



DEAD CANARY RECORDS
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BASSHOLES - "THE BASSHOLES"

FOR FANS OF: Gibson Bros., Blues Explosion, 68 Comeback, Flat Duo Jets, Anthology of American Folk Music

The Bassholes, released on the utterly independent **Dead Canary** label, is the first full-length by the band of the same name since 1998's *Long Way Blues* on **Matador** and *When My Blue Moon Turns Red Again* on **In the Red**. While the two-piece band, comprised of singer/guitarist Don Howland and drummer Lamont "Bim" Thomas, has been active in the years since - touring the Midwest, West Coast and Europe in the interval - recording has been problematic since Howland's move to North Carolina and Thomas' to Cleveland around the time of *Long Way Blues*' release. Howland recorded a solo album for **Birdman** called *The Land Beyond the Mountains* in 2001 that would've been a Bassholes album if Thomas had been around, but time and distance were a problem.

Up to this point, the Bassholes, reflecting Howland's bi-polar nature, had a sort of rhythm going with their long-players: the first, third and fifth albums were recorded in deep, deep lo-fi, while the second and fourth were big studio productions. The former batch (*Blue Roots*, *Deaf Mix 3*, and *Long Way Blues*) were considered by listeners to be weird to the extent that "experimental" often turned up in reviews, while the latter batch, considerably more listenable and likable to an audience that preferred rock to wondering whether their speakers had blown, were more straight-ahead, owing largely to the rushed nature of \$40-\$100 an hour recording sessions. The good guys at **Dead Canary**, after releasing an e.p. of lo-fi weird stuff recorded in a broom closet in Asheville, offered the band a chance to do something new - record some of the weird stuff in a hi-fi setting. Howland and Thomas met up in their old hometown of Columbus, Ohio and fed off the mostly but not entirely positive vibes of familiarity, working in a comfortable and well-appointed studio (Workbook) with a master engineer in Jon Chinn. The result is *The Bassholes*, which is far and away Howland's favorite record in the chain. (But then, it *ought* to be.)

The Bassholes began as a two-piece in 1992 in Columbus, Ohio. The 2-piece format was not so much an aesthetic decision as a practical one. (It was certainly not a trendy decision; there were no other two-piece bands going then until the Flat Duo Jets canned their bass player.) Gibson Brothers singer/guitarist Don Howland, a father and an inner-city middle school teacher, realized he had a lot of songs he still wanted to try but was too stress-fried to deal with organizing a 3- or 4-piece band. A country blues fanatic, Howland was fond of those impromptu Lightning Hopkins recordings from the '50s when Spider Kilpatrick or Connie Kroll happened by to play drums, and the Bassholes, but for a three month or so period when they tried adding a bass player, has remained a guitar-drums duo from the get-go. A series of 45s on various labels (compiled along with unreleased stuff from the period on an upcoming release on N.Y.C.'s **Secret Keeper**) and an LP on **In the Red** (*Blue Roots*, the label's first full-length, later reissued on John Fahey's **Revenant** label) were recorded in the converted stable house behind an operating funeral home with ex-Gibson Brothers' drummer Rich Lillash manning the tubs. They moved inside the home, down the hall and past the draining room, to work on material for second and third LP's, and the band (with Thomas subbing for Lillash at a Cleveland gig and sticking on ever since) has cantered along and accepting, finally, its cult status.

Hooking up with Grafton's Lou Poster, who drove the band on a Midwest jaunt in his fur-lined ex-CIA conversion van, the Bassholes recognized a kindred spirit. The two bands did some gigs together. Grafton's meat-and-spuds-and-suds Midwest power rock and the Bassholes' how-do-two-guys-make-all-that-noise? din complementing one another nicely. When Poster said he was starting **Dead Canary** (the name harkens to Poster's roots in the coal country of West Virginia), the Bassholes, who *only* work with friends, said they'd be happy to do an e.p. for the fledgling label. The idea for doing an full length album on **Dead Canary** naturally followed.

Howland, who continues to teach middle school history and English because it is meaningful work, has a tough time describing the band's sound to people who ask, but it is a sound reflects the sensibilities of a man who is first and foremost a music lover, and has been since his dad would bring home Top 40 hits - Animals and Sam the Sham and Gentrys and Castaways - on 45 every payday back in the mid-'60s. A list of the covers the band has undertaken over the years might say as much about where the Bassholes are coming from as any critic blurb; it includes both widely influential and remotely obscure tracks alike but they all share a certain surreal if wanton bleakness and they are all songs Howland *loves passionately*: "Broke Down Engine" by Blind Willie McTell (a live staple presented here in high fidelity), the Avantes' "Baby Go," Joy Division's "Interzone," the Fugs' "Coming Down," the Ramones' "Havana Affair," ESG's "Moody," the Stooges' "Raw Power," the Frogs' "Jesus Book," Bob Dylan and the Band's "Yea! Heavy and a Bottle of Bread," the Who's "Tattoo" and "Heaven and Hell" (the latter included in this set), Alan Vega's "Love Cry," Skip James' "Evil Devil Blues," the Germs' "Lion's Share," and pub-rocker Lew Lewis' classic Stiff B-side "Caravan Man" (*also* in this set, with guitar augmentation by *thee* Derek DiCenzo and harp by local (Columbus) harp legend Pete Remenyi.) Maybe that'll help.

Or maybe not. If you want the answer Howland usually resorts to, it's "sort of like punk rock."

NOTES/CONTACT: The Bassholes will be touring Europe for six weeks in February and March of 2005. For European booking information contact: Thee SEETZ at Kalium (seetz@kalium.nl). European publicity by Romy Raurus at Evil Bitch 666 (romy@evilbitch666.com). Dead Canary Records contact: Scott Stroemer (scott@deadcanaryrecords.com - 773.252.0946). Bassholes contact: Don Howland (donshitman@hotmail.com)

BASSHOLES DISCOGRAPHY

- Blue Roots* (LP - In The Red, 1993/CD - Revenant, 1997)
- Haunted Hill* (LP/CD - In The Red, 1995)
- Deaf Mix Vol. 3* (LP/CD - In The Red, 1997)
- Long Way Blues/1996-1998* (LP/CD - Matador, 1998)
- When My Blue Moon Turns Red Again* (LP/CD - In The Red, 1998)
- The Secret Strength Of Depression* (LP/CD - Sympathy for the Record Industry, 2001)
- Out In The Treetops* (2x7"/CD - Dead Canary, 2003)
- Broke Chamber Music (45s and Unreleased)* (LP/CD - Secret Keeper, 2004)
- The Bassholes* (LP/CD - Dead Canary, 2004)

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DCR005 -LP/CD. Release 12/04

1. Broke Down Engine (Blind Willie McTell)
2. Blackbird (Howland)
3. Hell's Angel (Howland)
4. Daughter (Howland)
5. Fascist Times (Howland)
6. Purple Noon (Howland)
7. Caravan Man (Lew Lewis)
8. High Up in the Treetops (Howland)
9. Bridgett (Howland)
10. Shortening (traditional)
11. St. Matthew (Howland)
12. John Barleycorn (lyrics: traditional)
13. Heaven and Hell (Entwistle)
14. Dingleberry Jam (Bassholes)

Don Howland - vocals,guitar, keyboard.
Bim Thomas - drums.

Derek DiCenzo - guitar on 7, 14.
Mark Gaskill - vocal harmonies on 11
Lou Poster - guitar on 6, 13
Pete Remenyi - dobro, harmonica
Donovan Roth - bass on 6, 13.
Mark Wyatt - accordion on 9, bass on 4, 11, vocal harmonies on 11.
Carl Yaffey - clawhammer banjo.

Recorded at Workbook Studio in Columbus, Ohio, 2003-4
Produced by Don Howland and Jon Chinn
Mastered by Kris Poulin

