

Mp3 Pledge Drive - I Gave At The Office



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With one foot planted in the Appalachian and British Isles folk tradition, another ankle-deep in quirky, angular pop, and yet a third dabbling its toes in punk snarl, this tripedal beast is ready to take on all comers. 14 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, ROCK: Folk Rock Details: Pledge Drive is: David Hearst: guitar, voice Rebecca Marculescu: voice Chris Now: organ, piano Steve Rosenthal: drums, voice Michael VanLandingham: bass, voice Tim Walters: electric dulcimer, hammered dulcimer, recorder, voice Here are some reviews of the album: (review in Dirty Linen magazine) Would you believe this self-described "tripedal beast... with one foot planted in the Appalachian and British Isles folk tradition, another ankle-deep in quirky, angular pop, and yet a third dabbling its toes in punk snarl," could pull all that off without tipping over? Credit the tale this group tells on each of their inventively arranged 12 songs. Tom Dambly's atmospheric trumpet hovers coolly alongside Rebecca Marculescu's airy vocal on "Swallow" and the pub-ready "Down Among the Dead Men." Tim Walters' faithful recorder air on the mystic's paean, "Julian of Norwich," trips along into an electric dulcimer and the Annie Haslam-reminiscent vocal tone of Marculescu on something more barbed and perceptive than anything Renaissance would've cut, a rootsy high church number named "My Cathedral Home." Fade the occasional punk snarl, and this multi-faceted as well as multi-ped beast is indeed something to behold. (review by "am" at Splendid E-Zine) As well as having some of the coolest packaging I've seen in a while, Pledge Drive blends a bit of British folk elegance, dulcimer and recorder appearances and primordial guitar into a jagged pop mixture that's tastefully done, and, well, pretty damn good too! Rebecca Marculescu's gorgeous voice carries each note with admirable fluidity as the wide variety of unique instruments provides for some refreshingly remarkable entertainment. Think of the Pogues feverishly mating with Boiled in Lead, and you'll either be sick to your stomach or anxiously rolling up your sleeves in anticipation of more Pledge Drive! (review by

Jim Santo at Demo Universe) Idiosyncratic with a capital "I", Pledge Drive attempts to meld the brainy pop of They Might Be Giants with the Celtic trad-rock of Steeleye Span and the Strawbs -- and, astonishingly, pulls it off. Tim Walters fronts Pledge Drive on dulcimer and recorder, sharing vocal duties with the dulcet Rebecca Marculescu, and pens lyrics that are an arresting blend of erudition and silliness: "I know a poodle breeder name of Rupert/Who runs his Chevy van on muscatel/Take me to your lieder, Mr. Schubert/Shoot me with your canon, Pachelbel." A cameo duet with Marculescu by Game Theory/Loud Family frontman Scott Miller on "My Lagan Love" (a 500-year-old Irish folk song previously covered by Kate Bush and Van Morrison among others) is an added inducement to grab this wonderfully original work. (review by Brian Block at 33-1/3 Rebellions Per Minute) Having gone through five band structures quickly enough to combine on one single-CD demo, Tim formed Pledge Drive as his vehicle for learning to write pop songs.... the good news is that Tim wasn't kidding, himself or us. "King Of Burgers" and "Too Much Perspective", sung with gruff, wheedling enthusiasm by Tim, sound like They Might Be Giants with slightly odder melodies and a slashing, but simple, guitar attack. The volume-knob games and abrupt finish to "...Burgers" are fun, as is the unaccompanied opening (interrupted by lurching power chords) to "...Perspective": a trick well-learned from the Loud Family's "Top-Dollar Survivalist Hardware", but also making the music a coincidentally good blunt-force approximation of Ani DiFranco's "Gravel". The tone of these two is satirical, about fast food ("You watch your churls and thralls increase your yields/ Your vassals bring you tribute from exotic lands/ We eat it with our hands"), and somehow about Elvis "the sixth constipated man in the Bible" Presley, with the immortal rhyme "Everyone wants a kiss from Dracula/ everyone wants a cure for scrofula", as well as "The flock never stops/ the stock never flops/ cuz the vox always pops" (I'll let you guess the next three phrases, why should he do all the work?). Tim is not, at root, a satirist, though, being too sincere to pull that off as a full-time job; and one of the central passions he's sincere about is folk music, meaning the kind that goes back several hundred years, propagated through dozens of versions of sheet music. Many of the eight original songs on I GAVE AT THE OFFICE reflect this, as, of course, do all five of the "trad. arr. Pledge Drive" songs. Walters original "Down Among The Dead Men" ... merges folk song with TMBG, but this time using peppy staccato trumpet bleats, soft winding horn melodies, recorder, and a confident major-key melody. The lyrics are a drinking song with arguments about health that could've been penned centuries ago: "Here's a health to the king and a lasting peace/ To faction an end, to wealth increase/ So come, let's drink it while we have

breath/ For there's no drinking after death/ And he that will this health deny/ Down among the dead men let him lie". It could also have been written by Smash Mouth, of course, an archaism or three aside, but as long as scientific evidence supports both "drinking makes life shorter" and "happiness makes life longer", there's no reason the argument needs to disappear. Tim also sings the quietly resigned "Bags", traditional in a more vaudeville sense, short and crammed with wordplay enough for TMBG's ramshackle 1986 debut. "Swallow", a mournful dulcimer/trumpet piece about death and memory and probably the only use ever of the metaphor "the city's steel and concrete votive candles", is sung instead by Rebecca Marculescu, who has a strong, traditionally lovely voice. She also sings "Nuptials", unplugged in the MTV sense, meaning all the instruments are electric but there's no distortion pedals so they all sound unreasonably pretty. Bits of "Nuptials" seem quasi-Eastern, which is as usual rock-crit speak for "I don't know what the hell I'm talking about"; the cryptic but not-entirely-respectful verse lyrics ("We sang along with the insect choir") are clarified by the reverential and not-entirely-uncelebratory chorus: "What we have joined let no one put asunder/ a circle is stronger than a square/ grasp a hand to keep from going under". The ringing guitar tones are a close match to those in "Willie McGee McGraw", a dignified and processional heavy-metal arrangement of a traditional folk song, where Tim sings with his own measure of subtlety - and if you demand some unity in your albums, those two songs are the necessary link keeping Tim's and Rebecca's halves together. I say it works (although I still wish Tim and Rebecca had sung "...Perspective" in unison - if he can fake elegance, surely she could play Exene Cervenka to one raggedy song of his John Doe?). You can also pair "Down..." with the Rebecca-sung version of Sydney Carter's "Julius Of Norwich", showcasing sprightly recorder and their self-described "dulcimer-driven beat combo" style. Otherwise, "Shenandoah" is almost a capella, Rebecca and the group's vocals doing gorgeous call response. "My Lagan Love" is a simple duet between Rebecca and Loud Family vocalist Scott Miller. "My Cathedral Home" is folk-rock; "Sangre De Santa" is silly; and "Schubert Pachelbel" is slightly less useful in teaching about classical music than "Roll Over Beethoven", but does feature four verses in the pattern of I know a poodle breeder name of Rupert Who runs his Chevy van on muscatel Take me to your lieder, Mr. Schubert Shoot me with your canon, Pachelbel You can order your copy of the CD from CDBaby. But if you don't, finish "Schubert and Pachelbel" for yourself. You'll thank me for it later.

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