

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE"
- SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

Chicago Tribune April 26 May 2 1991

Take 2

FRIDAY'S GUIDE TO MOVIES & MUSIC

'Ice Ice Baby' '50s style:

Big Daddy retro-fits the hits

What would have happened if, just before recording "Ice Ice Baby," Vanilla Ice had experienced a momentary mental short-circuit that left him convinced he was a 1950s rock 'n' roll star?

You can find out on "Cutting Their Own Groove," the just released third album (on Rhino Records) by a Los Angeles outfit known as Big Daddy. An eight member band that performs current-day songs in a variety of '50s and early '60s musical styles, Big Daddy retro-fits "Ice Ice Baby" to sound like a Chuck Berry workout complete with Johnny B. Goode—or in this case, Vanilla B. Goode—guitar.

Elsewhere on the album, Big Daddy turns Paul Simon's "Graceland" into (what else?) an Elvis Presley/Jordanaires-style number, invests the Talking Heads' "Once in a Lifetime" with a Harry Belafonte/"Day-O" calypso rhythm and makes Guns N' Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" sound like the Tokens' "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

And, for good measure, Big Daddy takes a crack at "Nothing Compares 2 U"—opening with a bit of the National Anthem and a cry of "Where's my Grammy?" and then shifting into a Little Richard-style romp complete with falsetto woo's and wop-hop-a-loo-bops.

The members of Big Daddy like to tell people they were taken captive in 1959 by Laotian revolutionaries while on a Southeast Asian tour. Released some 24 years later, they say, they began playing modern tunes the only way they knew how, oldies style. Whatever, they serve up some funny songs.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE - 4/26/91

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE"

- SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

rock 'n' roll

BIG DADDY «Cutting their own groove» (Rhino Records)

Una band mai sufficientemente considerata per il loro reale valore. I californiani **Big Daddy** hanno all'attivo solamente tre albums in 9 anni. Il loro esordio per la Rhino è stato con «**Big Daddy**» nel 1983 e la replica due anni dopo, nel 1985 con «**Meanwhile... back in the States**».

Un gruppo molto egocentrico, simpatico, fuori dalla norma e dai normali schemi della formazione rock. Una band che conferma un'ottima cultura musicale, una notevole preparazione ed un background non indifferente. Ero rimasto sorpreso come i **Big Daddy** fossero rimasti per così tanto tempo lontani dal vinile, abbiamo dovuto attendere ben 6 anni prima di rivederli ancora sotto contratto e con un nuovo album. Spieghiamolo subito, i **Big Daddy** sono originali, dei matakchioni sempre pieni di sorprese, esuberanti e fantasiosi.

Veniamo subito ai validi attributi di questo insolito otetto. Vanno evidenziate infatti alcune doti come le loro superbe idee, le splendide voci, la grande ironia, un in-

nato talento e la conferma che sono dei maestri negli arrangiamenti e nel riadattare classici degli altri. Il gruppo è meglio chiarirlo per chi non li conoscesse già, si è specializzato in «current hits», ovvero i maggiori successi dei nostri giorni, di artisti ora di grido con canzoni entrate nelle classifiche di vendita negli anni '80 e '90 ma suonate e cantate con estrema precisione in perfetto stile anni '50. I **Big Daddy** hanno un chiaro contrassegno stilistico, sono dei maghi nel ricamare struggenti ballate nello stile dei complessi vocali doo-woop. Un'operazione di riscrittura del rock and roll classico. Potrà sembrarvi un'opera di recupero, di nostalgia, di revival, al contrario invece, i **Big Daddy** sono sicuramente geniali nel riproporre melodie e sonorità tipiche degli anni '50. I **Big Daddy** camminano a braccetto rimettendosi in comodi abiti **rock and roll, rockabilly, rhythm and blues, doo-woop**.

La band immagina di essere nel 1959 e si ispira chiaramente ai **Coasters**, a **Dion & The Belmonds**, **The Chiffons**, **The Jordanaires**, **The Marcells**, **Four Preps**, **Four Freshmen**, **The Fleetwoods**, le **Shangri-Las**, il «Wall of sound» di **Phil Spector**, ecc.

I **Big Daddy** sono attualmente costituiti da **Marty Kaniger** (voce solista), **Tom Lee** (voce solista, chitarra elettrica e violino), **Bob Wayne** (voce solista e produttore), **Don Raymond** (chitarra solista), **John Hatton** (basso, violino), **Norman A. Norman** (piano e organo), **Bob Sandman** (sax) e **Damon De Grignon**

(batteria). «**Cutting their own groove**» è un tuffo negli anni '50, dai canti «acapella» alle melodie «doo-woop». Veniamo alle canzoni, difficile spiegarvi come la melodia appartenga ad un noto brano mentre i testi sono di tutt'altro motivo.

Un esperimento, se così lo vogliamo chiamare, assai curioso ma indubbiamente riuscitissimo. Non fatevi trovare spiazzati: «**Like a virgin**» di **Madonna** suona come «**Venus**» di **Frankie Avalon**, «**Graceland**» di **Paul Simon** è un rockabilly alla **Elvis Presley** prima maniera e riporta alla mente la casa di **Elvis**, ovvero «**Graceland**» a **Memphis** nel Tennessee con dei forti richiami anche a «**That's all right Mama**» e le sonorità di «**All shook up**». «**Once in a lifetime**» dei **Talking Heads** di **David Byrne** e **Brian Eno** divenuta «**Banana boat**» e ricorda di più le atmosfere care a **Harry Belafonte**. «**Ice ice Baby**» è in chiave rock'n'roll alla **Chuck Berry**. Se ascoltate «**Born to run**» di **Bruce Springsteen** vi accorgerete che è piacevolmente stravolta e la nuova versione è indubbiamente indovinata riprendendo fedelmente gli accordi di «**travelin'man**» di **Ricky Nelson**.

«**Hold on**» delle **Wilson**

Philips diventa un magico soul quale «**Higher and higher**» di **Jackie Wilson** mentre «**Welcome to the jungle**» ripropone invece le sonorità di «**The lion sleep tonight**» dei **Tokens**. «**Money for nothing**» dei **Dire Straits** di **Mark Knopfler** è musicata sulle note della celeberrima «**Sixteen tons**» di **Tennessee Ernie Ford**. Non mancano brani di **Prince** «**Nothing compares 2 U**» e di **Kris Kristofferson** con «**Help me make it through the night**» che appare però soltanto come «bonus track» del compact disc. Suonare un brano e cantare un'altro è certamente un esperimento interessante, insolito e divertente. I **Big Daddy** ci sgua-zano in maniera perfetta. Un album pimpante e piacevolissimo.

Riscopriamo i **Big Daddy** e diamo loro il giusto credito, se lo meritano veramente.

Aldo Pedron



BUSCADERO 115-74

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(Original review in Italian...see next page for English translation)

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE"

- SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

BIG DADDY
"Cutting Their Own Groove"
(Rhino Records)

Never sufficiently considered for their real value, the Californians Big Daddy have released just three albums in 9 years. Their beginning with Rhino Records was with the album "Big Daddy" in 1983 and a similar album two years later [in 1985] "Meanwhile...Back in the States."

Big Daddy is a very egocentric but congenial group out of the norm of the usual schemes of rock formation. They have an excellent musical culture, and a noteworthy preparation and background.

I was very surprised that Big Daddy remained out of the spotlight for so long. We've had to wait a good 6 years before seeing them again under a contract and with a new album. Let's get to the point: Big Daddy are originals, jesters always full of surprises, exuberant and imaginative.

We can immediately see the attributes of this unusual octet: their superb ideas, their splendid voices, their great irony, an innate talent, and their mastery of musical arrangements along with the re-adaptation of others' classics.

For those of you who don't know the group, it is best to explain that they specialize in current hits: actually, the major successes of our days, the songs of famous artists of the 80's and 90's played and sung with extreme precision in the perfect style of the 50's.

Big Daddy has a unique style. They're magicians in embellishing ballads in the doo-wop style and re-writing songs according to classic rock and roll. Although it might seem like an act of salvaging, nostalgia or revival, Big Daddy are certainly geniuses at reproducing melodies and acoustics typical of the 50's.

Big Daddy have put themselves in a comfortable spot by combining rock and roll, rockabilly, rhythm and blues, and doo-wop. The group imagines itself to be in 1959 and is inspired by The Coasters, Dion & The Belmonts, The Chiffons, The Jordanaires, The Marcels, Four Preps, Four Freshmen, The Fleetwoods, The Shangri-Las, the "Wall of Sound" of Phil Spector, etc.

Big Daddy is actually made up of Marty Kaniger, lead vocals; Tom Lee, lead vocals, electric guitar and violin; Bob Wayne, lead vocals and producer; Don Raymond, solo guitarist; John Hatton, bass and violin; Norman A. Norman, piano and organ; Bob Sandman, saxophone; and Damon DeGrignon, drums. "Cutting Their Own Groove" is a dive into 50's style acapella to the melody of doo-wop.

When it comes to the songs, it's difficult to explain how the melody belongs to a famous tune while the contexts have another meaning.

This is a bizarre but sure experiment, if that's what we want to call it, and proves that "Like a Virgin" by Madonna sounds like "Venus" by Frankie Avalon. "Graceland" by Paul Simon is a rockabilly done Elvis Presley style that carries us back to Elvis' house Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee with strong overtones of "That's All Right Mama" and the sound of "All Shook Up."

"Once in a lifetime" by Talking Heads (David Byrne and Brian Eno) has become "Banana Boat" and recalls the sounds of Harry Belafonte. "Ice Ice Baby" is in the rock and roll style of Chuck Berry. If you listen to "Born to Run" by Bruce Springsteen, you will find that it is pleasingly strummed and that the new version faithfully reproduces the arrangement of "Travelin' Man" by Ricky Nelson.

"Hold On" by Wilson Phillips becomes a magical soul tune similar to "Higher and Higher" by Jackie Wilson, while "Welcome to the Jungle" reproduces the sound of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens. "Money for Nothing" by Dire Straits (Mark Knopfler) is played to the notes of the celebrated "Sixteen Tons" by Tennessee Ernie Ford.

There is even something from Prince, "Nothing compares to U," and Kris Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night" which appears, however, only as a "bonus track" on the compact disc.

Playing a tune and singing another is certainly an interesting experiment, one that is unusual and fun. Big Daddy fulfills our expectations perfectly. This is an upbeat and pleasant album.

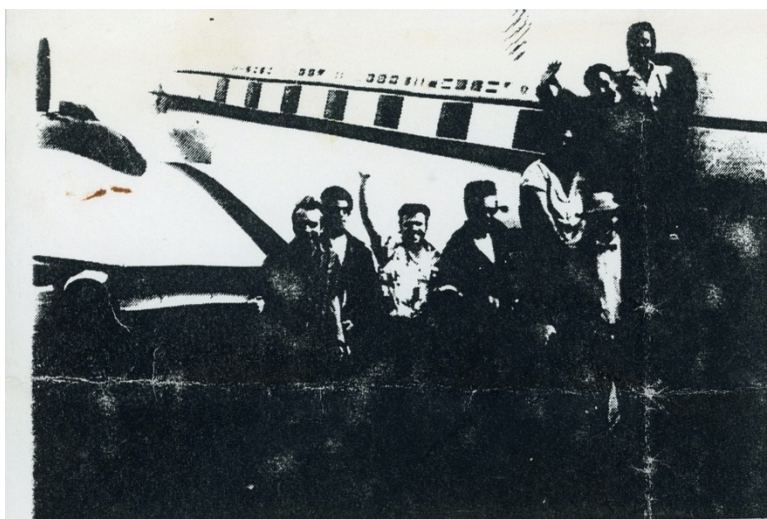
Let's rediscover Big Daddy and give them just credit. They really deserve it.

From "BUSCADERO" 115-74
- Written by Aldo Pedron
- Translated from the Italian by Rory Schaefer
- Edited by Ed Guertin

BUSCADERO – MILANO, ITALY, 6/91

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -



Big Daddy, after being stranded on a desert island for several decades, emerges onto the rock scene with familiar covers that they really wrote. And if you believe that...

'90s pop meets '50s doo-wop

"Cutting Their Own Groove"
Big Daddy

Who is Big Daddy and why are they playing 1950s versions of modern songs?

Big Daddy was a famous '50s rock group that disappeared in 1959 when their tour plane got lost and crashed on a remote South Sea island. The band remained there for years, until they finally figured out how to fix the plane's engine.

Eventually resurfacing in the United States, Big Daddy claimed they had actually written many of the hit songs currently on the radio — 30 years ago. And they had the cassette tapes (which they claim to have invented) to prove it.

If you ask Big Daddy anyway, that's what they'll tell you.

Now, with their third album, "Cutting Their Own Groove," Big Daddy continues to poke fun at modern hits, blending them with doo-wops, sh-booms and rang-a-lang-a-ding-dongs. It's an interesting gimmick, and what prevents it from being merely that is the fact that they do it so well. In fact, Big Daddy does it well enough that they had a minor hit a few years back with their version of Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark."

And they may just have another one with their new version of Vanilla Ice's "Ice Ice Baby," which is more than reminiscent of Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode." Sound weird? Well, it is. The song starts with Berry's opening guitar lick and then strangely merges with the bass line from Queen's "Under Pressure." The lyrics belong to Vanilla Ice, but the melody is unmistakably Berry's and, surprisingly, it

works.

Other highlights on the album include Guns 'n' Roses' "Welcome To The Jungle," done to the tune of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," and Talking Heads' "Once in a Lifetime," done à la Harry Belafonte. B. Daddy also merges Sinéad's "Nothing Compares 2 U" with Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" and gives listeners their interpretation of Paul Simon's "Graceland," U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" and Springsteen's "Born To Run."

Though all of the tunes are good, the high point of the album is "Money For Nothing," which Big Daddy wrestles to fit into the form of Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Sixteen Tons," a song that was also mined by the Stray Cats for "Stray Cat Strut."

Having a familiarity with '50s music may enhance your appreciation of Big Daddy, but you need not possess the in-depth knowledge of the music that they clearly do. Listeners with only a passing acquaintanceship with '50s tunes should enjoy the rampant lunacy and incongruity of the album. "Cutting Their Own Groove" isn't just a novelty record: The performances are so good that the tracks stand on their warped and twisted own.

— Dan Levitin

Stanford Univ.
Stanford Daily
cir. 20,000

◆ Thursday, May 23, 1991



STANFORD DAILY NEWS - 5/23/91

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE"

- SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

VOX

Published monthly by
IPC Magazines,
Holborn Publishing Group,
27th Floor, King's Reach Tower,
Stamford Street,
London SE1 9LS

August 1991

BIG DADDY

Cutting Their Own Groove

(Rhino Import)

In 1985 Big Daddy had a freak hit with their version of Bruce Springsteen's 'Dancing In The Dark', re-arranged to sound like Pat Boone.

This, their third album, follows the same formula, and comprises 15 familiar tracks performed as though by Presley, The Tokens, Little Richard, etc. They don't care who they lampoon: 'Ice Ice Baby' is done like Chuck Berry, 'Money For Nothing' like Tennessee Ernie Ford's '16 Tons', 'Hold On' like Jackie Wilson's 'Higher & Higher' and so on, all brilliantly observed.

The bonus CD track is a superb 'Help Me Make It Through The Night', very cleverly transposed into 'Yakety Yak' ("get in the sack" replacing "don't talk back"). Virtually every track displays the group's strong affection for past rock'n'roll glories.

(8) John Tobler

VOX MAGAZINE - LONDON, UK 8/91

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)

BIG DADDY: CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

FLINT JOURNAL
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Month's best: Big Daddy's mix of new and old

It's been a *creme de la creme* month for "A"-list music-related releases. The picks for May:

- **"Cutting Their Own Groove," Big Daddy (Rhino CT/CD).** The whole idea behind this outrageously clever collection is to prove that oldies can sing newies.

Through the "doo-rock" revivalist band called Big Daddy, improbability becomes reality.

For example, when the talented octet overlays Madonna's "Like a Virgin" over a loose arrangement of Frankie Avalon's "Venus," singing Avalon's familiar intro as "Oh! virgin; hey, virgin," innocence never sounded so pure.

Then hold your sides for Dire Straits' "Money for Nothing" (sung to Tennessee Ernie Ford's hit "Sixteen Tons") and Mike +

the Mechanics' "The Living Years" (another spoof supreme on "Leader of the Pack"). Again, the modern lyrics are adapted to the styles of the old hits.

Likewise, Big Daddy's straw-basket weaving of Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" with Rick Nelson's 1961 hit "Travelin' Man," sung by a Nelson sound-alike, is flawlessly ingenious.

"Cutting Their Own Groove" successfully bridges the gaps between four living generations of rock 'n' roll, and it rates a big score for Big Daddy.

THE FLINT MICHIGAN JOURNAL - 5/31/91

REVIEW: MELBOURNE

Reviews Album DISCS

Big Daddy CUTTING THEIR OWN GROOVE (Rhino)

Deep in the weird heart of America lies Rhino Records, the bastion of rock lunacy, and from its stable of crazoid entertainment has emerged Big Daddy, an eight piece rock n'roll monster determined to drag the nineties back to the fifties. And they very nearly succeed. One listen to Madonna's Like A Virgin done to Frankie Avalon's Venus will be enough to confirm these guys as masters of the absurd. This is not to say that they aren't competent not is the album a mere novelty, it is certainly more listenable than most and more playable, but an appreciation of fifties melodies and style is essential.

There are some of the biggest hits of the last decade or so reeled out of their skin and dragged back to the time of Roosevelt and Kennedy To hear Money For Nothing played to the tune of Sixteen Tons gives the song a slant that Knopfler and Sting wouldn't have figured on. The same goes for Welcome To The Jungle as Guns N'Roses give way to The Lion Sleeps Tonight.

It's a bit of fun this one, if you're into fun.

★ Darrell Bassett

Seabrain's BARRY PL (Shock)

Quirky local p surprise on this no less than tunes. Drawing Seabrain's cor intelligent arra

Driven by fo drums, Barry fact that the highlights w harmonies. No On The Tru introduction co the very spec unique an indiscreetly rapping vocals riffs and fac something to f wanting.

Love Love I and takes a sh G W McLenn reminiscent of itself as a real chunky bass beneath it all. bands versatili

MUSIC MONTHLY - MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 9/91

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)