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Headless
Household

Balladismo

balladismo

noun bal-lad-is-mo \ 'ba-ləd-eez-mo\'

1. a slow popular song that is typically about love, in an unholy alliance with musical machismo, a newly-coined word.
2. the title of the ninth feature-length album by eccentric American musical outfit Headless Household, released upon the world in the summer of 2015.

For album number nine, the hopelessly and mostly happily eclectic band Headless Household (born 1983, in Santa Barbara, Calif.) set out to tighten the stylistic/vibe focus knob and go the ballad route. They partially succeeded, as heard on *Balladismo*, a collection of tracks with balladism (or “Balladismo”) which settles into an easier, sometimes melancholic place and attitude, but also takes detours. Detouring is the Household way, after all.

Following the 25th anniversary double-disc album *Basemento* (the second in the B-title trilogy, after *Blur Joan* and preceding *Balladismo*), the group slowly got in gear for the new album. Once again, the menu ranges from jazz to rock ‘n’ avant-pop ‘n’ waltz/polka turf, free improvisation, Americana and Europeana, and then some. They had the generous help of a Kickstarter clan of patrons this time, but it was a long, nearly two-year process of arriving at a finished product – partly for artistic reasons, and partly because Lackner and pedal steel player

Bill Flores were frequently pulled out on the road by their employer/ally/fellow Santa Barbarana Jeff Bridges, in musician mode.

As usual, the core charter membered group (keyboarder Dick Dunlap, drummer/engineer Tom Lackner, bassist Chris Symer, guitarist/song-construction- worker Joe Woodard) were joined by a friendly talented posse of guests, many with many years invested as "Honorary Householders." Trumpeter and singer Nate Birkey (whose own *Ballads* album, on Household Ink Records, was one inspiration for this project) weighed in on several tracks, including supplying the supple vocal on "Searching." World-renowned alto sax master Dave Binney returns with some choice soloing, as does veteran tenor saxist Tom Bucker, by now an indispensable voice in the Household sound and one of the best tenor players in the west.

In the last few years, the geographical spread of the Headless Household members has become more complicated and multi-locality in nature. Symer has hailed from Seattle for several years, dipping down the coast for shows and recording (bassist David Piltch, of k.d. lang/Joe Henry fame, has been one of the ever-ready bass chair occupants in his absence). In-house violinist Sally Barr has relocated to NYC, home of Birkey and Binney, and longtime HH singer Julie (Leonard Cohen, Divine Horsemen, Van Dyke Parks) Christensen headed out to Nashville, but has lent her beauteous vocal duties on "Lucidity," the existential torch song "In Wait," and on the Belgrade-ready dream pop of "Serbian Ladybug."

Glen (Toad the Wet Sprocket, Glen Phillips) Phillips, who has graciously made cameos on Household albums going back to 1993's *Inside/Outside USA*, gave vocal warmth and the aptly subdued gusto to the left-of-Americana number "3/4: The Road," with new Householder Nicole Lvoff wending her way into the mix with harmony vocals. Lvoff also sings on the Sly Stoned neo-soul tune "I Love You, Too" and the closing tune, "My Beautiful Boy."

Visually, longtime Household friend and creative ally Kim Reierson (designer/photographer for many a Household Ink Records project since 1995) weighed in, and beautifully.

Balladismo reaffirms Headless Household's reputation as one of America's most identity-challenged and unstoppable musical outfits.

Headless Household albums to date, all on the in-house Household Ink Records label: *Headless Household* (1987), *Inside/Outside USA* (1993), *ITEMS* (1995), *Free Associations* (1999), *mockhausen* (2000), *post-Polka* (2003), *Blur Joan* (2005), *Basemento* (2010), *Balladism* (2015). The wayward adventure continues, heeding the headless impulse.

Links:

www.householdink.com/headless.htm

www.myspace.com/headlesshousehold

www.facebook.com/HeadlessHousehold

www.youtube.com/MrHeadlessHousehold

The press notes:

(re: *Basemento*)

<http://www.relix.com/reviews/cds/2010/07/22/gabor-szabo-headless-household-omar-souleyman-and-more-ear-crystals>

Santa Barbara's **Headless Household** celebrates 25 years of criminal neglect with a wonderful double album, *Basemento* (Household Ink). Come for "This, That..." guitarist Joe Woodard's song-oriented SoCal strip-mall blend of jazzy bossa nova and Bakersfield country laments (i.e., "Jobim Meets Jim Beam"). But stay for "...The Other," a disk's worth of some of the smartest and friendliest psychedelic jazz you'll ever snuggle up to. Guest saxophonist **Dave Binney** applies the hot sauce liberally to these nine smart, incisive sonic meditations encompassing everything from British progressives like Henry Cow, gnarly New York downtown jazz, Weather Report's international feel and the heady cosmic geologies of countless Grateful Dead space excursions.

--Richard Gehr, *Relix*, July, 2010

(re: *Blur Joan*)

"Soundwise, it is an eclectic and surprisingly alluring program that covers a variety of genres that, while certainly experimental, remains accessible. The group's interest in the fusion of electric and acoustic touches is seen from the outset... Overall, a quirky--in a good way--outing from a group that is certainly charting its own course." --Jay Collins, *Cadence*

"...solid musicianship and an admirable willingness to toss in whatever strikes their fancy."

--Aaron Steinberg, *Jazz Times*

"Long-running Santa Barbara eclectic-jazz weirdoes Headless Household have simmered all their exotic flavors into a very palatable goulash called *Blur Joan* (Household Ink). Joe Woodard, Dick Dunlap and Tom Lackner really orchestrated this one, and with the help of brilliant friends (Dave Binney, Jim Connolly, Julie Christensen et al.), swing and waltz and reggae and sound effects unite – natural, warm and full of protein." --Greg Burk, *Los Angeles Weekly*

(other notes...)

--"Music this wildly diverse can never be properly marketed in this age of specialization, but that doesn't make it any less extraordinary." --Bill Milkowski, *Tower Pulse magazine*

--"Headless Household achieved regional cult status by the late 1990s, thanks to their quirky and eclectic kind of new music, their relentless live shows and a string of albums..." --*All-Music Guide* (www.allmusic.com)

--"Headless Household still seems to think that a mind is a terrible thing to waste..." --Greg Burk, *L.A. Weekly*
