

Hot Day at the Zoo



Hot Day at the Zoo - Zoograss

INTA Records - January 12, 2010

RIYL: Grateful Dead, Old Crow Medicine Show,  
The Avett Brothers, Yonder Mountain String Band

Focus Tracks: #2 Mercy of the Sea, #3 One Day Soon

[www.hotdayatthezoo.com](http://www.hotdayatthezoo.com)

New England's genre-bending American roots string band, Hot Day at the Zoo, is spreading their "zoograss" sound nationwide. The high-energy quartet mixes folk, blues, ragtime and jazz with progressive bluegrass and Americana-infused rock and roll. Hot Day at the Zoo is pioneering their sound in a way that is reminiscent of how Johnny Cash transformed traditional country music. They have the songwriting and full-bodied sound of the Grateful Dead, the technicality and momentum of Sam Bush, the tightness and the ability to talk musically like Charles Mingus, and the cool, easy rock demeanor of Steely Dan. Fans accurately describe this sound as "zoograss."

Hot Day at the Zoo is Jon Cumming (banjo, dobro, vocals), Michael Dion (guitar, harmonica, vocals,) Jed Rosen (upright bass, vocals), and JT Lawrence (mandolin, vocals). Dion and Cumming are the band's two main songwriters. Both, with distinctive personalities, offer enough stories to fill a catalogue of songs that are whole-hearted and full of sincerity. Add in Rosen, who's technical prowess allows him to hold down the beat and push the music along, and Lawrence, who's youthful energy and stellar musicianship fuel his strength in fulfilling each song's missing piece, and the result is a band who humbly creates something bigger than any of themselves.

Hot Day at the Zoo is set to release their third album, *Zoograss*, on January 12, 2010 on their independent label INTA Records. *Zoograss* is a live album, recorded at The Waterhole in Saranac Lake, NY on February 14, 2009. It was mixed by Sir Bob Nash at Wonka Sound in Lowell, MA and mastered by Jay Frigoletto at ProMastering in Brookline, NH. *Zoograss* follows HDATZ's 2008 EP, *Long Way Home*, a dark and edgy album added to their collection that includes the wildly popular *Cool As Tuesday*.

In a venue so personally special to the band (Phish had Nectar's, HDATZ has The Waterhole), and on a night when all the planets and stars seemed to align to create an ideal environment for the creative process, HDATZ recorded a special, representative performance. "That night at The Waterhole was one of those times that I knew from the first few notes that we were on point," says Lawrence. "The energy exchange between us and the audience was incredible." *Zoograss* is a true picture in time, capturing a

band that has undergone transformations over the years, including two line-up changes, but has evolved and matured in their songwriting and live performance and is now tighter than ever before.

*Zoograss* brings HDATZ to life and proves that this is a band you must see live. "Expect to see four guys up on stage playing their asses off and singing their hearts out," says Rosen. All four members play with so much vivacity and vigor that an abundance of both baby powder to keep dry and superglue to prevent their fingernails from falling off is necessary. Whether they're headlining or performing as special guest support for artists including The Band's Levon Helm, David Grisman, Leon Russell, moe., and Hot Buttered Rum, HDATZ connects with their audience through their defiant high energy on stage. With improvisations that give songs new shape, signature arrangements of covers, and many special guests, concertgoers may expect to never see the same show twice.

Not unlike the Garcia/Weir songwriting partnership, Dion and Cumming strike a balance that's always signature. *Zoograss* illustrates the individuality of the two songwriters and the band's ability as a whole to carry their stories. The track "Mercy of the Sea," written by Dion, weighs in at over nine minutes on *Zoograss*. With imagery like, "Bones made of coral, saltwater in my veins, and a tidal wave of hope," this track required a great deal of complimentary energy and instrumental imagination from all four members who succeeded brilliantly. "'Mercy of the Sea' stretches things out and highlights the band's dynamics and ability to speak to each other musically," says Cumming. Quite the antithesis of this track is Cumming's "One Day Soon," three-plus minutes of direct, beautiful poetry: "With every mile I leave behind, it's one more I can't borrow." "One Day Soon' departs from our high-energy, jam-based mode, and tones it down some," says Cumming. "For a tune like this, the song is the master and the band serves it well."

*Zoograss* illustrates a new beginning for HDATZ who continue to develop exponentially. "Every week it seems we are breaking into new, uncharted territory with new songs, new ideas, and new aspirations," says Dion. "This album is just a taste of what this band is capable of."

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