

Deliciously Crazy

By Order Of Mayor Pawlicki, Pere Ubu (2CD, Cherry Red)

When I interviews David Thomas, lead singer of Pere Ubu, back the end of the 20th Century, he had this to say about gigs: 'We don't like touring. We like the playing but not the driving. We don't like being in the newspaper. We don't have anything to say that anybody wants to hear. We don't care. I think that sums it up.'

Mind you, he also said that he 'always thought [Pere Ubu] were a very traditional rock band. No, we are a very traditional rock band and always have been. It's not our fault that others have abandoned their roots and culture and traditions.' If you've heard the lurching, cacophonous monster that is Pere Ubu making music then you will probably be as sceptical as me.

Pere Ubu came screaming out of Cleveland Ohio on the tail of American new wave and punk. Desperate to find new things to write about, the UK music press created scenes where there were none, invented fictional success stories and nonsensical controversies, launching a thousand bands they would later torpedo and sink. Somehow, Pere Ubu are still afloat on an ocean of ragged vocals, jagged guitar, squawky synthesizers and offbeat rhythms. The press release uses the phrases 'dedicated brutality' which comes pretty close.

I love Pere Ubu. They have never sounded like anyone else, have never bowed to peer or critical pressure, and have ploughed their own way through the music industry from the word go. Even the pop psychedelic single 'Waiting for Mary', which managed to get drummer Chris Cutler onto TV with them, is downright weird and disturbing, despite it's commercial appeal.

Anyway, here's *By Order of Mayor Pawlicki*, a double live album for 2020. It revisits songs from 1975-1982, all recorded in Poland in 2017, and then throws in a second CD of encores entitled 'We Don't Do Encores'. Of course you don't David. You don't revisit the past either. But then you did tell me that you 'don't plan or think about what we do. We simply do it.' So maybe this is something that just happened. Whatever.

However it happened, it's awesome. It's dark, menacing, ramshackle, eccentric and hyper-original. Pere Ubu are stalking their past, dismembering their own songs and re-assembling them into new and disturbed versions. You thought Dylan reconstructed his musical past? Ha! Dylan has nothing on this band. Don't even think about greatest hits, from 'Heart of Darkness' on in, Pere Ubu's past leaps out, re-energized to haunt you. 'The Modern Dance' collapses in writhing limbs, 'Long Walk Home' is exhausting, 'Dub Housing' is nowhere you'd like to live, 'Caligari's Mirror' is a drunken-sounding reflection of its nautical self, and Final Solution, which closes the set, does not solve or resolve anything, just jet propels itself into a whirl of feedback. 'Goodnight' is all we get.

Except for CD2, which if anything is even more exhilarating and certainly more disorderly. 'Kick Out the Jams' is a 100mph cover, 'Sonic Reducer' starts with a meandering sustain of electric guitar then dives into more breakneck rock., which contrasts with a version of 'Final Solution' channelled through 1970s Patti Smith, complete with sonic disintegration guitar solo. My favourite track on the encores CD is 'Visions of the Moon' a spooky 3 minute spacewalk, taken whilst holding your breath and watching Earthrise. 'Modern Dance Blues', which is up next, seems almost straightforward and approachable until it lurches into feedback, hiss and stutter, and then we get 'Weird Cornfields/Merch Hypnotism' a drifting musical sales pitch encouraging the audience to buy, buy. buy.

I'd forgotten how deliciously crazy this band is, how belligerent, original and refreshing. This is music that makes you glad to be alive, reminds you of both the possible and impossible. David Thomas may say he doesn't care but you should. Buy this album now.

Rupert Loydell