



THE DIRTY PROJECTORS *SLAVES' GRAVES AND BALLADS*

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'Orchestral pop' is a pretty vague term. It seems to indicate, as with the Elephant Six collective, a wan parrot of those Sixties golden greats like *Pet Sounds* and *Revolver*, whose expressive intentions were 'orchestral' in scope and which wove orchestral instruments into the fabric of the music. Today's 'orchestral pop' usually doesn't have a tenth of the libido or confidence or intelligence of those Sixties albums. Its expressive intentions are generally to mimic the expression of those originals; its use of orchestral instruments is typically as superficial. Maybe the cello that doubles the electric bass in playing the same four notes over and over can lend that Low song a facile eeriness. Maybe the string parts on that Beck album can infuse otherwise boring material with false regalia. But either way, this marriage of classical with pop is kitschy and half-baked. It leans on the same conceit the London Philharmonic did in their killer covers of Pink Floyd riffage: borrowing some of the supposed altitude of high art instruments to achieve a quality that the music could not own for itself, not by inherent dearth of the genre but plain mediocrity.

Slaves' Graves, on the other hand, is classical and pop music's bodies-entwined, souls-commingled wedding, extended families abiding. Their child doesn't have one white eye and one Asian one; rather, he sees differently. Dave Longstreth explains, "what I tried to do with *Slaves' Graves* is to use classical instruments for their individual timbres and peculiarities. I got together a bunch of musicians—two violins, cello, flute, clarinet, oboe, horn, and a percussionist—and I called them the First Orchestral Society for the Preservation of the Orchestra. We rehearsed and recorded my scores from midnight to the break o' day for three consecutive nights in December. I recorded my own singing on top of them afterwards."

The lyrics further develop Longstreth's shrubs-at-the-edge-of-the-lot imagery from last year's debut *The Glad Fact*, marking how the landscaping in large parking lots makes us feel different about ourselves. Tricked-out Hondas, subwoofers, sunsets, woodchips, chiropractors: all these pieces of the American strip coalesce in a vivid meditation on the technology that domesticates and the instinct that resists domestication. What *Slaves' Graves* explores in a collective way, the *Ballads* explore in a personal, individual way. Here, the MO is personal heartbreak and romantic yearning. Uniting both is the feeling that what's most true is hard to see because it is unbearably simple. In this way, *Slaves' Graves and Ballads* belong to each other.

The album cover, a drawing Dave made of [[VVRSSNN]]'s Adam Forkner and Brooklyn party-person Nancy Sarrouf, is an emblem of dirty projecting. The two stare into each other's faces, but they don't see each other: their gazes are obscured by enveloping clouds of the ink they are written in.

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