

Harvey Danger
Little By Little...
(Phonographic Records)

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The third LP by Seattle band Harvey Danger will be released Tuesday, September 13th, on HD's own label, Phonographic Records. Produced by John Goodmanson and Steve Fisk—whose combined credits include dozens of essential records by bands as varied as Sleater-Kinney, Beat Happening, Low, Screaming Trees, Blonde Redhead, and Nirvana—*Little By Little...* is the sound of a radically transformed group.

A brief refresher: Harvey Danger formed in Seattle in 1994. Their first record, *Where Have All the Merrymakers Gone?*, released on Brooklyn's tiny Arena Rock Recording Company, became a surprise smash when the song "Flagpole Sitta" became an inescapable summer staple on commercial radio and MTV in 1998. The record, which cost about \$3,000 to make, was re-released by a major label (Slash/London) and eventually sold half a million copies. The follow-up, *King James Version* (London/Sire), was released in September 2000 (exactly five years and one day before the release of *Little By Little...*, as it happens). While the sophomore effort was nowhere near as successful as its predecessor (it's a long story...), *KJV* maintains a surprisingly strong cult following despite being out of print.

Anyway...

After a three-year hiatus, Harvey Danger began generating new material in early 2004; the songs quickly began to reflect a significant stylistic turn. In place of the distorted alt-/ garage- rock of the band's first two records, the sound of *Little By Little...* is mellower, less caustic, more melodically adventurous, reveling in a classic pop sensibility that owes everything to the band members' evolving musical interests. The biggest change is the dominance of piano throughout—a fitting development given pianist/guitarist Jeff Lin's classical training on the instrument. Songs like "Wine, Women & Song," "Little Round Mirrors," "Happiness Writes White," and "Moral Centralia" define the band's confident new direction. "Cream & Bastards Rise" (which will also be released as a single/EP on Kill Rock Stars in November) and "Cool James" provide reminders that the band can still make with the catchy indie rock when the mood strikes, while "War Buddies," "Incommunicado," "What You Live By," and the haunting finale "Diminishing Returns" find HD pushing into less easily classified musical

terrain (a fleck of near-jazz here, a dash of anthemic balladry there, and is that a French horn on “Little Round Mirrors”? Damn straight...).

The lyrics of *Little By Little...* represent no less an evolution from what you could safely call Harvey Danger’s early, funny years. While singer Sean Nelson’s wordplay is still deft and witty, the new songs are verbally spare, suggesting rather than dictating meaning, and allowing melody to prevail over intellect. As a result, his voice has never sounded better. The conflict between hope and regret dominates the album, and from the self-aware despair of album opener “Wine, Women & Song,” to the grave architecture of “What You Live By,” to the out-and-out celebration of love that is “Happiness Writes White,” it’s not hard to understand that hope is winning. Complex investigations emerge—of the limitations of friendship (“War Buddies”), the dangers of overidentification with art (“Little Round Mirrors”), the psychological toll of political engagement (“Cream & Bastards Rise,” “Diminishing Returns”), and good old fashioned romantic narcissism (“Moral Centralia,” “Incommunicado”)—yielding an album of deceptively high-minded pop music.

It may be tempting to read *Little By Little...* as the culmination of a 10-year career spent pursuing music at every level of endeavor, from basement band you never heard of to overnight success you can’t escape to has-beens you wonder whatever became of to out-of-left-field comeback. The reality, however, is that it’s just 10 songs written by three guys who decided they wanted to make a record again. However you choose to perceive it, it’s safe to say that this LP represents a singular musical voice, and that Harvey Danger is firing on all pistons. (By way of evidence, check out the wonderful 30-minute EP that accompanies *Little By Little...* as a free bonus disc.)

The record will be available for sale and download at www.harveydanger.com (for more information on the band’s distribution experiment, please see the accompanying press release, entitled “*Little By Little...* On the DL”), and at fine independent record stores around the country courtesy of CIMS (the Coalition of Independent Music Stores) and Junket Boy Distribution on September 13th. The band is available for interviews, and will be doing some national dates TBA. In the meantime, please let us know if there’s anything we can do to make your stay more enjoyable.