



The Dickens Campaign Releases Debut Album

Oh Lovely Appearance

Music That Has It's Eyes on The Far Horizon and It's Feet on the Front Porch of America.

Featuring Drummer Deric Dickens, Cornetist Kirk Knuffke, and Guitarist Jesse Lewis

Deric Dickens is a New-York-based drummer who hails from south Georgia, and those Georgia roots run deep under the earth of this music. He's chosen as bandmates two people who share his respect for tradition and his willingness to push beyond it. Cornetist **Kirk Knuffke** is one of the New York's busiest players, both as a leader and a sideman, particularly in the quartet of celebrated drummer Matt Wilson, who is Dickens' primary mentor. Guitarist **Jesse Lewis** cut his musical teeth in New Orleans and spends much of his time these days exploring the intersection of country, pop and jazz as one of New York's in-demand guitar players.

The music on *Oh Lovely Appearance* originates in a place more specific than "general Americana," namely the work of musicologist **Alan Lomax**. In the 1930s, Lomax traveled the country in a Model T Ford and recorded the songs and sounds of America. From work songs to folk ballads to the blues, Lomax created an invaluable archive of American musical history at a time when few people were paying attention to the music of the poor and working class.

"I spent time in school thinking I was going into ethnomusicology," said Dickens. "I was mainly interested in African and Southern music and I had written a few papers on Alan Lomax. What I really loved was that his work could still be seen today in modern music. This is a living music."

The album begins with what may be its most obviously Lomax-inspired track, "As I Went Out For A Ramble." Dickens' easy shuffle is like a train going down the line, pushing along Lewis's steel strings and the warmth and wistfulness of Knuffke's cornet. It sets the tone and lets the listener know that this music is coming from a deeper place than just the heads of these musicians.

The focus shifts into a tougher, grimier area with "Roustabout Holler," which sounds like music for a very hip roadhouse. Lewis shines on electric guitar on this track, as he does in a

wholly different, more ethereal way on Knuffke's "Poem." It's at this point that the album first diverges from the broad river of Americana and explores a world closer to that of New York's improvising scene. But the music never loses its footing, never gets swept away in the current.

"Lomax's idea was to show the United States as a place with enormous musical creativity," said Dickens. "The challenge however, was how to communicate this musical creativity in a way that could be used by all."

The album takes its name from the fifth track, "Oh Lovely Appearance Of Death," a plaintive tune recorded by Lomax in October of 1937, as sung by Mr. & Mrs. Boyd Hoskins. It's here that this album plants its flag, taking the bitter with the sweet, taking the whole fabric of American music as one garment. The lyrics sing the praises of a corpse, and the luck of the dead person to now be released from his or her troubles and to have found peace.

The tune "I Should Have Known" comes from the experience Dickens had with his neighbors in Knoxville, TN. "I lived next to them for five years," said Dickens. "They gave me my fair share of moonshine cherries and Bush beer after long work days. They'd sit outside and drink beer while I would have late sessions at my house. We'd finish a tune and we'd hear clapping outside. They'd be there just hanging and enjoying the music."

"Paul Motian" is, of course, an homage to the drummer of the same name who died in 2011. Dickens described Motian as "a folk musician who was accidentally thrown into a jazz musician's body. The way Paul writes, with an emphasis on phrase marks over note length, is very reminiscent of the way some of the field hollers and songs were written out by Alan Lomax and Ruth Crawford Seeger."

The transition between tunes highlights the flexibility of the The Dickens Campaign. They're comfortable anywhere the music needs to go. It's worth noting that this album really benefits from the experienced ears of recording engineer Matt Balitsaris, who brings just the right amount of unadorned clarity to the proceedings.

In short, The Dickens Campaign's *Oh Lovely Appearance* is about knowing where we've come from so that we can better decide where to go next. It's about acknowledging the past without be tethered by it. It's the sound of three musicians, three human beings, who are using art as a means of communicating their understanding of the human experience.

Release Date: October 22, 2013

*******TOUR DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED*******

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