

Orange Sunshine – Homo Erectus (2001)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 26 December 2009 12:27 - Last Updated Friday, 05 October 2018 21:27

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1 *Hush Hush* 5:19 2 *Catfish* 5:03 3 *Magic Ship* 4:23 4 *Luv Me* 5:05 5 *Girl, You...* 5:22 6 *Free* 4:10 7 *Cause I'm Your Man* 5:53 8 *Treatin' Me Mutha'* 4:27 Bass – Thomas Van Slooten Drums, Vocals – Guy Tavares Guitar – Arthur Van Berkel

You wanna hear something wild? Go ahead and click play on Orange Sunshine's 2001 debut, *Homo Erectus*. That'll qualify for sure. Something else, demonstrably less wild: I was all set to close out thweek with their second album, 2003's *Love = Acid Space = Hell*, but as I started putting the post together, it turned out I already did, like two years ago. Hell, at least I'm consistent.

When it comes to boogie and/or fuzz rock, they don't come much more undervalued than the Den Haag-based power trio. They were there early — *Homo Erectus* lit a fire under the ass of anyone who heard it upon its release in 2001 as the band — now comprised of Arthur van Berkel (guitar), Mehdi Rouchiche (bass), Guy Tavares (drums/vocals) — dove headfirst into the fuzzed-out heavy blues of "Catfish" — coated in '60s whiteboy soul like a slightly less frantic Radio Moscow — ad the unmitigated swing of... well, just about all of it. In its original form, the album's got six tracks. Take your pick and insert namedrop here.

Of course, Blue Cheer are a influence in sound and style, but one can hear plenty of bluesier-minded Hendrix throughout *Homo Erectus*, as well as The Kinks on album-closer "Free" and some shades of Sabbath on the otherwise Leaf Hound-referential "Girl, You..." or the Stooges-y vibe in opener "Hush Hush" serve as distinctive moments, driven by powerhouse basslines and the loose-feeling vocals of Tavares, who also mans the helm of Motorwolf Studios where the album was recorded for release on — wait for it — Motorwolf Records. These sonic references would become even more of a theme on *Love = Acid Space = Hell*, when Orange Sunshine dug deeper into specifics on Thin Lizzy and MC5, but "Magic Ship" here does

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a damn good job of getting the point across of proto-heavy swing, and the immediate shuffle of “Hush Hush” and stoned bluesy stomp of “Catfish” do pretty well too. If you’ve never heard Orange Sunshine before, you’re not going to come out of Homo Erectus with any mistake about where they’re coming from, is what I’m trying to say.

A few different versions of Homo Erectus have been released over the years, by Motorwolf as noted and then subsequent reissues in 2004 through Leaf Hound Records and Headspin Records. Leaf Hound would also do versions of Love = Acid Space = Hell and the third Orange Sunshine LP, Bullseye of Being, which saw initial release in 2006 under the title Ruler of the Universe before a revamp made the collection of covers what it wound up being. The band put out a couple live records this decade — both Live at Roadburn 2007 (released in 2011) and 2014’s Live at Freak Valley — but there hasn’t been much activity on the studio front. Still, I recall fondly seeing them at Roadburn 2010 and watching them play three Blue Cheer covers. In fact, it was regaling The Patient Mrs. with that story a couple days ago for probably the 80th time that made me want to close out the week with them. So there you go.

When I was a lad. Just a wee college boy doing wee college radio playing heavy rock and roll even as I was still in the process of discovering what it was, I wrote an email to Guy Tavares as representative of Motorwolf. I sent out a lot of that kind of note in those days to bands and labels I discovered mostly by perusing SoulSeek and the All That is Heavy store : “Hey, send me CDs and I’ll play them on the radio in the NY market.” It wasn’t a bad pitch, to be honest. Tavares not only sent me Homo Erectus and Love = Acid Space = Hell, but also the Den Haag Motor Rock compilation and a few other odds and ends. This was maybe in 2003. I still have those copies of those records, and there continue to be times when nothing else quite seems like enough of a party.

As always, I hope you enjoy. --- JJ Koczan, theobelisk.net

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