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In Rotation: World Famous Headliners' freewheeling debut

By Randy Lewis

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A series in Sunday Calendar about what Times writers and contributors are listening to right now...

Few bands have even been able to ride a groove like cult favorite NRBQ has over the course of a four-plus decade career, but the World Famous Headliners nail it out of the gate with the ad hoc band's rollicking debut album.

No big surprise there, since the Headliners formed recently around former NRBQ guitarist, singer and songwriter Al Anderson, who packed it in with his erstwhile New England bandmates almost two decades ago and headed to Nashville, where he's carved out a healthier, less punishing lifestyle primarily as a songwriter.

Anderson is joined by fellow guitarist-singer-songwriters Shawn Camp and Pat McLaughlin, bassist Michael Rhodes and drummer Greg Morrow for this attitudinally loose, musically tight and lyrically sharp session of songs written by Anderson, Camp and McLaughlin.

In the leadoff track, "Give Your Love To Me," the Headliners slip into an NRBQ-like rolling groove in a plea for affection bursting with a journeyman's facility for boiling sentiments down to the witty essentials:

Give your money to the March of Dimes

Give your attention to the New York Times

Can't you see me baby on my knees

I'm begging begging purty purty please

Give your love to me

It's a democratic operation, Anderson, Camp and McLaughlin trading lead vocal duties from song to song, sometimes from verse to verse. The material spans a rich expanse from soulful big-beat rock celebrating hedonism ("Party Til the Money's Gone") to New Orleans funk ("Mamarita"), from heart-on-sleeve country rock regret ("Take Me Back") to effervescent Tex-Mex solipsism ("Nobody to Love").

With a global reach as effortlessly freewheeling as this all sounds, these headliners deserve to be world famous indeed.

World Famous Headliners

"World Famous Headliners"

(Big Yellow Dog Music)