



*Who could possibly want to die for art with all this great music to listen to?*

## MUSIC REVIEW: *A DATE WITH JOHN WATERS*

Jon Sobel February 8, 2007 0 Comments 11 Views

Ah, Valentine's Day. Day of kitsch, day of sentimentality, day of trash. It may be named after two saints, but nowadays it's a Hallmark "holiday" – an excuse to sell cards, candy and flowers to ardent (or guilt-ridden) lovers, a time for the lonely to feel even worse.

Valentine's Day is even more important for schoolchildren, as an early lesson in status-seeking, social humiliation, and bitter disappointment. Other holidays seem trivial in comparison: Easter, which teaches children the essential skill of painting eggs; Hanukkah, when Jewish kids learn to lie to their Christian friends about getting "eight presents;" Labor Day, a mysterious Monday off work with distant origins shrouded in myth.

Mostly, though, Valentine's Day is big business, and specifically the big business of bad taste. For every lady coming home to a nice bunch of roses, ten others are getting garish heart-shaped boxes of awful "chocolate." For every couple having a romantic dinner at a nice restaurant with white tablecloths, ten others are buying each other cheap, stuffed animals plastered with purple and pink mylar. So who better to spend the day with than the King of Kitsch, the Champion of Trash, the Baron of Bad Taste himself – John Waters?

OK, maybe we can't actually personally hang with the man. But the new CD *A Date With John Waters* could be the next best thing. The legendary indie filmmaker (and unlikely Broadway mogul) has compiled a set of favorite love songs, cock-eyed Waters style. It all makes a nutty kind of sense. The CD starts with the vaguely threatening teen-infidelity tale "Tonight You Belong To Me" by Patience and Prudence. It also covers sexually ambiguous (and not-so-ambiguous) territory with Josie Cotton's timeless novelty tune "Johnny Are You Queer?" and Elton Motello's delightfully dirty punk-rock classic "Jet Boy Jet Girl" with its unforgettable line, "I'm gonna make you be a girl."

Clarence "Frogman" Henry's "Ain't Got No Home" is, according to Waters, "the first tri-sexual song ever recorded," and he may be right. Demonstrating that music was kinky before the Fabulous Fifties, Mildred Bailey's "I'd Love to Take Orders From You" swings like there'll never be another war: "I know that rules were made for fools, that's one thing I have learned/But I'm goin' in for discipline wherever you're concerned."

Tina Turner's early tour-de-force of anger and jealousy "All I Can Do Is Cry" illuminates the dark side of weddings. Two of Waters's wacky repertory actors, Mink Stole and the late Edith Massey, contribute delightfully nutty takes on, respectively, a song called "Sometimes I Wish I Had a Gun" and the oldie "Big Girls Don't Cry." Syrupy selections from the likes of Dean Martin and Ray Charles are less surprising but still fit the theme, while John Prine and Iris Dement betray the sentiment underlying the shock and trash: "There won't be nothin' but big ol' hearts dancin' in our eyes," they sing in the simultaneously kinky and corny "In Spite of Ourselves."

Really now – who could possibly want to die for art with all this great music to listen to, and auteurs (and characters) like John Waters to give it extra context? (He personally delivers the liner notes in a [video](#).)

Good fun.

*Blogcritic Bill Sherman has also posted a review of the CD, and Gothamist has a good interview with Waters about it.*