

Don Caballero is Damon Che

Can the drummer get some?

Fifteen years, five albums and three major line-up changes and Don Caballero is still standing. Well, Damon Che is still standing. And anyone who knows anything about the band knows that Damon Che *is* Don Caballero. While his eccentric musings and discordant relationships with fellow band members have evoked some animadversion from fans and critics over the years, the group has always found its impetus in Che's superhuman drumming.

Without a doubt, Ian Williams, the band's co-founder and original guitarist, is an incredibly gifted musician (his current band, Battles, has garnered nothing but praise over their first three releases). But on *Worldwide Listening Problem*, Don Caballero's first new album in six years,

only the most discerning listener will miss Williams' daedal pickings. What everybody will hear and love, as they have for many years now, is the incredibly rococo percussive assault of Damon Che.

Because of the complexity behind the unusual time signatures that are often employed in the group's music (as well as the masterful shifts in time signature, mid-song), people often refer to Don Caballero as the embodiment of math-rock, a genre tag which the band has abhorred since they were first hit with it. To bring everyone up to speed, math-rock consists primarily of instrumentals; melody takes second priority to abrasive percussion, intricate bass lines, crunchy riffs and very precise guitar plucking.

With *Worldwide Listening Problem*,



Che reassembles Don Cab, sans all its other original members. Pat Morris, the original bassist, left after *For Respect*, the group's first album. Mike Banfield, who shared guitar duties with Williams, dropped out after the band's third album. And in 2001, with the departure of Williams, whom Che has referred to in an artistic sense as his "natural born enemy," the group that fans came to know and love was no longer.

But like any true indie-rock institution

(Sonic Youth's longevity immediately comes to mind), Don Caballero just wouldn't die. Feeling as if the band's legacy was not quite ready for the history books, Che enlisted Creta Bourzia (another Pennsylvanian math-rock outfit) to help craft the new album, which happens to bear an uncanny resemblance to every Don Cab

album preceding it.

The fact is, although all the players are new, the band has never drifted very far from the original sound of *For Respect*. The distortion and epic chords may have slightly waned, but the band's penchant toward sonic annihilation has not diminished the slightest. Released on the notable metal label Relapse Records, *Worldwide Listening Party* marks the joyous return of the reliable but always dynamic and impressive Don Caballero. **EW**



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