**Single Review The Church ‘Coffee Hounds’**

**Unorthodox Uno 002**

**13:19**

**How Easy It All Is (The Coffee Song) \***

**Hounds Of Love**

**How Easy It All Is (The Coffee Song) (Instrumental) \***

*\* = The CD has the track titled as ‘The Coffee Song’, other sources such as the download call it ‘How Easy It*

*All Is’.*

Recorded at Spacejunk 3, ‘The Coffee Song’ was mixed and produced by Marty and Jorden Brebach, ‘Hounds Of Love’ was recorded by timEbandit Powles and The Church.

A curio in some ways as it comes along just before the ‘Untitled #23’ album launch yet doesn’t feature on the album, the E.P. was conceived sometime ago, Steve commented on his blog in April 2008 – “Wow, a cool thing it is, The Coffee Song Submarine N Floydy, Hounds Of Love fast N Furious, Instrumental…very stoned.

Having enjoyed hearing The Church’s take on ‘Hounds Of Love’ live, a live b-side or a recorded version (maybe acoustically on El Momento Triplemente !) was highly desirable. The ‘Coffee Hounds’ EP title suggests perhaps equal billing for the two songs and of course the first original song to be released since the Block Bonus tracks is keenly anticipated.

The last few singles ‘Easy’, ‘Block’, ‘Song In Space’ and ‘Numbers’ have been energetic dramatic songs which makes the opening moments of ‘**How Easy It All Is**’ a surprise – a ‘Cortez’ style strum at a relaxed tempo is joined by dreamy backing vocals and sustained twangs of Electric Guitar. You Soon realise that whilst not adrenalin pumping, catchy or straight for the throat it’s hypnotically fixing, melodic and full of controlled restraint with the same dense soundscape from verse to chorus there’s a retained atmosphere of densely richly textured playing, the closest comparison perhaps being the cover of ‘Room Full Of Diamonds’. A relaxed dreamy soundscape dominates as the light acoustic strum progresses through a haze of shimmering bass and guitar texturing totally blissful.

‘**Hounds Of Love**’ opens with Tim’s thundering Tom drums, Piano and acoustic guitar. Generating a spark, its tempo, the use of multiple backing vocals and the prominent piano give it a distinctive feel from the live version. The play out is particularly effectively arranged; anyone expecting a brisk run through with carefree abandonment will be surprised at the precise customisation. When played live it was met by warm smiles – whether it was the extended intro of tales of talking dogs and associated puns, the unexpected choice of cover version – a minor degree of surrealism to experience perhaps, pleasantly breezy performance of it or the sheer “WHAT”-ness of it all it’s nice to have it in recorded form. Whether calling it ‘fun’ would or should be offensive I don’t know but it just still produces an ear to ear grin and although a little different, brings back happy memories of the tour to which it will always seem attached to mentally.

The **instrumental version** of ‘**How Easy It All Is**’ shows what we’d already discovered – for a single it has considerable musical texture and atmosphere and here it stands up as substantially interesting enough to warrant inclusion. It takes on a new lease of life and is actually wholly successful as an instrumental with its brooding expressive backing evoking ample atmosphere to retain interest. The element of having something missing from it ie the vocal doesn’t enter your thoughts – it’s more that track 1 is the brooding atmospheric instrumental with a vocal on it than the other way round - surprisingly interesting. It ends more naturally than the lead tracks early fade out hence the difference in track times (by a good 1 ½ minutes). Think of it this way, if the vocal version had never existed would this be a successful instrumental track – yes it would, being far more sonically dense than most singles instrumental versions would be.

Rounding off the E.P, there is a consistent feel and mood to the tracks despite their vastly different origins and tempo’s. The effective use of backing vocals on both tracks, the warmth leant by the acoustic guitars and a ‘believable’ capture of performances where the remarkable detail in the playing couples unusually well with a mood of improvisation, in other words even when they’re loose and relaxed the performances ooze quality, discipline, structure and extreme high points, results of a finely honed ‘knowing’. The production allows everything to breathe, stopping the dense arrangement from sounding stodgy or cumbersome particularly at the tempo of ‘The Coffee Song’. You feel like you’re on the floor of a smoky hazy room with the band surrounding you playing live in a deeply hypnotic state of mind.

So not the bright, direct, ‘catchy’ single you may have in mind but a lead track capable of being deeply affecting and as the song fades you feel we’ve had a privileged invite to dip into something that would carry on when we’ve gone and to sample an inspired part of a typical latter day style writing / jam session. ‘Hounds Of Love’ was always going to be ‘fun’ but the impressive thought behind its structure with layered backing vocals and rousing piano parts show a customisation and pride in making it their own.

The why’s and wherefores of the EP’s existence and timing can wait for another day – treat it as a bonus or whatever you feel like thinking of it as, with two albums and two EP’s arriving within three months of each other let’s be grateful to Surprise and Delight is ‘What they do’ and the days of being orthodox and conventional are long gone leading to gems like ‘Back With Two Beasts’ and stand alone EP’s like this.

The key is that it’s distinctive and therefore deserving of its ‘home’, a capture of a moment in time and continuing that most interesting of discographies with another collectable item in a time when the fun of collecting is being seriously threatened by the download culture. I think if you’d been in the room that day and experienced the conception of the song, the desire to give it it’s own standalone EP release makes sense, it must have been a special moment and thankfully preserved.