

Review: The Stagger Rats – Mystery Masquerade EP

✘ Edinburgh five-piece **The Stagger Rats** prefer the road less travelled.

After being signed by a Hungarian record label the Scots decamped to the former Eastern bloc to set about recording a debut album of what they describe as ‘psychobilly’ music.

With producer Owen Morris (of Oasis and Verve fame) at the helm their 13 track album was dispatched, with this *Mystery Masquerade EP* serving as a taster for the full length main course.

‘Fuzzy Fuzzy’ kicks off this offering with some infectious hooks and vocals from Daniel Paylor that sit somewhere between magical and maudlin. Some attractive snare work by drummer Kai Wallace adds a shuffling beat to the track culminating in a sound that’s distinctly more leftfield than the majority of The Stagger Rats indie contemporaries.

The following track ‘I’m In Love’ presents another side of the band’s sonic patchwork, sounding distinctive but always uniquely themselves. Perhaps their most straight-up rock offering, the song is still given an off kilter feel by some dizzying vocals and combination of freewheeling guitars and wicked organ lines. Callum Easter’s proclamation of “*I’m in love though/It ain’t easy/I can’t remember when I fell*” tells you all you need to know about the recesses from where this track emerged.

EP closer ‘Sleeping Of Ecstasy’ is no doubt intended to show their softer side but still contains more than enough melody to get your foot tapping. Back with guitarist Daniel Paylor on

lead vocals, his tender offerings of “*All your candles of mercy/Why don't you blow them all out/My darkness and misery/Go on and give me a shout*” would strike a chord with even those with the blackest of hearts. Again the group's guitars sit perfectly, mirroring and mimicking the mood of the song.



All in all *Mystery Masquerade* leaves you craving the arrival of their full length album. The novel idea of bringing together three pre-album singles definitely works for **The Stagger Rats**. Their sound has been imbued with some of the idiosyncrasies and influences of their Eastern European apprenticeship. The combination of Scottish vocals and gypsy-sounding guitars gives them an edge over other UK debut acts and sets them apart in a sea of guitar blandness. Bring on the main event !

Mystery Masquerade is out now.