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Zeus

Busting Visions

(Arts And Crafts, 2012)

By Zoe Camp, March 29, 2012

Tracklist:

01. Are You Gonna' Waste My Time?
02. Love/Pain
03. Anything You Want Dear
04. Let It Go, Don't Let It Go
05. Strong Mind
06. Bright Brown Opus
07. Love In A Game
08. With Eyes Closed
09. Hello Tender Love
10. Messenger's Way
11. Proud And Beautiful
12. Stop The Train
13. Cool Blue (And The Things You Do)
14. Now That I've Got You

themusicofzeus.com

Contrary to what *Saturday Night Fever* would have you believe, the 1970s weren't all about disco. Sure, you could hear the Bee Gees on most FM channels, but just a radio dial turn away was the bastion of Americana: At any given time, the sweet sounds of Springsteen and John Mellencamp could be heard floating from the cheap plastic of a car stereo. Arguably, heartland rock ended up beating disco in the race to establish a long-term cultural legacy—if you need proof, just look at the ginormous crowds the Boss has been drawing on his most recent tour. And so, it's understandable—and expected—that subsequent generations have worked to tap into this beloved genre, bands like Blitzen Trapper and Delta Spirit being two of the most successful examples.

Sonically, the throwback-rock quartet Zeus isn't too far removed from the aforementioned bands and their influences. There is, however, one key differentiating factor: Zeus doesn't hail from Jersey or Nebraska but Toronto, Canada. This piece of geography may cause some heartland rock purists to turn up their noses—how can a Canadian band capture the American spirit inherent in amber waves of grain and old Chevrolets?—but to do so would be a shame because the band's latest effort, *Busting Visions*, is a nice set of scuzz-rock tunes that may very well have come from the days of Boston and Thin Lizzy.

All the necessary elements of classic rock are here: piston-pumping rhythms, wailing guitar riffs, stadium-sized melodies. Opener "Are You Gonna' Waste My Time," with its heavy use of cowbell, handclaps and crunchy guitar riffs, is a wonderful piece of FM gold and should be enough to dissuade any skeptics who think Canadians can't do good old-fashioned American rock. Most of the other cuts on the album take a mid-tempo approach; harmony-laden slow jams like the swinging "Love In A Game" and "Let It Go, Don't Let It Go." There are also forays into Elvis Costello-style post-punk ("Stop The Train") and country-fried ballads ("Hello Tender Love"). The variety likely stems from the fact that all four members of Zeus swap songwriting duties, meaning that hard-driving rock can segue to folk on a second's notice.

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This shows off the band's musical flexibility, but it also comes at the expense of solidarity. With no distinct sonic makeup sticking for more than two or three songs at a time, and a few too many generic hooks, *Busting Visions* can at times feel like a record that emphasizes quantity over quality. Then again, this also makes it easy for pretty much everyone to find at least one song they like. From hard rock to folk ballads, it's clear Zeus has done its homework on all of the key sounds of yesteryear.

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