



The new album by the HILLBILLY MOON EXPLOSION. 14 songs of love, hate, life and murder.

ENGLISH

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work up a plausible old-school sound these days — a few twangy guitars, a pile of echo, a sneering lead vocal on top, and presto, you're ready to rumble. There's a difference, however, between a true vintage-tinged update and another in a series of Eddie Cochran copycats. Which brings us to Hillbilly Moon Explosion, Zurich-based rock revivalists who've spent the past few years touring Europe incessantly, issuing a pair of psychobilly based releases (2002's *Introducing The Hillbilly Moon Explosion*, 2004's *Bourgeois Baby*) while watching their fan base grow by leaps and bounds. Mind you, this is no quaint Sun Records send-up; at their best, **HILLBILLY MOON EXPLOSION** - bassist/vocalist Oliver Baroni; rhythm guitarist/vocalist Emanuela Hutter; guitarist Duncan James and drummer Luke Weyermann — come across like a Sam Phillips-produced soundtrack to a Sam Raimi shock flick, a furious bed of slap bass and pounding snare underpinning layers of menacing guitar lines, wailing background vocals, and eerie keyboard flourishes, with front-woman Hutter providing the perfect aural/visual focal point, fishnet stockings and all.

When it came time to lay tracks for a third independent effort, head Hillbillies Baroni and Hutter eventually headed for the US and wound up at the door of producer-engineer Mark Neill, owner of San Diego's Soil of the South Studios, where it's all-analog, all the time. One could not imagine a better match-up: Neill, a rockabilly bred Southerner whose client list includes The Paladins, Los Straitjackets and Old 97s, is a rock archeologist of the highest order and vast collector of choice old-school audio tools, who knows how to nail it down in just a few takes using as few tracks possible (the way it was before we all had too much time and tracks on our hands). In order to provide Baroni and Hutter with the proper instrumental framework, Neill enlisted the support of cohorts like guitarist Eddie Angel (of Los Straitjackets fame), sax man Archie Thompson and drummer Craig "Flash" Packham, with Neill himself overlaying lead and rhythm guitars. The result is *All Grown Up*, a faithfully prepared (and mainly mono-mixed) amalgam of unbridled rock tracks that clock in at a Ramones-like two-and-a-half minutes apiece, featuring Baroni's saxes-with-axes classic "Live the Life," Hutter's sensually exotic take on "House of Bamboo," not to mention a tour-de-force rendering of Mel Larson's "Little Lil," with Baroni's lead vocals authentically distorting like a Little Richard 45. And in case anyone's forgotten what real country is supposed to sound like, there's the Baroni-penned "Brown Eyed Boy," a lilting Loretta Lynn pastiche that belies the murderous intent described within.

How good is this stuff? "To think that these guys came over to San Diego from Europe with a bunch of songs on acoustic guitar and absolutely nailed the vintage rock 'n roll sound—and made it contemporary," remarks the normally reserved Neill. "I've never seen that happen before."

-- Dave Simons