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Silver Monk Time: A Tribute To The Monks

PLAY LOUD 2xCD The Monks emerged from a 60s garage band called The Five Torquays, a group made up of American GIs who had been stationed in Germany and were influenced by the British Beat scene that had seemingly taken over the world. After changing their name to The Monks and (for a gimmick) shaving their Beatles styled haircuts into tonsures, they went into the recording studio to produce *Black Monk Time*, an album that has since been given holy grail status by garage rock connoisseurs. The Monks planned a second album to be called *Silver Monk Time* that never happened, but now an army of musicians (including Faust, The Raincoats, Mouse On Mars, Einstürzende Neubauten's Alexander Hacke, The Fall and many others) have joined forces to pay homage to what they still consider to be a special and influential group.

Unlike many tribute projects that fall flat due to those involved being either overawed or ignorant of the original material, *Silver Monk Time* succeeds because the participants have taken the group's primitive rock surge as a template to experiment with. As a result the sound of The Monks is treated to a 21st century workout with synthesizers and beat tracks threaded through the original quartet's already way out psychotic minimalism. Every one of the 29 tracks here has qualities, but some of the stand outs include Alec Empire and Gary Burger's global war update for the band's thematic "It's Monk Time", Mouse On Mars' bump and grind remake of the same (entitled "Momks No Time") that, to these ears, somehow reminds one of John Cage's *Construction (In Metal)* pieces, and Mark E Smith's gloriously raucous psychobilly rendering of "Higgle-dy Piggie-dy" where he sounds as though he has swallowed the microphone in his enthusiasm as the rest of The Fall mercilessly shred their equipment behind him. In the accompanying booklet Smith makes the observation that The Monks sound like a forerunner of Can with an American singer, a notion that might have slipped by the majority of the group's fan base, but one that is nevertheless spot on. **EDWIN POUNCEY**