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THEE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND BIOGRAPHY

Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band began life as the more manageably named A Silver Mt. Zion in 1998, and the group continues to use SMZ as band shorthand to this day. The Montréal-based group was initially formed by Efrim Menuck, Thierry Amar and Sophie Trudeau (all of Godspeed You! Black Emperor). Their early performances centered around Menuck's plaintive piano themes, supported by Amar's first forays into upright acoustic bass playing and Trudeau's swirling violin cascades. A debut album, self-recorded on the band's own 8-track reel-to-reel machine (the first official recording to be made at the now legendary Hotel2Tango studio), was released to broad critical acclaim in 1999. The album was largely instrumental, though notably featured Menuck's first example of singing and lyric writing since Godspeed's early cassette-only release from 1995.

The group expanded to six members in late 2000, with the addition of Rebecca Foon (cello), Ian Ilavsky (guitar) and Jessica Moss (violin). This line up composed new material and reworked songs from the debut album, embarking on a European tour in early 2001. The band name officially lengthened (to reflect the larger group, and help rock journalists with their word counts) with the release of a sophomore double album later that year. Rapturously received, the band's marriage of string quartet to blown-out electric guitars, and the increasing deployment of vocals - especially Efrim's uncompromising, incisive lyricism - pointed the way towards the more overt redefinition of protest music that the band would go on to chart with subsequent recordings.

The third SMZ album, released in 2003, featured a twenty-person amateur choir (enlisted from the band's community of friends, musicians and non-musicians alike) on the opening and closing tracks. This record rallied all of the group's emerging stylistic influences and interests - including free jazz, community sight-singing, Minimalism and American folkways - still anchored to a punk-rock take on neo-classical and modern music tropes. Menuck definitively found his voice on this album as well, as a singer and lyricist able to conjure a popular language of scathing social critique and heart-rending invocations of solidarity, without falling into any of the well-worn clichés of "political punk" or treacly righteousness. This unfettered, unbridled honesty and emotion, buffeted by an increasing use of group singing and massed vocals, cemented SMZ as a cult band with a dedicated following. The album also established long-form, multi-movement compositions as another of the band's trademarks; the album comprised four songs, each taking up an album side, each clocking in at 15:00-20:00. Needless to say, much commercial radio play ensued...

Having used guest drummers on their studio recordings up to this point, the band added multi-instrumentalist Scott Gilmore as a full-time seventh member in 2004, to fill drumming duties, as well as the occasional mandolin and guitar. SMZ toured the UK in December 2004, including the first of two appearances at the All Tomorrow's Parties festival. A full tour of Europe followed in spring 2005. Violinist Sophie Trudeau broke her collarbone in a nasty bike accident in fall of 2004 and played these tours with a metal plate in her shoulder and painkillers in her pocket. Another surgery related to this injury sidelined Trudeau for the rest of 2005, but Sophie had made a full recovery by 2006.

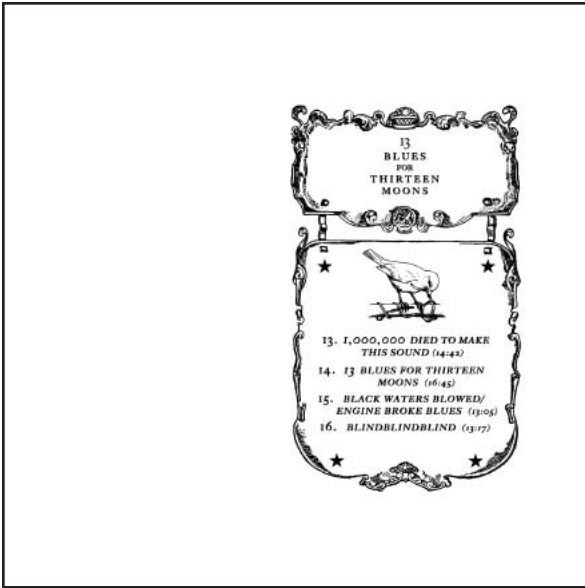
In the meantime, Menuck had self-recorded three tunes during late night wine-fueled sessions in 2004, to which various members of SMZ then added. Released in 2005 under the name Thee Silver Mountain Reveries, this EP opened with a saturated, euphoric rock instrumental left over from the band's previous recording sessions, followed by the three Menuck compositions marked by haunting, reverb-drenched vocals and a dark psych vibe throughout. The group has gone on to incorporate most of these songs into their live set at one point or another.

Four members of SMZ, together with label mates Hangedup, formed another side-project of sorts in fall of 2005, composing a new batch of original material to perform at a film, music and politics festival in Belgium. This one-off project was named and billed as Thee Silver Mountain Elegies Play War Radio. This group executed a studio recording of the material as well, which they continue to work on, when time permits, for eventual release.

The full band's next release - another double album - followed in 2006. Their most urgent and fully-realised record to date, this release in many ways completed the group's transition to full-on, vocal-driven, highly charged and uniquely inventive punk-rock. With song titles like "God Bless Our Dead Marines", "Teddy Roosevelt's Guns" and "Ring Them Bells (Freedom Has Come And Gone)", the record captured and commented on our new war conditions like few others, and was hailed as one of the most devastating and original protest records of these dark, outrageous times.

The group toured Europe and North America in spring and summer of 2006, after which drummer Gilmore quit the band to pursue school. Eric Craven (ex-Hangedup) was drafted to fill the drum chair and this line-up toured Europe again in spring 2007, playing much of the new material that would go on to appear on the band's forthcoming record, *13 Blues For Thirteen Moons*, slated for release in March 2008.

All of the band's recordings have been made at the Hotel2Tango recording studio in Montréal and all have been released worldwide by Constellation.



Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band

13 Blues For Thirteen Moons

OUT MARCH 25, 2008 ON CD & 2x180gLP 
CONSTELLATION WWW.CSTRECORDS.COM

Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band have been making a big raw angry tender racket since the 2005 release of their last album, *Horses In The Sky*. With a focus on live performance and special projects over the past three years, the group proper has logged well over 100 shows in Europe and North America, in between sessions that yielded

Thee Silver Mountain Reveries EP and Thee Silver Mountain Elegies Play War Radio tour (featuring four members of Mt. Zion and both members of labelmates Hangedup), as well as collaborations with Carla Bozulich, Vic Chesnutt and Patti Smith in the studio and in concert.

The music of the full band (two guitars, two violins, cello, contrebasse and drums) has grown louder, looser, full of spittle and tears. On *13 Blues For Thirteen Moons*, riffs are the backbone more than ever. Anchored by new drummer Eric Craven (ex-Hangedup), the band works its slow build and burn with newfound patience, sinuousness and ferocity. Whether methodically framing walls of sound over the four-on-the-floor punk dirge of "1,000,000 Died To Make This Sound" or exploding in sheets of free noise and melody on "Black Waters Blowed", the band has never rocked harder and has never sounded more determined, desperate and driven. A stuttered blues riff is the foundation for the album's title track, making its appearance after a blisteringly minimalist intro. "Engine Broke Blues" features a gorgeous set of chords that build inexorably from multiple guitar, string and organ lines.

Fans of the group will be familiar with much of this material from the band's live shows over the past couple of years. The recording, undertaken at the newly renovated Hotel2Tango facility in Montréal and co-engineered by Howard Bilerman and Radwan Moumneh (who is also the band's live sound person), ups the ante considerably, with crackling guitar crescendos setting the pace for dive-bombing swirls of strings, while Efrim's voice rasps and wails words of worry, hope and fury throughout. The band's hallmark group vocal passages are positively spine-tingling.

Constellation is thrilled to be releasing this mighty slab on CD and 2x180gLP. Both formats come in our custom cardstock packaging, printed on 100% recycled fine paper, and include lyrics as part of the insert booklet.

Thanks for listening.

SELECT PRESS QUOTATIONS ON THEE SILVER MT. ZION:

"...the group encompass the earthiness of basic rock'n'roll energy and the elevated raptures of a space rock chorale."
– Tom Ridge, *The Wire*

"...this remains marvelous music: at once complex and direct; unfashionably serious; uncommonly moving."
– John Mulvey, *Uncut*

"Where Godspeed are explosive, this Orchestra rest in the quiet lulls between the stormy peaks. Guitarist Efrim's orchestrations and Neil Young tones exude sadness and anger, urgency and calm." – Andrew Carden, *Mojo*

"The album's two pieces...weave a tapestry of piano, guitar, upright bass, violin, organ and various taped and organic sounds that creep slowly across the listener's heart and mind until the almost Beckettian world view expressed in the record's title is all-encompassing and inescapable." – Phil Freeman, *Magnet*

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