



Cooking Vinyl

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## PERE UBU

### New studio album "*Long Live Père Ubu!*" (COOKCD497)

Released 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009

Pere Ubu never do things by halves. Not content with inventing modern rock music in 1975, they set themselves the task of stylistically reinventing themselves with each subsequent album release. Next to Ubu, over the years, David "Chameleon of Rock" Bowie has looked as staid as Status Quo.

"*Long Live Père Ubu!*", released 14th September, is inspired by the proto-Absurdist stage play that gave the band its name – Alfred Jarry's "Ubu Roi" (King Ubu). Its premiere in Paris in 1896 provoked riots in the theatre and a national scandal. A vicious and satiric re-telling of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," Jarry's work lambastes do-gooder monsters and the survival of the Unfit.

During the hellishly protracted process of writing the songs, band leader David Thomas refused to speak to his band.

"He wouldn't see anyone. He didn't answer the phone," guitarist Keith Moliné explained. "The last time I was down to his place in Brighton he had cleared out his living room and installed two concentric rings of antique Mac computers, not one of them less than 20 years old. Somehow he had wired maybe 20 of them together. The heat and pulsing generated by all those old machines hit you like a wall. 'This is Mr. Ubu, he'll write the album,' was what David said. Then he sent me packing. I didn't see him again for nearly a year."

"We began to get emails with MP3 files," Moliné continues. "You could hear him walking around mumble-singing and you could hear waves of buzzing and tapping. One file would be labeled 'Bass Drum,' another 'Guitar Track,' and so on."

Thomas made ever more punishing and unreasonable demands, insisting that the band rehearse "Mr. Ubu's music" over and over at Thomas Alva Edison's family farm in Milan, Ohio.

"He would sit there arms folded, eyes closed, with a scowl on his face, listening to us rehearse," Moliné said. "Then he would make everyone stop, and he'd call his home in England - no one was there but something picked up the phone and he would make one of us listen to 'Mr. Ubu' - 'That! Play that!' he said. All you could hear was buzzing and tapping, maybe a car going by outside or someone walking past his window, or some piece of singing in the middle of it all. He'd go out, telling us get on with it. Sometimes, we'd just write our own music but he never mentioned it if he noticed or cared. Just started singing. I think he must have been listening at the window."

With the songs nearing completion, the band took on the challenge that Ubu-philes have spent thirty years hoping their heroes would tackle: the staging of a multimedia avant-musical entitled "Bring Me The Head Of Ubi Roi." True to form, they decided to do it The Hard Way. Thomas spent 18 months adapting Jarry's text, taking on the stage role of Père Ubu himself, and recruiting the actress/chanteuse Sarah Jane Morris (ex-Communards, Happy End) to play his conniving wife, Mère Ubu. In addition to arranging the songs and contributing music, the band and their soundman, Gagarin, were enlisted to play supporting roles on stage and perform dance routines. That's right, dance routines.

The play, staged for the first time in London in 2008, was glorious, riotous chaos. When an audience member required the attention of an ambulance crew during one of the performances most of the audience thought it was part of the show. Jarry would have been delighted. The songs from the production and some of the incidental music are here on "*Long Live Père Ubu!*," the band's 16th studio album. Ambitious, harrowing, hilarious, it's unlike anything they've done before. Typical Ubu.



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#### **TRACK LISTING**

1. Ubu Overture 2:42
2. Song Of The Grocery Police 1:46
3. Banquet Of The Butchers 2:55
4. March Of Greed 3:35
5. Less Said The Better 2:31
6. Big Sombrero (Love Theme) 3:47
7. Bring Me The Head 3:40
8. Road To Reason 3:55
9. Slowly I Turn 4:25
10. Watching The Pigeons 3:21
11. The Story So Far 7:57
12. Snowy Livonia 1:19
13. Elsinore & Beyond 1:35

#### **PERE UBU is:**

David Thomas - vocals  
Sarah Jane Morris - vocals  
Keith Moliné - guitar  
Robert Wheeler - EML synthesizer, theremin  
Gagarin - electronica  
Michele Temple - bass  
Steve Mehlman - drums

A radio play version of "Bring Me The Head Of Ubu Roi" is available from [www.hearpen.com](http://www.hearpen.com), Pere Ubu's download web site.

URL for "Bring Me The Head Of Ubu Roi": [www.ubuprojex.net/bringmethehead.html](http://www.ubuprojex.net/bringmethehead.html).