

Mp3 Buttercup - Hot Love



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Pop: Quirky 13 MP3 Songs POP: Quirky, ROCK: Modern Rock Details: There was a time when being a Buttercup fan required no small amount of tolerance for guerilla art nonsense. You couldn't buy a Buttercup record, but you could call frontman Erik Sanden's Dial-a-Song hotline and hear a track a week played back on his answering machine. You could go to a Buttercup show, but you did so knowing that your odds of getting to see the band actually play a normal set were pretty slim. Sometimes you'd show up and the band would just play home movies. Or invite the audience members, one by one, into an office to ask them about their day, play them a single song and send them on their way. At one gig, you could only watch the show by staring down into one of four different 50-gallon barrels, each holding a TV monitor showing a different Buttercup member as the band played the entire set hidden in another room. Buttercup called these weekly (later monthly) shows, invariably BYOB affairs staged at some dimly lit art gallery in downtown San Antonio, Grackle Mundys. No two were ever alike, except for the familiar faces in the crowd who showed up faithfully week after week like members of a secret society (the Buttercult, if you will.) Some newcomers invited by friends or curiosity, no doubt came just to see what new performance art stunt the band would reveal. But those in the know came knowing that said gimmicks, from the inspired and wacky fun to the, well, confounding were always secondary to the music. They'd willingly jump through hoops, walk under ladders and stare down oil drums to hear Buttercup's songs simply because the songs were worth it. Buttercup's new album, Hot Love, like its 2005 predecessor Sick Yellow Flower, is the proof. Granted, that name itself "Hot Love!" at first blush seems like yet another silly distraction. Or worse. The jaded and uninitiated will surely misinterpret it as a tell-tale sign of that all-too-trendy, irony-on-sleeve hipster bullshit that passes for cool in indie-rock circles these days. But any member of the Buttercult can attest that this is not a band that's ever been overly concerned with being

cool. The four members have far more important things to sort out, like where and when a chorus of las might work better than a string of fa-fa-fahs or a winsome whistle, and whether any given solo is better served by electric guitar or ukulele. When in doubt, Buttercup doesn't fret over "What is cool?" so much as the question, "What would Ray Davies do?" Even Davies at his Kinkiest never went so far as to dub an album or song "Hot Love" but chances are he'd hear his influence on it as clear as the first time he heard The Who's "Can't Explain" and mistook it for one of his own. Which should by no means suggest that Buttercup are brazen mimics so much as star students of one of rock's most esteemed schools of song writing. Chief among the lessons learned there: blatant irony is unnecessary once one masters the craft of marrying camp to earnest, and the ability to rock feebly when a song calls for it is as important as knowing how to rock hard. "I think that's Buttercup's forte, to really be able to interpret what a song needs," muses guitarist/singer Joe Reyes, who joined founding members Sanden (guitar, vocals), Odie (bass/vocals) and Jamie Roadman (drums/glockenspiel/vocals) in 2002. "I think everybody in the band enjoys doing the really mellow things as well as the loud, bashy, Who Live at Leeds kind of stuff that we also do. Those other guys in the band come from such a rock background, it's in their pedigree to rock it up a bit. But when we play a really tender song, there's a sensitivity to it that comes from the years they've played together." Buttercup was formed loosely some five years ago, though Sanden, Odie and Roadman had been playing together in various San Antonio rock groups for the better part of the last 15 years. Reyes himself was always a rocker at heart, too, but he spent years as half of the Grammy-nominated, flamenco instrumental duo Lara Reyes and as an in-demand session musician and studio hound (he co-produced Freddy Fender's Grammy-winning 2002 album, *La Musica de Baldemar Huerta*). When he joined the Buttercup fold, the band's already impressive musical ability went off the charts. "I knew Joe would be perfect for this band because he's more than a little strange," says Sanden. "The moment we talk about doing something creative, he's the first to come up with something original. I think that's fantastic, because we're constantly trying to one-up each other in terms of ideas and how we can approach performances and music in general. And Jamie and Odie, whom I've been playing with for so long, I still get surprised by them, too. There's always a willingness to get behind an idea and go full force. That's what Buttercup is about." *Sick Yellow Flower*, Buttercup's debut, received glowing reviews and helped the band extend its reach into Austin, where they've packed rock rooms like the Cactus Cafe and the Continental Club as easily as the San Antonio art galleries where they nurtured the earliest

Grackle Mundy shows. But in characteristic unconventional fashion, the band played a little hard to get on its first recorded effort opting to showcase its mellower, moodier side over the seemingly effortless pop smarts that brighten many of their Buttercult tested and approved greatest hits. Hot Love fills in all the missing pieces: from the so-infectiously-giddy-it-hurts title track to Spelling Bee, Unlevel, Anti-Antarctica and the longtime crowd favorite Johnny Appleseed, this is how Buttercup sounds when it rocks. "We withheld a lot of our more catchy, magnificent pop songs that hearken back to the Kinks from the last record, but this time we really felt like we wanted to rock more," says Sanden. "Because thats part of what we do, too." "When I first wrote Hot Love," he continues with a laugh, "I had to practice saying, 'Hi everybody, this is our new song, called Hot Love.' And I just found it mortifying. But part of me also relished it, because theres something about the idea of a bunch of grown men screaming Hot Love! that seemed really adventurous. I thought, This has to be the title of the record. Because it just seemed to capture the vibe of the band at the time." And that it does. Hot Love is Buttercup at its best, unfiltered and unencumbered by distraction. Replicate the trappings of a Grackle Mundy show at home: if you must draw a bubble bath, stand in a closet, stand on your head, or listen to the record on a boombox stuffed in a bucket hanging from a tree limb. Rest assured, these songs can take it.

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