

# Ghost Town - No Depression In Heaven

(Crossover-Jazz)

People tend to ascribe special properties to the number seven. Some call it magical, others holy, most just consider it plain lucky. One factoid that became widely accepted is that every 7 years the human body undergoes a full makeover, a rebirth of sorts – having every one of its atoms and cells replaced. The reality of the matter might be questionable, but the poetry at the heart of the myth will never be snuffed out.

Now, what's this got to do with the crossover Jazz mavericks known as Ghost Town? Well, after seven years spent humanising and resuscitating Techno and contemporary Pop hits, the group decided to veer off into old-time American classics. With their third full-length offering entitled *"No Depression in Heaven"*, they dug out a slew of regional, American hits – most of which were penned in the late 1800s and early 1900s – and gave them a full makeover. In the process they also upgraded from an instrumental trio formation to a vocally driven quartet, by adding the extremely unique and versatile vocalist Joana Aderi to their line up.

Unrequited love, murder, an Edgar Allen Poe type mindset mildly offset with a dash of comedy – the spirit of the record is reminiscent of *Brother Where Art Thou*, but if it were rewritten and directed by David Lynch. The source material it draws on is bleak because it was written in bleak times, but despite that, it's full of comic relief. Unfortunately for us, history tends to loop on itself, and many historians have pointed out some indisputable parallels between what's going on right now and the tumultuous 1930s. This explains why the material found here doesn't sound anachronistic at all. And because these songs are not really what is normally understood as covers, but rather something more akin to inspired versions, this long-player truly sounds like a faithful expression of our times. Note: If you're not listening to the record while reading this, then imagine a recording session with Sinkane, David Byrne and Tom Waits.

All the members of Ghost Town are seasoned Jazz musicians who, for different reasons, decided to apply their skills to anything but, what would be considered traditional Jazz. Their feeling for groove and extremely high musical aptitude shows in their improvisational fluency, the immediacy of the sound and a natural sense for pulsating polyrhythms. At times, the material found here hinges on something of an afro-beat-esque swing, while simultaneously redefining the parameters of a traditional, "roots" American twang. If that wasn't enough, the whole thing is layered with a patina of textured, percussive, liquid electronics. To call this anything but an original Ghost Town sound might prove to be quite a challenging feat.

The songs that became *"No Depression in Heaven"* come from a rich, thoroughly researched and cherry picked selection and could have easily filled up another stack of full length vinyl discs. The material was compiled by band leader and guitarist Urs Voegeli. Urs modified and rearranged the originals, in some cases only keeping the lyrics and giving the music a full work-over. These refitted compositions were then brought back to the band and took on a life of their own during a series of rehearsal sessions. The final track list was made with an eye on creating a cohesive and fluid listening experience. The entire material was recorded live, and then treated to overdubs. This took only five days.

*Authenticity is important, but so is ambivalence. It's sort of a game to me. It's important to have respect towards for the original material, to know its roots, and not to just have a picture of it which was crafted by today's music industry. At the core of it all is my own approach to things. It's about being subversive, authentic and ambivalent at the same time. This gives the listener the possibility to find their own interpretation of our music. – Urs Voegeli*

*Ghost Town are a crossover Jazz quartet located in the German part of Switzerland. They are: Joana Aderi (voice, electronics, fx), Urs Voegeli (guitar), Claude Meier (bass) and Lukas Mantel (drums).*