

'Puppets of Castro' is pop, not politics

By Bliss

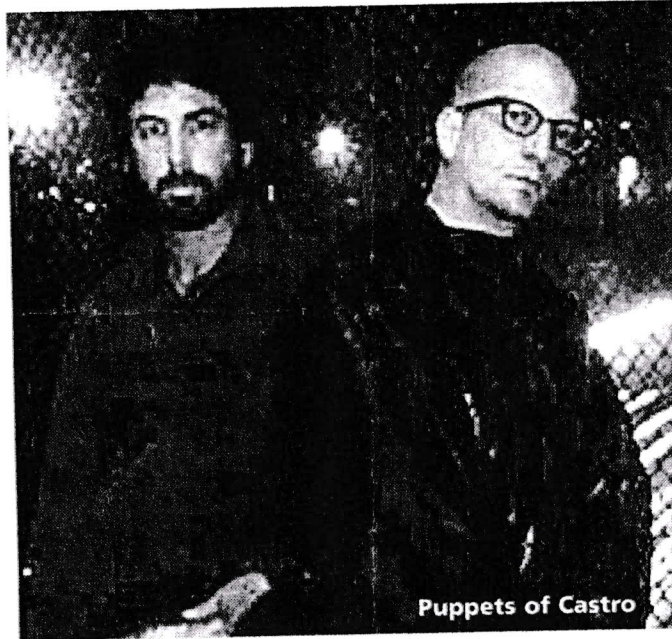
The slicing wit and insight that colored singer-songwriter Andrew Lorand's 1997 album "Location. Location. Location." resurface in welcome abundance on "Puppets of Castro" (Trough Records), Lorand's winning pop collaboration with chameleon-like singer/

MAKING TRACKS

poet Matthew Niblock (best known as front man for Superman Loses the Girl and the now-defunct Clear).

Lorand's playful yet provocative wordplay is showcased in a dozen songs, from the trumpet-spiced "Weight of the World" ("With a heart that's at least as large as four Jackie Gleasons, I could love you but it would be for all the wrong reasons") to the addictive catchy ode to co-dependence "I'd Do Anything" ("I could be more like you/ I could be my own man if you want me to/ I can't wait to find out what I'm about, you tell me").

Happily, the music is as involving as the lyrics. The absurd humor and vivacity of romps like "Girls Who Look Like That" and especially "Planet" (possibly the album's strongest track) are balanced by the less-is-more sparseness of "Mr. Smith" — one of two songs co-written by Niblock — and the damning finality of



Puppets of Castro

"We Had Hope." There's a touch of down-home folksiness about "Space and Time," with its flashes of Dobro and double mandolins, and the touching revelations in "Extraordinary Things."

Lorand assumes lead vocals on a few tunes, the nasal flatness of his delivery underscoring the humor in the lyrics. On "Maria," he sounds

like a slightly less sarcastic James McMurtry if McMurtry could actually sing.

But Lorand's a writer first, not a singer, and his choice to join forces with the gifted Niblock was a smart one. Niblock's poetic instincts are sharply evident in the way his expressive voice attacks, caresses, and interprets Lorand's lyrics. He and

Lorand are well supported by a fine crew of local musicians that includes drummer Albe Bonacci, keyboardist Matthew Lee, guitarist Lauren Ellis, bassist Ritt Henn, violinist Craig Eastman, and background singers Jennifer Hardaway, Terence Gillespie and Kathrin Shorr.

For more information about Puppets of Castro, click your mouse over to www.puppet-sofcastro.com or www.trough.com. PW



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