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Album review: Jay Reatard - Singles 06-07

July 24th, 2008 by The Editor

- [Jay Reatard website](#)
- [Jay Reatard MySpace page](#)
- Record label: [In The Red Records](#)
- Release date: 28th July 2008



Jay Reatard obviously set out to provoke when he picked his name, but I'm starting to think he may be one of those movie-character clichés - the spiky angry dude who's just trying to cover up his inner nice-guy. The album title *Singles 06-07* is a little more straightforward; I think you can work that one out for yourselves.

So, who is **Jay Reatard**? I've known his name for some time now, muttered by tastemakers and casually dropped by comment-thread hipsters in the venues where the next big thing is decided upon. The next big thing would appear to be that noisy garage-shoegaze-pop amalgam, and **Reatard** is usually mentioned as one of its more prolific and impressive proponents.

Prolific is about right. Despite covering only two years, *Singles 06-07* has seventeen tracks. Yes, seventeen, all remastered versions of **Reatard's** short-run vinyl-only output under his own name. Granted, only one clocks in over the three-minute mark (and even then it's a close call), but even so - that's more material than some big-name artists manage to squeeze out in a similar period.

Maybe we could achieve **Jay Reatard** of cutting corners? After all, it'd be easy to record seventeen singles in a year if you sacked the guys in quality control, right? Hell, then you could probably record them in an afternoon and spend the rest of the year, I dunno, skiing or something. The casual listener might reach that conclusion quite easily; the recordings collected on *Singles 06-07* are rough, scratchy, overloaded, lo-fi. ProTools, this ain't.

The immediate impression is one of sketchiness - a sense that perhaps **Reatard** has to avoid production frills so he can work fast enough to get the ideas out of his head *rightfuckingnow* before he gets bounced to something new by a form of musical ADHD. But take a second listen through, and it becomes apparent that the surface is only half the story, and **Jay Reatard's** songs are a lot more crafted than he may want you to think.

It's a good disguise, though; harsh overfuzzed guitars and cheesy Farfisa organs join rattling (but rock solid) drumming and **Reatard's** broken-mic vocals that bring to mind the "yeah-I'm-dumb-so-what" attitude of the early Beastie Boys material. But I find myself reminded of Bowie - not just because of **Reatard's** voice itself, but because both musicians share the knack of appearing to be very stupid when they are actually being very clever indeed.

And **Reatard's** singles are smart savvy pop, subverting a variety of formulas beneath the garage simplicity and a certain cartoonish abandon. Listen to the sixties radio bubblegum of "Don't Let Him Come Back", with everything in its place, with no part too short or too long; hear "All Wasted" out-Ramone the Ramones with a throwaway hook and a chorus about zombies; check out the '77 protopunk of "Blood Visions", or the New Wave clatter of "Let It All Go", or, or, or...

In isolation, you could imagine each track being a happy accident by an average band who play for the love of the noise. But **Jay Reatard** is unusually consistent, as *Singles 06-07* demonstrates very effectively - not consistent in sound or style, but in his ability to make a song sound throwaway and dumb, but have the thing stick in your head for the rest of the day. In fact, I suspect he puts a lot more work and polish into these tracks than he might want us to believe - but that's OK. I'm happy to keep quiet if he's happy to keep making the tunes.

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