

TCB Review: Lone Sharks - A Lone Sharks 6-Pack

(Self Release) Click on the Lone Sharks' website and up pops the cover of their latest release, *6-Pack*, with the words, "Maximum Rhythm 'N' Twang Since 1988," below it. An old Hank Thompson album inspired the cover, depicting a 6-pack with each band member's image on a can. Considered by many to be the best "American Roots" band in the Tri-State area, the Lone Sharks specialize in a high-energy mix of music that includes western swing, Louisiana boogie, rockabilly, honky-tonk and jump blues. Their sweaty, gritty and raucous shows that combine originals songs, mixed with covers of gems both well known and obscure, have gained them a devoted following.

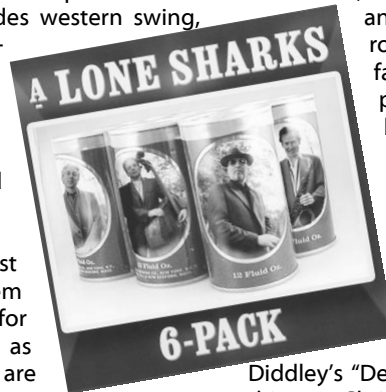
As one of the area's busiest and most popular bands, one might expect them to hail from that hotbed for country/Americana music known as Brooklyn, however, the Lone Sharks are based in the opposite direction, way out east on Long Island's north fork. The band is comprised of Gene Casey, who in addition to being the Lone Sharks' charismatic lead singer and guitarist, also serves as the writer of the band's original material. Making for a formidable rhythm section, Joe Lauro provides doghouse bass and backing vocals, while Chris Ripley handles drums, percussion and vocals. Last, but not least, Paul Scher delivers the goods on tenor sax and steel guitar.

The Lone Sharks already have two full-length albums under their belt, 1997's *Fire, Theft and Casualty*, and 2003's *Aqua Western*. Both of those albums focused on original Lone Sharks material and are quality, solid efforts that showcase their flawless musicianship and Gene's talent as a strong, skillful songwriter. While both albums also run the gamut of their musical diversity, as in the case of many performers that are as equally acclaimed for their charisma and spontaneity in a live setting as they are for their talent, the studio often proves a difficult place to fully capture the fire and energy of live performances.

Short of putting out a live album, they decided to take a slightly different approach with their latest release, *6-Pack*. Instead of a full-length disc, this one's an EP, 6 tracks plus "one for the road." Gene refers to it as having a definite "twang-billy bent," and being a "take home souvenir"- something for fans to take home with them that provides a stylistic taste of a little bit of everything in their extensive repertoire, which for the first time recording-wise, is nearly evenly split between covers and original songs.

6-Pack opens with a new Gene Casey penned original, "Sherri On The Ferry," an infectious twangy Cajun influenced two-stepper. Based on a real person (the title's Sherri), Gene supplies a lighthearted and clever twist to this song that revolves around a guy who stayed a little

too long at the bar and finds himself forlornly begging Sherri to *please* take him back- in a quite literal and unconventional sense. Next, the Sharks move into a shuffle groove with a flawless, gritty mix of country and R&B on Roy Orbison's "Uptown," which features red hot solos by Paul on sax and Gene on guitar. They chose to cover Elvis, but they steer clear of his better-known songs and instead unearth and deliver a muscular, roof raisin' rockabilly-Gospel rendition of the far more obscure "We're Gonna Move." Gene provides soulfully meaty vocals accompanied by some great Carl Perkins style picking, Joe's always impeccable bass playing skillfully drives the rhythm, and the rest of the band conjures up visions of The Jordanaires with their backing vocals on this gem.



The Lone Sharks crank it up to full throttle with a smokin' cover of Bo Diddley's "Dearest Darlin'." Everybody gets a workout on this one. Chris and Joe shine in the driver's seat, providing the song's foundation with an outstanding, ferociously driving, front and center primal voodoo beat. Gene then masterfully rides the beat, pulling out all the stops as he cuts loose and passionately delivers some of his very best soulfully gritty guttural growls and fiery guitar licks. After they more than effectively burn down the joint with that one, the band gives us a chance to catch our collective breath and they slow things down with *6-Pack's* lone ballad. "Who's Sharing The Moon" is another new Gene Casey original. He slips comfortably into crooner mode on this swaying, slow-shuffle tale of heartache, a throwback to those dreamy "torch & twang" ballads of the 50s & 60s. The result is another *6-Pack* highlight, and in addition to Gene's soulfully mournful vocals and the band's flawless musicianship, this one also features Paul Scher's shimmering steel playing. They next offer up a helping of tasty N'Awlins boogie as Chris Ripley steps into the spotlight and takes command of lead vocals on a delightfully raucous rendition of the classic back alley murder saga "Stagger Lee," with kudos for some killer backing sax and guitar licks going to Paul and Gene respectively. The ever-gracious hosts that they are, the Lone Sharks give us "one on the house," and close the disc with "This Time I'm Swingin'." Another Gene Casey original, this one was previously released on their *Aqua Western* album and features sometimes Shark and compadre Andy Burton on piano. True to the song's title, they close the disc with some perfectly written and executed swing.

It's been previously said, "When the Lone Sharks play, people dance. Like crazy. All night. So hard and hot that the waitress has to turn down the thermostat." *6-Pack* once again proves that beyond a doubt. 'Nuff said.

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