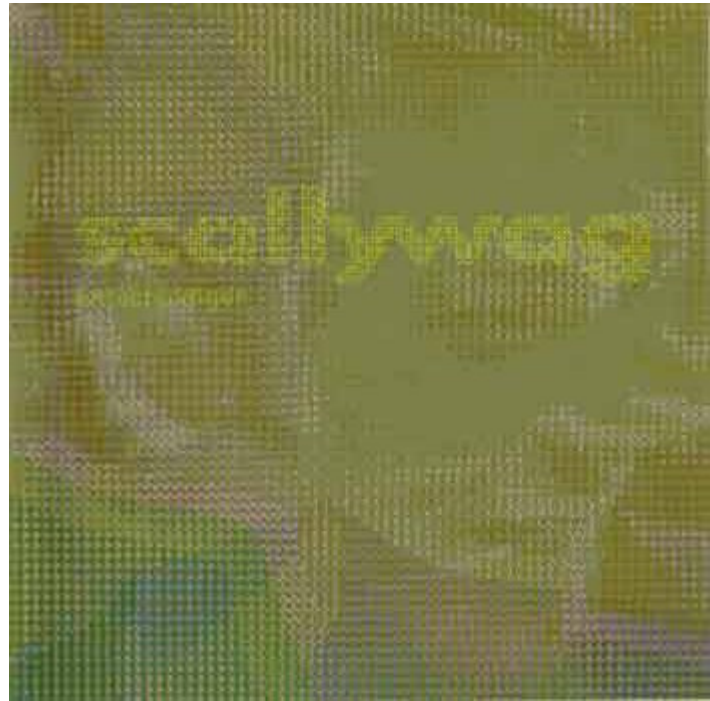


SCALLYWAG

entschuldiger

CD, frisin rekkordsr



Austrian band that play rockmusic with Irish influences. Actually, it is much better than that short description might make you expect, which is mainly due to the good songwriting, the variation in styles and the gentle use of traditional instruments. If you get behind those selfimposed prejudices (see below) and the ugly green cover of the CD you'll unveil an enjoyable collection of songs.

Usually I have strong prejudices against Austrian bands that play "irish rock", because I instantly associate that with slightly overweight girls in self-knit pullovers, died hair and celtic crosses on big necklaces, that wave accoustic guitars and talk about "Eire" as the most beautiful place on earth a lot^[1]. Mainly what you get are young people who are still hanging onto "Rum, Sodomy & The Leash" on the one hand and a bunch of Indie-rock-records on the other hand, and who'll invariably try to play "The Irish Rover" but the lead guitarist won't let go of his nifty 2.000 € electric guitar, so they'll put a guitar solo in there. A definite bummer in every way. And since I do own a The Pogues Greatest Hits-album, why would I want to listen to that?

Because, when I received a message from the bandleader, I downloaded two songs from their website (what would the world be without the internet today?) and there was something in the melodies, that stuck in my head. So I asked for more, and "entschuldiger" is what I got: the first full album by Scallywag, which keeps the promises, the first two songs I heard made. Twelve finely crafted songs, ranging from straight rock to irish traditionals (without electric guitar solos) and songwriting that is par with what I get to hear from places all over the world (see [Duff](#)). Here and there the production could have done more to clean things up, but since I never cared for production a lot and still find a lot of pleasure in records that sound as if they were recorded with a shoe carton, as long as the energy stays intact, who am I to care, anyway.

Listening to "entschuldiger" almost every day for a week now I was reminded strongly of a long forgotten band from Austria called Die Brüder; a band that I liked a lot, who also had a strong folk-influence on their first two albums, before going hardrock on their third album and then dissolving into nothing. From the harmonies and melodies to the voice of the singer (and the Austrian inflection of the almost perfect school-english pronunciation), these two bands are quite close on my map, though I'd guess that they have never heard of each other. So maybe it was plain nostalgia that made me listen to Scallywag in the first place. Did those two downloaded songs strike a nerve that sparked a flame of subconscious but still pleasant memories or mindbits? I ain't no neuropsychologist, so how would I know.

All I know is that "entschuldiger" is a good record and if I had to find a fault with it, it would be this: At times the a little bland and too obvious lyrics are hard to bear. Most of the times a little more poetic adventourousness would have done a lot of good, because the metaphors and ideas conveed are usually quite straightforward and one-dimensional. Allright, so "barrels of beer" might be an exception because it is a drinking song, but that doesn't mean it has to have dumb lyrics, does it? But where is te despair, the endless pain and the disillusionment that usualy fills "traditionals"? On "entschuldiger" we get a lot of lovers that are breaking up in plain description, almost as if it is not so important anyway. If I look at a collection of old-time-songs bound into an old songbook I own, I'll get a killer murdering his innocent girlfriend ("Girl from Knoxville", "Banks of the Ohio"), drug abuse and sexual deviancy ("Cocaine"), prostitution and gambling and drinking ("House of the rising sun") or even the meaninglessness of most people's lives described in the

bland eyes of cattle being brought to the slaughter ("Donna, donna"). I'd like a little more of that instead of "we are the redhaired and sober boys / we are the perfect sons in law" (which I take to be irony) or "why did you do that to me? / why can't you feel how feel?" or "the truth is that I love you / the truth is god I swear / the truth is that I want you / the truth is sometimes hard to bear".

I imagine Scallywag rocking a stage in a small pub in the country somewhere, and that would be a good experience. My favorite track is "my girl" for the unexpected use of funky guitars and a horn section, though the track somehow doesn't sit too well with the rest of the songs. No, it really isn't, it's "every song", the beautiful track that has deserved its lyrics to be printed in the booklet. No, actually it is "maybe" for the Chris Eckman-impersonation during the refrain. No, "the garden", because it is the one song whose lyrics are a little more challenging. Aaaw, I could go on until the record is over. Finally, there's only one question left: why is the title of that CD in German?

[1] Since I have never been to Ireland, I can't tell. The picture in my head of Ireland consists of IRA-movies, tv-shows (that might as well have been Scottish) and the trinity of U2, Sinéad O'Connor and The Commitments. But for some reason the image of Ireland is quite well liked in Austria, so you'll find a pub in almost every bigger town and Guinness at the bigger supermarkets.

www.scallywag.at

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