

Gutbucket

BIO

Gutbucket is a free-range band. The seven-year-old New York quartet is not only equally comfortable playing in front of 900 sweatily pogo-ing teenage skate-punks, a crowd of stoned jamband freaks, or on an anarchist German art collective houseboat, but most importantly, their music fits right in.

Flitting from hard rock to Latin to thrash to klezmer and back, often within the space of a few bars, the group veritably attacks their music with the kind of ferocity usually reserved for punk, despite having earned their jazz bona fides. “We’re all pretty serious about rock,” says saxophonist Ken Thomson, “and not just a token throwing-in of some different tunes. It’s something intrinsic to who we are as people. We’ve all had training in jazz, but we’ve moved outside that world into the rock world, to try to actually bring something new to that.”

Though the band might seem rooted in the genre exploding of avant-squonk (their 2001 debut, *InsomniacsDream*, was released on the Knitting Factory house imprint), their shift to louder sounds began with their controversially-titled *Dry Humping the American Dream* (released in 2003 in Europe on the legendary Enja label and in 2004 in the US on Bang on a Can’s acclaimed Cantaloupe label). It was an easier move than it might at first seem – bassist Eric Rockwin claims to have learned every Paul McCartney bassline by heart before his father humbled him with a Ray Brown CD. Guitarist Ty Citerman was “into everything that was Hendrix and Van Halen and Led Zeppelin.” And drummer Paul Chuffo learned to play by mimicking The Who’s Keith Moon.

It’s only fitting, then, that the band initially came together as Ty, Ken, and Paul looked to expand their musical horizons at Columbia University’s WKCR, where Ty had a late-night radio show and Paul was the self-admitted “crazy guy in the corner smoking cigarettes and writing papers.” After playing together for four years in the soul-jazz Ex Caminos, the three split off in 1999 to form what would become Gutbucket. Introduced through a friend, Eric and Paul found an instant rhythmic rapport, and the band was born. Four months later, they debuted before a packed house at Manhattan’s Baby Jupiter.

Gutbucket set to work building their all-important live rep, gigging first throughout Manhattan, before spreading across the collegiate markets of the east coast. The release of *Dry Humping the American Dream* and their full scale US rock club/art gallery/bar touring introduced them to their new “favorite places” -- San Francisco, Santa Fe, Hattiesburg, MS, and Wichita, KS. The band also hit the US festival circuit, including Seattle’s heralded Earshot Jazz Festival, New York’s Winter Jazz Festival, and played the colleges of Brandeis, Colgate, U. Missouri, and more.

This US effort, which the band speaks of proudly, follows what was – starting with the release of *InsomniacsDream* – their primary touring outlet – Europe. Through an eager German manager, they continued their love affair with the region after the release of their second disc, amassing performances in sixteen West and East European countries, over ten tours. “They think we’re jazz over there,” Ty says of the idyllic trips. “Over there, we stay in hotels and get fed. We like to go there. We’re art over there. I’m not sure what we are over here.”

If Gutbucket themselves don’t know, it can be forgiven. In seven years, they have engaged in numerous projects — many of them more akin to the art-rock stage antics of The Flaming Lips or even Phish than the somber-minded blowing of the downtown atonalists. While their shows are legendarily frenzied (“Keep all limbs, drinks and small children well clear of manic sax dervish Ken Thomson,” *Time Out New York* warned), they are also events unto themselves.

For special gigs, the band frequently presents its scores to classic cartoons, including the vintage *Superman Vs. The Mechanical Monsters* (1941) and the French animation *Johnny the Giant Killer* (1950). “It’s about a bunch of little kids who go looking for this giant that they read about in a fairy tale,” Eric explains. Ty jumps in, “It turns into this revolutionary theme, where they join forces with a band of bees and take over the giant’s castle” – “after fighting off a wasp coup d’état,” Paul adds. Eric finishes, “After that, Johnny suppresses his sexual attraction to the Queen Bee and fends off the jealous bee guards.” It is perfectly bizarre and perfectly Gutbucket, soundly capturing the kinds of narratives one might envision while listening to the band’s already cinematic charts.

There have been specially prepared collaborations with Bang on a Can family friends, Ethel, a string quartet with a predilection for distortion pedals; there have been live volleyball games; there have been blindfolds; and there have been Dixie cups filled with rice and passed to enthralled crowds. “We like having [musical] conversations with each other and seeing where that goes,” Rockwin says. “But we like engaging the audience in that conversation, too.”

Jesse Jarnow



Gutbucket

SLUDGE TEST

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www.gutweb.com, www.myspace.com/gutbucket



press raves

"... Gutbucket mashes free jazz, jam band rock, funk, heavy metal, and more into a fusion for the 21st Century."

- [East Bay Express \(San Fran\)](#)

"Like any self-respecting jazz-thrash-rock-latin-noise band from the dark underbelly of New York, Gutbucket have a peerless way.... There is something smart, sleek and assured about Gutbucket, and when they begin firing on all cylinders it makes for an exhilarating, intelligently performed racket. - [The Guardian UK](#)

"Frantic party music... Ornette Coleman mixed with a rock band" - [The New York Times](#)

"... made up of guys that LOOK like they'd be playing indie rock, but unlike way too many of those cats, THESE cats can play the beejeebers out of their instruments." - [Washington Post](#)

"Nothing makes you feel as sane as listening to musicians who are clearly out of their minds.... Like the circus clown who continually pretends he's falling off his unicycle yet never actually does, Gutbucket has a wonderful knack for melting time without ever losing the groove. Would have hurt my ears if I wasn't laughing so hard." - [Guitar Player](#)

"Their fine new album, Dry Humping the American Dream (Cantaloupe), lays out the aural landscape, and it's a kooky, chop-filled one — teeming with a certain benevolent mania, a clearly discernible sense of humor, considerable virtuosity, and not a little imagination." - [San Francisco Bay Guardian](#)

"Blends free jazz, hardcore rock, oddball time signatures, and other elements into a cacophonous, humor-laden sound all its own." - [Boston Globe](#)

"Sounds like Raymond Scott's soundtrack for a movie about Frank Zappa, performed by Slayer and Ornette Coleman, only the reels aren't in order." - [Nashville Scene](#)

"Gutbucket's stylistic chaos makes sonic dime-turns, blasting from riff-based heavy rock to jazz and klezmer, often in one song. The resulting noise sounds much larger than the quartet making it." - [The Onion](#)

"Smart, fireball, shock 'n awe sets" - [Santa Fe Reporter](#)

"The trademark Gutbucket sound is an energetic attack in which Citerman and Thomson engage in explosive guitar-sax duels, playing in tandem as often as in tangles." - [Tucson Weekly](#)

"... the sheer power of Sonic Youth, but they could never play this well ... a real kick in the pants to anyone looking for an easy ride." - [All About Jazz](#)

"The high level of innovative musicianship leaves the listener wanting more." - [AM News NY](#)

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RANTS AND RAVES

AUDIO



GUTBUCKET

Dry Humping the American Dream

Nothing makes you feel as sane as listening to musicians who are clearly out of their minds. One glance at none-too-serious song titles such as “O.J. Bin Laden,” “Dance of the Demented Pigeon,” and “Dry Humping the American Dream,” and you’ll know that the guys in Gutbucket are obviously, so to speak, a few beats short of a full measure. On the subject of mutant meters, this band does surf weirdo time signatures with zeal and tenacity, but what’s more impressive is how well they *morph* tempos. Like the circus clown who continually pretends he’s falling off his unicycle yet never actually does, Gutbucket has a wonderful knack for melting time without ever losing the groove.

But a collection of propeller-headed prog-rockers the New York-based quartet is not. These psycho improvisers—including guitarist Ty Citerman, who’s not afraid to kick in the lead channel—seem flung from the swirling musical maelstrom we call free jazz. And they swing. Saxophonist/bandleader Ken Thomson surely embodies the zany Gutbucket ethos best when he braids his twisted timbres with his frenetic sense of humor, as he does in his solo on the album’s title track. Towards the end of this raging bout of reed torture, Thomson’s horn shrieks as if being played by Ornette Coleman on a bad acid trip. Then, suddenly, Thomson puts his instrument aside and takes the chaotic emotion to the next plane of insanity by repeatedly screaming at the top of his lungs into his sax microphone, red-lining the mixing board’s level meters as much as he is his own vocal cords. It would have hurt my ears if I wasn’t laughing so hard. **Cantaloupe.** —*Jude Gold*

Gutbucket, masters of free jazz/rock improvisation, still working on that whole staircase thing.



 **the ONION** ***

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music

Mr. Bungle fans might appreciate Gutbucket, though it lacks the pretension and forced bizarreness of Mike Patton’s old side project. Gutbucket’s stylistic chaos makes sonic dime-turns, blasting from riff-based heavy rock to jazz and klezmer, often in one song. The resulting noise (heard most recently on *Dry Humping The American Dream*) sounds much larger than the quartet making it. Live, the band tends to break the fourth wall through a number of shenanigans, which in the past have included volleyball games, blindfolds, and more. Unlike other bands that embrace bizarreness for its own sake—often with boring, self-indulgent results—Gutbucket makes sure to keep the crowd interested, and even involved.