



Bio information: **FRENCH TV**

Title: ***A GHASTLY STATE OF AFFAIRS*** (Cuneiform Rune 519)

Format: CD / DIGITAL

www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: **FUSION / PROGRESSIVE ROCK**

***The History of French TV is Complex
Filled with Many Lineup Changes
But a 40 Year History Testifies to Their Longevity***

French TV's newest CD, "*A Ghastly State Of Affairs*" is their 15th in their long history. It is also their first album not to be self-released. Headed up by charter member bassist/composer **Mike Sary**, he is joined again by guitarist **Kasumi Yoneda** (also from the Japanese band TEE), keyboardist **Patrick Strawser** (best known for his work in the 90's band Volare), and now by the original drummer from FTV's first three albums, **Fenner Castner**. The new album displays their ingenious knack for tricky arrangements, blazing solos, surprising left-turns, and their ability to tell a well-crafted yarn musically without words. Blending elements of progressive rock, fusion, cartoon music, and Rock-in-Opposition, the music of his group can be simultaneously hilarious and highly challenging, making it one of the most original American prog rock outfits and also one of the longest lived, having created 14 albums, toured Europe and the US a few times, and played many festivals.

French TV began in Louisville, KY as an offshoot of an early '80's art-rock band Festung Amerika. Bassist Mike Sary and keyboardist/drummer Steve Roberts (currently with R.I.O. band Ut Gret) recruited guitarist Artie Bratton and drummer Fenner Castner, and the first album was released in 1984. Steve left the band to concentrate on his mail order CD business ZNR Records and his growing family, so Mike shepherded the band through many different members, tours, phases, and recordings through the present day.

The band's current trajectory roughly began four albums ago with their 2016 release "*Ambassadors Of Good Health And Clean Living*", when Mike was joined by guitarist Katsumi Yoneda. Pat Strawser signed up with their following CD, "*Operation: MOCKINGBIRD*" and brought more of a "clarity" to Mike's slightly-less-than-coherent arrangements, as well as bringing in his own pieces (encouraged by the band!).

"*A Ghastly State Of Affairs*" opens with Patrick's 18-minute opus "Every Morning, I Wake Up And Take My Hat Off To All The Beauty In The World" and could be considered FTV's finest moment, with a haunting main theme, various sub-themes, powerful solos (especially the ones featuring the flute of Katsumi's TEE bandmate Kenji Imai), movements that build and build only to have the floor disappear from under you, and an ending that will find you reaching for a cigarette (even if you don't smoke). Track two, "Baby, You Fill Me With Inertia", spotlights former member/occasional contributor Warren Dale's intricate 4-part horn charts. 2 songs, "Drunkard's Train To Westchester" and "My Boys Awake At Night 'Cuz They Nocturnal" include some blazing violin from another FTV alumni, Ludo Fabre of the French band Mentat Routage.

**Recommended if you like:
Happy The Man, National Health, Bruford, Brand X, Planeta Imaginario**

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT FRENCH TV:

"If you're familiar with the quirky music of French TV, the music that assaults you may come as no surprise. It's an expectedly playful affair from start to finish, recalling such masters as Caravan, Hatfield and the North and Frank Zappa. But French TV retain their own unique identity, finely walking the line between the aforementioned classic 70s progressive rock and the more experimental stylings of the avant-garde. Truly a majestic auditory journey, it still remains a mystery why French TV don't get more respect among fans of both old style 70s prog and fans of RIO/avant. They mesh both musical directions effortlessly and thus create a unique sound unlike anyone else. On top of that, the melodies and musical ideas are absolutely gorgeous, intricate and thought-provoking, tickling both the emotional and logical sides of your brain, which very few acts are able to do."

---Rok Podgrajsek/*The Rocktologist*

"If you're not familiar with this band; imagine combining jazz, prog, carnival music, and avant-garde all at the same time. Not only do they pull this off, but somehow they make the music sound fun and not too out there. Out there meaning dissonant, creepy, disturbing, purposely complex, and unsettling music. None of that on this album. In fact, listening to the first track "Desire and Consequence", I hear a pleasant fusion song with splattering's of musical mayhem that only FTV can provide. For the most part, this is instrumental music with the occasional spoken word or (aaahh!) thrown in. It is challenging but not so much that you need to study, or need a degree to understand it."

---ProgArchives

"It always makes me smile how French TV are listed as "RIO/Avant Prog" on prog nerds' Bible, Prog Archives. They may be baffling, humorous, and sometimes wilfully and knowingly pretentious, but "avant" they are not. Most of all, this band is fun! Don't let labels put you off, there is enough here to put a smile on the face of Mr & Mrs Adversity, no matter their musical preferences."

---Roger Trenwith/*The Progressive Aspect*

"I've always had a soft spot for French TV, a very quirky American band who combine the eccentric nature of Frank Zappa with a bit of Canterbury playfulness and a whole lot of classic jazz-fusion as well as the more avant-garde stylings of RIO. Often times not music for the faint of heart, French TV's stuff is ready made for those with challenging tastes, and once you peel back the layers there's always plenty of rewards to be found on any of their albums."

---Peter Pardo/*Sea Of Tranquility*

"In Seattle, we have a saying: "If you don't like the weather, wait ten minutes." (I'm sure people in many cities have a similar saying.) Well, if you don't like French TV, wait a minute or two. It doesn't take them ten minutes to change sounds. But it all mashes together and makes sense somehow. At least to me – I suppose some listeners might prefer a little more consistency. Mellotron-backed guitar freakouts trading fours with twittery monosynth; RIO-like woodwind parts bordering on dissonant chaos or perhaps Gentle Giant like polyphony; a spoken bit that sounds like Dalek poetry; tempo changes just when things are getting into a groove... These wonders and many more await you inside the freak show. There's another saying that seems appropriate: "It's so crazy, it just might work!" That's a statement I can picture being used frequently at French TV arranging sessions. It's their willingness to persevere against the bounds of safety that makes the music thrilling to me. That and titles like "Theme from ESPN X-treme Cobalt Blue 4x4 Bathroom Tile Installation Games" – how can you resist something like that?"

---Jon Davis/*Expose*