

Mp3 The Mercies - Pop: Power Pop



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Unabashedly power pop, new band formed in Rochester, New York by former Longwave drummer Mike James. Somewhere along the way they ended up crafting this year's perfect summertime pop soundtrack. 10 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, ROCK: College Rock Details: "Unabashedly power pop, The Mercies are a new band formed in Rochester, New York by former Longwave drummer Mike James. Somewhere along the way they ended up crafting this year's perfect summertime pop soundtrack. Turn it up and open all the windows-they don't make records like this every day." -The Planetary Group RIYL: Apples In Stereo, Sloan, Nada Surf The self-titled debut record from Rochester, New York-based The Mercies may sound a bit familiar upon first listen. Considering it is a lovingly crafted encomium to punk-rock energy, stadium-rock riffage, and Brit-pop punch, it should ring familiar in your ears. It is a rare and desirable trait for a band to be able to condense so much of the music of the last 50 years into 37 action-packed minutes. The Mercies take you to a time and a place in your life where all you have to is smile, rise to a standing position, and tell the world, "You can't stop me now!!" As the band's frontman and principle songwriter, Mike James longed to form a musical outfit capable of churning out the kind of hits that shape a generation of kids turning on their stereos for the first time, the way seminal classics such as "Touch Me" and "New York Groove" (Ace Frehley, not Hello) shaped him. His quest for that perfect sound even led him briefly behind the drumkit - in 2000, he was tabbed as the drummer for the New York City-based Longwave, a band that specialized in overt pop melody with an infusion of guitar atmospherics - think Echo and the Bunnymen meeting Pink Floyd. But by early 2004, he decided to return to Rochester and walk along a different musical path. Most rock bands have their start in basements or garages around the country, and The Mercies are no exception. Having played together as far back as 1998, James and bassist Brandon Lown not only represent the genesis of what would ultimately become The Mercies, but

also represent the requisite brothers-from-different-mothers portion of the band. A devout follower of early Beatles and Duran Duran, Lown's bass lines are an homage to Adam Clayton's steadiness and reliability - it's in the bass line that pop music draws its energy, its danger, and its sexuality. By 2000, guitarist Adam Ford had entered the fray. Like many other kids in the early 90's, Ford heard the opening chords to Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and, feeling like he had discovered the zenith of pop music, grabbed a guitar and chased his own version of rock and roll perfection. His rhythmic style of guitar playing is one built on confidence, on swagger, on belonging. Like all the prisoners of rock and roll who have come before him, Ford looks most comfortable with his 6-string in his hands. By 2002, the official first incarnation of The Mercies was in place. Working under the name Dick James/Footage, the band was a raw hybrid of power pop from both sides of the Atlantic. Imagine David Bowie taking Tom Verlaine's place at the helm of Television, or Eric Burdon hanging out with Eric Carmen for a weekend. In fact, make it easy on yourself - simply cross-breed Cheap Trick and The Kinks. Footage built a steady following in the Rochester area and even experimented with showing video imagery on four television sets placed at the front of the stage. However, when original members Kevin Quinn (drums) and Chris Pecoraro (keyboards) departed in early 2005, this promising band found itself in need of a versatile musician who could not only keep the beat, but could help the band manifest its vision more thoroughly. In the mid-1990's, during the resurgence in jam-oriented rock, Jonny Stevens kept the beat for Dizzy Monk, a band that fused the jam with the sophisticated pop stylings prevalent in the 1980's. A rock and roll devotee ever since hearing the King croon on "Suspicious Minds", Stevens lent a percussive feel to Dizzy Monk's stripped down, yet melodic, offerings. When the band broke up in 1997, Stevens and Dizzy Monk frontman Chad Anderson headed to Los Angeles. While on the coast, Stevens played in bands such as Roger Moon. But by 2004, he found himself back in Rochester, looking for the next segment of his musical trajectory. Jonny Stevens and Mike James had met each other through mutual contacts in the Rochester local music scene, and had talked about potentially working together. Until this point, the right opportunity had never presented itself. But all it took Stevens was one listen to "The Slide" for him to know that this band had something, and that he wanted in. Stevens was initiated through a series of shows in Western New York throughout 2005. Armed with over a dozen original compositions spat and polished by feverish live performances, The Mercies entered the studio in early 2006, along with producer Bill Racine. The band's unrelenting push, combined with Stevens' studio experience and Racine's

wizardry behind the mixing console, made for the perfect breeding ground for a defining musical statement. By July, the band had crafted 12 songs that work just as well individually as they do in one straight listen. The vision is more defined, the sound more crystalized. Bottom line: this record simply makes you want to get up and dance! From the Dylan-sings-Clash stampede "Walk Right Out", to the soothing, Badfinger-inspired "Out Of Nowhere", to the frenetic dreaminess of "Even The Lonely Know" it's everything that good-time pop music should be. The healthy mix of Eno stomp ("People Movin' On"), shameless bravado ("You Can't Stop Me Now"), and soaring anthem ("You're Not The Only One") all serve the underlying message - get the soul stirring, and the mind and spirit will soon follow. What does the future hold for The Mercies? A desire to present their music in any number of different formats, and an innate need to push the boundaries of power pop, lend themselves to numerous possibilities. Collaborations with Ric Ocasek? Grandiose, Spector-like productions? Stax-Volt horn accents? As long as The Mercies remain committed to rediscovering all that is great in pop music, anything can happen.

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