



JESSICA LINKER
DIR 773 784 4335
JESSICA@PITCHPERFECTPR.COM

4865 N WASHTENAW AVE #3
CHICAGO, IL 60625-2824
WWW.PITCHPERFECTPR.COM

BABY TEETH HUSTLE BEACH OUT 7/14 ON LUJO RECORDS

Hustle Beach is the third album from Baby Teeth, Chicago's reigning champions of brainy pop. The album is the fruit of a songwriting blog, "52 Teeth," maintained by bandleader Abraham Levitan, on which he posted a new song each week for one year. Over the course of this project, inspired by Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, he began writing about suburban dystopia, generating the lyrical heart of the album -- songs like "Big Schools," "The Swede," and "Hustle Beach."

The production, live and lean, captures the intensity of Baby Teeth's performances. Long celebrated for their chops, songwriting, and massively entertaining live shows, the band wanted to make this album on the quick, using as many live takes as possible. In the summer of 2008, they decamped to Key Club, the legendary live-in studio in Benton Harbor, Michigan, that birthed great records from the Fiery Furnaces, Franz Ferdinand, and the Kills. Leaving only to grab a daily plate of barbecue, Baby Teeth finished basic tracking in four days.

The album shows Abraham's newfound commitment to lyrically direct songwriting. Emerging from the soaring melodrama of *The Simp* (2007), *Hustle Beach* is a gritty response for the recession era. It looks at life as it is -- growing up, getting married, going on vacations, acquiring material possessions, losing material possessions, growing old -- with humor and intelligence fully intact. It's also a terribly catchy record that makes you drive fast.

Real life: marriages, kids, walking outside in your robe to pick up the Sunday paper. Day jobs. Abraham, originally from Louisville, Kentucky, heads a piano teaching group and composed songs for a 2009 production of Jenny Schwartz's absurdist verse play *God's Ear*. Bassist Jim Cooper, a D.C. native, is a film composer and church orchestra director. Drummer Peter Andreadis, a product of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is a mastering engineer. The three met in Chicago, where Peter mixed an album for Abraham's previous band (the Platonics), and where Abraham and Jim started attending each other's shows with regularity. (Jim was and is the frontman for Detholz!, and Jim and Abraham also did a stint together in Bobby Conn and the Glass Gypsies.)

From here on out, it's all direct reporting and great songwriting. Journalism from the domestic front lines. Recommended for fans of Spoon, the Hold Steady, Jonathan Franzen, Harry Nilsson, Saul Bellow, and E.L.O. Endorsed by David Berman, Bobby Conn, and Robert Pollard.

"Enough earthshaking riffs and anthemic bluster to fatten the entire fifth grade at the School of Rock. . . the perfect roof-down joyride for backstreet summertime slumming." --*Pitchfork*

"Filthy, oily lounge glam with nods to the Bee Gees, Queen, and CCR." --*Chicago Reader* (Critic's Choice)

"A brilliant patchwork combination of unpretentious intelligence, canny genre-play, shit-hot energy, and total devotion to the music."-- *Daytrotter*

For more information contact Jessica Linker at Pitch Perfect PR. 773-784-4335, jessica@pitchperfectpr.com.
www.pitchperfectpr.com. www.babyteethmusic.com.

Theater



HORN OF PLENTY
Levitan brings his Hideout sound to the storefront stage.

The book of Abraham

Dog & Pony gets a music man with teeth.
By Jake Austen

Prior to composing the score for Dog & Pony Theatre Company's production of *God's Ear*, Abraham Levitan's exposure to theater had been pretty limited. "I went to see *Cats* and fell asleep," the songwriter recalls. "I also saw *Starlight Express* and managed to stay awake." The only play he'd been personally involved in was a sixth-grade staging of *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*; Levitan, now 31, memorized the single line of non-canonical *Peanuts* character Wally.

Though he was quickly kicked out of that show for missing rehearsals, his interactions with Schroeder, Snoopy and the gang far outnumber his dealings with the cast and crew of Jenny Schwartz's surreal melodrama *God's Ear*. "I've chosen ignorance," Levitan says. "I deliberately wanted to be a hired hand, working totally isolated. The first time I'll see what they've done with my songs will be at the opening."

Best known to Chicago music fans as the frontman and keyboardist for the band Baby Teeth, the Louisville-raised artist formerly known as Pearly Sweets—Levitan stopped using the pseudonym when rock colleague Bobby Conn convinced him his real name was even more ridiculous—became involved in *God's Ear* after he was approached by actor David Dietrich Gray, an artistic associate with the dynamic storefront troupe

Dog & Pony (of last year's hit Henry Darger performance piece, *As Told by the Vivian Girls*). It's no surprise that a marriage would be arranged between New York-based Schwartz's whimsical relationship drama and the principal songwriter of a band known for a quirky, theatrical style of pop music (music critics have worn out comparisons to Elton John, Todd Rundgren and Queen). It's also no surprise that Levitan accepted the proposal. All three members of Baby Teeth take on ambitious side projects (including Levitan's home music-lesson business, Piano Power, and guitarist Jim Cooper's film-scoring work); last year, Levitan released a solo album and completed his "52 Teeth" blog project, which presented a new song every week for a year.

"It was an interesting challenge to put music to [Schwartz's] words," the Logan Square rocker explained, "especially because they told me nothing, requested nothing, and I worked completely independently." The collage-like play—which explores a couple's grief after the death of their son by juxtaposing comical, absurdist and heartbreaking scenarios—has a strong musical element. The show's critically lauded Off Broadway run last year featured a different score (by Michael Friedman, resident composer of New York's downtown troupe the Civilians), one that Levitan has intentionally avoided. If the producers remain true to Levitan's demo tapes, this version's suite of songs will recall "Closing Time"—era Tom Waits. Although the tunes may have

hints of Sondheim-esque structure, the composer explains that that stems less from a tribute to a master and more from a necessity of working with Schwartz's meter-ambivalent lyrics.

"I guess I've heard Fiddler on the Roof. Does Mamma Mia! count?"

The "legitimacy" of theater work may allow Levitan to indirectly address one of his pet peeves. Despite his penchant for funny stage banter, an embrace of amusing dance-pop aesthetics and borderline-ludicrous Baby Teeth lyrics such as, "Sedition's easy, baby / Like the forefathers who discovered America" and "You're either on the swim team or you're not," he bristles at the idea of labeling his music "joke rock."

"That's one of the reasons I changed my name, so that lazy journalists wouldn't put me in that ghetto," Levitan explains. "Joke rock" means to me that the lyrics and arrangements stomp on the musical merits of the work rather than complementing them. If it's the kind of song that produces a real emotional response, then it's not just a joke." The songwriter hopes this philosophy well serves the emotional weight of *God's Ear*.

Though Levitan realizes his ignorance of the musical-theater canon may present a roadblock to becoming a respected theatrical composer ("I guess I've heard the *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Chess* cast records. Does *Mamma Mia!* count? I haven't seen it, but I've heard *Abba Gold*"), he says he wouldn't mind finding himself in that line of work five years from now. "As you hit your thirties and your knees start to go, you look for work that's physically less demanding than gallivanting down the highway to play for half-empty rooms."

For the time being, Baby Teeth remains top priority. On Saturday 28, the band hits the Bottom Lounge, playing tunes from its forthcoming album *Hustle Beach* (Lujo Records). Levitan also will visit the Viaduct Theater this weekend to learn what director Krissy Vanderwarker and her troupe have done with his latest creations—and to see if his own work holds his attention any better than Andrew Lloyd Webber's klutzy ditties.

God's Ear opens Saturday 28. See Fringe & storefront. For Baby Teeth, see Music Listings.

HARP®



HEY BABY

Flying high with Chicago's Baby Teeth

Who the hell are they?



"It's like a band that's made up of three lead singers," says Abraham "Pearly Sweets" Levitan, Baby Teeth's de facto leader and songwriter. Bassist Jim Cooper and drummer Peter Andreadis are capable singers and songwriters—fronting the Detholz and All City Affairs, respectively—but together they're a musical force. The proof: 2005's *The Baby Teeth Album* (Lujo), a poignantly sardonic opus where Levitan's songs and hapless characters came to life in Polaroid retrocolor and a high-fidelity amalgam of 1980s Top 40 radio—with Bowie flair. The ensuing *For the Heathers* EP upped the ante, with each member flexing his love muscles on songs called (and for) "Heather," the fictional perfect girl.

Hometown
Chicago

Album
The Simp (Lujo)

In each song is...
...a meek, wretched, drunken,

adolescent chump that desperately wants to be a superhero—who doesn't love an underdog? It's tough to pick a favorite, but the anthemic "Swim Team," mirror-ball explosion "The Birds Are Crying," Carole King-on-'ludes ballad "God Girlfriend" and gospel-according-to-the-Doobies "Taste the Wine" are standouts.

It's funny 'cause it's sad Sweets writes of one character at two junctures—early teens, mid-to-late twenties. The teen lays awake nightly, watching life's possibilities pole-dance on his ceiling. He knows the world should be his oyster but can't overcome the awkwardness awaiting him each morning. The twenty-something knows he's missed out but has to commit to something (woman, city, career), but still sees the same visions—somehow in retrospect—on his bedroom ceiling. It's heartbreaking, but often hilarious. "The single most important thing to do when I write a song is be in the hyper-vulnerable version of myself," says Sweets. "Let's see if this hyper-vulnerable 14-year-old narrator can write a bunch of songs." **RANDY HARWARD**

CHICAGO
READER

MUSIC



BABY TEETH

Pearly Sweets's previous band, the Platonics, made quite a few lastemakers tinkle on the floor with excitement before spilling up last year—and though it's hard to pick up the pieces after you get that close to making it, the golden boy has moved on, and to weirder pastures. As the front-man for Baby Teeth he refines his formula for cockamamie pop soul: clean fingernails, a dirty mind, lots of guts, and not too much fucking off. Backed by bassist Jim Cooper of Detholz (a fellow member of Bobby Conn's Glass Gypsies) and drummer Peter Andreadis, Pearly croons, snarls, and draws with a sleazy quiver that's so foxy it makes my uterus ache. The tone recalls Hall and Oates's sunshiny faux moodiness, the delivery Manfred Mann's melodramatic gusto—in short, you could cut the irony with a cheese knife. On the forthcoming *Baby Teeth Album* (the band's still looking for a label), Cooper's greasy funk bass plays grab-ass with Pearly's shimmering keyboard frillery, and the harder Pearly tries to explain himself the iclier he gets: "Wakin' down the coast of Arizona / Catchin' a dirty fish or two... / I'm never goin' back to California / I don't wanna party with you no more." It'll make you either wince or swoon—and you've gotta admire a band that leaves itself so little room for error. Stanley Ross opens; Br. Danielson (see Spot Check) headlines. \$32. Friday, July 30, 10 PM. Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, Chicago, 773-270-3600 or 800-593-8499.

—Liz Armstrong



RED
EYE

Wednesday
February 9, 2006

Concerts at Meigs Field?



'Amazing Race' ends in Chicago

WASH WALTERS Stalking Madonna wannabes

WASH WALTERS

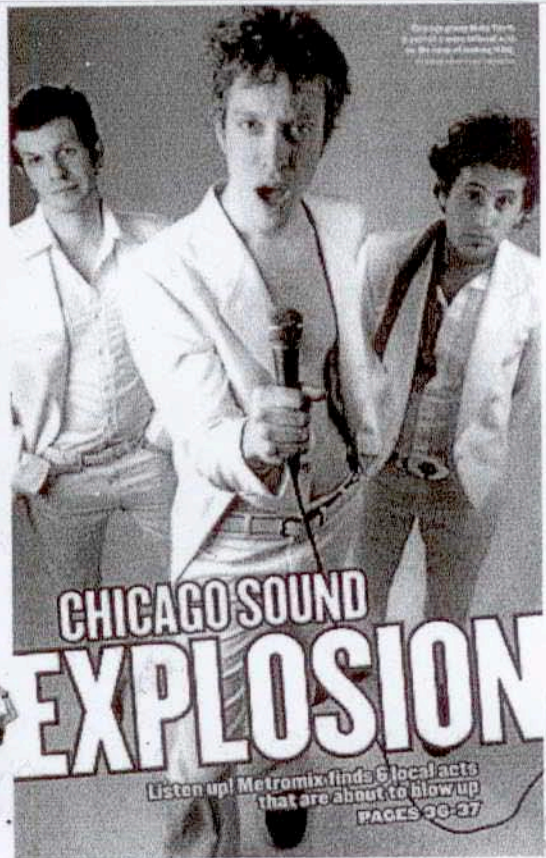
WASH WALTERS

WASH WALTERS

WASH WALTERS

WASH WALTERS

WASH WALTERS



CHICAGO SOUND
EXPLOSION

Listen up! Metromix finds 6 local acts that are about to blow up

PAGES 36-37