



homunculus
words

HOMUNCULUS

Words Howling

On old show fliers, Homunculus used to bill themselves as the bastard sons of Frank Zappa, the Beatles and Talking Heads. They even lived up to such high-fallutin' claims with their quirky compositions, sharp hooks and energetic delivery. Those basic elements remain today, but evolution has led this Cincinnati-based foursome more toward the graceful, lasting sound of Billy Joel, in a Ben Folds-cool kinda way. *Words*, the group's second stab at a third studio effort (reconfigured and remastered for re-release), showcases

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Quirk du soleil

R.I.Y.L.

Ben Folds Five, moe., Guster

this range of influences. It revels in stylistic shifts between the band's two distinct Type-A songwriters, playfully bizarre Ben Doepke (keyboards) and thoughtfully searching Kevin Shima (guitar). What unites them—the bandmates as well as the songs—is a combination of reliable beats, bouncy basslines and clever lyricism propelled by precise vocal harmonies. At least that explains the coexistence of a surreal opening line like, "Stargazing from the bathroom, naked astronaut" ("Stargazing"), with the more classically poetic, "A white dove flutters, a willow's weeping" ("When Sheila Dances"). Furthermore, there's "Deep South Beach," a percussive Latin funk groove that, even for this band, seems to come from out of nowhere. Truly, Homunculus write catchy, smart pop songs. But, as the previously released "Okay" proves with its unnecessarily rewritten lyrics, sometimes they can be too memorable for their own good. >>>ROBIN A. ROTHMAN