



VARIETY

Humorous album shines light on history's worst U.S. Presidents

This past month has been a historical one to say the least. On January 20, Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States.

While some are wary of his future as president, others were overjoyed to see Donald Trump's time in office come to an end after just one term.

One-term Presidents haven't been known as the most celebrated or even well-known in history, but this past year musician David W. Jacobsen decided to change that.

In 2020 Jacobsen released his album "POTUS," an amusing collection of songs about famous (and not-so-famous) commanders-in-chief that served for four years or less.

All of the songs on the album are written in the first-person perspective to give the audience a better glimpse into the mind of these disregarded presidents of the past.

According to the album's description, these songs "mix history with storytelling, providing a humanized view of men who have guided America for better or for worse (more often worse)."

The first song in the collection entitled "1799," a parody of Prince's "1999," is sung in the voice of John Adams. He is singing to Alexander Hamilton after his publication of a defamatory letter that harshly criticized Adams.

Although the two men belonged to the same party, Hamilton's letter greatly hurt Adams' chances of re-election. The line, "If we don't come together now, someone worse will hold sway" refers to Adams' opponent, Thomas Jefferson, who inevitably came out victorious.

Another interesting song off the album is "Shanties." This is sung from the perspective of Herbert Hoover after he lost re-election in the midst of the Great Depression to Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR).

In the song, Hoover sings about being vilified by FDR after losing the election. Even after being hailed as the "Great Humanitarian" during WWI, Hoover sings, "Still you name your shanties after me." This is referring to the shanty towns that were built during the Great Depression known as "Hoovervilles."

This song is an excellent example of Jacobsen humanizing an otherwise terrible man. Despite being regarded as one of the worst presidents in history, it's difficult to not feel a sense of

sympathy for Hoover. After all, the Great Depression couldn't have been entirely his fault, right?

Luckily, not all songs on the album are so melancholy. One song in particular is so amusing that most listeners will likely find themselves laughing along to the melody.

"Leave my bones in the ground" is a song from the perspective of a deceased Zachary Taylor pleading with researchers not to exhume his body 141 years after his death.

Taylor died rather mysteriously in office after only serving 16 months. This led some to believe he was murdered with arsenic. After 141 years his ascendants agreed to test his remains, however, medical examiners concluded his death was not caused by poisoning.

All in all, this album is great for history buffs and music lovers alike. With eleven wild stories ranging from getting drunk after losing an election to a love song between former friends, this track has something for everyone.

After such entertaining takes on former presidents' lives, it would be interesting to listen to a song from the perspective of the latest president to lose his re-election.

Because the album was released well before the 2020 election, "POTUS" does not include any narrative from Trump. If Jacobsen ever does decide to write from his perspective, a fitting name for it might be "Have a Good Life" after his famous, and quite bitter, last words in office.

Students interested in learning the history of some of the worst presidents this country has seen should definitely check out Jacobsen's full album.

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