brain wants music to make sense, so when it hears this piece, the ears adjust all my maladjustments to make the music seem more normal. And the bizarre alien voices? I put the mike in the bathroom and spent a whole night making weird noises through multi-effects to get that tile reverb sound....The neighbors must have thought I had a really bad burrito..... Mardi Gras Processional is a rollicking, second-line New Orleans street band song written for SCARAB Camps Mardi Gras parade in 2005. The various horn parts were played entirely on keyboard, but sound remarkably like the real thing. Such are the wonders of modern synth technology, Ehresman laughs. What really makes the song, of course, is the long-awaited return of the magnificent Hipwaders on background vocals. Last heard on the song Hind-Leg Dancin on the 2002 Snipe Hunt album I Saw the Future (But the Damn Train Hit Me Just the Same), this elusive, fugitive Austin singing duo makes a sneak appearance here, risking incarceration and singing background vocals along with local iconoclast Steve Jones. The results should put a glide in your stride. As for the timing of the song, Ehresman clarifies: We had spent a year planning a whole week of Mardi Gras events in our camp for Burning Man 05.....we had our whole camp decorated up that way, and a truly vast amount of beads to give away....When we had our Mardi Gras dance on that Tuesday night, we started hearing weird stories about something bad happening in New Orleans....You have to remember that Burning Man is held in the middle of the Black Rock Desert, and there is no communication with the outside world...Cell phones can't get a signal...Wild rumors are rife on the playa, so we didn't believe it when someone told us New Orleans is gone....We had our parade the next day, using this song as part of the soundtrack, but by Thursday it was clear that something had really happened....By the end of the week, the news was out, and Joan Baez even showed up unannounced on the playa and did a spontaneous fund raising performance....We of course didn't mean any disrespect by our camp theme....we all love New Orleans and the glorious music that flows from it....Once we heard about the news, we figured what we were doing was a tribute to a great American city. The SCARAB Strut (a funk processional) was written for the SCARAB 2006 parade, which had a funky/pimpy theme. For years I had this vision of our camp dressed up in our pimpiest polyester duds, strutting down the playa to some truly funky music and giving people shots of cachaca and mescal....My campmates thought it was a good idea, so I made a tape of some greasy strut music, starting off with this song. The listener will immediately hear a Parliament/Funkadelic influence here. Oh yeah, absolutely!, Ehresman happily admits. I had always loved that style of funk, where you could really tell that there were as many people

jacking around in the studio as there were on stage for those shows.....Massed vocals, and a general party vibe....I was able to get IZG, one of my campmates, to join in on background vocals, along with the Jones and my girlfriend at the time, Kathleen....I like the mixture of old school funk with a little bit of a more modern groove, and the song is all the more special to me because its the only time I was able to get Kathleen to sing in the studio with me....In fact, its the only recording of her voice that I have now, except in my head of course.....Anyway, the parade through the 7:30 Entertainment District was a fine thing, and people seemed to enjoy it. Track #6, Dont Speak of Nude Emperors, is the only song on the album that wasnt produced and engineered by Ehresman. I had a neighbor at the time, Greg Mayer, who was an intern at Willie Nelsons old Austin studio, Arlyn, and he asked me in passing one time if I had a song I wanted to record so that he could use the production of it as his final project, Ehresman remembers. As it happened, I had just written this song and was really itching to record it....but I hadnt done it yet because I was having problems with both my shoulders at the time, and some fingers on my left hand, and was finding the idea of all the playing and production and mixing somewhat daunting. Fortuitous timing, and soon enough this scathing protest song was in the can. This was right after Hunter Thompson died, which you can tell from the song intro, he recalls. I was embarrassed in the studio because my physical problems were making me have a hard time with the quick acoustic guitar lick that recurs throughout the song, but Greg was great and we got it over the course of two short sessions, since he only had limited access to the facility. Tough lick aside, the music is fairly simple and straightforward, but the lyric ranks among Ehresmans best, if not the best. Im very happy with how the lyrics turned out, because it captures ideas I have about social self-censorship in the name of 'polite conversation' which, coupled with the human tendency toward herd mentality thinking and the attendant fear to speak out against the flow, results in a self-regulating censorship out in the populace, Ehresman asserts. "This forms a deadly symbiosis when coupled with Right Wing/Corporate/GOP propaganda." Note this excerpt from the lyrics: In better circles, they don't talk about such things; Polite society won't stand for the observed when what's in front of you might call for thoughts unpleasant; When what's in front of you might call for deeper vision; When what's in front of you might tarnish your fine neighbor; When what's in front of you might make you avoid mirrors; Don't speak of nude emperors, or they will salt your pillar. They've demonized the truth, and made the obvious impolite; The greatest sins will not disrupt our garden party when all your guests are those who profit from the season; When all your guests are those who donate to

the rappers; When all your guests are getting favors from the rappers; When all your guests are symptoms of a deeper problem; Don't speak of nude emperors, or they'll treat you like a Moslem. Track #7, A Bump in the Road, is a testament to Ehresmans state of mind as an ill-advised long distance relationship ground to an ugly end in the summer of 2005. The recording stems back to some of his early 90s sessions, with no drum machines or sequencing.....Instead, he plays a single percussion track on tubano, with bass and acoustic guitar driving the whole thing along in the key of D. Track #8, Marianas (requiem for America), was written by Ehresman the morning after Bush was re-elected president. Although I knew it was going to happen, I was still in deep despair that day, full of hopelessness about the future of the country and about the gullibility and venality of those people who voted for him, he recalls painfully. The lyrics started filling my head on the way to work that morning, and within the hour I had the whole thing written and knew the tempo and tone of the song.....I knew the organ would give it that funereal feel, and I knew that the instrumentation should be sparse. After a soft, droning intro on an unusually-tuned electric solidbody bouzouki, the first of 4 long verses begins. Ehresmans singing is more baritone here than in any of his past recordings, perhaps enabled as much by age as the somber and bleak subject matter. Acoustic guitar fills around the changes, and a simple drum track anchors the piece. I recorded each element of the drum track (snare, bass drum, high hat, cymbals) separately, using my fingers on the drum pads on my keyboard....then used the sequencer to quantize them a little, but not too much, to make the pieces sound like one contiguous drum set track. And the background vocals at the breaks? Well, Ill let you decide if my voice suddenly got much more tuneful, or whether I found a trick, he says slyly. When those more upbeat, wordless background vocals pop up in the song breaks, and especially when the steel drum solo comes in at the end, its unclear whether Ehresman is using musical cues to give the listener hope, or whether its his way of representing the fiddling of the population (glued to American Idol, et.al) while Rome burns. Either way, it effectively breaks up what is otherwise a relentlessly dark opus, clocking in at more than nine minutes. A very effective piece, but not for the faint of heart. When Ehresmans girlfriend Kathleen passed away unexpectedly in October of 2006, many people were left in shock and deep sadness. Certainly, that was his state of mind. However, Kathleen left a 3-year-old daughter, now living with Kathleens parents, who was trying to cope with the unfathomable. Even though I was, and still am, I suppose, in deep shock, I knew that that poor little girl was going through something even worse, he haltingly recalls. I struggled to know what I could do to help her, and so I turned to something I knew,

which was music...I wrote Evans Waltz (Track #9) for her, trying to find something dignified and uptempo. Ehresman continues, I rarely write in 3/4 time, but there is something circular about it that hopefully gives the feeling that life goes on and yet you can always reach back to your past and bring the good things forward with you.....so that ultimately they're never really gone. A whole host of double-course instruments intertwine in this instrumental piece, with acoustic and electric mandolins mixing with electric mandola, acoustic and electric bouzoukis, and a Scottish mandocello holding down the bass notes. In the final measure, keyboards play a Viennese string part as the dance ends with a brief coda. Track 10, Kathleen, was written by Ehresman for his girlfriend in January of 2006, and was the first piece he wrote with his new Freshwater Mandocello upon it arriving from Inverness, Scotland, where it was handmade by David Freshwater. The mandocello, in the old mandolin orchestras, played the same part as a cello in a string section, and is tuned the same way, Ehresman explains. I had never played one before, but the intervals between string courses were the same as the mandolin, so I had an idea of some chord forms I could experiment with. What about the large-gauge strings, strung in double-course, and the difficult chord stretches given the long scale of the neck? Very painful on the fingers, especially with my small hands, he recalls. This was especially true given that I was still having shoulder and left hand problems at the time....But the instrument has a wonderful sound, with a host of rich overtones that, interestingly enough, become even more complex and musical when the instrument is plugged in....I had been wanting to write a song for Kathleen, and the new mandocello really inspired me to come up with something that I hope is unique. A beautiful piece of music, it is likely the first time that a mandocello has been combined with electric guitar and vocoder. Track 11, Goodbye, My Love, is a piece that Ehresman is loath to talk about. When Kathleen died, I felt like I had been whacked in the head with a steel pipe....Writing or recording music seemed unthinkable, he shares. But, looking back, I've always had to process trauma in my life by writing a song about it, and a day came a couple of months after her death that the lyrics and music just appeared out of the fog in my head.....I made myself record the piece, and I'm glad I did. The song stands as a deeply personal, heartbreaking statement about love, death, and the agony of seeing someone you love in a pain that you can't fix for them. No more really needs to be said. As a bonus track, Ehresman includes a solo mandocello mix of Kathleen (Track #12). And, just so that the album doesn't end on a somber note, the CD concludes with a dirty lounge song about a flightless water fowl. Benny, the Well-Hung Penguin was a ditty I wrote as a theme song for the famous Lost Penguin Caf, which is a

long-running theme camp at Burning Man where I performed solo guitar/vocal sets in 2005....There's a nod to Cab Calloway at the end, Ehresman recalls. I think there's a lesson for all of us buried amidst the lyrical complexity....., he confidently asserts, banging his tiki mug on the table. Or, one could just say that the song is vile, inappropriate and should not be listened to by anyone. The album title, Ehresman says, "Is an allusion to the choices we all have in dealing with the sorry national political situation....At the same time, it alludes to the types of music on the album, which in turn captures pages from my own life of the last three years." As with almost all his solo recordings, Ehresman plays all the instruments here himself, with background vocalists lending a hand on a couple of tracks. The diversity of the material will hopefully take you, the listener, on a winding journey of the heart and mind, with a feeling of having travelled a worthwhile path when the end is reached.

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review: Charlie Martin, KOOP Radio, Austin, Around the Town Sounds Host: 4/26/07, Set 2 New in 07 Twisted roots: 06. Walter Ehresman / Mardi Gras Processional / March, Scream or Cry. "The artist and album: Multi-instrumentalist Walter Ehresman is the quintessential Austin DIY musical artist following his own eccentric muse. He released his 10th solo album on April 21 with a show at the Irie Bean Coffee Bar on South Lamar. Much has happened in the political landscape of the nation and the personal landscape of Ehresman in the three-year stretch since his last CD, including the loss of two relationships, the most recent through death late last year, and the resulting emotions of outrage, sadness, love, humor, and happiness find expression in his new work. Ehresman has released several CDs under his band project Snipe Hunt, but his solo albums are almost all one-man projects with minimal outside accompaniment. He mixes sampled and real instruments, changes genres from one tune to the next with ease, and writes lyrics from his highly personal world view. With caustic wit, he spars with the forces that would limit individual freedoms, be they governmental or corporate. The song: Three of the tracks on the CD come straight from Ehresman's active involvement in the annual Burning Man Festival on a dry lakebed in Nevada where he is musical director for the theme camp SCARAB (Society for Creative Arts and Radio). Each year the camp has a focal art theme, which carries over into a parade, and the CD has three processional, each in a completely different style, which Ehresman wrote to accompany the parade themes for three different years. In 2005 the theme was Mardi Gras, thus inspiring this New Orleans second line marching song."

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