

FRANZ NICOLAY

New York, NY • www.franznicolay.com



ST. SEBASTIAN OF THE SHORT STAGE^{10"}

Team Science • www.teamsciencerecords.com

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RIYL The Hold Steady, Gogol Bordello, Dresden Dolls, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Waits

BIO Franz Nicolay has one impressive mustache.

Regardless of your feelings (or lack thereof) regarding the upper lip warmer and its rapid ascension to prominence with the hipster set, you must nevertheless be made aware of the enormity of our boisterous troubadour's facial markings. At least that's what nearly every feature penned about Nicolay and his 2008 solo outing, the critically acclaimed *Major General*, would have you think. In fact, I bet that right now you're listening to Nicolay's most recent release, the four-song 10-inch, *St Sebastian Of The Short Stage*, and asking yourself, "How the hell can I *not* mention that unmistakable waxed handlebar flavor saver?"

That distinctly Eastern European stache - rivaled past fifty years only by Rollie Fingers and Husker Du's Greg Norton - has been so ingrained into Nicolay's very existence that at this juncture, it's nearly impossible to separate the cookie duster from the man, or any of his other bands for that matter: World/Inferno Friendship Society, Guignol, Anti-Social Music and of course, The Hold Steady. It could even be argued that next to Craig Finn's lyrics, Nicolay's mustache is the second most noteworthy thing about the popular Brooklyn five piece.

Yes, even Snidely Whiplash would have trouble turning a blind eye, but perhaps it's because Franz Nicolay somehow looks exactly like you'd expect his music to sound - unorthodox, theatrical and just a bit retro. Place him in a lineup next to ten other artists and ask a random passerby to guess which one plays eclectic, gypsy-folk and vaudevillian-inspired punk rock. Most fingers would immediately point in the direction of our dapper, cabbie cap-wearing multi-instrumentalist. Nicolay often comes across as the most interesting, self-confident person in the room, and *St. Sebastian* does nothing to dissuade that notion.

Blasting off with an exuberant cover of "New England," Nicolay collaborates with similarly-minded punk cabaret act The Dresden Dolls on a rousing, tipsy tribute to the trio's Northeastern roots and kindred spirit in the song's originator, Jonathan Richman. Complete with bouncy accordion, hand clapping and a joyous, caterwauling singalong chorus, the EP's opener is the perfect example of Franz with his swagger and operatic stomp in full swing.

"The Ballad Of Hollis Wadsworth Mason, Jr." rounds out "The Fun Side" of *St. Sebastian*. Inspired by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' groundbreaking graphic novel, Nicolay composed the piece as part of the "Watchmen" episode of the Bushwick Book Club, a songwriter group based out of the Goodbye Blue Monday club in Bushwick, NYC. Nicolay's bravado and workingman's tenor are again on full display, pushed along by marching drum, a blustery trumpet and a bevy of other instruments that give an urgent, somewhat melodramatic feel to what might be the best mariachi-disco tribute to a retired superhero ever recorded.

On "The Depressing Side," Nicolay dives into two songs he refers to as "bleeding heart weepies ... relics of an earlier time, dating to a set of demos from 2001, recorded in pit-of-despair after-hours at my old dot-com job." Both are haunting and just a bit nostalgic, shrouded in regret and despair. Still, like the A Side of the EP, they crackle with drama and a palpable tension that, while subdued, is no less potent.

So raise a glass of wine, toast your friends, your native land and the spirit of adventure and mystery. Drink it down and wallow in tragic love stories and tales of punk rock disillusionment. Franz Nicolay - and of course, his mustache - will be there to laugh and cry right along with you, and *St. Sebastian Of The Short Stage* will undoubtedly be the soundtrack to the wildly unpredictable ride.

St. Sebastian is available in both digital and 10-inch vinyl from Team Science, which pressed 500 copies (200 clear, 300 black). Each EP includes a free mp3 download for the songs, a pullout poster insert and an exclusive new short story by Nicolay entitled "Paraska Mikhailivna Is A Witch." For more information, go to www.franznicolay.com, www.teamsciencerecords.com or www.beartrappr.com/franz-nicolay.

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