

Swamp Zombies shamble into Eugene



Swamp Zombies
A Frenzy of Music and Action
Doctor Dream Records
1992
★★

By Tim Neff
Emerald Associate Editor

One of life's greatest injustices is that "acoustic hippie punk" music connoisseurs are so starved for entertainment.

Unfortunately, it's a one-band genre, and fans have little choice but to turn to the Swamp Zombies, the Southern California band that started and single-handedly continue the acoustic hippie punk revolution.

And on Aug. 17, Eugene Zombiemaniacs can get a first-hand look at the three street



The Swamp Zombies are set to play Aug. 17 at Harpo's. The Zombie crew from left: Steve Jacobs, Josh Agle, David Warren and Ray Vogelzang.

musicians turned retro-crooners at Harpo's.

The Swamp Zombies are embarking on a one-week West Coast tour to stump for their recently released fourth album, *A Frenzy of Music and Action*.

If you've never heard of the Swamp Zombies, the vintage movie poster ring of the album title should tell you just about everything you need to know about the band.

Zombie meister Josh Agle confessed to the band's teen-flick influences.

"On this record we tried to do a vintage sound, not really retro," Agle said. "We like to stay away from modern ideas. And we're sort of into those trashy films of the '50s and '60s."

They also seem to be into mass murderers.

Past albums, like *Fink and Scratch* and *Sniff Car Crash* (which actually sported a foul-smelling scent patch on the cover) contained numerous references to the grisly crime. The theme continues on *Frenzy*

with the song "Unemployed," which details a down-his-luck drifter who obsesses about infamous mass murderers.

Accusing this band of being tongue-in-cheek is a bit like calling Leona Helmsley "unscrupulous."

Agle would prefer the label "pretension-free."

"It's sort of a level of unpretentiousness and ignoring a lot of things that popular music is doing today," he said. "We don't pay a lot of attention to those trends."

The result is concentrated wackiness like you haven't seen since "Hee-Haw" thankfully went on hiatus.

Observe the reggae-influenced lyrics to the song "I Bawled" — "Took me girlfriend home the other night/Got meself in an awful fight/She said do, do darling won't you please come in/Her old lady hit me with a rolling pin."

If you can stomach that, you are definitely Zombie material.

It makes no claim to being hip, and it's laced with strict "good-time" overtones. It can be a refreshing change from more serious bands. But in the end, it will probably only provide a brief — but wacky — musical pit stop.

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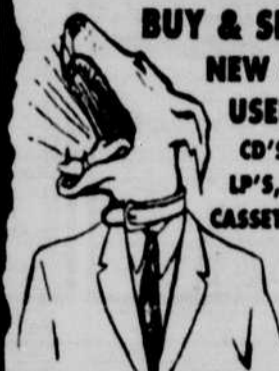
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Falling Joys capitalize on Nirvana



Falling Joys
Psychohum
IRS Records
1992
★★★

By Pat Malach
Emerald Editor

Nirvana is big. In fact the entire Seattle thrash sound is big. If you need proof, check out the new album by the Falling Joys from Australia. *Psychohum*, the band's second album, is an ode to the fact that the Seattle sound is a legitimate trend in the industry.

The first song on the album is clearly influenced by Nirvana, Sound Garden, et al. "Black Bandages" has the patented Nirvana-moan lyrical style, aggressive guitar riffs and continuously pounding bass beat typical of the punk invasion legitimized by Nirvana's platinum success.

But the similarities with the Seattle sound end with that first song. The other 11 songs on the al-

bum are solid, light-touch pop songs that hold up well in that genre. It's as if the Falling Joys completely changed their style for that first song just to capitalize on the popularity of the "alternatives."

"Black Bandages" works as a neo-punk song.

For the most part, the songs on the album are different enough to remain interesting for the entire album.

The lyrical message is sufficiently nihilistic, and the music has the necessary hard edge and kick. But the song just doesn't sound like it belongs on this album, mostly because the rest of the songs work so well as simple

pop tunes.

On songs like "Winter's Tale," lead singer Suzie Higgie shows off a gentle voice that belies the aggressiveness of "Black Bandages." The song is a typical ballad about love and security.

For the most part, the songs on the album are different enough to remain interesting for the entire album. "Natural Scene" has a standard 70-ish melody with backing guitars. "Parachute" is a simple love song with a slightly twisted melody — twisted enough to make it interesting, anyway.

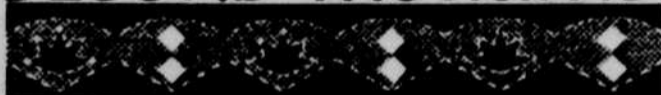
Despite what the band, their producers or the record company may want you to think about *Psychohum* based on the opening tune, this is not an alternative album. It is good quality pop music with enough surprises to be worthwhile.

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