



THE SILVER JEWS

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA

DC358 ▶▶ LP/CD

Songs:

- WHAT IS NOT BUT COULD BE IF
- ALOYSIUS, BLUEGRASS DRUMMER
- SUFFERING JUKEBOX
- MY PILLOW IS THE THRESHOLD
- STRANGE VICTORY, STRANGE DEFEAT
- OPEN FIELD
- SAN FRANCISCO B.C.
- CANDY JAIL
- PARTY BARGE
- WE COULD BE LOOKING FOR THE SAME THING

A new Silver Jews record so soon! What have we done in life to earn it? Just living is enough. Here's your guided tour to the guided tour that is **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA**.

All a-sweat and working hard, rumbling with terror and humility like old **Johnny Cash**, **David Berman** is once again our tour guide into the void, pointing out spots where some dreams died and other candy-colored conceits were conceived. Almost alone out front at the top of "What Is Not But Could Be If," he's joined by the band (**Jews vets Cassie Berman, Tony Crow, Brian Kotzur, Peyton Pinkerton and William Tyler**), wafting in as if from next door before kicking the lights out. Their opening trot deceives us into fantasies of easing into **Berman's** latest head bath. But no dice – **D.C.'s** got a head of steam and smoke, as evidenced by the antic pistol-pumping rhymes n' rhythms of "Aloysius, Bluegrass Drummer."

Ears thus cauterized, "Suffering Jukebox," and "My Pillow is the Threshold" strike us as the latest and most formal Silver Jews entries into the realm of the Chart-Worthy Song. Inspirational line: "what looks like sleep is really hot pursuit." But don't ignore the wide-hearted power of the chorus "Strange Victory, Strange Defeat" or the ear-pleasuring chime of "Open Field," (a **Maher Shalal Hash Baz** cover!) which will recall to old-timers their carefree days of **R.E.M.** fandom before the rest of the world knew, or cared – or didn't care anymore. The days of '80s-'90s flavor are aflame again in these tunes!

"San Francisco B.C." is the centerpiece of the penultimate part of the climax of **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA**. A dramatic panorama of music history is on epic display behind a tale of dovetailing fates featuring the ominous appearance of **Mr. Games** – a Merry Pranksters version of "Street Hassle," if you will. Regardless, history is longer than we think. Classic **Bermanisms** signal our arrival into "Candy Jail," an institution overflowing with assorted titular sweets as well as a few bitter treats too. Suddenly the sky is available overhead, as the breeze ruffs our hair and "Party Barge," is launched. It's back to a state of nature for the finale, and with our idyll gritting savory between our teeth, along with all other human failings intact, we swing back to the jungle, waving goodbye to **D.C.** and his bunch, edified, emulsified, intensified, stronger and ready. Uncanny! Excellent!

POINTS OF INTEREST

- ▶▶ **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA** is the all-new sixth album from Silver Jews and first since 2005's **TANGLEWOOD NUMBERS**.
- ▶▶ **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA** was played by the Jews who toured the world in 2005 and 2006: **David and Cassie Berman, Tony Crow, Brian Kotzur, Peyton Pinkerton and William Tyler**. They're gonna tour the world again for **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA**.
- ▶▶ The cover for **LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, LOOKOUT SEA** is "The Lure of Paris #27," painted by **Stephen Bush**.

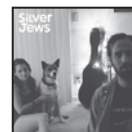
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THE SILVER JEWS

A Biography

Silver Jews have been talking to the world since 1990, watching that world grow ever larger with every Silver Jews release. Gradually formed from a beginning tangle of chair scraping, state motto twisting gnostic cutdowns, cigarette hiss and scissory whelps by David Berman, Steven Malkmus and Bob Nastanovich, Silver Jews have gone on to include nearly thirty members over the course of five albums between 1994 and 2005 — certainly enough bulls to qualify them for their own Antelope Stud Lodge. If they wanted it.

The Silver Jews first wandered on camera with a pair of home-recorded EPs, “Dime Map of the Reef” and “The Arizona Record” in the gay old summers of ’92 and ’93. These established their reputation as fearless and mysterious poets of the underground; to listen beneath the slashing bang and clang legislative sketch drawing of these recordings, one found songs of whimsy, soul and rare wit. A tiny but international public’s imagination thus inflamed, Silver Jews “came clean” with the 1994 release of *Starlite Walker*, which captured their first studio-bound utterances and contained the crystal and the cagey, but telegraphed an emotional openness and spiritual longing that wasn’t such a big part of its sister band’s act.

That sister band, Pavement, toured all over the world during those years. The Silver Jews didn’t tour — in fact, they forswore the action, preferring to ply their craft at a safe distance from their audience — but their rapidly expanding fanbase provided enough in sales royalties to live off at that distance in relative peace for a year or so. By the end of that time, Berman had a new set of songs ready to record. But sessions were scheduled and cancelled twice; it became apparent that just over five years into the Silver Jews’ history, David Berman had written himself out of the orbit of his bandmates. New fellows would be required for another attempt at completing the songs — and fortunately, the third time was the charm. Recordings were made shortly after Memorial Day, 1996 — and when released in the fall of that year, *The Natural Bridge* brought new depth, despair and one liners to the myth of the Silver Jews. *Melody Maker* called it the 17th best record of the year. Before going out of business.

Now the Silver Jews were officially in late Steely Dan territory, with carefully crafted albums rendered by session players and a growing popularity supported by no live shows of any kind. And like late Steely Dan, it worked. As the 90s dragged on, they lived off the fat of the land and the land grew fatter still. Reunited with Malkmus — whose lead guitar work on this album remains his best — only? — unself-conscious lead guitar work — in the New York City of 1998, Berman unveiled a new batch of tunes. With a bit of the old Jews magic, the two collaborated on additional material, recruited the best players the city had to offer (Mike Fellows and Tim Barnes) and recorded *American Water*. You know the statistics. Rated a 9.9 in a yet

to get their rating system straightened out Pitchfork. Sales in the high 20,000’s. The world at large capitulated — Courtney Love came knocking — but nothing was heard, only a note was shoved under the door.

At this point — 1998 — Berman was regarded as a voice of his times — so it came as no surprise when that note, *Actual Air*, a book of poems bearing his name, and the crude plaudits of the *New Yorker* and the *GQ*, appeared in 1999. However, when 2000 came and went without a new Jews record in the fall (as there had been every two years since *Starlite Walker* had redrawn the calendar), parties slowed down somewhat as people wondered what was going on — hoping against hope that it was bad enough to be good.

Bright Flight provided the answer. And they say it never hurts to ask! Holed up and rolled up in Nashville with a hot band, and a hotter wife, Berman cut a dozen or so of the hurtin’ est Silver Jews songs ever, merging the funny and the funereal in lyrics that cut to the souls of the hardest Jews fans. It was heart-rending material — songs meant to stand forever in the rain, as a comfort to those who knew warmth and dryness. In a rainy day special way, it’s our favorite Silver Jews album.

Three years passed — and then another year! David Berman had now taken four years between albums — and as that fourth October passed, *Tanglewood Numbers* had a dark tale to tell to those who had an advanced copy. And were ready to listen. It was told in exuberant, high-rocking fashion. A video for “Punks in the Beerlight” became a video hit — and then MTV kept playing that “How Can I Love You When You Won’t Lie Down” video on that once-a-week show. And then they asked for another so we gave them the “Sleeping is the Only Love” video and they kept showing that one. At that point we could no longer continue to provide free content for the network and also make a living in the music business.

But scarcity has away of fulfilling itself, even if it takes two years and seven months to do so. Thusly: *Lookout Mountain Lookout Sea*. Preferred acronym: *LOM LOC!* Recorded all over Nashville, the newish testament version of the Joos includes David and Cassie Berman, Tony Crow and Brian Kotzur — returnees all —, the twin ax attack of Peyton Pinkerton — *Natural Bridge* — and William Tyler — *Bright Flight* —. This is the band that broke the long-standing Silver Jews touring ban with an incredible series of shows all around America and Europe throughout 2006 that we didn’t tell you about in the last paragraph. They’re the band that plays on the new album as well. All Nashvillians —cept one, this band has had time together and their songwriter is one of the best there is. What’s more, this is the best rock album to come out of Nashville in a long, long time. It’s called *Lookout Mountain, Lookout Sea* and the cover painting is by Australian artist Stephen Bush.

