

Subterranean Boomtown Blues

David & David's Rock Noir

With its cameos of LA lowlife, David & David's debut album *Boomtown* successfully recreates the stark reality of the 4-track demos recorded in the apartment from which composer David Ricketts talks to *Rip It Up*.

He's collecting his thoughts after the duo's fairy-tale rise since they gave a demo tape to a friend "whose brother was a temporary secretary in the A&R department of A&M records" and won themselves a record deal.

"Since we released *Boomtown* we've been getting a lot of press and went on a tour," says Ricketts. "We've been finding out how it works when you put out an album and become known by it, which is kind of an interesting experience in itself — making the transition from being just two guys working in a living room to being something that's 'out there' in the collective consciousness a little more."

Wet Feet

David Ricketts composes David & David's music and plays most of the instruments, while his partner and close friend David Baerwald writes the lyrics and sings. Four musicians were added for the tour. "We were never a band until a couple of

Welcome to Los Angeles, city of fallen angels and angel dust. "Pick up a habit. We've got plenty to go around" ... David & David portray the seamier side of life in El Lay, but strangely their stories of the underground have found a home on commercial radio.

The clarity and depth of 'Welcome to the Boomtown' means it stands out amongst the aged and irrelevant mega-platinum rock on our airwaves. They're a new act of some credibility who have found favour with our FM programmers — while ironically, *Crowded House* had to succeed on the US Top 40 before getting a hearing here.

months ago," says Ricketts. "We wanted to do something that would gently get our feet wet, so it wouldn't be too big a shock playing in front of thousands of people, so we did a club tour, which turned out pretty good."

The clean production of *Boomtown* by Davitt Sigerson has retained the gritty edge of the 4-track demos. "The album sounds remarkably like the demos we did here in my apartment," says Ricketts. "The challenge for us was getting the feeling, because everyone liked the demos quite a bit. Naturally, the sounds you are dealing with on a

24-track are more articulate than those on a portastudio. But really the whole idea was to get back to where we were at the beginning."

The 29-year-old Sigerson has a pure approach to production, wanting listeners to notice the music not the sounds, and believing the ear can only take in so much. "He's a kind of renaissance man," says Ricketts. "He's been a critic for the *Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*, a sportswriter for the *London Times* and an artist in his own right signed to Island Records. He didn't really have much of a track record as a producer, but when we got together



David Ricketts and David Baerwald.

of the Davids.

"The way I see it, the music just sets up a narrator and he gives a visual image. It's not necessarily completely dark; I mean some of my favourite people like Randy Newman will be talking about something cynically and yet he'll have this beautiful music to the back of it. There's some hope and sensitivity there, as opposed to out-and-out self-pity and bleakness."

Sound of David

Reviewers can't seem to make up their minds where the sound of the Davids comes from, with everyone from Springsteen, the Bo Deans, Gram Parsons, Tim Buckley and even Phil Collins being mentioned as influences. That's a good sign, according to Ricketts. "The thing is nobody really knows what we do, by the amount of comparisons they make — so there must be something original about us!"

"I don't know, we do cross an awful lot of lines. Over the years you do accumulate an immense amount of influences, but when the time comes to do the record, the thing is finding your own course, and that's what makes it really work. So you're not really cognisant of your influences. Everyone's been influenced, we certainly have. But this is definitely our thing."

David & David are being groomed as their company's next big thing, and Ricketts is encouraged by the personal attention the duo is receiving, but also a little bemused by the star-making machinery. "It's a little strange, because to me it seems relatively far away from what it is that I do, and the mental attitude that I had to have at the outset to achieve what I wanted to achieve. I understand it as part of the process, but it does feel slightly alien. I feel like a fish out of water at times."

The duo are an odd hybrid of alternative attitude and contemporary technology, out of the underground but with dramatic songs that belong more to the stadium than the garage; that's why they've found a home on radio. David & David, welcome to the bigtime.

Chris Bourke

and talked with him, he was definitely the right man for the job. In fact it was much better that he wasn't a proven name because we all found our feet together."

Consequently Sigerson "expedited" the recording process rather than inflicting his own personality on the Davids. "He understood us both completely by listening to our demos, so the combination worked brilliantly for us. At the outset we worked with a different producer,

and that was more like going the 'LA by the book' method, which didn't work out for us at all. We'd be in the backyard of the studio wondering what was happening to our songs. That kind of thing was no good."

As you'd expect from an ex-porn fiction writer weaned on Kafka, Baerwald's images of his native LA are twisted and evocative. Combined with Ricketts' music and arrangements that forms what Ricketts calls the "cinematic" sound

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