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Headless Household *Basemento*

(two-disc set, c. 2010)

Time plows forward, as does the urge to make music, for some. Both can be unstoppable forces. So here we have the 25th anniversary (a year late, thanks to Santa Barbaran fires, and other factors) of Headless Household, Santa Barbara's peculiar and ongoing, eclectic excuse of a band. On the band's eighth feature-length album, the double-disc item called *Basemento*, the Household mixes mixed-up elements of jazz, free improvisation, avant-Americana, Europeana, rock, soul and a new strain of Brazilian (in time for the bossa nova's 50th birthday).

Basemento—the latest findings from the Household "basement" (actual and figurative)—is another hard-to-pinpoint musical journey, running through the jungles of genres, a torch song or two, sweet vocals and electro-acoustic ambient constructions. Etcetera. It seemed only proper to make it a two-disc album, one leaning more "inside" and the other "outside."

In progress for nearly five years, *Basemento* was interrupted for nearly a year after the Tea Fire threw the process off course. Drummer-engineer-producer Tom Lackner's "Tompson" studio was in the heart of the Mountain Drive Tea Fire devastation, but miraculously survived (a *Basemento* session there ended one hour before the start of that fire, on November 13, 2008).

The core quartet—Dick Dunlap (keyboards), Tom Lackner (percussives), Chris Symer (bass) and Joe Woodard (guitars)—are helped out by kindly "honorary householders." Included are vocalists Julie Christensen (on the balladic "Bodies in Cities" and "Loneliness") and Glen Phillips (the countrypolitan "Not Me," the Staples-esque soul ditty "I Never Wanted You," and the ode to SB fires, "(At the) Mercy of the Wind." Saxists Tom Buckner and world-renowned Dave Binney are heard on tracks such as the Lackner-penned Joe Zawinul tribute "Mount Analog (for JZ)," the brainy party song "Liquids for Visitors," "Basemento," "A Littler Prayer," "Timo Salminen" (written re: the great Finnish cinematographer), and Dunlap's bracingly maze-like "Ragout." NYC trumpeter/vocalist Nate Birkey sings and plays on "Jobim Meets Jim Beam," and the mix also benefits from harmonica wizard Tom Ball (playing assorted harps, freely and otherwise), pedal steel player/multi-axman Bill Flores, Kenny Edwards on mandolin,

and violinist Sally Barr. From the “free” zone come tracks like “Unbroken Glass,” “Nigh” and “Open-Heart Sandwich.”

On the visual front, longtime Household ally Kim Reiersen provided the evocative photography (including a back cover shot from her book about truckers, *Eighteen*, the inspiration for the song “Eighteen”), and her sleek graphic design eye.

Previous Headless Household albums to date, all on the in-house Household Ink Records label: *Headless Household* (1987), *Inside/Outside USA* (1993), *ITEMS* (1995), *Free Associations* (1999), *mockhausen* (2000), *post-Polka* (2003), and *Blur Joan* (2005). More to come, apparently.

Links:

www.householdink.com/headless.htm

www.myspace.com/headlesshousehold

The press notes:

(re: *Blur Joan*)

“Soundwise, it is an eclectic and surprisingly alluring program that covers a variety of genres that, while certainly experimental, remains accessible. The group’s interest in the fusion of electric and acoustic touches is seen from the outset... Overall, a quirky--in a good way--outing from a group that is certainly charting its own course.” --Jay Collins, *Cadence*

“...solid musicianship and an admirable willingness to toss in whatever strikes their fancy.”

--Aaron Steinberg, *Jazz Times*

“Long-running Santa Barbara eclectic-jazz weirdoes Headless Household have simmered all their exotic flavors into a very palatable goulash called *Blur Joan* (Household Ink). Joe Woodard, Dick Dunlap and Tom Lackner really orchestrated this one, and with the help of brilliant friends (Dave Binney, Jim Connolly, Julie Christensen et al.), swing and waltz and reggae and sound effects unite – natural, warm and full of protein.” --Greg Burk, *Los Angeles Weekly*

(*other notes...*)

--“Music this wildly diverse can never be properly marketed in this age of specialization, but that doesn’t make it any less extraordinary.” --Bill Milkowski, *Tower Pulse magazine*

--“Headless Household achieved regional cult status by the late 1990s, thanks to their quirky and eclectic kind of new music, their relentless live shows and a string of albums....” --*All-Music Guide* (www.allmusic.com)

“The first thing to understand about the Household’s music is that when they announce a genre – say, polka for example – that hardly means they will stick to anything much resembling a traditional polka, or even that one of their polkas will sound much like another.... What unites these disparate approaches is a commitment to the sound and values of free improvisation...

Everything that gets thrown into this musical blender seems to belong there...Here's to many more years of this unique Santa Barbara tradition. " --Charles Donelan, *Santa Barbara Independent*, re: the 2006 xmas concert

"This is a complex musical aggregation whose takes on various musical forms are fascinating. Each of the members is a solid professional -- a musician whose experience encompasses pop, jazz, classical, rock, and as-yet-undefined musical disciplines." --Stanley Naftaly, *Santa Barbara News-Press*

--"Headless Household still seems to think that a mind is a terrible thing to waste.." --Greg Burk, *L.A. Weekly*

