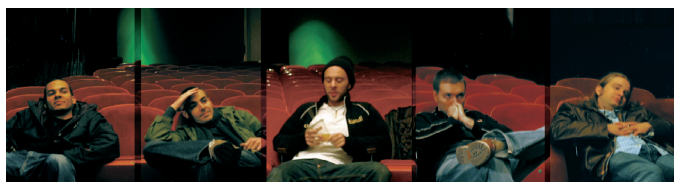
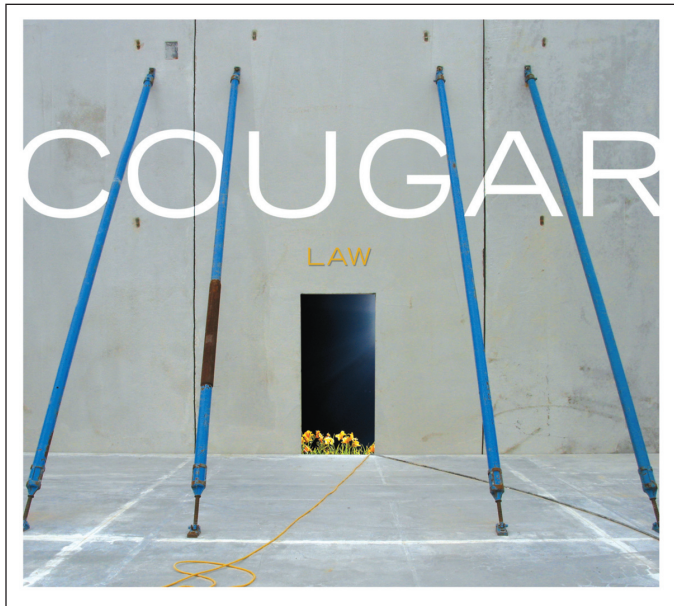


COUGAR LAW



PERSONNEL

Trent Johnson – guitar
Aaron Sleator – electronics
D. H. Skogen - percussion
Dan Venne - guitar
Todd Hill – bass



Layered Music is part of Layered Arts Collective, a community-based group of artists, teachers, musicians and writers in Madison, Wisconsin who are dedicated to progress. Layered sponsors youth workshops, educational events, concerts, and is responsible for a publishing house and record label. The label functions behind the collective ideology that it embodies a cause rather than just a brand-name. Layered's extended family of artists, while diverse in sound, are consistent in this: the desire to make music that has not yet been made.

CONTACT

press / jessica linker
jessica@pitchperfectpr.com - 773.784.4335
label / d.h. skogen - dh@layered.org
download liner notes, artwork, hi res images at
www.cougarsound.com

February 20th, 2007
on Layered Music cd/lp

Cougar was formed in 2003 in a cold Madison, Wisconsin basement, and has been secretly crafting beautiful music ever since. The secret's out.

Members have been involved in the progressive music community for years, including ensembles like the internationally renowned **YoungBlood Brass Band**.

Cougar is the culmination of what began as informal compositional/rhetorical gatherings. These sessions brought together a core group of musicians committed to careful meditation and refinement. This ethos pushed the group to constantly examine and breakdown their approach. The group began exploring the idea of the “hook” as an institution that occurs within all beautiful music; be that hip-hop, punk, electronic, classical, improvised, all- or none-of-the-above.

Cougar describes its music as “**Emergency Rock**”. Emergency Rock is not wordplay; it is a literal description. It captures the model of neutrality/purpose/efficiency that defines emergency procedure and extends it to music. Each song is a collage of voices constantly interacting and evolving one another. Shape shifting melodies, vast sonic canvases, dense, raw, electronic, organic, found-percussion and driven sounds resonate throughout. Cougar is passionate, powerful, unabashedly epic instrumental music. The band's sound has become anthemic to rescue-culture aficionados everywhere.

No small part of Cougar's extraordinary aesthetic is also attributed to the visionary design/photography team of **Scott Pauli** and **Peter Streicher**, whose images capture perfectly the marriage between organic/synthetic and electronic/acoustic elements in the music. It can be said that Cougar's double-sided fascination with density and space is represented in stark images' matter and emptiness, or better, nature v. architecture.

Law was recorded at **Layered** Studios in Madison. Additional recording was done by experimental music luminary **John McEntire (Tortoise/The Sea and Cake)** at Soma Electronic Music Studios in Chicago. John also mixed the record. After a successful European/UK tour last winter, Cougar is ready to make waves in the states with their landmark debut. Thanks for listening.

COUGAR LAW

CONTACT

press / jessica linker

jessica@pitchperfectpr.com - 773.784.4335

label / d.h. skogen - dh@layered.org

download liner notes, artwork, hi res images at

www.cougarsound.com

myspace.com/cougarsound

RELEASE TOUR

Jan. 24 Minneapolis, MN - Triple Rock

Jan. 25 Chicago, IL – Empty Bottle

Jan. 26 Kalamazoo, MI – Kraftbrau

Jan. 27 New York, NY – Tonic

Jan. 28 Cleveland – The Grog Shop

Jan. 29 Madison, WI – High Noon Saloon

Jan. 30 Iowa City, IA – Picador

Jan. 31 Lincoln, NE – Zoo Bar

Feb. 01 Lawrence, KS – Jackpot Music Saloon

Feb. 02 Albuquerque, NM - The Launchpad

Feb. 03 Tucson, AZ – Plush

Feb. 04 Los Angeles, CA – Knitting Factory

Feb. 05 San Francisco, CA - 12 Galaxies

Feb. 06 Portland, OR - Towne Lounge

Feb. 07 Seattle, WA – High Dive

PRESS

”THE FANGS, THE FUR, AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF CONSUMER ELECTRONICS.

The delicate nature of my 2G Nano calls out for something delicate, intimate, yet complex and engaging. And it just so happens that my favorite CD of all time this week, Law by Madison, WS post-rock outfit Cougar fits that requirement perfectly.

Cougar is the twinkling instrumental guitar and beats project by some of the cats from the utterly brilliant Youngblood Brass band – an organic array of skittery martial beats, subtle electronics and recombinant strains of lilting guitar. The band calls it “emergency rock” but this is more subliminal rock. The guitar lines, layered one atop another, make kaleidoscopes in my earbuds while the complimentary beats and shudders propel it forward.

The first track “Atlatl” is the best, starting out as a babbling trickle and slowly building into a volcano eruption by the end. I’m sure this confounded instrument has some sort of “most played” setting which will reveal a playlist solely of this song. This song rings the gong of my personal Shaolin temple. Other tracks like it make a close second, like the serene “Strict Scrutiny,” the careful steps of “Interracial Dating” and the resplendency of “Your Excellency”. But none

of them form the monolith like “Atlatl.” I feel like I’m in my own, personally-tailored Nike ad as I lumber around the track with it erasing all bad thoughts from my brain.

There are package of numbered tracks: “two” which is like the sampler let loose in the spring air, “Three” consists of drums vs. those cool echoey sounds you get when you bang on the metal rail in a stairwell. “Four” sounds like it might be a lost rhythm track from the “Around the World in a Day” sessions. And so on. They are short interludes that break up the bliss. Keeps you on your toes. The larger ensemble tracks like “Black Dove” that marry the two styles make it worth going through the ingredients. “Merit” starts out descent, comes on like a Technicolor sunset and later explodes like a rescue flare, giving way to “Postscript”, the delicate little fugue that closes this album. When that song came to its conclusion, I had a moment of tranquility engulfing me, until I panicked, searching for the repeat setting.”

- Outside Left

”Cougar style their music “epic emergency rock.” However, the presence of producer and Tortoise luminary John McEntire is clue enough that epic emergency rock also sits in the heritage of post-rock (and its own multitude of glories). The album is narrated by six numbered fragments built from found sound and muted voices. The compositions are melodically lush and rhythmically compelling. A penetratingly ruffed high-tom sample drives the hypnotic “Pulse Conditioner”. “Your Excellency” is sleepy and drifting, a reflectively rounded guitar tone carrying the riff before a more crunching coda replaces reflection with nagging doubt. The mellowed acoustic loop that opens standout track “Atlatl” is pushed aside by a gloriously precise and urgent second movement of dual lead guitars.”

- The Wire (Album review)

”The future ain’t what it used to be, and Madison, Wisconsin’s instrumental rock quintet Cougar take the stage apparently determined to prove it. Sleek, modern and precociously gifted, they ooze promise from the first chime of the lush guitar arpeggios that kick off “Atlatl”. The small crowd of curious, attentive listeners are immediately struck by the unit’s effortless command and undeniable technical skill. Cougar display that most old-fashioned of virtues: class.

It’s clear that what we’re witnessing tonight, dubbed ‘emergency rock’ by the group themselves, is the return of post-rock. Perhaps it never went away – Tortoise (whose John McEntire produced Cougar’s debut album *Law*) continue to do good business – but in Cougar’s hands, it’s polished into a gleaming jewel. It’s a leaner, more efficient proposition than its 90s vintage, shorn of anything extraneous or awkward. Cougar are great, and after half an hour’s worth of superb, finely wrought music there’s almost no need to listen, because it’s obvious that nothing can possibly go wrong.

They work their way diligently through *Law*, their well-drilled precision the result of a hefty touring schedule. Their twin guitar interplay (Dan Venne and Trent Johnson) can’t help but recall the cat’s cradle bass patterns of early Tortoise, and the subtle electronic colourings from Aaron Sleator add just the right amount of fizz and crackle to the hollow, woody restraint warmth of the compositions. Indeed, it’s this total sense of restraint that is the hallmark of this evening’s show. Their episodic arrangements eschew easy resolutions or the simple gratification of tension and release, though certain passages stand out. D.H. Skogen’s timbales on “Pulse Conditioner” cut brightly through the rich density of the music, while the stripped back coda to “Strict Scrutiny” centres on some delightfully lugubrious double bass from Todd Hill. For a brief moment during “Your Excellency”, the group deign to put their heads down and let loose the riff monster that’s otherwise locked in the gilded cage of studious intricacy, but the beast is soon back behind bars.

The short experimental interludes that punctuate the set seem to be confining their more adventurous leanings to sketches, and these miniatures are tantalizing glimpses of future possibilities. If they incorporate some of the pioneer spirit evident on these vignettes into their longer compositions, Cougar could leave the rest of the pack standing.”

- The Wire (London show review)

"Cougar are pushing the boundaries of the instrumental medium. Law is a surprisingly soft, instrumental album including the frantic tub-thumping of David Skogen, the percussionist also responsible for the antagonistic vocals in experimental hip-hop outfit, Youngblood Brass Band. With Cougar, Skogen has played his part to create an album which contains, in turn, simple atmospherics and breakneck guitar runs; for his own part his wayward yet tight drum runs remain, but they feel much more under control here. Teamed up with the more-than-competent talents of Trent Johnson, Dan Venne, Aaron Sleator and Todd Hill, the album combines to make a smooth and beautifully well-constructed whole.

Instrumental albums tend to be difficult to pull off. Only a few ever seem to merit multiple listens, except as background music for ambiguous social occasions, or heavily overplayed car ads, but Law has been stuck on my CD player for the last couple of weeks.

Depending on your mood Law can seem either really upbeat or somber: such is the way that the tracks are arranged, which in itself is impressive. They take your expectations of an instrumental album and then add a certain charge to the recording. Maybe it's the inclusion of Skogen's drumming, which has the same erratic, punchy menace contained in Youngblood, which peeps it up some, or maybe it's the ephemeral flashes of grinding guitar, which flow in and out from nowhere.

"Strict Scrutiny" is a definite highlight of this album, a layered, instrument-heavy piece bracketed with swift, clean finger-picking on an acoustic and a sobering backing cello to add a kind of sweeping depth.

I find Law hard to fault anywhere: all the tracks are polished to perfection and flow easily to the next. Possibly the best thing about this album though is that I can't imagine any of the tracks being hideously overplayed on generic television adverts, and that is the most complimentary thing I can think to say about an instrumental group."

- cdreviews.com

"Improvised instrumental music with mighty helpings of heart and soul is what you get when this Cougar starts to purr. Formed in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2003 as an offshoot of sorts to the dynamic Youngblood Brass Band (and with Tortoise handler John McEntire providing some of the studio steering for Law), Cougar's sound shifts between different shades and shapes. While there's an undoubtedly epic drawl to much of their emergency rock, Cougar's real panache can be found in those soft, subtle notes between grooves when the electronics and acoustic elements find common ground. As tracks bend and gyrate between different perspectives, there's an emotional intensity at work that pulls the listener closer. Spotlighting individual tracks is pointless - it's the overall sound that makes the most impact."

- The Irish Times/The Ticket

"This is alt.instrumental music that goes someplace else entirely and is must-hearing for the left-of-center. Skillfully presented, this is the spiritual grandchild of 60's free jazz that has come down through the generations and wants to wear it's own clothes. If you like music, this is something well worth checking out."

- midwestrecord.com

"This album has so much beauty that words escape me. Cougar defies comprehension with music that sails into the higher realms of the subconscious. The pieces are true masterpieces of atmospherics and grandiloquence. Although the shortest songs seem to be only interludes, the long instrumental stretches balance us between a penchant for engraved melody and for rhythms worthy of the most powerful earth tremors. If 2006 is, for the Chinese, the year of the dog, it is extremely likely to be for me the year of Cougar. To the wise: disregard the horoscopes and listen to this album."

- Liability Webzine