

Asheville Indie band releases new album

by Zack Harding
Arts & Life Editor

Asheville's "Stephanie's Id" has recently released their second full length album, *Grus Americanus*, and it is a smashing testament to the local indie music scene.

Stephanie's Id got started in 2002 and have since become the icon for Asheville-based music. Though there have been many lineup changes over their existence, the core of the band has always revolved around the songwriting partnership of keyboardist Chuck Lichtenberger and vocalist Stephanie Morgan. *Grus Americanus* only serves to solidify the duo as modern age indie pop/rock wizards that will continue to thrive.

Their sound is alternative for sure, but to place them too far into any of the rock, pop, or R&B categories which they seem to approach would be a disservice. Instead, let me tell you a little about some of the songs that make up the album.

"Wash Us Down With Sea Saline" begins the album with the sort of intensity which follows throughout. Stephanie's vocals here are long-held and couple with the thick-rumbling bass to forcefully grab the listener's ear. "Blue" follows with a somewhat ambient spoken word intro that soon blasts into a steadily driving beat, the vocal delivery now almost angry in its strength.

These first two songs are good examples of one of Stephanie's Id's prime songwriting strengths: a sense of the "epic" while still retained within a three to four minute, tightly composed song.



This idea comes into full being with the undeniably catchy "Cold Cold". Here they take a sultry, groovy introduction and morph it into a dramatic chorus that only continues to build throughout the song; it is like hearing a

miniature musical story, complete with rising action, climax and conclusion.

Another strength is their smart sense of restraint. The vibrant and energetic "Cindy" has a great hook in the chorus that immediately has the

listener singing along and feeling a sense of familiarity with the song. One of the reasons that this hook is so good though, is because of how sparingly it's used, unlike mainstream pop music which beats a catchy hook into the ground.

At times the band comes across rather experimental, such as in "Just Wanna Show Ya", yet they never stray too far into that territory. They also have a couple of straight ahead friendly-sounding tunes where Stephanie's vocals are just dripping with a sort of sweet & sexy charm, like in "Bounce." They counteract these tunes with haunting, ethereal numbers like "Quite Enough".

In short, there is nothing to dislike about *Grus Americanus*: it's smart, well written, innovative, expertly produced and most importantly, honest.

Mascot Hottie Spotlight



Name: Tommy the Twister

Class: F-5

Favorite Hobbies: Spinning, cow tossing, making white squirrels unemployed

Favortie Movie: Twister
Favorite Song: "Crank that Tornadoboy"

Favorite Food: Hawk

Favorite Magazine: SPIN

Role Model: Tasmanian Devil

Favorite Hang out spot: Trailer Parks