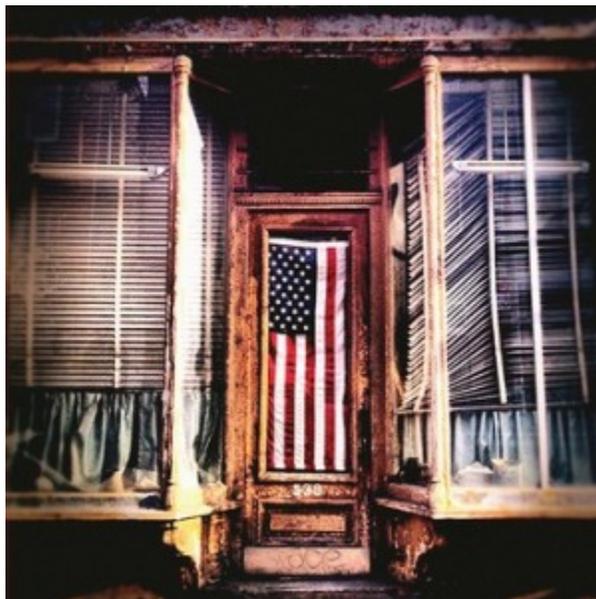


# CD Review: The Silks - Last American Band



## ***In contrast to the hard-driving numbers, The Silks reach down deep for the acoustic folk-blues dirge***

I've been accused of taking rock & roll a tad too seriously. You see, I'm one of those people who have lost countless hours of sleep wondering why it all went so wrong. How could an enterprise that once boasted revenues twice that of the colossal motion picture industry be so disposable in our 21<sup>st</sup> century culture? Today's 99¢ download is often tomorrow's forgotten impulse purchase. And the reason is simple - there's very little coming out of the rock world worthy of a second listen. I'm looking for Janis Joplin and all they can give me is Miley Cyrus?!

Of course the one glimmer of hope for rock's future fate is placed squarely upon the local scene, safely removed from the cynical reach of corporate greed and focus groups. And it's right here in Providence where bands like The Silks are emerging to steady the course and reinstate dominance. Clearly, this blues-driven rock & roll trio and I seem to be on the same wavelength, as their band bio proclaims "*Rock and Roll may not be dead, but it does seem like there's a priest leaning over its bed... if The Silks have anything to do with it, the body will soon be out of bed, bopping around the room.*" I could not agree more.

Led by singer-guitarist Tyler-James Kelly and the rhythm section of Jonas Parmelee on bass and Matthew Donnelly on drums, the band has sprung onto the scene with their debut release, *Last American Band*. Far from the usual collection of over-covered blues standards and fumbling self-indulgent solos, often associated with a band's first effort, The Silks present 11 highly polished tracks

that belie their freshman status.

Clearly these guys have rock and blues in their DNA, as evidenced by the opening slide-guitar salvo on the disc's first song, "Livin' In The World Today." Kelly seems to channel Elmore James for an effortless run of slide work that remains tasteful throughout, and never showy. In an earnest vocal that derives its power from Paul Rodgers and its snarl from Eddie Vedder, Kelly proclaims, "*I'm so tired of living in the world today.... I'm so tired of living in the world this way.*"

In contrast to the hard-driving numbers, The Silks reach down deep for the acoustic folk-blues dirge, "Try All You Want." In a style reminiscent of an Exile-era Rolling Stones, Tyler and company incorporate harmonica and soulful background vocals in this dark, gritty, back-alley singalong.

Any A&R man worth his weight in gold records would pull "Mountain Man" as the strongest contender for a single. It is three minutes and 20-plus seconds of pure chart-topping, hit record material (if it was 1976, of course). No matter what the year, the song's catchy musical hooks and infectious refrain leave an indelible impression to any listen within earshot. "*I gotta get away from the man, I know you won't understand, I guess that's why they call me The Mountain Man...*" Bob Seger could resurrect his career if he ever managed to pull out a song as good as this one.

These few examples serve only to highlight what The Silks have accomplished on *Last American Band*. They perform with a sense of urgency and write with the kind of authenticity bands twice their age have long since abandoned. The Silks might just be that perfect dose of strong medicine needed to get rock up off its deathbed, by getting rock fans back into the stores and clubs for a much-needed fix of good NEW fashioned rock & roll.