

# SAM COOMES

## "Bugger Me"

Transparency: it's me, writing about myself. I couldn't be bothered to hornswoggle someone or other to churn out some hypey bio, so we can forget the idea that this was written by a disinterested third party. They never are anyway. Let's consider this something more like an "artist's statement" like those you might see in some gallery – although I doubt this particular statement would fly with any normal gallery owner. But this is still nominally rock & roll, so fuck it.

Alright, let's get the preliminaries out of the way, quickly as possible. (& here I commence the rightfully mocked practice of referring to myself in third person...whatever. I'm going to call myself "S.C.") S.C. is probably best known as half of the long running underground pop duo Quasi, the other half being Janet Weiss, herself better known as the drummer for Sleater-Kinney. Quasi has managed to release nine or ten (depending on how you count) albums on such labels as Up, Domino, Touch and Go, Kill Rock Stars, and has toured all over the place for a couple decades or so. Concurrently S.C. has toured &/or recorded with a number of other bands/artists, such as Built to Spill, Elliott Smith, Jandek & numerous other less recognized names, & also worked as a producer (with above mentioned Built to Spill, for instance), scored underground films & art installations, etc., etc. In short, not a newcomer to the scene.

Which brings us to the issue at hand - *Bugger Me*, the first solo album under the given name "Sam Coomes". A sympathetic promoter of a recent performance described the music as "Suicide meets Plastic Ono era John Lennon." I'll take that! But actually it's probably a little more accurate to call it Suicide meets the Beach Boys. Not the sophisticated *Pet Sounds* Beach Boys, but more like "Surfer Girl" type stuff. More conscious reference points were Chris Montez, or Timmy Thomas. The idea was to keep to a rigorously minimalist aesthetic, and balance classicist impulses with an overtly non-mainstream approach. The fact that *Bugger Me* is a murky, maybe even a little creepy sounding album is no accident. It is entertainment music, but entertainment music meant for those not served by more mainstream entertainment music. Maybe one might want to take a break from *Sheer Hellish Miasma* & enjoy some simple tunes that maybe speak to the same sense of the absurd, that likewise reject commercialism & market-based aesthetics, & even now & again pay a little homage to the raw synthesizer noise we have grown to love & even crave. Maybe timeworn themes such as love & war still resonate in the dusty backrooms of your mind (indeed maybe they are the only themes which do so).

And maybe, in a time where anyone with a computer & enough time on their hands can micro-manage a given piece of music to the nth degree; can process, arrange, edit & otherwise wheedle a song into a state-of-the-art showcase of outclevering the next guy... maybe allowing a song to exist at its most basic level – just voice, accompanying instrument (in this case, organ), & a very basic rhythmic element (in this case a circa mid-'60s rhythm box {non-programmable, not even really a drum machine} named "Conny") – maybe this is a means to not only subvert market-based (or, almost equivalently, technology-based) standards of production, but also a means to keep the music & the performance of the music honest. This is assuming of course that honesty is a good thing, or at least is considered a good thing by those unmoved by mainstream entertainment music, which often reeks of dishonesty. Whether this is a safe assumption, who knows? Actually, I'm suspicious of people proclaiming their own honesty – so forget it. Certainly, its artifice. But the intent is honest artifice – like the original *King Kong*, as opposed to the remakes. If *King Kong* for you means Willis O'Brien rather than Dino De Laurentis or Peter Jackson, then you probably have an idea of what I'm driving at.