



Kevin Russell's Junker **"Buttermilk & Rifles"** Sugar Hill [USA] / Munich Records [Europe]

In the world of alt. country, or whatever we're calling it this week, The Gourds are, stylistically, a pretty loose aggregation of performers. I'd even hazard use of the word, *sloppy*. And that's why I guess I like them so much, because some of these alt. country guys take themselves way too seriously. There's a *devil may care* charm that The Gourds incorporate into their music, which the band leader, Kevin Russell, has brought to this solo recording. Recorded in Austin during 2K1 [well that's what the liner claims] the support pickers include *local stars* Mark Rubin [Bad Livers] and Jon Dee Graham, on backing vocals from Damnation Tx. Amy Boone and Debra Kelly, plus a *full house* of Gourds – Keith Langford, Jimmy Smith, Claude Bernard and Max Johnson. Apart from A. P. Carter's "No More The Moon Shines On Lorena," Russell penned the remaining thirteen cuts, including a pair with Guthrie Russell, his young son. We'll return to those in a minute. The album title turns up in the lines of the opening cut, "Virgin On The Cobra," the opening verse of which [well, the first half] goes something like, "*yer disease is the sweetest, yer tug boat's swarthy, coagulate the handles, maybe make'em worth something.*" The latter should explain why I've never felt the need to analyse Russell's lyrics. As for further craziness, Debra Kelly's *harmonizin'* at the end of the second cut, "Twilight Of Song," consists of screams delivered at the top of her voice. Which bring us to those Kev & Son co-writes, "(Somebody Bring Me a Flower) I'm A Robot" and "Robot Reprise." Well, what can I say ? The best thing to do with The Gourds and Kevin Russell is sit back, get comfortable and just allow the good-time styled, toe tappin' music to wash over you. Lighten up and enjoy because, further down the road, there's lots more fun. "Shoetie Rag" for instance, is just a straight clog dancing instrumental. Then there's "Ashes In My Beard" – the lyric doesn't say whether they were still red hot, and "Imbibing My Prescriptions." As for "Way Fallen Stranger," golly that title sounds familiar ? One of the main headlines on The Gourds web site home page attests, this is "*Music for the unwashed and well read.*" So I guess loud rhythmic noise, amazing words and a devil may care attitude to stayin' in tune, is enough reason for you to rush out and buy this disc.....the foregoing review has been written in *the spirit* of Gourds/Kevin Russell music.

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood

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