

TED LEO and the PHARMACISTS THE BRUTALIST BRICKS

Anyone who was lucky enough to see Ted Leo and the Pharmacists live over the last year or so got an advance preview of some of the songs that make up THE BRUTALIST BRICKS. I was at a more than a few of those shows, and let me just say that as someone who has witnessed some of the most important rock shows in the last twenty-plus years* I could not believe what my eyes were seeing and my ears were hearing.

So many times bands play 'the new stuff' and it's time to pull out the old iPhone and check your fantasy basketball stats. But these songs sent a shock of genuine excitement through the crowd, as if the band was cranking out an old favorite like "Me and Mia" or "Where Have All the Rude Boys Gone?". I was even a little suspicious - you know how when you see a band and they play something so good that it just has to be a cover? That's how I felt about hearing "Where Was My Brain?" and "Bottled In Cork" for the first time. Surely these were not new songs!

But when Ted Leo himself told me post-show that they were among the new stuff, I knew what I had to do. I sat the band down, looked them in the eye and said with songs like that on deck, the new Ted Leo and the Pharmacists record was theirs to lose and they better not mess it up.***

I am happy to say that they most certainly Brought It. From the opening facepunch of "The Mighty Sparrow" to the thank-you-goodnight stomp of "Last Days" THE BRUTALIST BRICKS is a ripper that distills all that TL/Rx have been working towards over the last decade into thirteen monster tracks.

I know what you're saying – what makes it so great, loudmouth? Well, jerk, it starts with the songs. While I love all the preceding TL/Rx records like they were related to me, this baker's dozen is inarguably the strongest batch that Ted has ever assembled. There are straight up HITS on this thing. From "One Polaroid A Day" to "Bottled In Cork" To "Even Heroes Have To Die" and beyond, this album is stuffed with straight-up capital C Classics.

But enough about Ted - how about the Pharmacists? Could they be more in the pocket?**** Chris Wilson's drumming has never sounded better. Marty Key holds down the Thud Stick***** it owes him money. And James Canty is Mr. Everything, taking the songs to another level with his whipsmart guitar and keyboardings. Ted is the anchor, but the Pharmacists are the reason the whole thing crushes like it does.

As a fan of Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, THE BRUTALIST BRICKS is everything I hoped they would bring to their Matador debut. It's the intersection of songs and performance from a band that embodies the perfect synthesis of head and heart. Music is generally a case of individual taste, but if you don't like this record the only thing I can think is that you're wrong and kinda stupid and I don't want anything to do with you.*****

--Tom Scharpling (Famous Television Writer and Radio Host)

*Um, the first night of A.R.M.S Concert at Madison Square Garden, anyone?**

** What, you don't remember the A.R.M.S. concert?! Clapton? Ron Wood? Jimmy Page doing songs from the DEATH WISH II soundtrack? Doesn't the debut of what would become The Firm mean anything anymore?

*** I have since been told this is not how things 'went down'.

**** No!

***** That's right, the Thud Stick. You might know it as a bass guitar.

***** Unless you have a board tape of the December 9th 1983 A.R.M.S. concert? Anyone?



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