

# TPA

## THE PROGRESSIVE ASPECT



Published on 5th May 2021

## The Aristocrats – FREEZE! Live in Europe 2020

Article by: Kevan Furbank

BOING! That's the sound of my jaw hitting the floor. Actually, it's more of a clunk. But 'Boing!' is appropriate because that's the name of the record label responsible for this jaw-dropping release. If you hear a more astonishing instrumental album this year I won't just eat my hat, I will poach my trousers and serve them up for dessert.

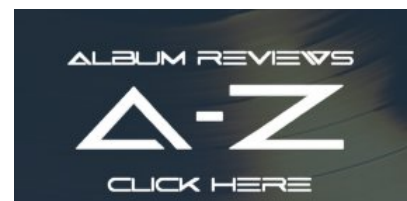
Here are three masterful musicians playing powerful, intricate music full of drama and humour. If it reminds me of anything, it's the work of Frank Zappa and the way he coaxed some of his live bands to reproduce his bewilderingly-complicated compositions with such apparent ease, while at the same time squirting shaving cream at the audience from a magical pig. But even the 1988 Zappa band couldn't play like this.

If you read [my interview with Aristocrats bassist Bryan Beller](#) you will know the band was formed in 2011 by three of the most proficient and in-demand musicians working in the worlds of jazz fusion and prog – Beller from the likes of Joe Satriani and Deathklok, drummer Marco Minnemann from Satriani, Steven Wilson and Steve Hackett, and guitarist Guthrie Govan from Wilson, Asia and Jan Hammer. You will also know that this live album was recorded in Spain just before Covid killed concerts, and the title reflects the sudden premature end to the band's tour.

Their four studio albums released in the last 10 years show they are masters at creating and performing aggressive, adventurous and intense jazz-rock fusion with apparent ease and precision. But what raises their work to another level entirely are the broad mixture of styles they effortlessly reproduce – from rock, pop and jazz to country and flamenco – and the humour they inject into song titles and performances.

In fact, their name comes from an infamously foul joke, too rude to be repeated here, and was inspired by the fact that many of the instrumentals they composed had off-colour titles, such as *See You Next Tuesday* and *Sweaty Knockers*. Of course, funny titles fall flat if the music takes itself too seriously. And, thankfully, The Aristocrats are adept at mixing up musical motifs into something that's almost heavy metal meets the score to a Tom and Jerry cartoon.

Back to Top ↑

[Search A-Z Reviews Index](#)[Search TPA Website](#)

Search...

Go →

Latest Posts



Asia – The Official Live Bootlegs, Volume 1  
March 1st | by [Alex Driessen](#)



Tiger Moth Tales – A Song of Spring  
February 28th | by [Leo Trimming](#)



Kosmodome – Kosmodome  
February 27th | by [Mel Allen](#)



Alan Parsons – One Note Symphony: Live in Tel Aviv  
February 26th | by [David Edwards](#)



Kaprekar's Constant – The Murder Wall  
February 25th | by [Richard Swan](#)



t – pareidoliving  
February 24th | by [Rob Fisher](#)



A Different Aspect #79  
February 23rd | by [Nick Hudson](#)



John Lodge  
February 22nd | by [Geoff Ford](#)

Take second track *Spanish Eddie*. It's electric flamenco, played with extravagant chordal flourishes and lightning fast muted runs, with sudden, pin-sharp stops and starts, Govan picking out high-pitched little melodies so far up on the guitar he's almost playing the strings after they pass over the bridge. As the track builds in menace and speed, the guitarist is at one point performing *The Flight of the Bumblebee* so fast the average flying insect would burst into flames from air friction, before crashing into a heavy rock riff reminiscent of King Crimson at their most uncompromising, then throwing in sweet major sevenths.

*When We All Come Together* is the Dixie Dregs at 78rpm, showcasing incredibly-fast guitar picking played with a gloriously cheesy, country twang and Beller's bouncy bass line dancing on acid all the way through. If you can listen to this without a big grin on your face then I advise you to check your pulse and, if necessary, find the nearest defibrillator.

### The Aristocrats FREEZE! Live In Europe 202...



Opener *D Grade Fuck Movie Jam* combines crashing wah-wah'd chords with gentle tonks from our favourite prog rock instrument, the cowbell, before Beller's bass leads the band into a huge, heavy jazz-rock workout played in the sort of time signatures that only turn up in equations at CERN.

Closer *Last Orders* dials down the drama a bit as gentle, almost brush-like drums introduce warm minor key chords, Guthrie's notes ringing out like church bells on a Sunday morning. Beller takes a heart-wrenching bass solo spot before things suddenly erupt like Mount Vesuvius destroying Pompeii, Govan's guitar screaming and roaring defiantly.

*The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde* is inspired by the theft of Beller's basses, when the culprits were arrested right in front of him, and it opens with a suitably moody atmosphere befitting someone who has just had all the tools of his trade pilfered. Then it speeds up almost into dramatic chase music before coming to a tumultuous conclusion.

At the heart of the album is *Get It Like That*, a complete reworking of a track from the debut album, extended into a 19-minute monster courtesy of a tribute by Marco Minnemann to the Rush drummer Neil Peart, who passed away while the band was on tour. So we get a drum solo that packs in percussive nods to some of the great man's playing across 45 years and 19 studio albums. I'm not the biggest Rush fan in the world but I definitely spotted the drum intro to *Tom Sawyer* in the mix. I'm also not the biggest fan of drum solos but, like Peart, Minnemann packs enough variety and dexterity into his performance to keep your attention throughout.

Both Beller and Minnemann are fantastic players who show off their considerable chops on this album. But, at the risk of causing a fight, it's Guthrie Govan who stands astride it like a colossus. His playing is incredible and the notes pour out of him like the water over Niagara Falls, his guitar screaming, roaring, laughing, cajoling, pleading and weeping.

The man is a six-string phenomenon. It wouldn't surprise me if it turns out he sold his soul to the Devil in order to do things on the guitar that are simply not humanly possible. Either that or he secretly checked into a discreet private hospital to have a dozen additional fingers grafted on to his left hand. Whatever the reason, let us give thanks to whatever deity you believe in – I'm going with Zappa, god of humour in music – that Mr and Mrs Govan's genes produced such a remarkable player.

In a year of disappointments and tragedies, let us give thanks to small miracles such as this album from The Aristocrats. Just one tip: listen to it in a room with a carpet so your jaw has something soft to land on when it drops.

[You can read Kevan's interview with Bryan Beller [HERE](#).]

#### TRACK LISTING

- 01. D Grade Fuck Movie Jam (6:58)
- 02. Spanish Eddie (8:57)

A Different Aspect ~ Melodic Revolution Records Special

February 21st | by David Edwards



Marillion – An Hour Before It's Dark

February 20th | by Leo Trimming



Voivod – Synchro Anarchy

February 19th | by Graham Thomas



Broers + Klazinga – Burdens of the Mind

February 16th | by Alex Driessen



A Different Aspect #77

February 15th | by Nick Hudson



Kalle Wallner – Voices

February 14th | by Graham Thomas



John Lodge – The Royal Affair and After

February 13th | by Geoff Ford



- 03. When We All Come Together (6:37)
- 04. The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde (7:47)
- 05. Get It Like That (Dedicated to Neil Peart) (18:54)
- 06. Last Orders (10:50)

Total Time – 60:13

MUSICIANS

Guthrie Govan – Guitar  
Brian Beller – Bass  
Marco Minnemann – Drums

ADDITIONAL INFO

Record Label: Boing!  
Country of Origin: U.S.A./Germany/U.K.  
Date of Release: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021

LINKS

The Aristocrats – [Website](#) | [Facebook](#)

Tags: [The Aristocrats](#)

Related Posts

- Bryan Beller – The Aristocrats →
- The Aristocrats / Godsticks →
- The Aristocrats – Tres Caballeros →
- The Aristocrats 3rd album update and North American Tour →



The Progressive Aspect (TPA) is a site dedicated to finding new and innovative music in all its guises, whilst acknowledging its long and rich history. Includes News, Album Reviews, Interviews, Concert Reviews, UK Gig Guide, UK Festival Page and more...

Search by Category

Select Category ▼

May 2021

| M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 |    |    |    |    |    |    |

« Apr Jun »