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The New Siberians, *Black Blue + White*

By CHRIS FARNSWORTH

(Self-released, digital download, vinyl)

If you're going to go almost a decade between album releases, you might as well turn out a double album, right? Perhaps that was the thinking behind **the New Siberians'** long-awaited second LP, *Black Blue + White*. Packed with 19 songs, featuring 16 musicians and recorded at three different studios over seven years, the album "feels like a life's work," as the Burlington band states on its website. The songs endeavor to document the New Siberians' long absence.

Penned mostly by Brendan Devitt (Ninja Custodian) and Ted Pappadopoulos (Go to Blazes), the eclectic songs convey a sense of time passing. It's not so much a single, cohesive evolution as a collection of subtle changes. At times, the songs possess the vigor of a Big Star record, such as on "Bird on the Sea" and "Black 17." Or they veer into garage bombast, as on "Tenderness," with guitar riffs whipping back and forth.

As the four-sided record marches on, the band masterfully expands its range. Emerging from the almost prog-like stomp of "Racers," the New Siberians take a turn for the pastoral. Bluegrass sneaks into "And the Gods." The beautiful, haunting "Upstream" stretches out like a lazy river, with mandolin and strings replacing the guitar solos of side one.

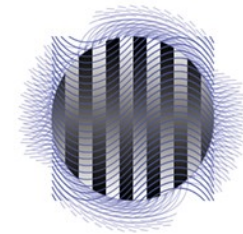
Black Blue + White displays the unique duality of Vermont's best rock music. It has one foot in rural, hedge-and-wood-enshrined music yet can get loud and weird at a moment's notice.

The green shade of Vermont that permeates the record isn't an accident — the band says it's "a testament to recording locally." Ryan Power, one of the area's brightest talents, produced. It was recorded largely in Essex and Ferrisburgh. Burlington Record Plant pressed the vinyl. *Black Blue + White* is incredibly local, and that is a high compliment.

The record doesn't entirely escape the bane of double albums: bloat and overindulgence. It includes a few stinkers — "Breaking Camp," for one. But it's an accomplishment that so many of the 19 songs deliver; that they maintain a decent flow over four sides is a feat. It's easy to forgive the odd boring track when a body of music is, overall, so listenable.

Black Blue + White ends fittingly with a lush, six-and-a-half-minute soundtrack piece titled "Notes to Future Self." Here's a note to the New Siberians of the future: "Hey, don't wait another 10 years to make a record."

Black Blue + White is available at thenewsiberians.com.

The New Siberians, *Black Blue + White***Got something to say?**Send a **letter to the editor** and we'll publish your feedback in print!