

STARFLYER 59

**“I am The Portuguese Blues”
In Stores February 24, 2004**



In 1997, Starflyer 59 released the guitar heavy Americana, a record that alternated between melancholy drones and big rock dirges with snarling, cocksure leads dancing around electric fuzz.

In 1998, Starflyer 59 put out The Fashion Focus, and suddenly the fuzz was subdued, the guitar lead was nowhere to be found, and the organ was in charge of atmosphere. It was a pop record, surf inspired, and the beginning of a new direction in songwriting for Jason Martin that he would go on to perfect through his band's next three releases (Everybody Makes Mistakes, Leave Here a Stranger, and the Can't Stop Eating EP).

The musical gap between Americana and Fashion Focus was huge, and even a cold slap to Starflyer fans - one they would praise, decry, and debate up until present day. It was almost like there was a missing record somewhere. Good artists reinvent themselves constantly, and Martin is no exception, but one would think there would be some form of transition -- a "Missing Link" -- some songs that started to expand towards his new idea.

And here it is. No PR spin necessary, Portuguese Blues is literally the "missing Starflyer album," as Martin puts it in his characteristically no-nonsense manner. "The majority of the songs were written between 1997 and 1998," he explains. "At the time, I wanted to go in a different direction musically, so I scrapped them and we recorded The Fashion Focus."

But the truly odd thing about the songs on Portuguese Blues is that they have a lot in common with Starflyer's last record, Old. The rock swagger, unabashed guitars, and pulsating, gigantic hooks -- this may sound weird, but it's almost as if six years ago Martin wrote the natural follow-up to a record he wouldn't even start making until 2002. In other words, Portuguese Blues is hardly a b-sides or outtakes collection -- it is more of a peculiar singularity in the time-space-continuum, like a sonic wormhole.

In fact, none of the songs on Portuguese Blues had ever been recorded for a release. They were home demos at best until a few months ago, when Martin pulled them out, dusted them off, and called in Jeff Cloud and Frank Lenz to lay them down properly. "I have a studio in my loft that I call The Black Hand. We recorded [Portuguese Blues there] and went to Seattle to have it mixed by Aaron Sprinkle," Martin shares.

It should be noted that not all of the songs on Portuguese Blues were written six years ago. “Wake Up Early, was a newer song,” Martin explains, “and Worth of Labor. There was one other one that was written recently, but I can’t remember which it is.”

However or whenever these songs came into existence, they are an exceptional addition to the Starflyer oeuvre. Martin’s dry sense of humor has never been more pronounced in song, and the trio raked and beat their instruments for loud, brash sounds and syrupy melodies. “Not Funny” strides on crisp drums and a fabulous guitar tone into a wickedly cryptic hook that hangs in your head for weeks. “No Revolution” recalls the Beatles sentiment for a new group of pop idolaters -- self-deprecating yet pointed outward. “Destiny” uses a diving rhythm to mock something that is, honestly, up for anybody’s best guess. And “I Need Some Help” is just plain nasty in its magnificence -- dirty guitars gyrating under an indignant, almost caustic admission of weakness. And really there isn’t a stinker on here. “I think it rolls through pretty evenly,” Martin comments with his usual modesty.

When asked about the album’s title, Martin says simply, “I thought the title was odd. There are a couple of proper blues riffs, on there, but mainly it is just a rock and roll album -- no tricks no gimmicks.... And, oh yeah, I’m Portuguese.”

In stores February 24th, Martin plans to tour Portuguese Blues this spring!

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