



Chris Leo's Vague Angels

The Sunny Day I caught Tintarella di Luna for a Picnic at the Cemetery

CD/LP (+ Download)/Digital

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File Under:

Indie

Contact:

Label

Expect Candy
info@expectcandy.com
www.expectcandy.com

Artist

www.myspace.com/vagueangels

Press

Germany/Austria/Switzerland:
Starkult
info@starkult.de

UK:

A Badge of Friendship
claire@abadgeoffriendship.com

Other territories:

press@expectcandy.com

Tracks:

1. So Lonely
2. I Know An Altar
3. I Did Not Find You In Kips Bay
4. Suisliding Home Down Battlefield Road
5. Astringent Curse of Ides Inverse
6. Festigiare de Fete Defeat
7. Esquina Bonita on Diddycoy's Imbibes
8. The Whole Note Has Neither A Flag Nor a Body
9. The Moon, the Metaphor
10. Isis Is Isi

Chris Leo's involvement with The Lapse and The Van Pelt was only the beginning of his varied and colourful musical journey. With these two bands, Chris found underground success and had begun to lay the foundations, note by note, of what was to come.

The Van Pelt was somewhat of an indie rock powerhouse, with Chris joined by Brian Maryansky (who later joined Jets to Brazil) and Toko Yasuda (of Enon and ex-Blonde Redhead). The band released the albums *Stealing From Our Favourite Thieves* and *The Sultans of Sentiment* on Gern Blandsten, however they shortly disbanded in 1997.

Chris and Toko then formed The Lapse and soon released debut album *Betrayal!*, again, on Gern Blandsten and second album *Heaven Ain't Happening* on Southern Records. After Toko left the band to join Enon in late 1999, Chris continued on his own for a while and eventually signed to Matador in 2000.

His latest musical project, Vague Angels, finally sees Manhattan's own wordy, wandering minstrel release the much-anticipated *The Sunny Day I Caught Tintarella di Luna for a Picnic at the Cemetery* on Expect Candy. The album conjures-up the finest elements of Leo's writing style – from the dissonant riff-based rock of The Lapse to the entrancing melodies of The Van Pelt. However, songs like "The Moon, The Metaphor" hark back to a sound more akin to The Velvet Underground.

The further out Chris Leo gets as a character (last we heard he was in Mexico writing a book about a "wordless letter"), the more concerned he seems to be with making music we can actually tap our feet to. Don't get us wrong, the lyrics are as elaborately interfused as ever, verse/chorus/verse is still a fleeting gift at best, and he can't help but speak/sing the words the way only he can -- but there are glimmers of some normalcy here.

First of all, he recorded this album with actual bands rather than the one man drunken show making his rounds around whatever toys were in the studio that day we're used to (and many of us love). These are bands he'd toured with -- a band from Barcelona, a band from Puglia, and a band from Brooklyn -- and the songs congeal like these musicians have seen some nights together. Secondly, he finally feels comfortable with who he is, what he does, where his place here is. This allows the elements in each song to fall just where they're supposed to. These songs aren't forced, they sit comfortably in his discomfort; it's almost more disconcerting.

But most startling >> we swear << if you listen carefully you might actually hear him sing sometimes. That's right, sing. In fact, you may even hear a falsetto or two. This is the album where Chris Leo picks up new fans, let's hope that doesn't send him running deeper into oblivion.

