



Americans in France

Pretzelvania

Odessa Records ODE-01 LP/CD

Release Date: May 12th 2009

Josh Lajoie (Guitar, Vocals) Kent Howard (Bass, B. Vocals)
Casey Cook (Drums, Vocals)

Song Listing: Mr. Fister * Tout Les Temps * Mkele Mbembe * Ballad of Brad and Angie * Mashing Up The Clouds * Cold Cold Heart * Turkey Fever * Knock You Down * Liking You * Mean Serene * Make It Feel Better * Little Wolf * Nose Job *

*Debut album co-produced, engineered & mixed by Brian Paulson (Wilco, Superchunk, Slint).

* "Liking You" has been featured on Pitchfork's "Forkcast" and was voted one of the top 40 best songs of 2008 by the Independent Weekly.

* Beautiful cover painting by drummer Casey Cook, who has received positive press in Artforum, Art in America and many other Fine Art publications.

* Casey's art (including album cover) recently was on display at The Branch Gallery—owned by Chloe Seymour and Les Savy Fav's Harrison Haynes.

* Americans in France will be on tour this Spring.

* Lyric Sheets, bios, and hi-res photos available on Odessa Website.

* Publicity is being handled by Martin Hall.
martin@reverb-media.com
919-604-2668

"I'm getting sick of the UUUUU-S! Pack your shit, 'cause we're moving to France!" sings Josh Lajoie on opening track, "Mr. Fister". I'm not sure if he means that, but I like how he says it. "Mr. Fister" is the Americans in France call to arms. Self-styled expatriates, the France that they find themselves in is not necessarily the same geographical location as the home of Paris—maybe a little closer to Paris, Texas. Definitely closer to the embarrassingly dubbed "Paris of the Piedmont"—Carrboro, North Carolina, U.S.A.

But lest you think this is some group of America haters, please be cautioned that the mythos and images created in their songs are every bit imaginary as inspired by real life events. Last November I asked Josh what he would do if John McCain won the election. "Move to France," he scowled. When I asked him what he would do if Obama won the election, without missing a beat he answered "Move to France".

But I think that France to them really exists in the small three room pond house that serves as Josh's and drummer/vocalist Casey Cooks' home and practice space. The setting is serene. Prior to practice, Josh and bass player Kent Howard can often be found fishing. The interior of the house itself is covered with musical equipment, Josh's oblique collages and Casey's awe inspiring, large paintings. It is their little escape in remote Chatham county. Their own little France.

It is also the sight of where just over a year ago they convinced producer extraordinaire Brian Paulson to lug all of his equipment, including a hopelessly outdated 1/2" 8 track tape machine borrowed by Polvo's Ash Bowie, setup shop, and record *Pretzelvania*.

When the day to record finally came, producer Paul Finn was in a bit of a panic. He had been unable to track down any 1/2" tape. Most stores do not carry this outdated media anymore, and living in North Carolina meant it was little harder to come by than if you lived in New York. There was only one thing to do. Paul found tapes of a recording he had made while living in Chicago. The recording had never been finished, but he still hoped one day to return to the material. But a decision had to be made. There was no time. Paul surrendered the tapes and had Paulson record *over* the previous material. Now that *Pretzelvania* is done, there are no regrets.

The album was recorded live in their living room. Guitar solos were all done live. Vocals and the odd overdub were finished at Paulson's apartment, where the record was also mixed. For "Turkey Fever", the band wanted to have a moment of cacophony. So they dragged some old guitars, amps, and drums up three flights of metal stairs, tied them all together with rope, mic'ed them up and *threw them down the stairs*. The result is delightful chaos.

The strength in the band's sound is in the unexpected. Songs shift tempo and structure without warning. The lyrics are at once hilarious and stark without ever being seeming heavy-handed. Their unique sense of humor and world-view is reflected in every aspect of their music from the songs themselves to their inspiring live shows where seemingly anything can happen, from Josh unexpectedly slapping Kent in the face, to people dressed up as Uncle Sam and Godzilla storming the stage and fighting over 5' tall replicas of the World Trade Center.

But just when you think you have their formula down, they surprise you again with a song such as "Liking You" which is beautifully heartfelt, girded by melancholy organ lines, and featuring their signature complementary vocals. Americans in France are elusive shape-shifters, who seem equally at home with Prog Rock as they do with Punk Rock. A marriage that is cringe-inducing on paper but feels natural when listening to *Pretzelvania*. I hope they stick around. My gut tells me they will.



PO Box 1301 Carrboro NC 27510
919-923-7661ph/919-932-1269 fx
paul@odessarecords.com

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