

Brian Woodbury and His Popular Music Group

Release date: 4/17/92

Style: Indie Pop/Pop Underground/Singer-Songwriter/Protest

The Fang Records' 1992 debut of Brian Woodbury's melodic, irreverent rock outfit. The Popular Music Group is Marc Muller (guitar & pedal steel); Eric Boyd (bass); Jon Feinberg (drums) and Elma Mayer (keyboards & vocals), with Woodbury providing vocals and acoustic guitars. Guests include **John Linnell (They Might Be Giants); D.J. Bonebrake (X); Oren Bloedow** and **Brian Dewan**.

Brian Woodbury and His Popular Music Group is what happens when impressionable minds are exposed to Van Dyke Parks' *Song Cycle* at an early age. Woodbury... has a similar desire to cram every bar of music and line of lyrics with witty references and ear-catching surprises. [H]e is also a consummate writer of instantly memorable pop tunes, and so all 19 songs on this 55-minute album are suffused with the kind of pure pop hooks that fans of XTC or Guided by Voices will immediately love. Woodbury's goofy-brainy persona and fondness for surreal wordplay will appeal to They Might Be Giants fans, but those who find that duo too precious will respond to the solid power pop hooks of songs like the faux-patriotic "Your Roots Are Phony" and the Young Fresh Fellows -like "I've Still Got My Balls."

Stewart Mason, *All Music Guide*

A parcel of songs that from a distance sound like very infinitesimally demented pop art pieces... Beneath this patina of seemingly normal niceness lies a veritable tank trap of lyrical ambushes. Take "Your Roots Are Phony," for instance. Bright and ebullient, it takes just two minutes and nine seconds to completely demolish the American dream and its false historical mystique... Nineteen wistful works, packed with twinkling tunes and more clever lyrics than you can find in a decade's worth of other releases. Brian Woodbury sure as damnit deserves your attention. He can definitely be trusted – to make a great record, again and again and again.

Andy Dunkley, *Rockpool*

Fans of They Might Be Giants, here's another oddball New Yorker who creates hook-laden pop tunes that simply won't behave themselves. Woodbury and his musicians perform ditties like "Your Roots Are Phony" and "I've Still Got My Balls" with an innate avant-rock sensibility. The eclecticism of Sparks and Zappa is – crossbred with the melodic sheen of NRBQ. Only a man with a firm grip on his cajones could write a tune like "I Bum the Flag" (a brilliant ode to sexual passion) or the Donovan-meets Gentle Giant "Dreamstate of California" ("... where you always let your subconscious be your guide.") ... 18 demented gems. **Dino DiMuro, *Option***

Woodbury's a charming melodist, more toward the Broadway tradition than top 40 radio. [H]e has clearly studied Brian Wilson's notions of harmony and arrangement and you'd swear Todd Rundgren was involved in some of the more guitar-crazed scores. ... aspires to Cole Porter's complex internal rhymes, homonyms, and puns. He's also witheringly sarcastic. "I Burn the Flag" is a love song that improbably quotes "Some Enchanted Evening." [O]ne tune's called "The Oranges," as the inverse of the blues, and it's an absurdly jolly patter song. And the chorus of his catchiest love song goes, "Flavor packet, you're my flavor packet, you taste so good you make everything else taste worse!"

Michael Bloom, *Boston Rock*



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