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New Music From Big Kitty, Gnod

by Ernie, Paik

June 13, 2018

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New Music From Big Kitty, Gnod

Big Kitty

...A Legend in the Field of Entertainment

(Let's Pretend)

The new album from Big Kitty—the charming outlet of former Chattanooga Clark Williams—is self-aware in its artificiality, but it's too fun to be mired in some grand statement about that.

His assumed posture on his new fake-live, completely solo effort *...A Legend in the Field of Entertainment* is that of a world-famous, arena-filling performer in a televised spectacle (think “Elvis comeback special”), rooted in an old-school duty to entertain; ultimately, the message that's conveyed is that it's the audience that matters the most, not the artist's vanity.

Beginning with the sound of a film projector, suggesting some kind of documentary to be witnessed, the album often includes the rapturous sounds of an obviously dubbed-in massive audience, and there are moments of artificial stage drama, maybe like Brecht without the moral dilemmas, pushing tragedy in a few unexpected glimpses of body horror so that it circles back and becomes uneasy comedy.

The bright and summery “Aliens” is carried by spry, effervescent violins, hinting at baroque pop, and “The Boy Who Smelled Real Good” is a slice of toe-tapping, easygoing country. “Hey Yolanda” is a ditty about an elephant who can hook you up with old car engine parts; Williams' vocal range is showcased



here, going from a deep baritone to falsetto backing vocals.

Our fair city perhaps has no greater ambassador than Williams, who offers the civic pride anthem “Chattanooga, Tennessee” with its earworm melody and a parade of tourism tips and even culinary recommendations.

An oddly unsettling diversion in the Big Kitty catalog is the minor-keyed “A Man Melting,” with graphic descriptions of the titular victim with “eyes like soft-boiled eggs” and organic textures of jelly and plasma; it’s like an absurd horror tale told around a campfire, but with keyboard squiggles and samples of what sounds like a woman whimpering. In the same vein, there’s “My Finger Tips” with Williams describing giant blades that are growing out of his fingers, causing pain and blood loss, saying “I am dying...I am dying...I am dead.”

But when the song/scene is over, he jumps up miraculously, like an “injured” soccer player after the ruse is up.

Some lofty goals are outlined in the album’s intro by the announcer—“He’s dedicated his life to the noble profession of entertainment, and he’s here to make you smile, he’s here to make you cry, he’s here to make you feel alive”—and Big Kitty’s fantasy stage spectacular makes good on its promises.

Gnod

Chapel Perilous

(Rocket Recordings)

The latest album from the Salford, England group Gnod is titled *Chapel Perilous*, a term which originally referred to a dangerous setting in the context of Sir Lancelot being seduced within an epic quest.

However, in more modern times, the term was adopted by the writer Robert Anton Wilson in “Cosmic Trigger I: The Final Secret of the Illuminati” to describe a psychological state where reality seems to be bendable, and depending on the observer, this distortion could be thought to have been either caused by an external supernatural force—leading to paranoia—or a part of one’s imagination, reflecting the observer’s skepticism.

Knowing Gnod’s political leanings (hint: its previous album is titled *Just Say No to the Psycho Right-Wing Capitalist Fascist Industrial Death Machine*), one might assume that the group falls in the “skeptic” camp, regarding perception in the post-truth era.

But after listening to the group’s music—which alternates between forceful and shadowy—one could also make a case that it’s conveying a paranoia of forces beyond earthly comprehension.

The tremendous 15-minute opener, “Donovan’s Daughters,” is a hell of a track, evoking the post-punk potency of bands such as This Heat and The Pop Group with persistent and dissonant guitar chords woven together under agitated vocals. The song chugs along, gradually building its locomotive



momentum and invoking a sort of primitive Swans-esque rough-edged death march, alternating between meaty bass and treble skronks.

Also impressively intense is the closing track “Uncle Frank Says Turn It Down,” which pounds out its sludgy head-banging metal riffs, honing itself so that it reduces to a basic primal pounding throb.

However, between the bookends are three tracks that are more subtle and sinister, chopping up the album’s flow, including the greyscale atmospherics of “Europa,” with echoing pulses and samples of an accented woman calling for responsibility in Europe, and “Voice from Nowhere,” with clangs and crunchy, industrial rhythms.

While this writer prefers its louder, more rock-oriented tracks, Chapel Perilous might actually work better when perceived as two separate releases, representing both an agitated skepticism and a lurking fear.

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Comments

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MARKETS

Chattanooga Market at Erlanger

Nov 30, 2018 10:30 AM

Erlanger Hospital

ART & EXHIBITIONS

Our Neighbors - A Photo Exhibition of Highland Park and Ridgedale

Nov 30, 2018 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Amani Chattanooga

CONCERTS & LIVE MUSIC

Binji Varsossa

Nov 30, 2018 6:00 PM

Cancun Restaurant Downtown

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Ice on the Landing

Nov 30, 2018 6:00 PM

Chattanooga Choo Choo

CONCERTS & LIVE MUSIC

Gino Fanelli

Nov 30, 2018 6:30 PM

Westin Dorato Bar

CONCERTS & LIVE MUSIC

John Carroll

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Westin Alchemy Bar

THIS & THAT

No Shave November Finale

Nov 30, 2018 6:30 PM

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