

## Mp3 Zircus - Smashes



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Groundbreaking early 90's eclectic, genre-hopping San Francisco pop septet, at one time the critic and fan favorite, and recognized as the city's best live act. 17 MP3 Songs POP: California Pop, ROCK: Psychedelic Details: Their first single "My Astoria, sounds like a lost David Bowie song from Ziggy Stardust covered by the Pixies who hired Brian Wilson to write the bridge with Public Enemy delivering it. And that's just one 3 minute song. At one time produced by Art Alexakis (Everclear) and claimed to be Adam Duritz(Counting Crows)favorite band. Zircus "Smashes" review from All Music.com There is no simple way to say what, exactly, Zircus is. It sounds, at any one time, like a circus orchestra, a soul collective,a funky avant-garde jug band, and an off-kilter zoot-suit combo. If we're to take "My Astoria" as standard-bearer for the aggregate,it is Public Enemy backed by a ska band helmed by Brian Wilson. The group was even once described as "a cross between a high school marching band and the junkyard ensemble from the Fat Albert Show," which is as close to accurate as anyone is likely to come.Tom Waits fronting the Mothers of Invention?The Band playing cop show themes? Penn and Teller with instruments and musical skills? The Stax house band on speed? Yes to them all. And it's not really any of those things, either. Only one thing is for certain:Besides being unclassifiable, Smashes is an explosive, exciting record. At more than an hour's length, it still manages to seem too short.There is so much to discover in the music that it literally takes dozens of listens before the record starts to grow remotely familiar.Funk riffs and Tower of Power horns run headlong into Beach Boy harmonies, film noir intrigue, ragtime, exotic gypsy-ish textures, and swing. After a hot electric blues riff opens the song,"Crown of Spoons" looks back to trad jazz, Dixieland, old-timey,and Tin Pan Alley traditions for its musical inspirations, and to Looney Toons cartoons for its lyrical ones. At other times, the band can turn beautifully eerie (their wiggly acoustic cover of "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times"),sound like Bo

Diddley playing free jazz with Fats Waller ("The Devil's Busboy"), or like the Muppets all liquored up and dueting with Al Jolson ("Shine on Harvest Moon"). It is a surreal, improvisatory, haphazard melange that could have turned disorienting if it wasn't, instead, so fertile and inventive. Recorded between late 1990 and early 1994 but not released until 1999 by which time the band was already kaput the posthumous recording unfortunately marked the first and probably only time the band would make it onto CD. It's hard to imagine a better tribute. There has never been another record remotely like Smashes, which is reason enough to search it out. Stanton Swihart

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