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Nervous Germans – From Prussia With Love

The Nervous Germans enjoyed an initial five year career from 1979 until 1984 and managed to achieve some modicum of notoriety and interest from music big wigs. Despite the scrutiny, they were never able to break from the chains of the hip yet dreaded “cult status” tag. Suddenly in 2014, the Germans were back to touring; opening for Billy Idol, and now they’ve got a brand new album out on the streets. From Prussia with Love is an amalgamation of updated older songs and brand new ones, and for the most part, they’ve aged well and sound great. There are a few small lulls in the album’s progression, but nothing stalls this determined band for long.

Working almost as a commentary on the rock scene they left behind, lead-in rocker “Superstars (And Superheroes)” weaves a cautious tale about the pitfalls of rock n’ roll and the band’s experience of it. The guitar melody is sticky sweet like molasses and the rhythm section grooves to match it as vocalist Grant Stevens carves up a true power ballad that would easily win a Billy Idol crowd over. It’s a pop song for those that enjoy a little depth buried within the candy coating. “Liberation Day” careens and bounces like a pinball caught up in hyperspace with bluesy licks melting into grungy punk riffs and crash n’ bang rhythms giving boost to Grant’s expressive, edgy vocal. This is a rocker straight-up and “Summer Rain” delivers more of the same snarl with a different arrangement more befitting of the classic German scene with little bits of punk, country and grunge thrown in for good measure.

“Living the Dream” is an appealing slab of fun, poppy songwriting, but its inclinations wear a little thin by the time it ends. The melodies are catchy, but they bubble with an inescapably commercial feel that suffers when compared to the immediacy of rock-riff driven “On Fire”. Neither pop nor rock is the dominant force here, but a glorious harmony of the two disparate genres. “Happy Birthday Major Tom” is a cheeky New Wave number built for the dance floor and obvious drunken singalongs with the chorus. From here onward, the album settles down A LOT. You get largely acoustic, laid-back jamming on cuts like “Hey Mister Sunshine,” “Modern People” and “Sailing Blind,” while “In my Mind’s Eye” and finale “Paradise Lost” aim and hit the mark on some mountainous balladry that’s composed masterfully and layered with gorgeous background sounds. >From Prussia with Love is a pretty divine return to form for a band that never got the respect they deserved during their heyday. It’s not perfect and they are obviously still shaking off some rust and finding their way, but still give the listener plenty of great songs to enjoy and cherish regardless. It’ll hook you in with its pop melodies, although it doesn’t shy away from harder moments befitting of the English punk scene.

8 out of 10 stars.