

THE HIGH WATER MARKS

Songs About the Ocean

(Eenie Meenie)

It seems that the popular method of collaboration these days is via post. What with the success of 2003's Postal Service project from Death Cab for Cutie's Ben Gibbard and Dntel's Jimmy Tamborello, it is not unexpected that a glut of other artists would try to cash in on the same concept. While the debut disc from the High Water Marks features the collaborative efforts of stateside and overseas members though the mail, the similarities to previous projects from other artists ends there. *Songs About the Ocean* is a seamless chunk of power pop gold. You would be hard-pressed to believe that these cohesive tracks were produced in different studios — let alone different continents.

This poppy amalgamation of underground indie-pop superstars — as much as they would like you to believe otherwise — tears through their material with such fervor and zeal that they are almost daring you not to tap your foot and belt out the lyrics along with them. Hilarie Sidney and Per Ole Bratset share guitar and vocal duties, the former of Apples in Stereo and Secret Square Fame, the latter the Norwegian element of the HWM and singer from Palermo. Jim Lindsay of Oranger goes to town on drums and Mike Snowden of Von Hemmling plays bass.

Like a sun-shiny day with last-day-of-the-world urgency, most guitar-driven numbers fall just under the time-honored ideal that is the three-minute mark. The High Water Marks essentially chew the listener up and spit them out — all within 40 minutes — and anyone experiencing *Songs About the Ocean* is all the better for it. — Jennifer Jones

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It seems that some combination of the Elephant 6 collective delivers a new set of melodic pop antics on a monthly basis, so it's hard to know which discs are essential. No doubt, most are worth the listen and some are instant classics. If you're a fan of Apples in Stereo or Oranger (High Water Marks incorporates personnel from both, and then some), it's a done deal — you will almost definitely enjoy the bouncy California ensemble's debut. The question is whether *Songs About the Ocean* compares to masterpieces like the Apples' *Fun Trick Noisemaker* or *Her Wallpaper Reverie*.

Happily, *Songs About the Ocean* leans more toward punk power-pop than psychedelia. Even so, catchy analog organ melodies are woven into song structures with aplomb. Examples of the Marks' songcraft talent are "Have Another Dream," which warrants a Dressy Bessy comparison with its sweetness (without drifting into saccharine territory) and "Suicide," which benefits from complementary boy-girl vocals and a simple, hummable melody.

It might take a couple of listens to differentiate High Water Marks' music from their peers', but *Songs About the Ocean* is a good album made by a skilled group of musicians having fun writing good songs together and sharing them with fans, never to become rich. — Katherine Gorell

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FANNYPACK BLON
MORNINGWOOD TH

HIGH WATER MARKS

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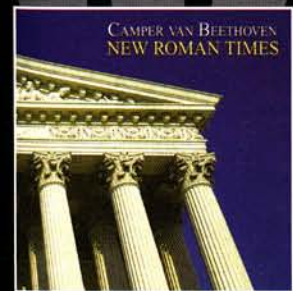
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11	37	ADEM Homesongs	Domino
12	37	HIGH WATER MARKS Songs About The Ocean	Enie Meenie
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CMJ MUSIC MARATHON: LIVE FROM NEW YORK! AL FRANKEN TO KEYNOTE (See Page 13)

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MAGNET

REAL MUSIC ALTERNATIVES

FRESH FRUIT

The APPLES Have Fallen From The Tree

Robert Schneider has been known to have a few fires going at once, but his main flame—the Apples In Stereo—is eerily dim at the moment. The band's most recent album, *Velocity Of Sound*, appeared in 2002, about the same time Schneider separated from his wife, Apples drummer Hilarie Sidney. Both members of the now-divorced couple have recently debuted new groups.

Schneider has been focusing on Ulysses, a quartet he formed with members of Lexington, Ky., bands Big Fresh and Hair Police. "I got sort of

work; *010* instead offers the more plaintive, moody sounds of Pavement or the Velvet Underground.

Says Schneider, "It definitely influenced the overall mood of loneliness or emptiness, but I wasn't specifically writing about [Sidney]. I've always written like that. I just decided to focus on that and push that particular style."

"It's all too personal for me," says Sidney of *010*'s lyrical content. "People will read into it how they will."

Sidney's combo, the High Water Marks, issued *Songs About The Ocean* (also on Eenie Meenie) in September. After meeting songwriting partner (and now husband) Per Ole Bratset in Oslo, Norway, in 2002, the two began trading four-track cassette tapes through the mail. An upbeat, jangling pop effort on which Sidney shares vocal and guitar duties with Bratset, *Ocean* doesn't fall too far from the Apples tree.

"Robert writes so many songs that there wasn't room for me [in the Apples]," says Sidney. "It's really nice to have another outlet."

Although members of the Apples are booked through 2004—guitarist John Hill plays in Dressy Bessy, bassist Eric Allen performs with jazz combo the Perry Weissman 3 and Schneider will issue *Expo*, an album by his Marbles side project, early next year—signs indicate the core band isn't history just yet.

"I've got a lot of songs written for our new album," says Schneider. "Our marriage breaking up was a bump in the road, but the band has actually been easier since we broke up."

—Matthew Fritch

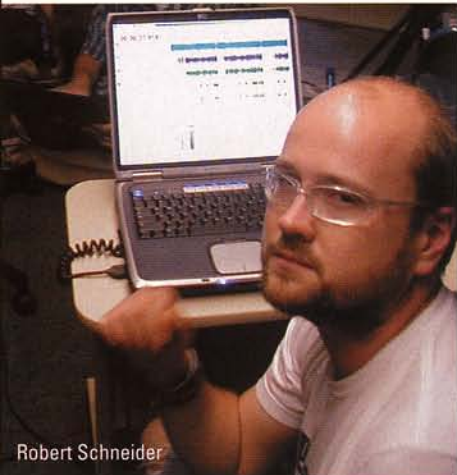
BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

TOM WAITS

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Robert Schneider

burned out on making huge, ambitious productions," says Schneider of *010* (Eenie Meenie), which was recorded in just four hours.

Ulysses will please those disappointed by the sugary, kiddie-punk buzz of the Apples' recent

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THE HIGH WATER MARKS
Songs About the Ocean
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7

När melodier är lyckliga. Lyckliga bara över att få finnas till. Lyckliga över att få verka bland ringande gitarrer, okomplicerade arrangemang och varma själar. Lyckliga över att ha skapats av den genomsympatiska norsk-amerikanska familj som är The High Water Marks.

Då låter det så här.

The High Water Marks är en kvartett som främst utmärks av de båda sångarna, norrmannen Per Ole Bratset (även medlem i Palermo) och amerikanskan Hilarie Sidney (som normalt återfinns bakom trummorna i Apples In Stereo, men här spelar hon gitarr). Deras låtar är egentligen inte låtar utan snarare envetet surrande bisvärmar. Precis som Buzzcocks klassiska singlar och Superchunks tidiga låtar var det. Surrande, lyckliga bisvärmar.

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