

Mp3 Sparkle*jets U.k. - Bamboo Lounge

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Power Pop. It's fun, catchy, rockin', and you can sing along. It's a soup of Beatles, Beach Boys, ELO, zany loud guitars, with an emphasis on melody and harmony... with girl/boy singing that's sassy, sweet, sappy, and soulful.. all at the same time. If 14 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, POP: Beatles-pop Details: BIO From All Music Guide: Los Angeles-based Sparkle*Jets U.K. became one of the most adored bands in the power pop movement of the late '90s and early 2000s following a series of International Pop Overthrow festival appearances, their adorably geeky sensibility, and their sound: a distinctive marriage of '60s and '70s rock and whimsical guitar pop. Sparkle*Jets U.K. founding members Mike Simmons, Susan West, and Jamie Knight first met in 1995 at a gig for Simmons' band at the time, Virgin 7. In February of 1996, Virgin 7 enlisted Knight to play bass on a series of recordings for a planned album. The collaboration, which also included Fletcher Harrington of Cowboy Buddha, clicked, and the three separate acts merged into a single entity. The group included the first writing contributions from Mike Simmons, but the band had a total of five songwriters, and as egos took control the group pared itself down to the core of Simmons, West, and Knight. The group, which was initially dubbed Happy Birthday!, was renamed Sparkle*Jets U.K., including the "U.K." tag because the name wasn't nearly wacky enough. The three bandmembers also shared a lot of musical common ground, starting at the Beatles and running through Electric Light Orchestra, Brian Wilson, Teenage Fanclub, the Pixies, the Jackson 5; and various R&B, soul, and Stiff Records-style new wave/punk. The band, who then included drummer James DeBeau, recorded their debut, In, Through and Beyond, and pressed just 1,000 copies. Copies of the disc made it into a single store, where rock journalist John Borack (Receiver) bought a copy, his decision based only on the cover art and 3.99 dollar price. After passing word onto pop fanatic and International Pop Overthrow organizer David Bash, Sparkle*Jets U.K. were soon inducted into the close-knit family of Los Angeles-based power pop acts and their fans while word spread. Not long after, following a conversation surrounding the proliferation of tribute albums, the band proposed a tribute album to themselves, where other L.A.-based pop acts would cover their material. It caught on, with more bands taking part than the band had songs to offer. I Love Sparkle*Jets U.K.: Tribute was released in 2000, and increased the

band's profile further. Bamboo Lounge, their proper sophomore release, followed in early 2002 with a bigger budget and nationwide distribution, as the band began touring outside California and playing bigger venues. Official Bio: Frantic. Fun. Loud. Authentic. If you seek salvation, look no further than sparkle*jets u.k. It's been ages since a band came along that everyone would like, kids, teens, boomers, even stuck up wall street types. Students, drunks, nuns, biochemists, it doesn't matter. Rock music is coming back, and sparkle*jets u.k. have it down, expertly honed to hit your heart and not let go. An aural slap and caress all at once. Bringing with them a passion for the last 30 years of amazing pop music, they set out to boil it all down to its core: pure blissful fun with an eternally youthful attack. Garnering their name from the Gretsch guitars they promised to buy themselves when they "made it", along with a perfect example of their wacky humor (attaching the oh-so-eighties "u.k." tag) they set out from Orange County to make their mark on the Los Angeles pop hotbed. They released their critically acclaimed debut "In, Through, and Beyond" at the end of 1998, and it wasn't long until they were flavor of the month among pop stalwarts across the nation, playing knockout shows at crowded clubs and major pop festivals. Their new-found alliances paid off in their 2000 release of a coup-de-gras tribute album to themselves featuring 20 other bands. Now the band has formed a formidable alliance with Smile Records, who are releasing their second album, the versatile multi-faceted "Bamboo Lounge", which has already attracted huge praises from the press and fans alike since it's underground "pre-release" last summer. The word on the street is for everyone to get onboard as sparkle*jets u.k. make the transition from local phenomenon to the big time. Meet the band: Michael Simmons: computer geek meets guitar god, called "the ultimate consumer" by the band, can be found buried amongst ceiling-high piles of CD's and gadgets, recording and archiving nearly everything he ever experiences, just in case. He also writes, sings, and plays guitar. Susan West: she's the boss. The quirky heart and soul of the band, friend to all, and awesome mom. She also writes killer lyrics songs, plays guitar, and has a voice that many fans and press people have called "one of the most awesome and powerful instruments ever." Jamie "Mr." Knight: He's the only high school librarian you're likely to find with 1600 watts of pure bass fury at his disposal. He lends the distinction of a real working pedigree in rock, jazz, soul, and new wave. A bassist without peer. REVIEWS OF BAMBOO LOUNGE: 02/11/02 - REVIEW of Bamboo Lounge from The Phoenix (loyola university, Chicago) The great unknowns: the year's best music you probably haven't heard of by Ben Collins With all due respect to Weezer, Sparklejets U.K. is the best nerd rock band on the planet. From its blatantly incorrect moniker

(the members are from California), to its overt worship of '60s and '70s pop, Sparklejets U.K. is simply a group of music geeks making music that is endlessly sunny and enjoyable. The band features two songwriters, the pop traditionalist Simmons, who splits his songs between ballads like "Sorry" and rockers like "She May Be Nice," and the bubbly Susan West, responsible for the album's most energetic tracks like the opener "Monster" and "They Shoot Square Dancers." 02/11/02 - REVIEW of Bamboo Lounge from Fufkin.com by Gary Glauber Release Date: February 26, 2002 Bamboo is a fast-growing plant that offers strength and flexibility, much in the same way as the sparkle*jets u.k. Bamboo Lounge provides musical muscle and range. Before one even gets to spin this one, you get the treat of the CD packaging (graphic design courtesy of the talented Susan West and Michael Simmons), which includes a little cocktail umbrella encased within your plastic jewel box. As you pull the CD booklet out of its sleeve, you are treated to the exotic drink menu of this fictional cocktail lounge, and you won't find more cordial hosts than the four members of sparkle*jets u.k. Every song is a mixed concoction on this lyric sheet menu, the song times presented as prices. If you think that's fun, just wait until you give the music a whirl - according to this bartender, it's four parts fun, four parts chutzpah, mixed with sly rock and pop references from the sixties through the nineties, stirred well with energy and talent and topped with a maraschino cherry. This heady mix packs a wallop, but leaves you wanting more. Okay, so you put your CD into your computer's disk drive to give it a spin...but wait...something else pops onto your screen. It's a little cell phone that reads "SJUK". Talk about value for your CD dollar. Not only do you get 14 tracks of exciting studio music, you get welcomed into a multimedia bonus room of the Bamboo Lounge. Here you get the choice of looking at the lyrics to each song on your screen, or perhaps you'd like a whole extra CD's worth of live song performances (12 songs) from this past year's IPO. Additionally, there are photos, fonts, even a video of "Hate Your Hair", plus another 15 bonus tracks (demos and the like). All in all, probably the most music you've ever gotten from any one CD. This is just the kind of wacky happy surprise you can expect from the likes of sparkle*jets u.k., a band named for the Gretsch guitars they envisioned for themselves post-fame. The "u.k." merely is a humorous tag added to garner attention, provide some continental cache and distinguish them from the long list of bands with sparkle or jet in their names (they're from Orange County, California). Since the release of their first CD, 1998's In, Through, and Beyond, the group has logged in extensive touring time, entertaining crowds from coast-to-coast with their rollicking musical antics. In between original CDs came an unusual marketing idea, as sparkle*jets u.k. enlisted 20 bands

from the Los Angeles area to cover their tunes on a self-produced tribute CD (to themselves) I Love The Sparkle*jets U.K.. This was a bold move, to say the least, and somewhat unprecedented in the annals of rock history. Still, the tribute CD met with favorable reviews. How dare a band be so audacious? The answer can be found in the music, obviously. The sparkle*jets u.k. are a talented quartet, and can sport a number of different powerpop styles (3 of the 4 are songwriters). The majority of the songs are penned by guitarist/vocalist Michael Simmons, resident computer geek of the band. Still, many other of the songs are written and sung by the charmingly quirky Susan West (who also plays guitar and sports a voice that demands your attention). Jamie Knight co-writes a few here as well, playing bass while on leave from his high school librarian duties. Larry Doran pounds the drums when not manning the counter of your favorite cool record shop. "Monster" leads off the proceedings, with Susan West serving up an Ann Wilson-ish vocal that will get your Heart thumping, with a lyric that reminds you that monsters can be girls too (convincingly presented). Probyn Gregory adds some nice horns as well. We get a similar Wilson-ish vocal on the rocking "They Shoot Square Dancers, Don't They?" "She May Be Nice" gives us the other sparkle*jets u.k., with Michael Simmons pleasant voice harmonizing nicely with Susan's, in a catchy romantic ditty that steals a wee hook from Kiss (heaven forfend) and still manages to win you over. How could one not love simple-yet-true lyrics like: "She may have eyes of blue/ Killer thighs and a boss tattoo / The toast of every guy in town / A whole wardrobe that oozes style / Breaking hearts with just her smile / She may be nice, but she ain't you". Sweet harmonies lead into the slower-tempo ballad "Sorry", serving up a sort of David Gates/Bread feel to this lover's apology (with a nice touch of flute from Lisa Jenio). In "Consult Your Physician", Dr. Susan West uses her lovely voice to play both speaker channels to the hilt, reminding us things are not as bad as they seem: "You can agonize till your agony is your heaviest load / Come on, get happy!" The thing is, sparkle*jets u.k. can make even the bad times seem fun. "So Gone" is a catchy soft rock anthem from Michael Simmons and Jamie Knight exploring bitter memories of a relationship gone horribly bad. "Real Nice Time" is the Susan West answer to similar subject material. Again, how can one not warm to such lyrics as this: "Did you have a good time? / Did you have one with lime? / Did someone say l'chaim? / Did you tell her you're mine? / Well I hope you had a real nice time without me". "Beautiful Girl" lets Simmons show his lounge lizard chops as he romances said beautiful girl with "the only song that's true". No stranger to jazzy lounge music, he also impresses with the intriguing and exotic title instrumental "Bamboo Lounge"(complete with wild monkeys screeching). Fans of loud

punk rock will enjoy "Hate Your Hair" (but fleetingly, since it clocks in at only 42 seconds). "It's Gotta Happen" is an infectiously wonderful hand-clapping piece of pop that reminds all of us striving for greater things that "it's gotta happen" even if "it sure ain't happening now". "Nobody's Girl" reminds you of all those wonderful songs from the seventies (back when radio still had promise - ah, nostalgia). "A Nice One" wins as the song that made me smile the most. Here Susan West explains why she wants to write a nice pretty song, rather than another mean one, telling us how one is necessary to appreciate the other: "It's smog that makes the sky look pretty / It's hunger that makes your food taste good / And you don't know you're happy until you're sad". There's a full and varied menu of songs and styles presented here, and you'll want to drink of these libations liberally (I haven't even touched upon any of the extra music) in order to best digest it all. Fun and talent meet up at the Bamboo Lounge and you get a great musical bang for the buck. Drink up and sing along with Sparkle*jets u.k., but always watch out for the wild monkeys. 04/05/02 - REVIEW of Bamboo Lounge from Pop Matters by Jason Damas One of the most important, yet one of the most oft-forgotten, details of being a pop band is that pop music is essentially fun. This is especially lost on the myriad guitar-pop revivalists who try to recreate every note of their favorite Badfinger and Raspberries records. They know craft, but they sometimes forget why they do it. Why pop music is free of the weight and seriousness of much of its rocking kin. Los Angeles-based Sparkle*jets u.k. (get it? They're not really from the UK) is one of the most talked-about, best, and most innovative guitar pop bands on the L.A. scene at the moment, and one of the main reasons why is their sense of sheer, unadulterated fun. The Sparkle*jets vocalists Michael Simmons and Susan West are two drastically different front persons. Simmons' vocals are plain, clean, more typical power-pop fodder, and provide an ideal centerpiece for some of the band's more traditional moments. By contrast, West is somewhat of a loose cannon, channeling the ghosts of Heart's Ann and Nancy Wilson (which is not an easy task, since they're not dead) to scream and shriek through every track. And just when you think you've got her pinned down, at the end of the disc she tosses out the cutesy "A Nice One", a song more precious and adorable than Hello Kitty. And once the Sparkle*jets even organized a tribute album to themselves and invited their friends to cover their songs, just for the hell of it. This all makes Bamboo Lounge, the band's second album proper (not counting the tribute), a wildly disparate listen, careening in a bunch of musical directions but always maintaining a cheeky sense of humor and fun. Over the course of fourteen tracks, the Sparkle*jets pull bits and pieces of '70s junk culture-from the tiki lounge-inspired

cover art and album title to musical lifts from the gaudier side of '70s hard rock-into one single, coherent rock 'n' roll album. They don't shy away from a few blatant musical lifts: "She May Be Nice" and "Beautiful Girl" each take large bits of melody from Kiss's "Rock and Roll All Nite" and Elvis Costello's "Alison", respectively. But that's part of the charm: while they incorporate bits of hard rock inspired by Kiss and Heart and pop from sources as far and wide as Elvis Costello and Jackson Browne, the Sparkle*jets create an alternate take of the '70s where there was no cool and uncool, no prog-rock or hard rock or punk. There was just rock. So the Susan West songs-raging rockers like "Real Nice Time" and the hilarious, sneering "They Shoot Square Dancers, Don't They?" are the meat, potatoes, and gimmick: because her voice and her attitude are what distinguish the Sparkle*jets from their peers. But Mike Simmons's tracks, from the straightforward rock of "She May Be Nice" to the power-ballad "Sorry", manage to inject some life into power-pop cliches without abandoning that good old catchy chorus. Bamboo Lounge is geek rock at its finest, because it's (us) geeks who'll get the musical references and get the jokes. This is an album for everyone who grew up in a house with fake wood paneling and orange shag carpeting, for everyone who sat around and played Atari in a finished suburban basement. In short, for everyone who experienced some degree of '70s culture but who never knew or cared what about it was cool. Review from Kerry Kompost, Music Fan The new Sparkle*Jets UK CD 'Bamboo Lounge' is a giant step forward for this fun-lovin' Orange County quartet. It's also far and away the most FUN interactive CD-ROM I've come across, ever. Some of the enhanced features include additional demos, pictures, a 'live' bootleg album you assemble yourself, and an MTV-ready rock video ('Hate Your Hair') among other goodies. The CD case even comes complete with its own exotic drink mini-umbrella! All in all a *very* attractive and fun package, certainly a great value for those who measure such things. Musically, this sucker *rips*, man. Not quite as sarcastic and irreverent as their debut offering 'In, Thru and Beyond', but still cute and humorous in the best possible way, the songs on Bamboo Lounge show a band reaching for and achieving their potential as bona-fide heirs to the pop-rock throne. Mike Simmons and Susan West continue to inspire with their vocal interactions, Mike with his picture-perfect lonely surfer pop boy voice and Susan with her amazing, sassy snarl. Mike also shines on lead guitar, providing everything from off-the-rails, punk-inspired shredfests to plaintive, jazz-tinged stylings. Jamie Knight lays down an assured, confident groove on bass and new drummer Larry Doran adds a distinctive rhythmic flair to some of the newer tunes. Numerous production touches lend each and every track a distinctive

sound, including flute by Candypan's frontwoman Lisa Genio and many varied instruments courtesy of multi-instrumentalist Wondermint/Brian Wilson Band member Probyn Gregory. Some personal favorites include the opening track 'Monster' (co-written by Susan West and her young son Julian, quite possibly the first such pairing in pop songwriting history) which sets the tone for the whole album with its rocking guitars and Susan's amazing Ann Wilson-esque vocal performance. The lyrics are really cool as well (i.e. "Open your eyes, there's a monster in front of you, and she is a girl."). The song closes with a flourish of horns courtesy of Probyn. Very tomorrow. Another great tune is the Mike Simmons-penned 'Sorry' which I *guarantee* will have all of you 'sad guy' pop freaks on your knees worshipping this purest of pop masterpieces. I'm also fond of the pop-a-licious radio-friendly 'Good Morning World', again featuring oh-so-perfect vocals by Mike and sweeping band harmonies. Additional faves include the rockabilly stylings of 'Consult Your Physician', the flat-out pop-punk rocker 'Hate Your Hair', the totally hilarious 'They Shoot Square Dancers, Don't They?', the gorgeous mid-tempo ballad 'Beautiful Girl' and the album closer, the soon-to-be-a-classic lounge anthem 'Bamboo Lounge', with its jungle screams and vibraphone accents. As much as the new Cockeyed Ghost album ('Ludlow 6:18') demands a sit-down-and-listen-to-this approach, 'Bamboo Lounge' seems almost its polar opposite, a sort of stand-up-and-dance-to-me counterpart. It's a tremendously fun record, managing to convey measured doses of humor offset with serious moments of genuine, heartfelt reflection, a refreshing balance of the best of both pop worlds. Highly recommended to all fans of pure, unadulterated pop.

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