monkey.

GINGA
Album: They Should Have Told Us

They Should Have Told Us
MONCD072 (Jewelcase in a slipcase)

VÖ AUT 17.09.2010
VÖ GER/CH 28.01.2011

DISTRIBUTOR
Hoanzl (AUT), Rough Trade (GER/CH)

www.monkeymusic.at/ginga
http://www.thisisginga.com/

They really are one of those bands. One of those bands that you see for the first time and instantly feel that nothing can stop them, barring a plane crash or a flower pot falling from a fourth-floor Viennese windowsill. One of those bands that remind you of all the essential things that great pop should be about: Like the pure cheek of singing a line such as “this goes out to every boy and girl” (“Fashion”) with sheer unironic conviction.

Or the talent to write a song like “Cinnamon” that segues from a string-laden far-eastern-sounding intro into a melody dripping with searing heartache and possible redemption. Or the knack of making people, who have never heard their music before, dance. Especially girls... (a purely empirical, non-sexist observation) Or the uncrafted, yet neatly synchronised look of a gang of four boys that anyone would want to be a part of. “We Are One,” as one of their improbably bouncy tunes convincingly claims: “We sing songs to stay awake!”

There is Alex Konrad, the enviably handsome lead singer with his curly head of hair, cropped at the back in that coquettish mid-eighties way, strumming his guitar with such reckless energy he seems to break a string in every single song, only to surprise you by unexpectedly launching into an arrestingly sparse Marc Ribot-style solo at the end of show-closer “In the Stagelights”.

To his left, the bespectacled Klemens Wihlidal in white shirt and braces, built like Egon Schiele, or maybe Buddy Holly, is busy adding special little touches on keyboards, guitars, melodica, glockenspiel and backing vocals, exuding the slightly confused air of the thinking fan's favourite. To his right, Emanuel Donner (yes, what names...), perfectly cast in the time-honoured role of the puppy-eyed cute one, switches between the microphone, the violin (which on the album is multi-tracked to orchestral proportions), the guitar and an array of percussive devices, i.e. a floor tom and a badly abused music stand that looks more battered with every gig.

Matthias Loitsch, the singing drummer at the back, calmly observes the mayhem from underneath his schoolboy fringe, providing plenty of oomph with a post-Franz Ferdinand, occasionally four-to-the-floor, new wave funkiness that doesn't shy away from gimmicks like quoting the “Sunday Bloody Sunday” snare fill in the album-opening first single “This Is Happening”. This ability to play around with musical and lyrical clichés and references, intentional or not (a glimmer of early Waterboys here, a snatch of Modest Mouse there, a touch of Radiohead maybe) is just one more of those irresistible pop qualities in Ginga's armoury.

And how come we haven't mentioned the bass player yet? His name is James “Stel” Stelfox, you might have seen him before. He first met Ginga one night not too long ago when they supported his other band Starsailor at a gig in Brussels. In the strictly hierarchical world of pop it isn't often seen that a musician likes their support band so much he asks to join them. But, as we said before, Ginga really are one of those special bands, or as Stel puts it: “I'm a fan.”

And so it came to pass that four young men from Vienna who recorded their album “They Should Have Told Us” in Belgium with Mons Jegers and mixed it in London with Dan Rejmer (previous credits include Nick Cave and Foals) ended up in a band with a proper Mancunian. But, as Stel would agree, yet another essential pop quality about Ginga is the way their music is fundamentally cosmopolitan, untied to any geographical restraints.

The only thing Stel frankly doesn't like about his new band is their name, which sounds far too much like a playground insult to his Northern ears. Then again it is also the name of the principal move in the Afro-Brazilian martial arts dance Capoeira and popular short-hand for the magic in Brazilian footballers' legs.

Or, according to Wikipedia at the time of writing, the name of a certain Vienna-based band whose entry is due for removal because they are deemed “non-notable”. That, we predict, is about to change. Don't let anyone say “They Should Have Told Us”.

(Robert Rotifer, Juni 2010)

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Tracklisting:

1. This Is Happening
2. Fire
3. Final Call
4. Cinamon
5. Fever
6. Fashion
7. They Should Have Told Us
8. Sparkle & Shine
9. We Are One
10. Stagelights
11. Up A Creek

concerts:

27-08: festsaal zentrum judenburg
02-09: b72 wien
08-09: maria am ostbahnhof berlin
23-09: postgarage graz
24-09: eiskeller hagenberg
25-09: culture club timelkam
02-10: rockhouse salzburg
09-10: stadtwerkstatt linz
15-10: arena wien
13-11: the garage london
03-12: kultutlabor stromboli hall in tirol
09-12: cinema paradiso st.pölten

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