



SKRATCH ★ SKRATCH



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HEY!

THE GRUESOMES

(Og Records)

The Gruesomes sport beetle moptop haircuts, have an apparent fascination with creepy-horror memorabilia, and possibly haven't heard that the 60's are over. This last point is particularly evident upon listening to this Montreal-based quartet's third album.

"El Diablo" is a spicy little number that emulates the rollicking guitar style popularized by the Ventures (early surfin' music for you younger readers). "So Far, So Bad" struck me with its sound and writing that is very reminiscent of the early Rolling Stones. If it weren't for that slight "Herman Munster-in-trousers-three-sizes-too-small" quality of the vocals that replaces Mick's pouting, I might have fallen for the disguise. ...And speaking of disguises: The eeriest aspect of the album has to be the songs "World of Darkness" and "I Can Dig It" which could be easily have been at home on the Who's Tommy and Magic Bus albums, respectively.

The music of the sixties covered a lot of territory and to describe it through imitation of

the styles of a few bands, no matter how popular, sets unreasonably low limitations. The sixties was an era of rapid exploration of musical frontiers that at the beginning was less a business than a fun cultural venture. This lack of pretence that flowed from inspired amateurism is not often felt in today's music.. The vocal versatility of the Gruesomes is "highlighted" in the title track as each member in turn sings the lead. The fact that the song consists of only one word of lyric (and what might that be?) is not so much indicative of their song-writing talents as it is in underscoring the band's puckish tendencies. Many of the other songs on the album, particularly "Won't You Listen?", present a fun, fond remembrance of sounds past that should go over well at parties. Give a listen!

Peter Ferguson

DECADE OF DREAMS

THE PAROCHIAL ZOO

(DTK RECORDS)

Remember these little pop-up books Mom used to give us when we were kids? There you'd be, leafing through the large gaudily colored pages when BAM! Suddenly you'd only just escaped being walloped on the nose by a suddenly mobile cardboard bear or a friendly postman. You see kids, basically that's the way I like my music - to be lead along a stimulating path only to be surprised and exhilarated by a sudden twist or turn, or even the discovery of something bright and shiny that glints in the corner of the eye.

Before I get soaked in a deluge of trite metaphors let me say that The Parochial Zoo is not one of the best musical pop-up extravaganzas to get an airing at Griffiths Acres of late. Rather than succumbing to the urge to occasionally take a spontaneous swoop, jump or spit-ball, it seems that far too often Decade of Dreams are content to parade along under the carpet mumbling mondo-Joycian epithets in a rather drab monotone. But hey! Before the multitudinous

members of this combo turn up on my doorstep and demand my *cozones* in a jam-jar - listen up. It's catchy. How many times this week have I suddenly surprised myself by suddenly blurting out "oh-oh-oh-uh-oh what a wicked surprise!" (from 'Man Who Loved To Talk') or relived the swirling paisley protoplasts like brooding tadpoles gallivanting around my subconscious to the tune of 'What Sally Wants'? Erm... well quite a few times actually. Yes damn it! It has profound substance to be sure, but so often I yearned for a tuneful female voice to counterpoint Carmody's apres-Reed observational drone, or maybe a dead STOP, a breath taking change in tempo or (gasp!) a simple emphasized synth arpeggio to provide a diversion to what otherwise tends to grind along rather painfully. A feminine flavour is a definite requirement in the vocal department. One aspect of general approach to song structure here which invariably made my sinuses contract rather painfully, is the WHINING male harmonies. This is especially EVIDENT in the title track as well as "Collision".

To be honest there are liberal doses of this problem all the way through the album, often exacerbated by delay and echo effects. Stop it!

In total Parochial Zoo provides the audiophile with a rich wall of sound with plenty of engrossing little bits and pieces to titillate the perceptive. Lyrically the songs are of the contemplative school - full of tales from The Book of Irony that the poets and cognoscenti will doubtless find very appealing.

If any of this admittedly subjective criticism is taken at all seriously (although I'm sure the number of people that bother to talk to me has been reduced quite substantially by now) I am convinced that the next project to be completed by this thoughtful band of local talents will be essential listening.

STEVE GRIFFITHS

THE STRATEJACKETS

ARE YOU CRAZY?

(DTK RECORDS)

What a genuine delight it is to witness the growth of a young enthusiastic band! Whatever the quality of the recording you managed to get as a third-copy bootleg, something always managed to stretch out of the portable tape recorder and squeeze your heart with insurgent glee. Seen live, the band in question is good enough to make you wish you'd saved that drum-kit and made a

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better go of your own teenage fantasy. Yes, the StrateJackets are quite capable of doing this to me.

Mix together a ripe salad of Sabbath, the Yardbirds, a sprinkling of thrash and garnish generously with late sixties Californian garage bands and somebody will invariably hit me over the head with a two by four if I say this is a good recipe to produce some StrateJackets. But that's my opinion and we welcome yours.

The sixties thing is certainly a taste left frequently under my tongue when I chomp through "Are You Crazy?". How these young lads can recapture the feeling for an era that soared roughly around the time most of 'em were filling diapers, if not firmly ensconced in CHUF, is a mystery. But they do it perfectly. This is especially true of 'Elevator,' 'Capital I,' and 'Don't Cry'. Hang on - look: there they are on that B/W T.V. screen! Resplendent on separate podiums decked out in billowing flares and frilly shirts with the obligatory drugged out stares, the TV cameras zoom randomly in and out on the StrateJackets, as the poorly superimposed flashing lights are going bonkers everywhere! Close your eyes and press on the lids while listening to *Capital I* and see if I'm wrong Buster!

That said, some alarming inconsistencies have managed to flourish rather malignantly on what should have been a tarnished but entirely exciting debut. Good examples of this are 'You're So Cool,' and 'My Italian Home' which approach

the status of horrible mid-pubescent din and fail to retain credibility even after you've clipped somebody's ear for daring to use the word 'eclectic.' *Words* too is an extremely messy affair which contains the warring couplet;

I hate words when I don't know what they mean/ I hate you, you're the worst I've ever seen.

This song like many others is not helped by what is generally a real BODGE-up of a production job. Granted it's QUITE nice to attempt to try and retain a certain spontaneity and gritty feel to the sound, but if it involves turning guitars into ear-needling little bastards while simultaneously making the rest of the band jump IN a pit of sticky mud, it is just not worth it. Despite this hatchet job however, my lobes can still dance undaunted at the nascent psychedelia of the three previously mentioned tracks. Further, if the concept of 'single' registers at all to the band and their svengali, then 'Think It Over' is the obvious choice. I'll bet a case of my preferred beverage that with a bit of trimming and polishing this could be a chart-denting hit if only for the stupidly addictive simple guitar riff that catches you on the fly right off the bat.

So, I register a complaint to the producers that have turned most of the album into a collection of nuggets in a faulty sieve that has retained a lot of obscuring junk. Besides that though, the potential for pressing a wonderful E.P. is obvious. Get on it men.

STEVE GRIFFITHS



DTK records are available at Back Street Records or you can contact this important local concern at 224 Brunswick Street/Suite 2/Fredericton, N.B./E3B 1G9