



Ex-Sugar, Husker Du songsmith returns with a stellar set of guitar-driven rock songs

Whether it was time spent with his buddy Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters during the making of their last album *Wasting Light* or just the re-emergence of the need to turn things up a bit in celebration of the recent album reissues of his last band Sugar, rock veteran Bob Mould (Husker Du, Sugar) has delivered a cool bit of crunch with his latest, *Silver Age*. From the opening chords of the first track, the scalding profile of today's disposable celebrities 'Star Machine', one gets the feeling things will be going in a decidedly more uptempo direction than Mould's last effort, 2009's *Life And Times*.

Mould keeps the party going on the title track and the single 'The Decent' with its three-chord main riff and verse-section energy that is more than a little reminiscent of 'Fortune Teller' off Sugar's debut release *Copper Blue*.

The album kicks into full anthemic mode with the 'Steam of Hercules' - a mid-tempo thumper built on swirling guitars and Mould's reverberated vocals. Pounding toms and more

crunchy guitars introduce 'Fugue State' - a three and a half minute gem showcasing more of Mould's sonic adeptness.

Things don't really slow down on *Silver Age* until the end. The last - and longest - track on the record, 'First Time Joy', is also one of its best. Clean, chiming guitars and subtle keyboard strokes give way to power chord crunch as Mould sings about the dreams and decisions that move all of us through life.

The new record features Mould's current band - drummer Jon Wurster (Superchunk, The Mountain Goats) and bassist Jason Narducy (Split Single, Verbow). The band is on the road in the US right now in support of *Silver Age*, as well as playing Sugar's aforementioned *Copper Blue* record in its entirety.

Silver Age is an upbeat, crunchy audio feast for fans of Mould who had hoped he would make a third Sugar full-length. The songs hold their own with the best of those records without sounding dated or contrived.



ARTIST: Josh Smith
ALBUM: *Don't Give Up On Me*
LABEL: Crosscut Records

VERDICT: *Mojo Rising*

Los Angeles-based guitarist Josh Smith (Raphael Saadiq, Taylor Hicks) takes a soulful turn on his latest solo album, *Don't Give Up On Me*. The album's 11 cuts are steeped in rootsy, vintage Memphis-style blues complete with horn section and plenty of shimmering keys work.

Fans shouldn't let that description put them off this record at all. Josh Smith, the guitar hero, remains ever-present, but does step aside for a bit to let Josh Smith, the singer, take the center stage on songs like the title track, 'That Ain't Me' and 'Carry Me Through'.

The distinct 1970s Stax Records vibe permeates every cut here down to the laid back funk-inspired bass lines and groove-oriented vibe.

Some of Smith's best guitar work on *Don't Give Up On Me* comes in the extended solo sections on songs like the Steely Dan-tinged instrumental 'Sneaky Jo Turner' or the back alley slink of 'I've Always Been'. Following 2009's *Inception* - a solid collection of guitar-centric instrumentals - with a vocal-heavy, soulful 'mood' record like *Don't Give Up On Me* is a gamble for Smith, but one that pays off in more ways than simply being an exercise in flexibility. *Don't Give Up On Me* is one of the most complete 'nighttime' records we've heard in years. So dim the lights, pour a cocktail, invite a lady friend (or two) over and let Mr. Smith do his thing. You'll be happy that you did.

Check out more albums from Bob Mould

