



## People Like Us & Wobbly

Music for the Fire

USA ILLEGAL ART IA121 CD (2010)

People Like Us, the English cut-up creatrix, released *Music For The Fire* with her American counterpart Wobbly, and it's released on Illegal Art, a quasi-subversive operation with a substantial catalogue of mind-sapping anti-consumerist and oppositional cut-up statements. The duo are collaborators of long-standing, and this fine item is the result of many years of effort. Like all her work, this "collection of warm and mellow mood melodies" is dark and subversive, cruelly parodying the innocent world of the 1950s and laying bare the hypocrisies of bourgeois society with fiendish glee. Wobbly adds his own touches of sneering nastiness to the surreal proceedings, and we admire the dizzying ingenuity with which they combine radio and TV voices with fragmented, interrupted moments of the cheesiest, toe-curling musical honey-drippings you could imagine. Even the sleeve gets in on the act, covered with garish full-colour images taken straight from old issues of *Ladies Home Journal* or *McCalls* magazine, and conveying the effect of the ultimate easy-listening LP, complete with visible (fake) fold-over seams on the back cover.

If there's an underlying theme here, it's a grotesque satire on the institutions of marriage and family life, things which it is clear the bohemian creators regard with the utmost scepticism and disdain. Rather than lecturing us with feminist diatribes about empowerment, the strategy is to attack The Enemy and make it look ridiculous, absurd, and slightly creepy. The album tells a fractured narrative, a story of courtship, marriage and raising a family; the courting couple enjoy a romantic dance on 'Partners', wallow in a 'Giant Love Ball', copulate on 'Woman', and finally give birth to 'A new baby'. Needless to say the story turns out badly for all concerned, and the last tracks 'Bad News' and 'Pain' are spiked with pessimism and harsh contradictions. 'Bad News' contrasts the smooth-o lyrical delivery of a Barry White song with hammer-blow repetitions of the word 'agony'; and a heartfelt soul song about 'the saddest day of my life' is intercut with stabs of cruel, unfeeling laughter. The final track extracts similarly heartbreaking material from unlikely sources, a combination of corny American folk song, country-western tunes and Elton John, along with some yodelling samples. (Yodel records are a PLU trademark, always chosen because they are inappropriate for every conceivable moment.) Full of 'goodbyes', 'nothing succeeds' and a rope around your neck, this tune is a horrible

statement of finality, suicide and death, yet it's composed almost entirely from pop songs and other banal sources whose underlying messages are the exact opposite. This has always been one of PLU's talents; she effectively starts out with a script from a cheesy situation comedy, and remakes it as Greek tragedy of the darkest tint.

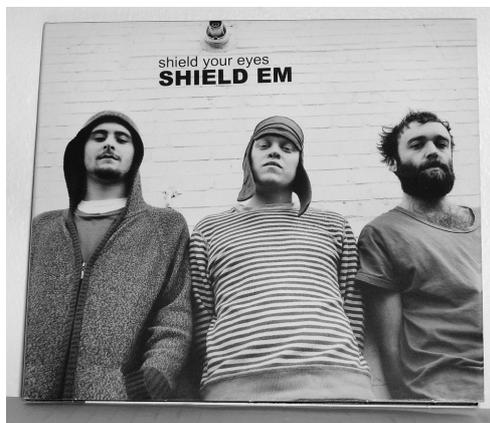
If you listen a bit further in, noting where you can the clever juxtapositions of information which fly by in seconds (fortunately this album comes with a complete transcript of the libretto which someone has carefully produced – no trivial undertaking I might add), you can start to dig out further nasty jokes embedded in this narrative, which probe taboo subjects and uncover the dark side of married life. 'Naked Little Girl' strongly suggests incest and child molestation, 'Partners' does ditto for wife-beating, and the depth of the sexual perversions implied in 'Woman' and 'Female Convict' are beyond the pale. It's not all Krafft-Ebing, thankfully, as it's also an extremely funny record – 'Pick Up' being one of my favourite examples of sheer comical absurdity – and executed with the usual love-hate feeling for the records and musical styles which are being demolished. The Carpenters and Julie London are just two examples of innocent victims besmirched; if you're of a sensitive turn of mind, you'll never hear 'Goodbye To Love' quite the same way again after this. To listen to this bundle of mixed messages and snide jokes is like eating strawberry Jello laced with cyanide.

ED PINSENT

[www.illegal-art.net](http://www.illegal-art.net)

[www.peoplelikeus.org](http://www.peoplelikeus.org)

[www.detrutus.net/wobbly](http://www.detrutus.net/wobbly)



## Shield Your Eyes

Shield 'Em

UKGRAVID HANDS GRVH 003 /

SADDAM HUSSEIN RECORDS

JIZZ001 CD (2009)

Second album from Shield Your Eyes, a London rock trio of young men performing frenetic and extremely dynamic guitar-bass-drum music replete with harsh, shredded and desperate vocals from the anguished lead singer. The guitarist and bass player emerged from the ruins of Strobe 45, a hardcore rock band from the South-East. Lest some of this information lead you to expect an Angloid version of American mathrock, it's actually much harder to pigeonhole their

powered-up atonal guitar licks and insane time-signatures led by a drummer who's doing his best to restrain his rubber-band arms and legs. Though they start off somewhere in the mode of The Stooges, they soon take a detour via post-punk abrasiveness and wild dynamics, only to slip into another side-road where sweet melodies, major-seventh chords and even introspective wistfulness are permitted. When they do all these things in the course of one single tune, it's fairly staggering. Not since the glory days of Thin Lizzy have we heard such a successful combination of power metal with pop song. It seems that they were guided down this particular eclectic route through careful study of two specific 1970s albums of progressive blues-rock, one of them by Taste and another by Savoy Brown. While I'm not familiar with the albums in question, I'll gladly bend an ear to anyone who has more than a passing awareness of the guitar work of the great Martin Stone (ex Mighty Baby, who played in Savoy Brown for a time). However, talented though Shield Your Eyes guitarist Stef Ketteringham is, at this stage of his career there's more energy and wild invention than musical subtlety pouring off the frets of his dissonant and angular axe. Recorded in just three days in a studio by Ellis Gardiner, *Shield Em* is certainly a good showcase that lets you know this band really ought to be seen live, and I like the direct and natural feel of the session (partly influenced by Atlantic recordings of 1960s blues and soul bands), even if the album does start to drag a bit halfway through and the limitations of the band's sound become more evident and start to grate, particularly in the thin vocals. A minor quibble though, as this electrifying disc has tremendous immediacy and excitement.

ED PINSENT

[www.gravidhands.com](http://www.gravidhands.com)

[www.saddamhuseinrecords.co.uk](http://www.saddamhuseinrecords.co.uk)



## Tea & Toast Band

Swarf

UK NO LABEL CDR (2010)

For a singularly British approach to contemporary acoustic guitar music and song, the listener is advised to point their listening-nose in the direction of Tea & Toast Band, the UK underground combo who positively ooze quirkiness from every fluffy pore of their green-coloured pelts. On *Swarf*, you'll find seven songs made out of bedroom-minimal instrumentation to produce stark and skeletal backdrops for the deadpan singing of Robert Bidder, who sings and intones his semi-nonsensical poetry in an unadorned fashion, while the spirits of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll look on with warm approval. James Bull, Molly Palmer, Alice Theobald