

VICTORIAN HALLS

Sean Lenart *vocals/guitar* Carlos Luna *keyboards/vocals* Mike Tomala *drums* John Shotwell *bass*

VICTORIAN HALLS don't so much *write* pop songs as chase them down an alley and hatchet them to death. Then, like some metaphorical Dr. Frankenstein, they sew the songs' limbs back together and in the process create a whole new monster: music that is crudely punk, brilliantly artful and instantly likeable. It's as quixotic as it is unquestionably pleasing, equal measures pop and pulp fiction.

Singer/guitarist Sean Lenart couldn't agree more, "We write pop songs," he plainly states, "but they're really noisy and lyrically overt, and kind of jarring. It's not simply generalized feelings over familiar chord progressions. ... Basically, your mother wouldn't like this band."

The Chicago quartet's 2008 release, *Springteen*, was lauded from coast to coast for what has become **VICTORIAN HALLS'** trademark straightjacket-pop sound, dazzling in its ability to draw the listener in, daunting in its ability to shove the listener into dark corners of the dance floor previously occupied by post-whatever dance-chic pioneers.

"Those who love it will love the hell out of it," raved Redefine Magazine, emphasizing how, while **VICTORIAN HALLS** might not be heir apparent to the pop-punk throne occupied by fellow Chicago-nites FALL OUT BOY, they are a band that can be loved fiercely by fans of MGMT and the REFUSED alike. " **VICTORIAN HALLS'** tunes jerk, whirl, rip, roar and squeal their way into your subconsciousness," gushed tastemaking publication Babysue. "Our guess is that over the course of the next few months you will be seeing and hearing a whole goddamn lot about this peculiar new band." Many dozens of other respected publications made that prediction become reality.

Springteen also helped the band to nab second place in Spin's Music Nation competition and second prize on MTV2's "On The Rise" contest, with over 126,000 votes – all with no label support, no management and no million-dollar hype machine behind them. "Being able to piss people off by not wearing eyeliner, playing a packed venue and being the only unsigned band there and then having people lining up to take pictures and sign autographs," says an adorably befuddled Lenart, "that's just amazing."

A normal reaction to all of the attention might be to sit back and wait for the record labels to come calling or smile smugly as the MySpace listens racked up to the hundreds of thousands – which they did. But **VICTORIAN HALLS** are hardly what you'd call a normal band. Rather than rest on their laurels, Chicago's hardest working band dove headfirst back into the studio to lay down new material, less than a year after finishing their debut. In the process of recording their new self-titled EP, the band wandered into strange, heretofore unknown territory. Above all else, the songs on the eponymous release are easily digestible – first-listen material even for people who don't typically include bands like CURSIVE or DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979 in the pop pantheon. Granted, there are still song titles like "I'm Gonna Eat Your Brains and Gain Your Knowledge" ... but old habits die hard.

Whereas before, a spoonful of sugar helped the **VICTORIAN HALLS'** musical razorblade go down, the opposite is now true – the band's penchant for vaudevillian pop hooks has worked its way to the forefront, and the rest (the ear-splitting shrieks, the clattering piano, the post-post-post-everything rock) is merely the cherry on top. In short, **VICTORIAN HALLS'** dance-pop is no longer being served up with the traditional dose of aural cyanide, or at least not a lethal one.

With **VICTORIAN HALLS**, accolades and hordes of adoring fans were never the point – although the songs on *Victorian Halls*, with a side dish of serendipity, could actually put those things in the realm of possibility. The central theme, as a young Mary Shelley imagined back in the 1800s, is simple: there's a monster to be built, and whether it ends up murdering the town or being elected mayor can be worried about later. Regardless, there is a hell of a lot of dancing to be done before our demise, and no one throws an apocalyptic hoedown like **VICTORIAN HALLS**.



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