**LARS FINBERG**

***Moonlight Over Bakersfield***

**In The Red Records**

Deep breath: It’s been nearly 20 years of high marks Mr. Lars Aldric Finberg, shocking as that calculation may be to make. Be it as basher in A-FRAMES and THEE OH SEES, secret weapon of WOUNDED LION, architect of PUBERTY and administrator of THE INTELLIGENCE, his whirlwind presence has been a reliable one; that of an artist that people look for and look toward. With outlets as varied (be they casual or all-consuming) as this, what oh what then prompted the emergence of a solo offering? In truth, it was In The Red’s outta-nowhere green-lighting of the concept that sent Finberg’s brain bubbling toward *Moonlight Over Bakersfield*, a statement of entirely his own concoction…A truly swirling step from a guy that’s always movin’ diagonally.

Followers of Finberg’s recording history will immediately detect a plume of confidence around *Moonlight Over Bakersfield*, an air that each successive offering has inched toward but now, at long last, has taken full bloom. It’s legitimately wonderful to witness Lars ordering off the top shelf across every aspect of the album, recognizing this as a collection of experiments and bangers deserving of such treatment. This assuredness carries over thematically, with Finberg tackling both personal and political obsessions with equal honesty and sophistication.

His lone messaging when providing the album for perusal? “I got a little bit weird on this one.” And how: a wrong-made-right cross fade opens “Permanent Prowl”, a personal status update wherein nylon acoustic simplicity mutates toward alien discotheque raunch. The elite and original cleanliness to the rhythms on the album, where lows frequently become high (“Bass IS a guitar, after all!”), creates a total inversion of the Manc-born post-punkisms that have informed so much of his prior pop-craft. In fact, there’s a shocking amount of 90s industrial residue in tunes like “Isle Of Lucy”, an unexpected and completely winning addition to Finberg’s trick bag. The centerpiece of “Myopic Blue Heaven” is artificial Intelligence, a reimagining of the bedroom beginnings of “Boredom And Terror”, replacing any human charm with robot junk. It makes you think that this is what he’s been chasing after all along. The dangerous distortion bleed of “Ambiverts” forges what feels like the album’s epic: a speaker-ruiner with refrains that somehow never waver.

The favors called in for this occasion serve only as to bolster the offering as a whole. Frequent collaborators now stew with notable heavies from LA LUZ and MELVINS / BIG BUSINESS, creating Finberg’s Whole New Sound. The great MIKAL CRONIN even guests on sax, offering sophisticated bleat as needed. It’s TY SEGALL that serves as Finberg’s main ally though, both at the controls and in performance. Previous valiant attempts aside, *Moonlight Over Bakersfield* marks Segall’s first truly great achievement as producer/engineer, as if a partnership with Finberg would result in anything less.

Veiled hints at future L.A.F. riots are already coming in, so waste no time in hearing *Moonlight Over Bakersfield*. Lifestyle Popping --- Into The Gap!

Mitch Cardwell

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