

FUN CAM - BASEMENT ROCK

10/20/2015 0 Comments



fun cam

Basement Rock
self-released; 2015

3.7 out of 5

By Mike Przygoda

Basement Rock by Fun Cam is part power pop and part comedy in the vein of Fountains Of Wayne. There are some excellent performances on the album and some good songwriting.

The second half of the album is the best. "Small Town Swing Bridge" is driven by a head-nodding stoner-rock groove and some chiming inverted arpeggios. Each verse slightly reconfigures the instrumentation, which is a clever way to develop and build on each section. The chorus is very catchy and the vocal is very strong, working the metaphor of the lyric very well. "Not Today" combines pop-punk and power-pop, sneering through the sunshine. Handclaps and synths show two ends of the genre spectrum and work together quite nicely under driving guitars and drums.

"Last Show" has some great guitar work and an earworm of a chorus. When the song breaks into a half time groove and adds female vocals over organ it makes for an excellent transition to and from where the song came from. The lyrics in the verse could use some editing, however, and some of the backing vocals throughout could be trimmed down to make them pop out even more. Another good song on the album is "Vegan Girlfriend," which lives in a world between Fountains Of Wayne and Beck. The metallic sound of the gated snare is an interesting contrast with the reversed cymbals and makes for an interesting sonic palette. Here, the lyrics fit quite well and it's easy to appreciate the humor in them.

The first half of the album could do with some editing as well. The album opens with "Baby Tonight," a power-pop potpourri full of John Lennon-solo-era chord progressions, fuzzed out electric guitars, stereo trickery and soulful backing vocals. The chorus is catchy and though it comes a bit late in the song, the guitar solo is admirable, however some of the lyrics in the verse trend more towards cliché and lose some of the power of the song. "Colder In LA" blasts in with an energy that combines The Ramones and early Beatles but with a Blink 182 vocal inflection.

The guitar solo is fun, energetic and flashy and fits into the song just as the double-time tambourine and backing "oohs" and "ahhs." There are a lot of lyrics to cram into a short period of time, however, and the song might benefit from some editing of those words to make the vocal line flow. "Bandana Jean Girl" used a pseudo-calypso feel with guiro, bongos and acoustic guitar. The melody is catchy and there are some clever lines in the verses. The constant backing vocal choir gets to be a bit much as does the more prominent voices that echo almost every line, but they are well executed.

The album closes with a stripped-down acoustic cover of Brittany Spears' "Hit Me Baby," which is performed with conviction with an excellent vocal performance. It's unclear if irony is the intention of including it on the album; it actually comes across with a lot of sincerity (particularly after the subject matter of the penultimate track). It's clever, performed well and really showcases how stripping away so much can really let the melody and lyrics pop out of a great singer. Overall, Fun Cam has a lot going on and there's a lot of cleverness in the writing and execution. Some editing, trimming down and streamlining could help make those ideas shine even brighter.

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