

Mp3 Smoke - Heaven On A Popsicle Stick

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

This is the album filmmakers Jem Cohen and Pete Sillen used in their documentary BENJAMIN SMOKE. We are currently looking for a means to reprint this album. If any suggestion-contact via email link below.

13 MP3 Songs ROCK: Progressive Rock, BLUES: Acoustic Blues Details: Reviews and bio.. "Smoke incorporates banjo, cello, and cornet into an acoustic swamp groove that exudes a seedy allure" --New York Times Creative Loafing Critic's Poll "Best Alternative Band of 1995" Rumored proclivities aside, Smoke's version of chamber country blues is still one of the most iconoclastic and enjoyable around. This all-star post-Opal aggregate enjoys a surprising amount of fame, given their interminably morbid style, but that probably says more about their audience than it does about their music, for Smoke certainly do not pander to anyone's lowest-common-denominator expectations. Their second album should not only extend the musical boundaries they've been operating in, but also bring them notoriety far beyond their supplicants at the Point and Clermont. CMJ That Smoke's most obvious reference point is Tom Waits is both complimentary and misleading. Like Waits, Smoke's vocalist/lyricist Benjamin weilds an immediately striking, tattered growl that is particularly fond of wandering in and around shadowy places and downtrodden characters. His backing - cornet, banjo, cello, guitar and sparse percussion - weaves a similarly moody, rag-tag tapestry of color. But idiosyncrasy comes in an unlimited variety of shapes and sizes, and Smokes brand of twisted Southern dispossession enjoys a universe all its own. Rather than lingering in mere histrionics or fabricated atmosphere, Smoke creates emotion through difficult, often disparate musical pathways. Benjamin's musings are pained, sarcastic and, at times, nerve rattling, while the melodic lines created by his bandmates' brass and strings are understated and beautifully woeful, layered among a bed of plunking banjo and feathery electric guitar work. The world is an undeniably more interesting and eerie place as visualized by this kind of exquisite storytelling, and this Atlanta collective's second long-player creates a considerably rich and provocative one. While best as a whole, "When It Rains," "Train Song," "Debbey's Song," and "Snake" are some of the record's best fasting tunes. by Colin Helms Interview Another Reason To Fast, the sophomore album by Atlanta's Smoke, is positively drenched in the three d's of cabaret gloom: dissolution, dissipation, and desperation. Surname-free

frontman Benjamin's gravelly vocals apply a decidedly Tom Waits-esque veneer to dusky tales of lost boyfriends and rotgut-fueled benders, while daubings of trumpet, cello, and timpani illuminate the music's darkest corners. by David Sprague New York Press The saying in Atlanta is "Fuck the Olympics, but leave Benjamin alone," and the lead singer of Smoke certainly is the sickliest-looking sex symbol ever to compete for the role of the thinnest man in rock. The decadent air of Smoke's albums may evoke Tom Waits, but would-be country cousins like Nick Cave would absolutely adore the jury-rigged cello, banjo and cornet that propel this stellar combo. The band's live performances are right up there with well-known house-rockers like Mazzy Star, but the impressive album can only hint at the glorious horror of watching Benjamin display himself on stage. In finding the rural beauty that separates languidness from boredom, Smoke has become the most Southern band around, turning nightclubs across America into long walks in the woods. by J.R. Taylor LA Weekly As a fanfare of scratching cellos and a lone cornet sets the stage for the disc's opening cut, you can visualize a group of Reconstruction-era miscreants lazily making music on a large, rundown back porch in the Deep South. Over sparse, Salvation Army percussion, singer "Benjamin" croons in a brogue worthy of Pere Ubu's David Thomas: "I fell asleep, I fell asleep in love, I fell into a hole." It's not often that you stumble onto a record with as rare and fragile a sense of majesty as the debut from this Atlanta quintet. A serious and depressing work of art, *Heaven* is both artfully constructed and beautifully orchestrated. It's inevitable that the warbling, throaty-voiced front man/woman "Benjamin" (last spotted as the namesake of Atlanta's experimental Opal Foxx Quartet) will be tagged a Tom Waits surrogate. But the truth is, Waits hasn't sounded this possessed in years. *Heaven* takes 1993's fine OFQ disc *The Love That Won't Shut Up* one step further into the murky depths of the gothic South. Musically, the tunes have grown from utilizing a more conventional backdrop of electric guitars to a gentle, often eerie tapestry of cellos, cornet and banjo. Fellow ex-OFQ members Bill Taft (also an alumnus of the Jody Grind) and Brian Halloran provide the odd combination and inventive use of these instruments, giving this disc an impact that may not suit all ears. There are surprising and effective textures at every turn. The banjo strumming on "Curtsins" contrasts with layered whispers, a resonant cello passage gives the melodic "Hank Aaron" a fragile chamber feel, while repetitive dissonance turns "The Trip" into a ragtag mantra. Smoke pulls at the elements together on "Luke's Feet," an odd waltz-time piece with Benjamin musing over a photograph of Luke Perry ("This glossy, airbrushed picture of Luke Perry's feet keeps me on my toes so to speak/my hero worship intact and indiscreet") and an encounter with fellow storyteller

Vic Chesnutt. Introduced on last year's OFQ disc as "the man, the woman, the paragon of mental health, Miss Opal Foxx," Benjamin draws on the tradition that has inspired fellow Georgians like Chesnutt and Bruce Hampton to create vivid lyrical imagery. His lyrics may be less evolved than his cohorts', but Benjamin makes up for his momentary lapses of self-indulgence with a sharp, focused intensity. Michael Lipton CMJ Evolving out of two other Long Play bands, Opal Foxx Quartet and Jody Grind, Smoke plays an edgy brand of Southern Goth, but ultimately, this band makes much more than music. As vocalist Benjamin recalls the spooky gruffness of Tom Waits and Nick Cave, the five other musicians concentrate on supplying as much atmosphere as sound. The bare, underproduced ethic of Heaven on a Popsicle Stick allows cello, banjo, cornet and drums to moan, pluck, whine and skitter their way towards the center of a nerve on songs of personal torment and ironic humor: There's plenty going on here, but nothing is disguised. Benjamin's lyrics sound like they were dashed out after he awoke from nightmares or hangovers; his voice, which sounds like something beyond the grave, only adds to the tension and drama of each track. Much like those of Cave and Waits, Benjamin's voice can be scary, yet the emphasis on many of the songs on Heaven...is on a sympathetic sadness that darkens the songs even further. There's fire: "Hole," "Hank Aaron," "Guilt" and "Luke's Feet," about the guilty pleasure of watching Beverly Hills 90210. Steve Ciabattone Ink 19 Smoke best describes the name of this band. Perhaps singer Benjamin has smoked for decades to produce his raw, throaty, grinding voice. Perhaps Smoke pervades the pool hall back rooms, a place from which this music has possibly come. These gin-soaked melancholic tunes are reminiscent of Tom Waits. Lyrics are kooky and prosaic, honest and from the gut. The cornet, cello and banjo make some songs "backwoodsy," while others sound like New Orleans. Besides that, Smoke is just really cool to pass up. The only lacking area is production quality. Liner notes reveal "Recorded in Neil Fried's basement," and it's easy to believe, as the instruments variously drown out each other. But this should only mean that the best from Smoke is yet to come. You'll treasure this album and eagerly wait to see what they'll do after they get some bucks to work with. Ann Blanke Creative Loafing - Charlotte, NC One time Jody Grind member Bill Taft says that the accident two years ago that took the lives of two band mates and Atlanta poet Deacon Lunchbox made him more aware of taking time for granted. "I became much less interested, " he says "in compromise." That attitude is clearly audible in Smoke, the new Atlanta band for which Taft's cornet and banjo playing serve as musical linchpin. The predominantly acoustic quintet is one of the most radically left of field bands to surface all year. Their

debut, *Heaven on a Popsicle Stick* sounds like a sordid mingling of Kurt Weill cabaret, Tom Waits, Stephen Foster and Nick Cave's demonic obsessions. At the core of Smoke's stirring appeal is gravelly voiced, single name singer and lyricist Benjamin. It's this longtime fixture of the Atlanta club scene and former leader of the now defunct, near-legendary Opal Foxx Quartet that gives Smoke's music its perpetual case of melancholy. By no means, however, is he some one dimensional mope. Benjamin can come on bitterly funny, for instance, musing in "Luke's Feet" about a magazine photo of the 90210 thoroughbred's hooves. "Nine-oh-two-one-oh," he expounds, "six-six-six; I don't watch it but turn it on now and again for kicks." At other point he's achingly poignant and personal. In the tortured ballad "Awake," set to a heartstopping melody, he sings "You don't want it tomorrow; if you got it today. Tomorrow never happens...anyway." The musical backdrop for Benjamin's ruminations is fittingly idiosyncratic. Woven together with Taft's cornet and banjo are cello, drums and quietly electric guitar. The ensemble has a graceful interplay, conjuring an almost nostalgic air. At the same time the skeletal arrangements and always economical playing lend the music a primitivism that give it a rock edge. Guitarist Coleman Lewis adds a country lilt to things with his understated guitar sounding as though it were lifted straight off a Cowboy Junkies record. But it's Taft who's the musical focal point. His mournful cornet and uncharacteristically pensive banjo playing give Smoke's music a weird elegiac feel. Smoke's version of artistic intransigence may not involve any of the generally received notions of the term. They don't bathe their songs in seas of distortion; they don't push the envelope of lyrical taboo like a gangsta rapper. But it's unlikely that you'll hear any record this year that butts heads with convention quite as successfully as this debut. ----- Smoke is: Benjamin - words Brian Halloran - cello Bill Taft - cornet banjo Tim Campion - drums Coleman Lewis - guitar Time moves slowly, if at all, in urban-Appalachian Cabbagetown. Across the street from a tiny Baptist Church under the stacks of the old Fulton Bag Mill, Smoke are teaching themselves new songs. The quintet doesn't usually practice the older tunes, but they take a moment to indulge by digging up "Dirt," a perfect example of their sound-without-brand-name. The somber blues that Smoke creates -- from Siberian sambas to state fair freakouts -- is arresting in every sense of the word. The music of the depressed and dispossessed rarely draws throngs of admirers. Yet Smoke tends to pack the venues in which they serve their eloquent time. With the release of their second record *Another Reason To Fast*, they attempt to meet the lingering anticipation of their growing following intrigued by 1994's *Heaven on a Popsicle Stick*. All but one of the band members live in Cabbagetown, the perfect

environment for this troupe. Much like Smoke, the dilapidated Atlanta neighborhood holds a colorful mix of folks, historical importance, and a vaguely promising future. From the original cast of characters when Smoke formed in 1992, only vocalist Benjamin and cellist Brian Halloran (both ex-Opal Foxx Quartet) remain. But Bill Taft (ex-Jody Grind), who plays banjo and cornet, joined the band shortly thereafter. More recently, guitarist Coleman Lewis (Grand Fury) and drummer Tim Campion (ex-Insane Jane, ex-Blood Poets) have stepped in, while Dana Trotsky occasionally accompanies on clarinet. Although they use the tag team approach to songwriting ("like championship wrestling!" exclaims Taft), the band is undeniably led by Benjamin. Without him, the Smoke will clear. Benjamin, who has a home at the moment, says he's leading "a more full life than ever before." Moments later, he recalls hearing Patti Smith's "Kimberly" at 16. "I can remember the day, the minute," when music emerged from the background and, enthusiastically, into the foreground of his life. Your 'typical' Southern-raised pill-popping homosexual/drag queen, Benjamin has paid his performing dues in this town by way of such 1980's noise and punk outfits as Medicine Suite and Freedom Puff. Years ago, Benjamin told Lowlife Magazine that the experimental, exhibitionistic Medicine Suite was his way of saying "Hey Atlanta industrial bullshit scene, let's see how cool you really are! Let's see how much culture and art you can take, let's see how much dick and sex and piss you can take." But, with Debbey Richardson (ex-Magic Bone) on guitar and Benjamin on bass, Freedom Puff reverted to the simple, comparatively wholesome joys of (sorta) punk rock. As for the 90s, Benjamin is perhaps better known to some as Ms. Opal Foxx, frontperson for the legendary "quartet" that often featured over a dozen members. Regardless of garb or genre, he is always in character. Over the years, his unmistakable low-end grumble has resembled the roar of a wounded lion, a French intellectual in the gutter, a confused Southern outsider, a forsaken soulmate of Hank Williams, or (the inevitable reference) a Georgia-bred Tom Waits. Remarkably, Smoke blends luxuriant pop with atonality with a Blue Ridge flavor. Something in its chemistry makes the band as comfortable at the High Museum of Art or a swanky New York gallery as at the seedy Clermont Lounge or a burnt out carriage house in Rome, GA. It's in the instrumentation, too. Taft's cornet, for example, a shorter, fatter, less shrill trumpet, refines the Smoke sound while his occasional banjo brings it back to earth. Halloran's vivid cello enriches the combo. Apparently, violins and cellos are proliferating in pop music. With amusement, Taft notes his conversation with a DC booking agent who informed him that strings are "really cool; the string thing is just really big now." One of the original three "plink plank plunk" brothers,

as one Athens critic referred to them, with Taft and Todd Butler (Smoke's first guitarist), Halloran's cello is more foundation than trendy window dressing. On Another Reason To Fast, the mix caters to the mid-range, presenting Halloran's cello more prominently than 1994's Heaven On A Popsicle Stick CD. The new album was recorded in Athens by Sugar/Buzzhungry guy David Barbe, "a genius maniac freak" of a recording engineer, Benjamin applauds. This batch of songs features such highlights as the resurrected Opal Foxx classic "Clean White Bed," and "Friends," a melancholy tune that has little to do with the hit TV show. But the disc also carries a subtle new direction away from Smoke's original sparse ballads of pain. These are the songs that Benjamin has taken to sarcastically introducing as their "new wave" tunes. Champion and Lewis are behind these energetic pieces. Whereas Todd Butler maintained an acoustic presence, Lewis adds a Gibson electric. On the first single "Shadow Box," he takes center stage alongside Champion's impossibly funky beat. "I was terrified when Tim came because I was afraid that it would suck. Instead, it was twenty times better than it had been," Benjamin recollects of the addition of Champion's meticulous, perfectly pressurized drumming. Far from jumbling the ensemble, Champion's stripped down kit fits in seamlessly. More so than any other Atlanta act, the comfortable Smoke vibe is made for commiserating. But not everyone can fathom the beauty Benjamin somehow culls from the despair and pain of a self-described addictive personality. He has a handful of heroes: Tracy Terrill (the reclusive songwriter also known as Cake), Debbey Richardson, Dana Kletter (Black Girls), Vic Chesnutt, and Nina Simone. According to Champion, Smoke's songwriting is what distinguishes it from previous bands, especially the beloved spectacle of the Opal Foxx Quartet. "After two years of fucking kicking ass and having a great time, we could finally hear what we were doing (with Smoke)," adds Benjamin of the transition. Indeed, the modern day Smoke relies less on depravity and more on the crafting of songs. As only Benjamin could get away with singing the words he sings, the band is getting away with making music that only this collection could possibly conjure. Perhaps referring to the fact that all music lovers - everyone - can enjoy the common denominator of his pensive, lyrical sufferings, Benjamin delivers Smoke's musical bottom line wryly: "No matter where you are, people know good stuff. People go, 'Uh-huh, something my body needs anyway.'" by Thomas Peake, 11/95 People who are interested in Tom Waits Nick Cave Nina Simone should consider this download.

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

Similar manuals: