

Mp3 The Hired Guns - Between Here & The Night



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On the Hired Guns' debut album, there are hints of The Stones circa 'Sticky Fingers', The Byrds, Neil Young with Crazy Horse, and even a dash of 'Loaded'-era Velvet Underground. 12 MP3 Songs

COUNTRY: Country Rock, ROCK: Americana Details: Between Here The Night", the debut full-length CD from Melbourne band The Hired Guns, is here at last. Formed in 1996, the band was originally intended as a side-project involving Adam Spellicy, Chris Willard and David Creese (all from Melbourne jazz-noir outfit The Dumb Earth) and Anthony Paine (from High Pass Filter and Snout). After releasing a split 7-inch single in 1999 with Sydney's The Dearhunters (on the Steady Cam label) and contributing 2 tracks to the Au Go Go Records compilation CD 'Musikal Identikit' in the same year, the band took on a legitimacy of its own. 1999 also saw the addition of pianist Timothy Deane and Jane McCracken (from The Foots, Fibrotown) to the band's ranks. The band's sound invokes (in part) the country-rock stylings of the late 60s and early 70s, with chiming guitars and soaring harmonies to the fore. There are hints of The Stones circa 'Sticky Fingers', The Byrds, Neil Young with Crazy Horse, and even a dash of 'Loaded'-era Velvet Underground. Recorded in an abandoned 1930s Knitting Mill in Melbourne, the album features 12 original tracks, with songwriting contributions from each member of the band. PERSONNEL: ADAM SPELLICY: Guitar, Vocals CHRIS WILLARD: Lead Guitar, Vocals ANTHONY PAINE: Bass Guitar, Vocals TIMOTHY DEANE: Keyboards, Vocals DAVID CREESE: Drums, Percussion REVIEWS: "The Hired Guns waste no time in establishing a rootsy, bar-band sound on their debut. "Loose Change," a lovely, waltz-time ballad, is a tight, clean slab of blue-eyed soul, instantly catchy as singer Adam Spellicy cries "I owe it all to you, 'cause it's weighing me down, all this loose change that I'm carrying around" over smooth backing vocals. The country stylings of "You're Not There for Me," complete with steel guitar backing, sounds straight out of a Texas juke joint, quite a feat considering that the Guns hail from

Melbourne. If any criticism could be levelled here, it's that the production leans toward glossy arrangements; the material would benefit from the grittier atmosphere from which it was likely born. Still, with strong ballads like "Are You Gonna Leave Her at the Church" and the Stax-like "Over Over," the Hired Guns prove they have impressive songwriting chops." - Amplifier

"Like all music lovers I have a number of albums that I can always return to when I want to recall an old friend, place or time. Albums that are, in fact, a major part of my life and never fail to give me whatever I need from them. In amongst these cherished albums are a few which do not take me back in time, do not remind me of a lost love or opportunity and which don't bring to mind a specific "moment". They are there just because they are bloody good albums that I love for no other reason than they are full of great songs. Now the Hired Guns, a 5 piece band according to the press release but a 6 piece according to the CD inlay, from Melbourne have just released their debut and straight away it is obvious that this collection is another one which is never going to be far out of my reach. In a period when, for me at least, there have been so many outstanding new albums, it has been 'Between Here And The Night' which has been playing constantly. The band was formed in 1996 and consists of Adam Spellicy (vocals, guitar and accordion), Chris Willard (vocals, lead guitar), Anthony Paine (vocals, bass), Timothy Deane (vocals, keyboards, harmonica), David Creese (drums) and Jane McCracken (vocals, guitar, harmonica, accordion). Apart from one song, 'Lend Me Your Gun', which was written by Willard's partner Liz Dealey, all the band members except McCracken (who may be a honorary member as she is not mentioned in any press releases) contribute at least one song each here. Creese, Paine and Deane offer one song each while Spellicy and Willard penned the remaining 8 tracks equally between them. The band has 4 members taking turns at lead vocals and together they provide some of the most moving harmonies you will ever hear and as soon as the aching vocals come in on the opening track, 'Loose Change', the classic song-writing and musicianship of the Band springs to mind. The song is so good, so well produced (by The Hired Guns and David Nelson) that it wouldn't sound out of place on 'Music From Big Pink' or 'The Band'. If that opening song was the best track on this album it would still be worth buying. But, although common sense dictates that things can only go downhill from here, the songs actually get better. Any thoughts that the Hired Guns are Band clones (albeit excellent ones) are swiftly cast aside with the second track, 'Somewhere', which is the contribution from drummer David Creese. When was the last time you heard a song composed by a drummer that you would make a point of listening to every day? From the opening

Young/Crazy Horse distorted guitar and those longing vocals pining for a lost love it's obvious the listener is in for something special here. It's deathly slow, an atmospheric soundscape with a yearning melody, stunning guitar and harmonica all adding to the picture. More on the next album please, Mr. Creese. The difference in the type of song from the opening track is so great it could almost be by another band. That is the beauty of this collection; although the band stamp their own identity over these songs each one throws up their influences. We can hear 'Sticky Fingers' era Stones, Gene Clark, Young and Crazy Horse, and, of course, the Band .yet still the songs have the Hired Guns uniqueness about them. The beginning of track three, 'Lend Me Your Gun', could be heard on a Neil Young album without an eyebrow being raised but, and I'm a huge Young fan, it's been a while since I've been moved as much by the great man's work as I am by this track. It's to their credit that that lines like "You gotta lend me your gun so I can blow myself away, I can take you with me or maybe you just wanna stay without me" are sung with such passion over a great melody that the listener forgets the singer wants to blow his brains out as your foot taps along to the guitar/harmonica fuelled melody. The title of these songs says a lot about the themes covered on the album, 'You're Not There For Me' and 'Without Her', tell it all. But these are heartbroken ballads with a difference, Listen to the searing guitar solo on 'Are You Gonna Leave Her At The Church?' for a good example of the playing featured throughout all of these songs. On track seven, 'Over and Over', we are treated to another surprise; it opens with some Stax styled horns, which were totally unexpected after hearing the first six tracks, and progresses into what sounds like Lou Reed fronting a band put together from various Stones and Crazy Horse members. The horns are there again on the next song, 'Without Her', which rolls along on another stunning melody. A dangerous melody, in fact. It's not often I'm moved to actually sing along in the car these days, especially in company. But the "oohs" which make up the last couple of minutes of this Spellcycy tale of lost love are so catchy. especially when the horns kick in and a nagging guitar line runs underneath that I have to confess my mind wanders along with my driving as I get caught up in this great sound. A good job it doesn't last longer! Spellcycy also penned the next track, the seven minute long 'Blue Sunday'. A brooding ballad again with Willard's lead guitar shining bright through the darkness. On any other album this song would have been the standout track but this collection of songs is so strong throughout it is only the best song on the album while it is actually playing. As they all are. There is no filler on this album; each and every one of the twelve tracks is stunning. Every song has qualities of its own. The closing track, ' My Last Breath', (a dying man's

thoughts?) has a la-la-la chorus where the bands' harmonies will have you singing along. Light in even the darkest of places. The record was made in a disused 1930s knitting mill in Melbourne that has been converted into a 24 track-recording studio. One can't help but feel that some of the atmosphere and large open space of the building has shaped the sound of these songs. This album really is a contender for my best album of 2003. Twelve songs and not a dud among them. It's classic song writing played and produced beautifully. I wouldn't want to be without it now." - pennyblackmusic

"We're a little behind in getting to this excellent record by Melbourne's The Hired Guns- it came out in May, but to be completely honest, it's been stuck in one of my CD players (for good reasons), and it's only now that I have got around to reviewing it rather than just living with it. The success of the record demonstrates the truisms that you need to have your own spin on these things to make it work, and that sounding like a depressed lunatic from the backwoods always helps. Oh, and that you don't have to come from Kentucky or Virginia to make good country music. All of the musicians here have played together in other incarnations and in different genres, such as "jazz noir" and something faintly pretentious sounding called "art dub"; putting aside their creation of spurious new sub genres, all this experience adds up to a whole lot- there's a sense of professionalism is everything from the arrangements to the production, and yet the lasting impression is of a loose, funky country rock sound. It's rather like Keef, Gram, Lou Reed and Robbie Robertson all got together with Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section and went on a walkabout with Nick Cave in some fictional land between Memphis, Nashville and rural Victoria. Recorded in a converted 1930's knitting mill, "Between Here and the Night" achieves a balance between rock n roll atmospheric, simple folk wisdom and a streak of underground New York decadence; it's not going to cheer your day up by any means, but for those with jaded tastes, it's a real pleasure, and in it's own way, rather original. It's the slightness of touch which makes so many of the songs, accordion gently interacting with soft struck guitar stings and Adam Spellicy's Donnie Darko of a singing persona- you find it all getting quieter, all minor chords, and you're straining to hear what he's saying, and somehow it matters that you work it out. "Dead of Night" is a particularly stark, blue and compelling example of this, whilst "Without Her" has horns all over it, soulful and dark at the same time, Adam coming on like Moz crossed with the bastard love child of Brett Sparks and Solomon Burke- it's a stormer and deserves being played loud out of all your windows, just to make sure the whole neighbourhood gets it. I really can't recommend this one highly enough- The Hired Guns deserve tremendous success and huge record sales. Go make a start towards their first

platinum record." 4 / 5 - Americana-UK Website "We don't often feature albums from groups (rather than solo artists), and it's rare for us to carry discs from Australian acts, so this disc from 'The Hired Guns' a five piece band from Melbourne is a welcome diversion from the norm. The band plough a unique alt-country furrow, although there are influences clearly visible throughout the disc (the most relevant ones being Neil Young, The Band Steve Young), even with these reference points the album is fresh and has a distinctly Australian sound. While many group albums fall down because of overly full and unnecessary complex mixes, it's to the Hired Guns credit that this disc is a balanced combination of upbeat and restrained material, and even in it's more strident moments the musical detail and subtlety is still there. The recording is excellent throughout, and there's a discernable atmosphere and sense of space throughout the 12 songs; much of this must be attributed to the recording venue, an old disused 1930s knitting mill converted into a studio. All the songs here are credited to individual band members, and they're all represented on at least one song - this has created a diverse and fascinating range of songs. Although from the pen of different writers, it's customary for an alt-country disc to be lyrically downbeat, the open road, leaving and break-ups are all recurrent themes throughout, but the strong melodies and underlying dark sense of comfort in the songs makes this an easy disc to listen to. This is a strong disc that will appeal to all fans of any form of alt-country, the almost retro sound gives it a familiar feel, but further listening shows this to be a disc with a unique edge." - Fishrecords "The Hired Guns are a five-piece based in Melbourne, and come across as a kind of Aussie counterpart to Lambchop, if slightly more retro in sound, though with a comparable roots-country sensibility and a markedly similar approach to melodic construction. This is perhaps surprising when you learn that no less than three of the band members originated in a jazz-noir outfit (The Dumb Earth) and the bassist comes fresh from an art-dub band (High Pass Filter). Apparently, the Hired Guns started out playing pastiche country, but this, their debut album, the result of six long years honing a band sound, smacks muchly of the real thang with its alternation (give or take a detour or two) between the two basic landscapes of the country of country(dust-blown driving rolling rock anthems and lovelorn melancholy narrative songs). Within that broad ambit, then, permeate distinct echoes of late-60s country rock (Burritos, Band, Crazy Horse - check Out On An Errand) and garage-jangle (Without Her) along with shades of both Youngs (Neil and Steve!) and even Banquet/Fingers-era Stones, moody as they come (Wild Horses couldn't drag me away from the stately seven-minute Blue Sunday!), then with a dash of horny, Velvety soul-blues for good measure

(Over And Over) - a heady enough, if not overly disparate mix, which could easily get out of control and make for a shapeless, aimless record, but it says much for the Hired Guns that by and large this doesn't happen. With one exception, the songs are all penned by group members, in various combinations, and none of them strike a hint of a false note. Sure, there's maybe a couple of slightly over-derivative moments, but in 54 minutes that's a perfectly acceptable average, and this really is a genuinely likeable album, recorded with a fine sense of space, which proves ever more satisfying on further plays." - NetRhythms Website

"This is a nice place to be! - an album that has quality, depth and an emotive presentation that makes you think that the band really have carefully put this together. "Between Here The Night" is the debut album from Melbourne band The Hired Guns, another of Laughing Outlaw Records' discoveries. This is an album that melds that classic country rock sound with a modern day approach blending portions of harmonies, jangling guitars and oceans of ubiquitous wistfulness. There is an underlying imprint of Neil Young and Crazy Horse in the playing, though without the overbearing Marshall grind. The Hired Guns have a more thoughtful approach and one which I found quite refreshing putting me in mind of bands like North Carolina's Lou Ford. The fact that all members of the band make writing contributions to the set probably makes for the variation on display, but each song sits well with its buddies on the track list and the whole sequence works towards building a veritable quality musical harvest. The twelve tracks on offer here afford no fillers and many highlights; the best being where the band create those magical moments that are at once reminiscent of the best 70's country rock but with a state-of-the-art swagger. Of the twelve there are five compositions that really stick in your head for their absolute quality and sheer presence. "Somewhere" is pretty yet potent and ominous ballad, where equal parts guitar and harmonica balance the sound out nicely. The powerful melodrama of "Are You Gonna leave Her at the Church" plays out well, with breathily ethereal vocals, lonesome pedal steel and a fiery guitar tirade all adding to the boast of this potentially being the best of the set. The award for that one however goes to "Blue Sunday". This track demonstrates emotional power making thorough use of its deadpan pace to provide a rigid framework for some strong vocals and a lazily graceful guitar solo that builds into one of the most forceful pieces of phrasing that I have witnessed for many years. Winding through over seven minutes of intensely astonishing music this tour de force is the sort of that got me hooked at the tender age of 13 to guitar rock, and my track of the year so far. The use of a Stax horns sound on "Over over" conjures an Exile era Stonesy feel, a 'mogadon' vocal drawl uplifted by some

gospel inflected backing, as the whole song drifts, then builds, then hangs in the air floating on some dreamy guitar. "Dead of Night" has an eerily atmosphere that suits the theme perfectly, complete with haunting accordion and spine tingling keyboard droplets making for a perfectly hatched arrangement. I enjoyed this album a great deal, and probably as much as anything I have heard from the Laughing Outlaw catalogue to date. It has a degree of intimacy that is seldom found these days and it just made me want to play it over and over again just to bask in the warmth and charm that it exudes. The words 'Passion' and 'spirit' also kept springing into mind as I drafted this review, the music evokes a sensation that they really played their hearts and souls out on this one, and it's a feeling that comes across quite forcibly at times. The entire set stands up well; works like "Blue Sunday" and "...Leave Her at the Church" help form a charming melange of southern country rock with memorable excursions into the realms of truly original roots music. 'Between Here and the Night' is a brilliant set - warm and hearty, like a good meal, and one certainly to cherish." 4.5 / 5 - AltCountryTab Website

"Somewhere out there in the Australian night, between Brisbane and Bourke or Perth and Pittsworth, there's a truckstop where The Hired Guns, our antipodean answer to Lambchop's multi-membered melodics, are playing their feedback-soaked brand of deep-fried harmonic country rock. This is a truckstop that serves its meat pies with a side of sadness, its kabana sticks with failed love affairs, and its cheap, bad coffee with enough plates of broken hopes to carry you out into the desert. "You gotta lend me a gun so I can blow myself away," sings one of the five vocalists, and we're only up to track three, the appropriately titled "Lend Me Your Gun." Jane McCracken holds off the harmonica to harmonize the chorus, "You gotta help me baby oh yeah," and if it weren't so as the singer could blow his brains out, this would almost sound like love, if you could hear it over the sound of the deep fryer. This is The Hired Guns' first full-length, recorded in an abandoned knitting mill in Australia's south. They've combined the sweat of the factory floor with the ache of repetition, whether it's a failure to meet an old lover at a motel somewhere up the road in "You're Not There For Me," or the tired strumming of a guitar with a tinge of trumpet and piano on "Blue Sunday," a song that drifts like cigarette smoke just after sex. Adam Spell icily drawls his way over "you're clinging onto what can't be held," and it becomes that last song before you put on your shoes and just walk away. So between here and the night you're not going to find much happiness, or joy, but there is a darker sense of comfort and solace that will last you through a breakup or two. That's how good music works, it touches you, lets you know you're not alone, and The Hired Guns let you know that some other bastard in a dead-make diner spooning baked

beans through a dirty fork has been there before, and survived. Unless of course his partner decided to really help him out and lend him her gun. But even then there's one more song, as the band fittingly winds up on "My Last Breath," with a la-la-la chorus entwined around a man's dying thoughts. An apt way to end. - Delusions Of Adequacy

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