

SCENE

Charlie Pickett and ...Bar Band Americanus (Bloodshot)

Rising from the murk of the late '80s Florida post-punk scene (wait, there was a Florida music scene?) Charlie Pickett and the Eggs' 1982 album *Live at the Button* was a legendary touchstone – that is if you could actually find a copy.

At the time only Jeffrey Lee Pierce and the Gun Club was coming close to Pickett and company's jagged blend of punk-blues. Bonafide Southern-fried junky rockandroll exiled from main street with due cause, this here was the real dark side – death letters, America on horseback, Flannery O'Connor's mayhem and Old Testament retribution – dangerous music that would ultimately be cleaned up and packaged to the public under the rubric Americana many years later. In hindsight they fairly blew their jangly brethren out of the water.

As you might have guessed, this gang of thugs was fronted by one Charlie Pickett, a sincere-as-the-day-is-long straight shooter who came off like Gary Cooper wailing on a Gibson SG. Not exactly Marshall Matt Dillon fronting the Ramones but you get the drift.

No ego monger, in the liner notes Pickett gives due props to his main gtr-slinger Johnny Salton, "Everything I've ever done is set up for Johnny Salton's guitar... Johnny Salton is the lasting value. It's what makes it worthwhile." Together Pickett and Salton's gtr tones were light years beyond the bargain basement new wave amateurs jangling for attention.

Alas, after too much time on the road in a pressure cooker van and the road's attendant evils, the group eventually splintered. But Pickett soldiered on to Minneapolis to record the great album *Route 33* with the help of an ad hoc cast (Gun Club's Jim Duckworth and Chris Osgood from the Suicide Commandos), abetted by some of the usual suspects and produced by Velvet Underground drummer Maureen Tucker.

By the time of the band's 1987 finale *The Wilderness* (this time out as Charlie Pickett & the MC3), even Peter Buck's neutered production couldn't sabotage the depths of Charlie's high lonesome howl and Salton's charging riffs and searing bottleneck guitar. These guys were a juggernaut to be reckoned with, even if no one knew it at the time. This long-awaited *Bloodshot* compilation collects 19 tracks spanning the career of Pickett and the various configurations of the Eggs and the MC3. And when you think about just how crappy the big name new wave acts of the era sound today, a full blown box set on Charlie might be the next logical step.

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