

The Handsome Family - HONEY MOON
(Loose VJCD.185)



Opening with Brett Sparks' signature dark gothic doowop crooning featuring prominently on Linger, Let Me Linger, Honey Moon once again transports us to the weird and compellingly wonderful world of The Handsome Family, as ostensibly wholesome as the carefully cultivated image of Brett and Rennie's 20th wedding anniversary that the album celebrates.

There are, as ever with The Handsomes, some disturbing undertones, where the primal forces of nature reclaim the world from that of man. Spiders, falling leaves, June Bugs and other skewed images of the natural world creep and seep into the marital bliss and genial contentment - but these intrude less than usual on what is after all a positively devotional, and dare I say even comforting, set of new songs that perhaps more than ever before could qualify for the description of love songs.

The unusually unbridled warmth of My Friend, for instance, is only momentarily disturbed by the cold waters of detached memory. Even so, with lyrics like "I want to kiss you in thickets and dripping wet glades as the stars rub against the dark skin of space", you know there's something perversely enticing about life's dark corners; and in The Petrified Forest, raindrops and roses fall through the heavens to brush against your skin.

Musically too, the deep-twang waltz-time mode beloved of the duo is tellingly incorporated into the neo-traditional or classic-country-bluegrass framework of When You Whispered and the cultish film-noir brooding of A Thousand Diamond Rings. The mournfully dissonant college-lounge-shuffle of The Loneliness Of Magnets is probably the closest to marital discord we encounter here - and even that is resolutely third-person.

Generally on Honey Moon, the Handsomes' special brand of lovingly-constructed whispersome poetry and arcane symbolism is shown to have hitherto unsuspected affectionately positive qualities, and this is a richly rewarding, really rather beautiful disc.

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