

biscuit head and the biscuit badgers



Photo Suna Xie
Words : Ewan Jamieson

BISCUITHEAD AND THE BISCUIT BADGERS are neither crumbly, rabid, dunkable in Earl Grey or part of the Mustelidae family. Instead, they are a four piece swing band fronted by Elvis and holed up in Leeds, fuelled by nonsensical randomness and hell-bent on ripping you a new smile hole. They are not hateful people. They find fun in almost everything (apart from the dead fox they found by their bin this morning) and as a result, there is laughter chuckling out of every note they play, with irony and sarcasm dripping from every movement. This is, however, not a pastiche. Or if it is, it's a clever pastiche of a pastiche. Maybe even deeper than that. Like a musical mockumentary. So it goes.

The band adopted their current line-up just over a year ago when a desire to do something different (a notion synonymous with most bands) lead founding member Dean to gather a troupe that was "not only fun and entertaining, but completely over the top and ridiculous". This ethos may or may not have been instrumental when choosing the final line-up which now consists of ukulele, tuba, piano and drums; instruments which the band are very comfortable with. Dean enjoys visiting his local corner shop in his trademark white suit before a gig to see if anyone mentions it. Once, somebody did. They said he looked like God, but beaten-up a bit. Like Wayne Coyne, but weirder.

Musically the Biscuitheads are often compared to the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band or similarly-minded 60s vaudeville acts (like the Temperance Seven) though their initial inspiration came from a range of performers as eccentric and diverse as Vic Reeves, Sammy Davis Jr., Screaming Jay Hawkins and David Bowie. In incorporating a girthful, mirthful dearth of different styles (such as calypso, ragtime, gypsy-punk and samba) the Biscuitheads showcase their pop sensibilities in a strange and capricious, yet mirthfully-compelling style. Like a pile-up of clowns in Skodas.

Incidentally the name is pointless, which in itself is the whole point of the name. It did once earn them the NME band name of the week though. For the record there are no badgers, but if you dig deep in the biscuit barrel there are custard creams a-plenty. Whatever that means. The last year has seen the band find their feet, remove all balance stabilisation and begin to raise their profile locally, along the way enjoying some spectacular gigs (particularly Croissant Neuf and Unity Day).

With current lyrical subject matter including diatribes about cheese, hermit crabs and Runcorn (amongst other more bizarre observations) all delivered in a soulful droll to the sounds of lounge, the Biscuitheads sound unlike anything you will hear this year. Imagine Sinatra fronting Flight of the Conchords and singing songs about Yorkshire and you're edging nearer to the precipice from which the Biscuitheads will throw you off. Locally, the Biscuitheads are huge fans of Madame Laycock and her Dabeno Pleasures, the Devil's Jukebox and the Research.

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The band's favourite gigs are when "people start off completely baffled but during the course of the gig you can see them starting to get into it". These shows, as indeed does the entire band's concept, seems to polarise extreme opinions: some punters in Wakefield have proclaimed that the band have saved live music as we know it, whilst elsewhere uncouth Bradfordians insisted on shouting profanities throughout their entire set. If you are undecided which side of the fence you swing then may I recommend investing four minutes of your life into 'Elvis Was a Black-Belt'. Your allegiance will then be obvious. Just like a yeast extract-based spread. Love or hate. Slash or burn. Crunch or dunk. Bait or adopt. There are no other options.

Apart from an end to all suffering in 2009, the band would like to gig out of town more. Plans for recording in January are afoot, so keep your peepers peeled for an LP and a no-doubt astonishingly baffling promo video. The subject matter of currently-being-written tracks includes: the debt we owe in our everyday lives to tubes; the evolution of vertebrates; and how to worm your cat.

So give them a chance. At worst they will cleanse your waxy auricles like aural napalm. At best they will have you bent double over the biscuit barrel in salutation to their sheer irreverence and balls. Charge your glasses now in recognition of Leeds' newest oddball curiosity. And perhaps get a rabies booster. These vermin will have you frothing out of every orifice. Rock and droll.