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The Scoldees - *Nightcap World*

Off Hours Rockers Records SPP-12

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by John Crossett

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Musical Performance ■■■■□
Recording Quality ■■■□□
Overall Enjoyment ■■■■□

Bar bands are a dime a dozen. Good bar bands are a somewhat rarer breed. Good bar bands with enough talent to take their act to another level are about as plentiful as hen's teeth. The Scoldees are such a band. They have all the elements -- talent, the ability to write powerful, evocative songs, and a fine new CD in *Nightcap World*.



The only item that could be lacking is luck. More specifically, will the Scoldees be lucky enough to get their music heard by the general public, thereby reaping the rewards they've earned here?

But just who, and what, are the Scoldees? In regard to the who, the Scoldees are made up of lead singer/acoustic guitarist Nancy Sirianni, lead singer/acoustic guitarist Jack Hoffman, acoustic 12 string guitarist/background vocalist/percussionist John Collis, and bassist/background vocalist Ted Rydzewski. They also get support from drummer John Michel, keyboardist Peter Adams, and electric guitarist Robin Macatangay. But the most interesting musician on *Nightcap World* is Jeff Pevar, of the group CPR, who appears on all 12 tracks playing guitar, dobro and/or mandolin.

It's what the Scoldees are that may take a bit more explaining. Picture, if you will, the musical styles of Suzanne Vega and John Mellencamp sprinkled with a tiny bit of Enya, then doused with The Grateful Dead, Uncle Tupelo and Muscle Shoals. Can you picture that? Good, because those are the jumping off points for the music of The Scoldees. The more you listen to *Nightcap World*, the more their myriad musical influences become evident. And, as is the case with many of modern music's top acts, The Scoldees adapt and meld those influences into a new, totally personal sound that will grab your attention, shake it, and say " shut up and listen."

For examples of what I'm referring to, you'll need to listen to just three different cuts from *Nightcap World*. First, listen to the opening cut "Cocoon," where not only does the band summon images of Vega's sound, lead singer Sirianni even sounds a bit like her too. But this is no mere copy tune. The lyrics of "Cocoon," describe the type of loneliness many of us experience as we slide through life -- that of being among people, but still alone, wrapped up in their own personal cocoons. It's pointed enough to hit the heart of even the most jaded music lover. Then listen to the caustic wit wrapped around the truth in the bluegrass-tinged Midwestern anthem "American Tonight," which punctures the smugness some Americans feel toward the rest of the world. And finally, enjoy the pop-drenched, Dead-inspired, sweet-sounding side of The Scoldees songwriting talent in the song "Figure It Out."

The music of The Scoldees will catch and hold your attention and the sound of *Nightcap World* comes close to the quality of the music. Had just a bit more attention been paid to the sound, this album might have become that rarest of items -- a pop music demo disc that could be played by music lovers and audiophiles alike. As it is, there's a very slight haze that overrides the sound and belies the band's use of so many acoustic instruments. Still, careful listening will yield a treasure trove of sonic delights. Sirianni's slight nasality is easily distinguished, as are the lovely harmonies between her and Hoffman.

I have two wishes for the Scoldees. First, I hope they find the luck they so richly deserve; all the other ingredients for success are already there. Second, I would like to see as much effort given to the sonics as The Scoldees put into their songwriting. Fulfillment of these two wishes could vault any future albums from the group into the realm of stardom. As it stands, should you have the opportunity to listen to *Nightcap World*, don't pass it up. The Scoldees are the real deal.

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