

Mp3 The Woodbox Gang - Trashcan Americana



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CAUSTIC ACOUSTIC. The Woodbox Gang is a jug band with a punk attitude. With a banjo PLUNK and a gut bucket THUNK, they are the most electric acoustic band in the world. 16 MP3 Songs FOLK:

Power-folk, ROCK: Americana Details: Released in 2001, Trashcan Americana is the first Official Studio Album released by the Woodbox Gang. At the time of this recording, the group was comprised of Hugh DeNeal (vocals, guitar, and kazoo), Brian DeNeal (bass), Alex Kirt (multi-instrumentalist vocals). Some have dubbed their music "insurgent Americana", as well as "jug-punk", and "y'allternative". The Woodbox Gang prefers "caustic acoustic" or "trashcan Americana", the latter being the title of their debut release.

The Gang has been performing the local clubs, bars, and coffee shop of Southern Illinois and the surrounding area. Their following as steady as their repertoire of original, off-the-wall, but always entertaining material written mostly by the chief songsmith, Hugh DeNeal. The Woodbox Gang is an eclectic blend of musical styles. Some would say they are a mixture of folk, rock, traditional blues, and punk with a shot of bluegrass. Their songs are humorous, haunting, and villainous. Their audiences rave about the group's lyrics, home-made instruments, and on-stage antics. The shows are always intense with the crowds dancing and generally whooping and hollering. A local WDBX DJ called them "the most electric acoustic band around."

----- Trashcan Americana

Review from Nightlife, Carbondale Illinois 12/14/00 By Chris Wissmann Those who may have heard singer Hugh DeNeal's early performances or recordings--be they with his first bands, Sideshow and Painted Cellar, solo, or with his current group, the Woodbox Gang--probably came away with the impression that Hugh's voice was similar to Bob Dylan's or Jello Biafra's, but worse and without the character. Time for a reassessment. Hugh has truly arrived, as the latest release by the Woodbox Gang

clearly demonstrates. On Trashcan Americana--not just the title of the Woodbox Gang's latest CD, but the name of their combination of Woodie Guthrie folk and either weird subject matter or serious concerns refracted through absurdist mental processes, plus way offbeat touches--Hugh has found his voice. Not only does he stay on key, but Hugh has learned to express himself quite effectively within his limited range. Most of the tunes on Trashcan Americana are humorous, and Hugh does a fine job of communicating mock outrage, sarcasm, and just plain goofiness. A frequent problem with such material, of course, comes when the novelty wears off. But Trashcan Americana has a pretty good chance of holding up. "Italian Plumber Lawsuit," for example, has the kind of singsong melody and sharp hooks that, when set into listeners' ears, will slowly consume their brains. (Too bad the song, which mourns "those poor turtles and the mushrooms that never grew into hallucinogens" in the Mario Brothers videogame, didn't come out in, like, 1987 or so. It could've been a runaway MTV hit back in that arcade game's heyday.) "The Termite Song" is another one that will probably age gracefully. It looks at home destruction from the point of view of a ravenously famished insect: "I'm hungry, and I'm gonna eat your house," declares the main character in a creepy tone. An idle threat? Not judging by the ominous, booming stomp boxes and the deep bass tones of Brian DeNeal (Hugh's brother, and an able partner in nearly all of Hugh's bands.) This termite will not be denied. The band's secret weapon is Alex Kirt, former vocalist for local grunge group Soldog, whose wide array of bizarre instruments turns Trashcan Americana into a record that would have made Spike Jones proud. Kirt adds buoyant kazoo solos to "Italian Plumber Lawsuit" and "Savage wiener dogs." His eerie banjo makes a tale of alien abduction and anal probing, "Strange Desert 1947," surreal, while the same instrument lends southern Gospel authenticity to the "Let the light shine on me" shoutalong chorus of "Vampire Suicide." It's Kirt's didgeridoo, however, that really sets an original tone. The low, low notes of the huge Australian wind instrument turn "Showdown" from the lament of an unappreciated musician into that of a man who might as well be dead. It's almost a ghost story. A few conventional touches by Kirt--backing vocals in places that need punctuation, for example--are even more effective. The group's biggest weakness is their preoccupation with tobacco. No less than three of the CD's sixteen songs use tobacco as their primary theme. The worst is probably "I Roll My Own," because rolling machines are as dumb a symbol of freedom as the Marlboro Man, and even DeNeal's somewhat tongue-in-cheek delivery can't quite mitigate that. This, however, doesn't diminish the overall enjoyability of Trashcan Americana. On first listen, it's startlingly fresh and

fun. Subsequent spins reveal the group's songwriting substance and their extraordinary ability to produce intricate but still, somehow, raw arrangements. Engineer Mike Lescelius, at whose Misunderstudio Trashcan Americana was recorded, deserves a bit of credit as well for the disc's sharp crisp sound. Trashcan Americana is available at Woodbox Gang shows, Plaza Records, Rosetta News, and the Yellowmoon Cafe. (Wissmann)

Flagstaff Live! 12/14/00 By Joe Collier Trashcan Americana Woodbox Gang In recent years there's been a rash of bands attempting to cash in on the "trailer park chic" phenomenon. Most of these bands, however, are faking it; writing songs about NASCAR, grilled cheese sandwiches and BBQ chicken wings from the water-treated redwood deck of their townhouse, safely removed from the immediate area of "the tracks." Not so the Woodbox Gang - this band is the real deal. Hailing from Herod, Illinois (a town so small, their P.O. Box number is listed as "8"), the Gang [Alex Kirt (washboard, banjo, kazoo, harmonica, didjeridoo, slide resonator guitar, drum, vocals, stomp board, gut bucket) and the DeNeal Brothers: Hugh (vocals, acoustic guitar, kazoo) and Brian (bass)] didn't call their debut CD Trashcan Americana by accident. Mixing a jug-band vibe that wouldn't sound out of place on the Andy Griffith soundtrack with the skewed lyrics of today's modern hillbilly, Trashcan Americana picks, grins, stomps and scratches its way through 16 down-home roots-a-billy kickers, celebrating a genuinely American way of life that most of us lost touch with the instant we ditched our privy and signed up for our first cell phone and cable TV. Principal songwriter Hugh DeNeal obviously knows his way around a lyric. From the rollicking upbeat pessimism of the opener, "Better Place to Die," to the tongue-in-cheek indignant social commentary of "Italian Plumber Lawsuit," (who ELSE noticed that Mario and Luigi may be responsible for the decline of Western civilization?) DeNeal writes truly original songs (ironically in a very traditional style) that beg you to sing along, providing plenty of hooks and a substantial dose of his obviously bent sense of humor in the process. The simple - even mundane - things in life are twisted into new significance in DeNeal's world; rolling one's own cigarettes means not selling out, normally benign Dachshunds terrorize the local neighborhood, simple pest infestation takes on global proportions. You need this album, but to get it you'll have to either check out their website: woodboxgang.homestead.com, or write to P.O. Box 8, Herod, IL 62947. Sure, the vocals are little ragged at times, and the production falls down in a couple of spots - but that's what makes it good. The Woodbox Gang is honest. Trashcan Americana is sincere. And isn't that

Spotlight on Area Entertainment Woodbox Gang Creates "Trashcan Americana" Sounds 12/4/00 By Mary White

Are you in the mood for something completely different? Tired of the same old sounds coming out of the same old speakers? Well, we've got just the ticket for you. Quite possibly the most original sound to come out of anybody's speakers in the past few years is created right here in Southern Illinois, by the eclectic trio known as The Woodbox Gang. The Gang, as they often refer to themselves, have been known to describe their music as "caustic acoustic cacophony" or "trashcan Americana" (which is, incidentally, also the name of their new CD). Convenient descriptions aside, the gang carves out a sound that is hard to put your finger on. No simple description does their music justice. It is music that is at once raw and elemental, and then plaintive and poignant. It merges elements of traditional folk sound with, aw heck, you just have to hear these guys. They truly defy description. The Woodbox Gang is composed of brothers Hugh and Brian DeNeal from Harrisburg, and Alex Kirt from Anna. Each of these players is a study in contrast, which explains the complexity of their collective "cacophony." Hugh, the pensive "gang leader," is the primary songwriter, singer, and guitar player for the group. Brian, the enigmatic "quiet guy," is the bass player. And Alex is the essential musical mechanic, carrying a dozen tools that he can tweak a song with here, make another adjustment there, adjust the timing where needed, and provide an occasional jump start. Alex's tools include the washtub bass (or "gut bucket"), the washboard, the kazoo, the didgeridoo (for those of you who are unfamiliar with it, a traditional Australian instrument made from a long curved piece of wood hollowed out by termites), the banjo, occasional ventures into steel guitar, and others, I'm sure, of which I'm not yet aware. The Woodbox Gang started out in 1999 with the DeNeal brothers and steel guitar player Brad Bolin, who provided a melodic finish for their repertoire. Bolin's stay with the group was short-lived, leaving the DeNeal brothers playing as a guitar, bass, and vocal duo, and searching for something to round out their sound. After a brief stint as the two-man Woodbox Gang, Kirt signed on and exerted a new influence on the Woodbox style. It picked up the pace, and gave the gang a more percussive edge in some of their pieces. This can be heard on the new CD, "Trashcan Americana." The heart of the gang, however, is the music and lyricism of Hugh DeNeal. DeNeal, who doubles as design and layout person for the family business, Springhouse Magazine, a historical journal of Southern Illinois, approaches his subject matter with a rare sense of poetry. Perhaps it is his work with history and

legend that give Hugh his unique approach to the music. I don't know. I do know, however, that devotees of John Prine, Bob Dylan, and older Bruce Springsteen music should give a long hard listen to the basic ingredients of Trashcan Americana. With the little bit of time we have together, I'd like to share a sampling of Trashcan Americana with you. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the gang, I'd like to start with "The Italian Plumber Lawsuit," a song that explains, with lighthearted humor, why video games are one of the greatest problems with the youth of today. You should then move on to "The Termite Song," a sardonic piece that describes your house being eaten, from the perspective of the termite. Alex's work on the gut bucket provides the ominous, low rumble that helps you to imagine this happening, and still allows you to laugh. "Vampire Suicide" has the feel of an old time gospel song, only it's a vampire singing, "let the light shine down on me." And by all means, close your eyes and listen to the beautiful ballad, "The Color of Freedom." There's so much more to tell you about. My recommendation is that you buy the CD, and see for yourself. You can see the Woodbox Gang this Saturday at 8 p.m. for their third CD release party, at the Yellowmoon Caf in Cobden. Tell them to play "Better Place to Die" a little slower again though (adjust that timing, Alex." You can also visit the gang on the web at woodboxgang.homestead.com/ freeyellow.com/members7/mkwhite/yellowmoon.html

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