

Shiny Shiny Black

Travelers

They may tout themselves as Americana roots rock, but Peter Paul and Mary they're not. Shiny Shiny Black are a three-piece band hailing from Goshen whose core sound comes across as more akin to moodily atmospheric alt-rockers like R.E.M. and the Tragically Hip.

If anything, their sparing sound could possibly be compared to alt-country artists like Ryan Adams or Wilco, with as much power pop brought into the mix as rootsier elements. Frontman and chief songwriter Nathan Butler has one of those high pitched rock voices (a la Neil Young) that is something of an acquired taste, sounding something like a cross between David Grubbs and Jad Fair.

If all that sounds like an odd mix, it's actually not. The sound found on their debut LP, *Travelers*, arrives more or less fully formed, instantly familiar-sounding, but not a knockoff of a better-known band. For only having three personnel, they throw a good deal into the mix: two guitars, bass, vocals, percussion (which Butler plays with his feet), and the occasional flourish of flute or banjo.

The most indelible tune found on *Travelers* might just be "Love Kill," which features some stomping guitar work and a chorus that sticks in the mind: "Either love me or kill me / Just don't leave me here." Elsewhere on the album, "Lady of the Harbor" features some lilting lute and acoustic guitar work combined with a solid melody that serves as a counterpoint to some of the more guitar-heavy numbers.

Most of the tunes on the album are succinct, clocking in at two to three minutes, and the nature of their sound means that when they do stretch out a bit to the five minute mark (as they do on "Heaven Only Knows" and "The Prisoner"), it comes across as more expansive than epic in a prog rock sense. It's all put together in a nice and tidy package, with the band never truly faltering, although at times their limitations show through. Most specifically, Butler's voice generally sounds fitting for the music, but at times he seems to overreach his vocal abilities, such as on album closer "The Prisoner" in which his voice sounds strained when he seems to be going for powerful.

For the most part, Shiny Shiny Black seem to know their confines and stick within them. Their style touches on several genres without completely embodying any one of them - alt-country (Gram Parsons), guitar rock (Tom Petty) and even near-surf instrumental rock (Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet). *Travelers* works in part because they never exceed their limits. Moving forward, though, they may need to commit more fully to one of their strengths in order to distinguish themselves from the pack. (Ryan Smith)

Jakob Skott

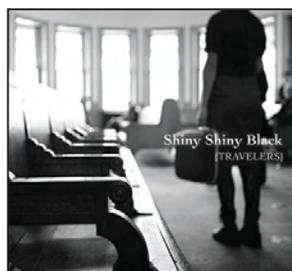
Amore Fati

If dystopian landscapes, futuristic visions and the bubbly analog howls that go along with those visions pique your interest in the least, then Jakob Skott has created a soundtrack to the most intense sci-fi epic you've never seen.

For those that don't know (and there are probably quite a few reading this that don't), Jakob Skott is the drummer extraordinaire for the Danish psych band Causa Sui. Skott, along with Causa Sui guitarist (and solo artist in his own right) Jonas Munk started El Paraiso Records in Denmark so they could put out their records the way they want. Besides Causa Sui albums they've released albums by fellow psych purveyors Papir and the American band Psicomagia. Munk and Skott have also put out records under their own names.

This time around Jakob Skott is giving us his second solo record called *Amor Fati*. His previous effort was the lo fi-ish *Doppler*. That record bubbled and swooshed like some old analog machine found in an ancient lab. *Amor Fati* is decidedly crisper in its production but no less bubbly. It swirls and swells with analog warmth giving fans of both Boards of Canada and Tangerine Dream something to love dearly.

"Mantis in Lace" opens like something from a late-70s Tangerine Dream concept album, that is until Skott comes in on his drum set and proceeds to blow that thought out of the water. It's like Tangerine Dream being backed up by Tony Williams. Skott isn't a "four on the



BACKTRACKS

Peter Gabriel

So (1986)

After leaving the trippy prog-rock band Genesis in 1975, Peter Gabriel continued his solo career with a firm recognition of the uneasy world around him. With tracks like "Biko" and "Shock The Monkey," he remained a politically-minded artist with decent sales and chart positions. But this, his fifth studio release, ignited a new era of fans and positioned him as the best thing to ever come from Genesis (sorry Phil Collins, you just got too soft).

With MTV packaged in with most cable subscriptions, Gabriel reached millions of homes and was able to capture both the tweens and their parents.

Opening with the haunting "Red Rain," Gabriel touches on the subject of acid-rain (or nuclear fallout) before giving us the impressive "Sledgehammer." You've seen the video - sort of a claymation meets stop-motion, art student film? In fact it's the most-played video on MTV, ever, and it features Stax Records' very own Memphis Horns.

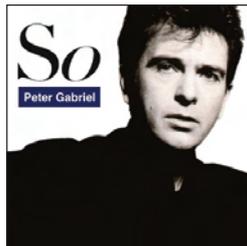
The record slows down with a nice duet featuring Kate Bush in "Don't Give Up."

Side two opens with "In Your Eyes," the anthem of my generation made famous a couple of years later by a character named Lloyd Dobler. "Mercy Street" brings the room down again, but is a cool track based on the tragic life of poet Anne Sexton. It may be the best track on the album actually, if you know or have read any works by Sexton.

"Big Time" comes at you in the same way "Sledgehammer" did, with its poppy arrangements and supplemented video, but is still a pretty good song 25 years later.

The record closes with the early-Genesis sounding "We Do What We're Told." This isn't his best work, but for the mid 80s, it was very refreshing.

Fun Fact: Gabriel wanted Dolly Parton for the "Don't Give Up" duet, but her touring schedule made it difficult to record, so she turned it down." (Dennis Donahue)



floor" kind of drummer. He's all over the place. He adds this organic element to the cold, desolate landscape of a post-apocalyptic world his synths bring to mind.

"Synthemesc" rises from the ashes of a future war with square waves and radar readings of hope. Bleeps, swishes and swooshes of sonic stabs come in and out. *Amor Fati* sounds like Boards of Canada after a long night of agitation and angst. This is what the dark(er) side of *Tomorrow's Harvest* would sound like. "Araucaria Fire" sounds like ancient war drums bursting through a wall of flames as lasers pierce the air in the background. This is eight minutes of sonic grandeur. Again, Jakob Skott shows he has more musical interests than just beating on the drums, like building walls of analog noise. But he tears through those walls with tight grooves and snare rolls Buddy Rich would've been proud to call his own.

Really, I can't say enough about this album. It ebbs and flows from hard, spacey funk ("Eastman Oyster") to beautiful, hazy sunset drones ("Omega Oscillator") to just plain driving synth/drum strutting with a hint of electric Miles ("Amor Fati"). Skott has so much more to offer than just being a hell of a drummer. But yeah, he's one hell of a drummer. (John Hubner)

38 SPECIAL - From Page 2

The result was 2011's *Live from Texas*, a digitally recorded and carefully mixed collection of tracks taken from several performances. The record is something special, because it captures the pedal-to-the-metal energy that has characterized the band's performances for the past 40 years, an energy that shows no signs of abating. Circumstances may require adjustments, but quitting isn't an option.

"It's not a question of if you're going to go on," Chauncey says. "You're going to do it, but you have to decide what it's going to look like. We're at a place where that's still unfolding, but 38 Special [are] bigger than any one person. Where we're at now, it's different, but it's complete."

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Fans of Cincinnati's own Afghan Whigs have waited a long time for *Do to the Beast*, the group's first studio effort in 16 years. Whoever it was that said, "Anticipation is the greatest form of happiness," obviously didn't have the pleasure of listening to this album which, thanks to tracks like "Matamoros," "Lost in the Woods" and "The Lottery," definitely delivers. Pick up your copy for the low price of \$11.99 at any Wooden Nickel Music Store.

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2	3	PHARRELL WILLIAMS <i>G I R L</i>
3	5	JOE BONAMASSA/BETH HART <i>Live in Amsterdam</i>
4	4	GARY CLARK JR. <i>Blak & Blu</i>
5	-	FUTURE <i>Honest</i>
6	8	SEVENDUST <i>Time Travelers & Bonfires</i>
7	6	BECK <i>Morning Phase</i>
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