



Released on U.S. label Project Records, *Grand Guignol & Varietes* is *Katzenjammer Kabarett's* follow-up to their 2006 debut. Like an older Gothic sister of *The New Young Pony Club*, *Katzenjammer Kabarett* deliver music that is at once fresh, exciting, and yet possess an indefinable familiarity.

Easing you into the world of *Katzenjammer Kabarett*, "Jack's Pride" develops from a sparse and moody soundscape, before building to an up-tempo Electro Pop Goth fusion.

From here on in, anything goes as *Katzenjammer Kabarett* fuse synths to live percussion, live strings to electronic drums, in fact a myriad of instrumentation is on offer. Delivering a lyrical and musical roller-coaster that is in perpetual motion, while not Free Jazz, it is a style that keeps the listener guessing as to what direction each song will take.

On "Hidden & Sick" an Acid Rock, Acid Goth if you will, undercurrent of swirling melodies and stripped-down drum-machine rhythms are blended with Mary Komplikat's voice, which

here is reminiscent of Siouxsie Sioux. "10 Years" is an obvious highlight, blending hypnotic urgent rhythms interspersed with catchy melodies. The Stride piano led "Nothing But His" is another highpoint, sharp and to the point musically; it proves that *Katzenjammer Kabarett* can be concise if the song demands it.

Punky-Gothic, and flighty Cabaret vibes permeate the album. Insistent and driving one moment, laid back and dreamy the next, there's barely a dull moment anywhere on *Grand Guignol & Varietes*. Lyrically most of the songs are not framed in the usual verse, chorus, verse format, but rather narratives with the music providing the hook, unusual but it works unexpectedly well.

"Sunlight Sanatorium" sees them at their most dramatic, creepy and twisted. Here introducing characters and shrieking voices that would not be out of place in a warped piece of theatre at a carnival-bizarre. The eminently danceable "Collage" features a spoken word intro describing a Doctor in his 50s meeting a 19-year-old girl and marrying her, despite the unusual subject "Collage" is a fine song that perfectly mixes Goth Rock with Pop sensibilities. This hybrid of Goth & Pop is also to be found on the more linear "Romance".

"45" ends the album with a gloriously unapologetic climax that seems to encompass all things Goth of the last hundred years (musically speaking at least), it even possess a clarinet solo!

Wow, is one word to describe the helter-skelter ride that *Katzenjammer Kabarett* take you on with *Grand Guignol & Varietes*. Together Mary Komplikat, Herr Katz, Klischee and Mr. Guillotine have produced a wonderful collection of intelligent music on their second album. The garden of delights that *Katzenjammer Kabarett* inhabit may well be Gothic, but they are not afraid to inject a little Regina Spektor playfulness here and there.

Siouxsie & The Banshees in places, Dresden Dolls in others, *Katzenjammer Kabarett* have not slavishly copied but merely worked a little magic that at once feels comfortable yet new and original.

A really satisfying album from the opening bars of "Jack's Pride" to the dying moments of "45", *Grand Guignol & Varietes* should propel *Katzenjammer Kabarett* into the public consciousness. 9/10

Zak