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## RECORD REVIEWS

### Meat Puppets pull the right strings



In these days of commercial-oriented rock and roll, it is rare that a band will stay together for a long time without hitting large-scale commercial success. Fortunately for music fans, the Meat Puppets, three musicians who have been in the business since 1980, have remained intact and continue to create good music.

The band's latest endeavor, *Forbidden Places*, marks the first time the band has released an album on a major record label. It is also the first time the band has used a producer to help create the finished product. Whatever the Meat Puppets did this time, it worked.

The new album, released on London Records, is consistently good although it is not as consistent in style, making it hard to categorize.

"Sam," the first song on the album, is a real ear-catcher. The vocal style used by lead singer Curt Kirkwood is certainly unique, and must be heard to be believed. The recording's fourth song, "Open

Wide," has speed metal influences, while "That's How it Goes" has a country-western tinge and some satirical lyrics about the thoughts of the average American Joe.

The album is a myriad of different styles and concepts all brought together in a consistent way by the band's years of experience. "That's How it Goes" is followed by a pop-sounding, pleasingly melodic song titled "Whirlpool." The style of "Open Wide" is progressive music reminiscent of work by Jane's Addiction.

In short, the Meat Puppets have produced a recording that has something for everyone, and will convert people who thought they would never listen to music that didn't fit neatly into a *Billboard* category. If you have an open mind to music, give *Forbidden Places* and the Meat Puppets a try.

There are enough odd-sounding riffs on the record to set it apart from the latest folk wannabes like Natalie Merchant and Edie Brickell. However, the down-to-earth lyrics fall squarely in line with the concerns of most traditional and new folk groups.

"Superman's Song," which is being pushed as the record's first single, is a quirky song that grows on you as you listen. The subtle fight-the-good-fight message has been sorely lacking from most of today's Reagan-Bush era musicians.

The simple lyrics reflect a time when some Americans could see past their own noses: "Superman never made any money savin' the world from Solomon Grundy. Sometimes I despair that the world will never see another man... like him."

The slow-paced, non-ballad style of the song precludes it from being a smash hit in the United States, but it has received limited air play.

The record's only weakness is that it begins to grow tiresome near the end. The strength of the first half of the record begins to fade. But the early, gritty, blue-collar songs contained on the album make it worth looking into.

There are no overt politics on the album. However, the down-home, real-life aspects of the lyrics touch base with a reality that seems to have been left behind in the profit-driven corruption of the American dream. Sometimes it is good to touch base with this reality.

The Crash Test Dummies will not sweep the country or play any White House barbecues, but hopefully, they will keep pushing forward and producing more of the same quality work.

By Pat Malach  
Emerald Managing Editor



What can you say about the Crash Test Dummies other than they didn't spend enough time thinking of a name for the band? How about "It's about time." The Dummies new recording, *The Ghosts That Haunt Me*, is a unique work of music in an industry crowded with people following patterns set by other successful groups.

The Dummies have a style that is a cross of folk, progressive, country and Lou Reed. Lead singer Brad Roberts' distinctive baritone voice helps tear the Dummies sound out of the mainstream of folk music.

**RECORD RATINGS**

- ★★★★★ Steal it if you have to.
- ★★★★ Quality music.
- ★★★ Nothing special.
- ★★ Frisbee material.
- ★ Destroy all copies.

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