



Homewreckers & Heartbreakers

A little bit of what you need to know...

There are those who'd have you believe that bands like The Quireboys aren't supposed to make records this good. That in the 21st century there's no place for a type of music which, it was once famously pointed out, was supposed to have passed out permanently after a particularly heavy drinking session in the 70s. That the trademark urchin-shaggy hair, scuffed boots, flares and waistcoats are now the preserve of skinny comedians, not a disparate bunch of rock'n'roll ragamuffins. So welcome, my friends, to the continuing true adventures of the last gang in town.

With the release of their latest album **Homewreckers & Heartbreakers** everyone's favourite vagabonds prove that - like the finest red wine - true quality only improves with age. You know the history; the late 80s stories of round-the-clock boozin', cigarettes and the most elegantly ramshackle flash-trash-rock'n'roll. The dalliance with Sharon Osbourne's delicate management touch; the fall from grace which so many great British bands underwent when the record companies went looking for the grimy grunge dollar.

Then the late 90s re-emergence, and the band's re-establishment as a keystone of British rock'n'roll. But quitters never win, and winners never quit. So now, well into the new Millennium, The Quireboys just keep on doing what it is they do best. Festival favourites once again, they cemented their concert legend with the 2006 release of the live DVD *One More For The Road*.

Their last two releases *This Is Rock'n'Roll* and *Well Oiled* hinted loudly at it, but the evidence of a full-scale rehabilitation is writ large all over **Homewreckers & Heartbreakers** (make up your own mind about whether the title refers to the band, or the here-today-gone-later-today ladies who've left stiletto marks all over their bruised hearts.)

Just like on his excellent solo record *It's A Treat To Be Alive*, singer Spike turned to his hometown of Newcastle for lyrical inspiration. And **Homewreckers & Heartbreakers'** opening track, *I Love This Dirty Town*, is a joyous ode to Tyne-life, name-checking Dog Leap Stairs and Amen Corner with a joyous exuberance. The chopping guitars from Guy Griffin and Paul Guerin, and wailing harmonica hark back to the traditional Quireboys sound, but there's a maturity too, bringing in elements of country and even folk.

Spike says: "I think overall, I'm very happy with this album. There's a different feel to some of the songs, we wanted to stretch ourselves a little on things like *Blackwater*, because that makes it interesting for us as well as the listeners. "We've introduced some of the new numbers into the live set as well, and we've all been really pleased with the response they're getting." Guy adds: "It's an album that works on plenty of levels - there's material that will keep the loyal fans happy, but there's also stuff in the mix that we hope can help introduce a new generation of fans to The Quireboys." "We're a very different band to what we were all those years ago, all a lot older and a lot wiser, which is bound to be reflected in the kind of material that we're doing and the sort of pressure we put on ourselves. "So although we're still very proud of everything we achieved back then, **Homewreckers & Heartbreakers** is very much where The Quireboys are now."

The beautiful **Mona Lisa Smiled** is a mid-paced, acoustic-led number with delicate touches of mandolin, recalling the genius of Frankie Miller. Once again, Spike's rattle-taggle vocals are perfectly suited to a whiskey-soaked lament for a bittersweet love. It's an inescapable truth that the music of The Quireboys is rooted in the Seventies, the era of flag-waving anthems, and *Mona Lisa Smiled* deserves to take its place alongside the best of them.

Louder is underpinned by Keith Weir's piano and a honeyed, gospel-style backing vocal; a tale of the evils of TV evangelism, while **Fear Within The Lie** is the record's first out-and-out ballad, a nagging, insistent tear-stained letter to a love gone bad, as the guitars cut loose.

Blackwater is among the most ambitious tracks The Quireboys have attempted; a near seven-minute epic slice of southern funky rock. The swampy bass pattern from four-string man Jimi Jimmi transports the listener to the backwoods of Lynchburg, Tennessee (home, of course, to the Jack Daniel's distillery). It works beautifully.

There's a joyous feel too about **One For The Road**, Spike's favourite lyrical theme (raising a glass...) leading a bittersweet fiddle-driven romp which takes the band a fair way down the road into country territory. There's even a lyrical tip of the hat to the Georgia Satellites' album *In The Land Of Salvation & Sin* – former Satellites man Dan Baird mastered the album.

We've all been there; a few too many drinks and the desire to speak to a former love takes hold. Well, ladies and gentlemen, **Late Nite Saturday Call** is the theme song of all those emotion-choked confessions and apologies. A stunning ballad with sterling backing vocals from Welsh folk-blues belter Cherry Lee Mewis, it's a guaranteed lighter-waver and, if anything, the natural, soulful sequel to The Quireboys' massive 1980s hit, *I Don't Love You Anymore*.

Hall Of Shame swaggers in on a Stonesy, Crowesy riff and funky keyboard motif, recalling the cocksure heyday of The Quireboys. The folksy, campfire, guitars that usher in **Take A Look At Yourself** evoke a million love songs and again there's a thick musical tapestry, while **Hello's** laid-back acoustic charm belies the vitriolic lyrical attack within (you wouldn't want to be the person on the end of Spike's barbs here).

Album closer **Josephine** takes us back once again to The Quireboys' roots as out-and-out shinkicking rock'n'rollers, a raucous 12-bar romp through a perilous minefield of teenage temptresses and lipstick queens.

Dismiss The Quireboys at your peril because **Homewreckers & Heartbreakers** – and the string of rollocking, good-time live shows that have followed it – are among the classic rock'n'roll events of the year.