

AntiComps

historical antifolk compilations, part 1

Jonathan Berger

Word on the street is that Crafty Records is putting out an AntiFolk compilation. This is not an original concept. Every couple of years, somebody gets the bright idea to release of these comps. Travel, then, back to the dawn of time, to the birth of the AntiFolk era, and listen to the clarion call of early AF albums, and just what they meant.

White Trash, Volume 1, NY Music

(109 Records)

Steve Gabe was just sitting in his clothing store/art gallery when Ron Katz came in and asked him if he wanted to release an album of the AntiFolk who participated in the Tompkins Square Park riots. It was an earlier time, 1988, and Gabe, who'd already released several albums on his 109 Records (109 St. Marks was the address of his store), quickly assented. Don Fury produced the mostly minimalist tracks from 14 artists almost twenty years ago. "We made the record that would become the document of the AntiFolk scene," Gabe asserts, "Mainly due to the *Village Voice* devoting a lead music article to reviewing the record." Power of the press... Lots of the acts are folk you've never heard of. Mark Zero starts things off with his "White Trash," which risks falling into cliché (but maybe didn't at the time), and ends it with Resibaum's sneering, incredible "Blood on the Pavement", featuring Gabe's accompaniment on bass. In between, Tom Clark does his folkabilly "Trouble at Home," Joe Hurley (of Rogue's March) presents a rambling, fascinating musical travelogue, "All Quiet on the Western Front." There's some guy called Lach, doing a notably nasal "Poor Town" I wonder if he still knows the song. Despite the rapid clip of the recording, some people present some pretty overblown affairs: Lauren Stauber sings over a keyboard-generated beat on the epic "Prisonville Blues," "We'd be getting high, day and night, wondering why there was nothing to do." Billy Syndrome rocks insanely out with "Have You Seen the Cows." It's a track that's clearly proud of being loud.

White Trash, Volume 1 made a fair amount of noise at the time, prompting Gabe to want to release *Volume 2*.

The 109 Records releases are available today on one CD, in reverse chronological order. The content of the two records may cost less to own today than they did three decades ago, when they first appeared. <http://www.cafepress.com/artmonkeynyc>

Broome Closet Anti-Folk Sessions

(109 Records)

"When I tried to put together *White Trash NY Folk Vol. 2*," 109 Records' Gabe explains, "too many of the artists wanted to go punk rock."

He scrapped the name, but kept the spirit. "I asked my friend and well-known folk artist Roger Manning if he could put together a real 'Best of Anti-Folk' record." Manning had been recording his own albums on 4-track at his small Broome Street apartment, appropriately called the Broome Closet.

Featuring five spoken words breaks from King Missile's John S. Hall, as well as songs from the likes of Cindy Lee Berryhill (fresh off her major label foray) the aforementioned Kirk Kelly, and, of course, Manning himself. Broome Closet "got a nice write up in *Billboard's* Grassroots section."

These songs are all minimalist, like the AntiFolk we newbies know and love. In most cases, the songs are recorded solo. Sometimes without accompaniment. Along with Hall, Maggie Estep does a spoken word piece that precedes her major label debut *No More Mister Nice Girl* by several years.

"It had the distinction of having been the first album Paleface and Maggie Estep appeared on," Gabe notes proudly. Paleface, then a fine young contender, had two tracks on the release, one the very clever and amazingly succinct "Galaxie 500 Party Song," then, near the end, the extremely, extensively epic "There's Something About a Truck (I Don't Know What It Is)."

Billy Syndrome appears again with a suddenly timely song, "Funky Stairway." In it, Syndrome grunts and sweats, funk-style, over a particularly potent banjo. Recorded decades ago, it's a fitting testament to the recently passed Godfather of Soul.

