



## **DANIELSON FAMILIE – Fetch The Compass Kids (Secretly Canadian)**

At the end of the day, music is all about entertainment, right? Whether it's Rivulets or Slipknot, it serves as an escape from all the other shit. And whatever you may think of the bizarre Danielson Famile, it cannot be denied that they are certainly entertaining. Even before a single note is heard, they are entertaining. To look at a photo of them is a treat akin to secretly wanting the Children of the Damned to win and take over the world. And I could read about them all day.

Are you ready for this? Danielson Famile features six genuine siblings, actually called Smith, ranging in age from 12 to 25 and all committed Christians. Lead singer, writer and band focus Daniel considers Sonic Youth “the life changer,” also equally appreciates Woody Guthrie and Aphex Twin and considers himself and his family as earthbound musical vessels of God.

On stage, they have been known to wear antennae to receive clearer heavenly transmissions and perform dance routines The Four Tops would die for. Their uniforms are those of nurses to convey “the healing” in their music. Daniel often performs as a solo acoustic artist inside a huge tree trunk that he made himself. And, they all have ginger hair.

It should come as no surprise that Daniel, his brothers and sisters and the friends that help out, are very serious about what they are doing. These are genuine eccentric and honest people that are doing something natural and unique.

I state elsewhere in this issue that anything involving Steve Albini is worth at least a glance - and here he is again, this time in his engineering overalls. Of all the interesting musicians that Albini must have worked with, the Smith family and friends must rank high in outsider stakes.

But what of the music? Well, if you've been disturbed by the traditional grotesque imagery and music of carnivals and fairgrounds, then the Famile's fifth album *Fetch The Compass Kids* will have you fleeing in abject terror. Involving guitars, drums, bells, violins, flutes, brass, banjo and keyboards behind one very scary voice, the Smiths have invented Christian loony-pop and challenged all-comers to wrestle away their weirdo crown.

Daniel's voice is simply outrageous. Like Geddy Lee on helium, he squeals tales of spiritual struggle backed by the Arkham Asylum house band. This is what is termed 'an acquired taste,' but if you are interested in musical extremes, then it has to be heard. Like that misunderstood, long forgotten Chicagoan pop freak Skafish, Danielson Famile are initially something of a novelty, but behind all the oddity is innovation and passion.

Despite my praise, I can happily live without any Famile releases in my home – it's just not what I seek emotionally from music. You can get a little pleasure from squeezing a

loaf you don't eat. I believe, however, that such rampant sonic adventure should be applauded, and I wish them great success in their crazy adventures with sound.

**TOM SHERIFF**

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