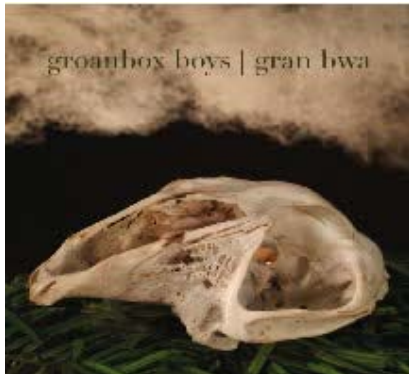


Groanbox Boys - GRAN BWA
Groanbox Records GBR. 003



Last year, the celebrated Groanbox Boys' second album, *Fences Come Down*, both introduced to the UK and consolidated their notably eclectic maverick sound (as originally bestowed on the wider world via their *Smokestack Trilogy* debut a couple of years back).

It seems they've now blossomed into a touring and recording threesome on a permanent basis, with original members Michael Ward-Bergeman and Cory Seznec indelibly and inspiringly augmented by Paul Clifford and his amazing suitcase-full of percussive oddities.

Their live performances have invariably gone down a storm, and so they'll be a good bet for sellout status when they return to these shores in June and July to promote this new CD, which is now well ensconced in the player and on its third enchanted playthrough already. Its title (a corruption of "grand bois, French for "great wood") refers to the Haitian voodoo god of the deep forest, protector of wild animals and herbal lore and the gateway between the spirit world and the real world - whose presence broods over the disc's fourteen tracks and seeps into their very titles (and your consciousness). These labels reflect the strictly bizarre moments experienced by the trio on the road (many of the songs were written under a tree in Edinburgh towards the end of their lengthy British tour last year, and the album was recorded there shortly afterwards).

Even when compared to *Fences*, this new disc proves an even more heady experience, an hallucinogenic magic-mushroom parade of musical images and strange textures that wave wildly in the winds across the crop fields and deserts of Americana and Africana, shaped by the archaic landscapes of old-time backwoods gothic and embracing scenarios like where Harry Partch comes across Brett Marvin's zob-stick in a junkyard and beats the hell out of Tom Waits in some primordial folk ritual.

The end product is often improvisatory in feel, less arranged than organically grown and nurtured over the space of a few minutes, the song's tale left to unfold intuitively via the contributions of the musicians. With the sounds of a modified accordion, fretless pumpkin-gourd banjo, harmonica, guitar and sundry

obscure percussive artefacts, the Groanbox Boys conjure a vital and significantly individual brand of conceptual weirdness that makes perverse sense, from the creepin' woozy bluesy *Beneath A Dark Veil Of Needles* to the Bo-Diddle-meets-Beefheart shamanistic hambone old-time of *Deer Bone In The Mansion*, the psychedelic "organic percussion" clanking of *Pigman's Dog* to the threatening, devilish *Bogeyman*, the true-blue-grass mould of *Rabbit On A Hill* and the Cajun-punk-riff-laden *Shards Of The Journey (Talisman)* to the eerie incantation of *Dam Door* and the deliriously swaying Parisian-café-meets-African-mojo beats of *Where Are You Now?* and *Mountains Are Creeping (Yew)*.

Eccentric, weird, brilliant, and certainly their best batch yet. The only thing I just can't cope with (sorry Anna!) is the virtually unreadable grey-on-black colour-scheme adopted for the credits.

PS - Wanna catch the Groanbox Boys on tour here in the UK? Well you can from mid-June - see

www.groanboxboys.com and www.myspace.com/thegroanboxboys