

Love Those Buttless Chaps

By FISH GRIWKOWSKY, EDMONTON SUN
FREELANCE

LOVE THIS TIME

The Buttless Chaps

Mint Records

5 out of 5

How do you even describe the remarkable new Buttless Chaps record? Well, son, it's retro-futuristic.

This point is confirmed by the CD jacket, which shows an old wood cabin outside a city from the year 3000. OK, fair enough.

Past plus future equals modern music, then.

The Buttless Chaps, in case you joined us late, are a neo-Vancouver, post-alt-country outfit which has proved increasingly clever and experimental as time moved on, to the delight of all. Two signals you're listening to the Chaps are the stretched-out, vaporous words, slowly sung somewhat monotonally by Dave Gowans, and his faithful banjo, scampering around below.

It haunts, it does.

Love This Time has a little more pep than the band's last recording, making fine use of B.C. darling Ida Nilsen (Beans, Radiogram) - sweet voice and accordion. Makes me miss the comfy Sugar Refinery on Granville. Also on board for the cosmic wagon ride are Carolyn Mark, Ford Pier and Jesse Zubot's enchanted violin. You'd think, then, that this would have that typical house-party bohemian sound associated with these alley cats, but that's a bad assumption.

Vancouver can thank the Buttless Chaps: Love This Time breaks a stunning number of boundaries.

Numan, for example, sees normally calm Gowans do something remarkable, which is scream his lyrics like he has a safety pin with a chicken attached to it through his nostril. Hello! Shuttle Systems opens up with choir of monks, then leaps off the dirt road onto the highway in a brilliant homage to Kraftwerk that's pure sci-fi. My new favourite song. Oddly, all the techno keyboarding fits in quite nicely with Gowans' banjo playing. Banjee brings us back to a country-shuffle

sound, pretty piano covering the surface of the song.

Nice phat beats on Kinda Empty turn into yet another pretty number, and Brotherhood ends the album with another resonator.

Seriously, check this one out. Your past and future depend on it.

Edmonton Sun

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

By Shawn Conner

The latest from the Buttless Chaps doesn't quite represent the perfect balance between roots and robots the group has aimed for in previous work, but it does mark a solid growth in songwriting and arrangements. Punchy horns elevate "18 Rabbits" from melancholy to majestic, and "Babbles" builds from a lonely acoustic guitar to a nicely melodic drone. Carolyn Mark's backup vocals on the country dance of "Lonely Hearts" provide a gingham counterpoint to singer Dave Gowans's young Man in Black presence, while Jesse Zubot's violin parts combine with new-wave synth in "Fresh Horses". "Shuttle Systems" and "Numan" also trade on the band's fondness for '80s new wave, but Love This Time works best when the band indulges its rootsier side. An exception is the title track, on which guest musician Ida Nilsen's vocals are almost buried amid swirling keyboard lines, distant computerized voices, and a robotic drum beat. The song is the album's heart, and quite possibly the group's crowning achievement to date.

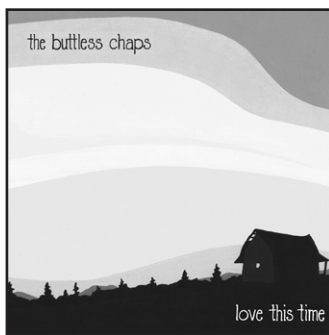


Georgia Straight, Vancouver BC

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

The Buttless Chaps have plenty of bottoms in the studio chairs. On Love This Time they recruited a host of talent to work under the well-tuned ears of producer Chôn (Ox, Radiogram), bottoms belonging to Jesse Zubot and Carolyn Mark among others.



It's the Chaps' fourth album and their first for Mint Records and they embellish their alt-country with horns and accordions, adding violin for lushness. It's earned them tags like "robotic Americana" and "record collection music," meaning a culmination of all their influences.

It's not far off the mark says vocalist/guitar/banjo guy Dave Gowans, who doesn't mind those labels, because they're so happy with the record label.

"It's nice to know there's people that are excited about the music. With Mint the band gets full artistic liberty even at the risk of not selling lots of records or having a super-catchy radio single."

Not that they don't. The cut called Shuttle Systems with its synth and horn layers could qualify as catchy even under the veneer of an alt-country finish. Mark's vocals don't hurt either. She's booked for a show at the Black Sheep the next night with Geoff Berner (they're playing all their folk stuff in what she called the "Together At Last, For the First Time, in the Think of the Savings Tour!" - Cover's \$7), so watch for her to show up to guest vocal with the Chaps instead of her usual Boyfriends on the Friday.

The Buttless Chaps w/ Greenfield Main at the Black Sheep Inn Friday, October 3 at 9 p.m. \$5.

Ottawa Xpress

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint/Outside

Yes, the name is obviously a joke and yes, the fact that they claim to be the world's only electro-alt-country band seems like a schtick on paper.

What is not a joke is that their fourth album proves that the Buttless Chaps are one of the most fearlessly creative groups in Western Canada. Lonely Hearts is a honky-tonk heartbreaker, while Fresh Horses is a synth pop classic that sounds like a lost hit from The Breakfast Club, with gorgeous strings courtesy of folk fusion violinist Jesse Zubot.

These Buttless boys don't hesitate to clash banjos and vocoders, country choirs and non-ironic sci-fi songs about Shuttle Systems. Over the course of 11 songs, the only time they lose the map is on Numan, an overwrought tribute to Mr. Pleasure Principle himself.

The Buttless Chaps play tonight at Trasheteria in Guelph with Cuff the Duke and the Fembots. They'll be in Waterloo on Oct. 4 at the Starlight Lounge, with Stars.

Michael Barclay
therecord.com

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS Love This Time (Mint) The Buttless Chaps is a pretty inane name for a band. Then again, so was The Psychedelic Furs, but that didn't stop Richard Butler and company from creating some pop mini-masterpieces. The Victoria-based Chaps somehow manage to incorporate elements of several noteworthy genres — notably alt.country, '80s retro and Bacharachian orchestral pop — into one neat and almost seamless sound. Vocalist Dave Gowans has a deep, slightly British vocal inflection that's well-suited to ironic new wave ditties, but not so much for twangier fare like "Lonely Hearts" and "Banjee." The highlight is "Fresh Horses," a string-and-synth workout wherein Gowans name-drops '80s Brat Packers Judd Nelson and Molly Ringwald. In all, it's a worthy listen.

Chart Magazine, Toronto

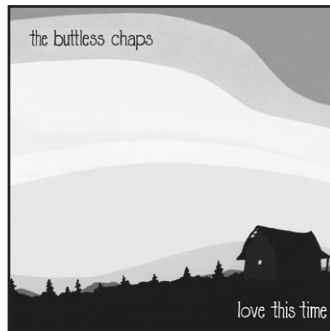
THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint

Once again, the Chaps pull off the extraordinary task of blending country crooning with Kraftwerkian futurism. "Babbles" and "18 Rabbits" evoke images of too many drinks and long mountain roads, while the trad-style "Lonely Hearts" gets an added kick from Carolyn Mark's harmonies. But without a hint of irony, Love This Time slips into a parallel sci-fi universe for the title track, while lush chamber strings mix with '80s synth tones on the Ringwald-referencing "Fresh Horses." And yet it all still sounds like one cohesive whole. Here I was thinking 2001's Death Scenes I II III was just a fluke. Behold -- the brave new future of country music has arrived. CHRIS ROLFE

eye weekly, Toronto



2. THE BUTTLESS CHAPS, "Love This Time": This Victoria, B.C. band's self-described "electro-country" aesthetic bursts beyond the bounds of precious theory on this track from their upcoming fourth album by uniting, among other things, heavily treated vocals and a bassline that dips in and out of both genres. The result could be described as a musical recombinant.

Anti-Hit List, eye weekly, Toronto ON

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time – Mint

The cover art for the latest effort from the Buttless Chaps couldn't be more appropriate. It features a silhouette of a lone cabin in the wilderness, surrounded by blue skies and yellow sunshine. Open it up, though, and you see a futuristic city (kinda looks like the starbase from the Star Trek episode "Court Martial" — wow, have I increased my geek potential or what?) silhouetted against the same blue and yellow sky. We move from the antique to the futuristic with just a flick of the wrist.

Love This Time performs much the same feat; the Buttless Chaps have always augmented their love for Scandinavian folk, old-school American country and jangling guitars with synth and vocal lines that sound as if they were lifted from an old Dr. Who episode. But with this new effort, the band doesn't simply put dark country and electro-pop side by side; now, lonesome guitar peals permeate the synths on songs like "Love This Time" and "Shuttle Systems," and there's a haunting electronic background to the lonesome cowboy tune "18 Rabbits." With the help of guest stars who make up the crème de la crème of the B.C. music industry, from punk stalwart Ford Pier to country chanteuse Carolyn Mark, the Buttless Chaps show how a common theme of isolation can unite a country ballad and a synth song about a robot who cannot find love.

FOUR STARS

Steven Sandor, Vue, Edmonton AB

the buttless chaps with Aaron Booth at Rancho Relaxo

October 2. Tickets: \$7. Attendance: 35. Rating: NNN

The change of seasons can be a tricky time for live music. Not only do all the outdoor shows suddenly shut down, but it can seem a lot less appealing to layer up and brave the evening chill than to crank up the stereo and zone out under a duvet. That's the only explanation I can find for the sparsely attended Buttless Chaps show at Rancho Relaxo last Thursday. The super-eclectic Victoria band has a healthy cult following, and their superb new *Love This Time* (Mint) album is proof that they're crafting some of the most interesting indie music in this country.

It saddens me to think how few people discovered that during their rare live set in this city, though.

I didn't feel quite as bad for opener Aaron Booth. The sweet singer/songwriter bleated out some melancholic autumnal songs that staggered between folkie rock and country pop but remained fairly tame.

To be fair, a shoddy sound set-up didn't help his cause. I'm sure his vocals would've been decent if I could've heard them. Too-thick bass buzz and overpowering guitar chords drowned out the few wisps of sighing lyrics I could catch. Still, Booth seems to have talent, and he's got the sexiest guitar I've seen – so shiny and blue I almost wanted to jump onstage and make love to it.

The Buttless Chaps managed to overcome any technical difficulties to deliver a dead-on set. Frontman Dave Gowans had the front half of the room captivated as he whipped from acoustic guitar to sit-down banjo, switching from mournful crooning to hardcore yowls to a sweet cowpunk lilt. Keysman Morgan McDonald was a manic vision flailing away at his vintage synths.

The Chaps are a marvel of genre-jumping prowess, flipping from lonesome range-riding twang ballads to icy 80s New Wave synth pop to thrashing tunes that hint at the members' punk rock pasts.

What was particularly cool about their Rancho gig was the sequencing, moving logically from seasonal moody indie rock through the rollicking country tunes all the way to robotic electro. There was something almost novelistic about the lovely trajectory, and the way they tied all the styles together was definitely impressive.

They even managed to maintain focus when hometown pal Carolyn Mark sailed through the door midway through the set with accordion nut Geoff Berner in tow, fresh from their gig over at Hugh's Room.

Always keen to be the centre of attention, Mark caused a brief lull when she rushed the stage, laughing raucously and blowing air kisses, but the Chaps settled back into a fine groove by the time she was headed straight for the bar at the back with a big grin on her face.

Sarah Liss
Now, Toronto

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint

My dad thinks they're a gay band. My girlfriend thinks they have beautiful album artwork. I just think they're brilliant. The sound of this CD is impossible to categorize - at times, it's straight-forward alt.country. Then, it's straight-forward electro-pop. Then, it becomes some kind of roaring amalgamation of the two; a kind of alt.electro.country.pop, if you will. In fact, the artwork of the album could not compliment the music any better; a beautiful countryside on the front, morphing into a space-aged city of the future as you open the case. This art perfectly exemplifies the traits of The Buttless Chaps that make them so impossible to pin down. Listening to this CD gives me the simultaneous feeling of driving down a country road with my friends at the end of the summer, and zipping around some Star Wars scene in the sky. Most impressively, however, is the fact that from song to song, *Love This Time* maintains a constituency which would seem a difficult task to accomplish when melding such separate and distinct sounds. A truly cohesive album, this is a record worth picking up for any fan of country, alternative, electro-pop, or any genre in between.

9 out of 10

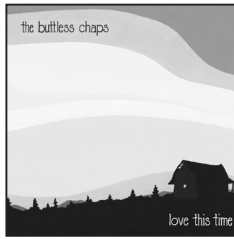
S. Sutherland

<http://www.mysweater.net/reviews/love.htm>

The Buttless Chaps

by Vish Khanna

The Buttless Chaps Love This Time Mint Records Victoria's the Buttless



Chaps return for another dose of their bizarre mesh of '80s-synth-inflected country rock with their Mint Records debut, *Love This Time*. The Chaps, who are astounding live, can be an acquired taste for some on record. While their 2001 album, *Death Scenes I II II* received critical acclaim and exposure on college radio, there were some listeners left scratching their heads as to what to make of this strange Canadian band that puts the "alt" in "alt-country" like few before them. From the mechanic shuffle that is the band's music, to vocalist Dave Gowans, Gary Numan-meets-Johnny Cash delivery, the Buttless Chaps, self-described "electro-country" is alternately endearing and creepy, kind of like what might one expect from a musical collaboration between Blue Rodeo and Men Without Hats, but with less safety dancing of course. With *Love This Time*, the Chaps have managed to outdo themselves, seamlessly mixing odes to '80s iconography (the crowd-pleasing dance-number, "Fresh Horses:") with moody country-tinged numbers (the lovely album opener, "18 Rabbits") that form a cohesive, pulsating record that remains fresh with each subsequent listen. [VK]

Echo Weekly, Waterloo, ON

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time – Mint

Love This Time is a bit of a departure for the Buttless Chaps. This time around, Dave Gowans and his rowdy posse of misfits have decided to move even further away from the alt.country tag they have acquired over the course of 4 albums. *Love This Time* is more along the lines of orchestral pop than twang. If they already didn't have a stigma attached to them, people wouldn't even be able to put them in the genre any more. The arrangements on this album are amazingly lush. With piano and horns providing depth and breadth to the album. We see Jesse Zubot, Evan Symons, Carolyn Mark, Brian Samuels, Ford Pier, and Ida Nilson helping out the foursome. There are tracks like "Lonely Hearts" that still warrant The Buttless Chaps an alt-country tag but if they stray much further then we will have to revoke that title. Listen to "Love This Time", the track that features Ida Nilson singing and harmonizing with a three-chord vocoder. That's right. Sounds like this girl's in love with a robot. The Buttless Chaps have created an album that requires a bit of getting into but that's something to be said for a band such as this. They have achieved a very original composition here and that is something that is hard to do these days.

(Mint 2003)

Reviewed on 2003-10-22 12:45:47 by Dennis Scanland

www.musicemissions.com/display_review/1261

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint

2003-09-11

Becky van Bussel

The Buttless Chaps are a Vancouver-based band. They formed in 1998, putting out an album that year and every year since, including this year. *Love This Time* is the band's 2003 release.

The Buttless Chaps seem to take pride in their ability to collaborate on any type of music, to write music without boundaries. Unfortunately, this lack of boundaries is not entirely evident on *Love This Time*. Each song seems to fade into the next with the exception of a few tracks.

However, the album is still very pleasant to listen to. It contains an assortment of musical instruments including cellos, trumpets and french horns beautifully brought together by guitar, synth and light drum beats. And Dave Gowan's voice is both inviting and comfortable, like a small town country music karaoke singer who always manages to get even the virtually immobile drunks to clap appreciatively as he steps down from the stage. All these factors combine to make *Love This Time* compelling, soothing and worth listening to.

The Gauntlet, Calgary

More punk than Hall and Oates

The Buttless Chaps saddle up and ride bareback into Calgary

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Friday, September 19, Liberty Lounge

Saturday, September 20, Original Joe's

In the twang-rich province of Alberta, country bands come and go like tumbleweeds before a Chinook wind. So, how is it that a Victoria-grown foursome, namely The Buttless Chaps, have managed to put down deep roots in the subconscious of Canadian country music? Pure innovation – a talent perhaps best demonstrated on their newest album, *Love This Time*, which includes some collaborations from their Mint Records label-mates Ford Pier and Carolyn Mark.

Reflecting on five years playing electro-prog-country-rock, singer, guitarist and banjo maestro Dave Gowan reveals what The Buttless Chaps have been up to since the 2001 release of *Death Scenes I II and III*, and how the band has been evolving since we last heard from them.

In the two years since the release of *Death Scenes*, lots of things have changed. This time out sees the Chaps experimenting with strings, horns and choirs to expand the sound and make it more rich. At the same time, Gowan says the band was conscious about not overcrowding the songs. "We also spent about four months in the studio on *Love this Time*, which gave us a lot more time to arrange and compose the songs."

While possessing a golden ear certainly has its advantages, Gowan still remains at a loss when it comes to describing The Buttless Chaps' laid-back approach to the creative process. It seems that these things just come naturally to some folks. And, of course, Gowan gets a lot of help from his faithful band of amigos. Lasse Lutick (electric guitar, lapsteel, synthesizers, banjo), Morgan McDonald (keyboards and synth) and Torben Wilson (drums and pads) each add their own secret spice to The Buttless Chaps' country-fried flair.

"There is no real plan to it, we just let it go where it wants to," explains Gowan.

"When the band is playing well together and we are feeling relaxed, we usually become inspired to write new songs. I think music all ties together – we are not very punk, but Hall and Oates are. Is Lyle Lovett considered new country? I like Lyle Lovett's voice. I really like his role in the movie *Short Cuts*, where he plays the evil baker phoning about the birthday cake."

Strange tastes indeed, but what else would one expect from a band that calls itself The Buttless Chaps? Gowan has encountered just about every reaction possible to this all-too-apt anointment of his wonderfully twisted little gang of players. Aren't all chaps buttless, Dave? Isn't that kind of the point? Gowan dutifully attempts to extinguish this burning question.

"I have tried to answer that one many times... and have given up. I like the way the name gets misspelled more: 'Buttless Chips,' 'Buttless Chups,' 'Buttless Chops.' and my personal fave, 'Buttless Craps.'"

All modesty aside, The Buttless Chaps continue to leap the barbed wire fences of the imagination, grabbing the whole western music genre by the horns and wrestling it to the muddy ground in one swift movement. Some unwitting concert-goers may resent being pelted with their oven-fresh audio road apples, but that's just the price you'll pay for sittin' rail side at The Buttless Chaps rodeo.

"We are very honoured to get to play for people and that they choose to share their time with us.... Some people prefer the rootsy stuff, some prefer the '80s stuff, some people are brought by their friends and kindly tolerate both. Some people threaten us, or tell us to play the blues.... I think people kind of know that the show mixes different genres."

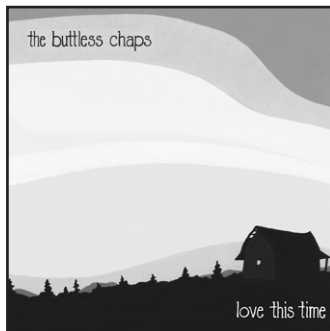
www.ffwdweekly.com/Issues/2003/0918/mus1.htm

THE BUTTLESS CHAPS

Love This Time

Mint/Outside

Some days you just want to slow down and escape this hum-drum, day to day life we all have fallen into. Sometimes for only a few minutes, but perhaps on occasion a weekend would be nice. A weekend to getaway and not think about the stuff that stresses you out. No work, No money problems, no worries - if this sounds like something you desire, let the Buttless Chaps be the soundtrack to your escape. The Chaps are an odd blend, with an alt-country spin on a new wave sound. I don't know how they do it, but they throw it in a futuristic blender and it comes out all "Robotic-Americana" (and these boys are from Canada).



This is my first time hearing the four Buttless fellas. With four proper albums already released, *Love This Time* is their debut for the Mint label. When I first read the press sheet and saw they were described as being Alt-country/New wave, I didn't even want to give it a chance. How in the world could those worlds collide? I'll tell you- it isn't a specific sound in every song. Each song is influenced more one way or the other. "Babbles" starts off very slow, Neil Young-like, but breaks down in the middle with some very beautiful Radiohead-esque instrumentation. "Lonely Hearts" is right off of any random country record found on the floor under the peanut shells at your local steak house, upright piano and all (with very purdy n' twangy guest vocals by Mint's own Carolyn Mark). Then Devo comes in and influences the Chaps as they sing a song about a bad 80's movie, "Fresh Horses". This song comes the closest to combining the two genres they are influenced by, however it is over-riden with new wave synthesizer sounds, which distracts your ears from hearing the really great violin and piano underscore. It is however, a clever sound topped with clever lyrics.

The New Wave influence gets a bit cheesy and too much to take at times "Shuttle Systems", "Numan".

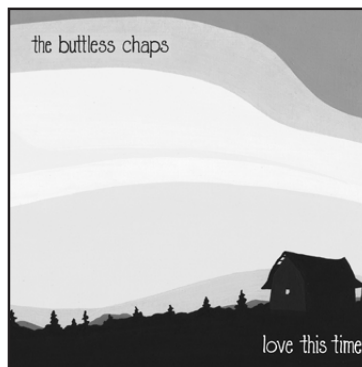
These guys are definitely at their best when using the alt-country influence over the new wave, but thankfully - the majority of songs are performed in just such a manor.

The biggest distraction for me while listening is the similarities between Dave Gowans' voice and that of the Johns of They Might Be Giants. As I've said, the new wave tunes are quirky (and cheesy at times) but they never turn themselves into a novelty act like They Might Be Giants, thankfully. It's not a big thing, just something that distracted me.

The record is fun and is a great escape from life. I'd call it the future according to Devo as translated by My Morning Jacket (sung by They Might Be Giants).

Reviewed by Bob Ladewig

<http://lostatsea.net>



The Buttless Chaps *Love This Time* Mint Records

This album starts out very slow, both in song, and in getting used to. The Buttless Chaps have departed from country rock and have shifted their sound toward indie-rock synth pop, although they do still go back to country, once in a while. They seem to be heading in the direction of Radiohead and Bjork. This is a very interesting album, and the more I listened to it the more it grew on me. Their songwriting leans toward sci-fi with songs about the future of transportation and about a machine falling in love, so the synth pop is suitable to the lyrics. *Love This Time* is very mellow and relaxing, so it would be great to listen to before going to bed.

Dan Holiday

Nerve, Vancouver BC