

# The Residents: I Am a Resident!

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September 5, 2018



It's not hard to figure out who the Residents are if you try, but anonymity is a big part of the package. Are the people in the eyeball masks and top hats really the musicians? There's a wonderful interview from 1986 where Homer Flynn, head of their Cryptic Corporation, drones on while the Residents pace around the room behind him like bored pets—and gee, doesn't Flynn's Southern-accented voice sound a lot like the singer on a lot of the songs? He might be a Resident, he might not be, but it'd be a little underwhelming if he was. As with fellow art-world troll dril, even those who know the creatives' identities might be hesitant to divulge them.

The argument of the long-running art collective's new album, *I Am a Resident*, is that anyone is a Resident. Indeed, fans were encouraged to submit their own covers of Residents songs to the group, who mashed them up into long-form compositions on disc one of the sprawling collection. Disc two highlights the covers individually, which range from lo-fi bedroom-pop curiosities as hermetic as anything recorded by the band itself to a professional gypsy-jazz cover of 1980's "Moisture." The artists aren't credited, and a "Song Gallery" on their website gives only jokey artist names like "Ranchstyle Chickenpants" and "El Douche (and His Sister)."

Not all the compositions included here are in the song gallery either; the origin of a child-sung

version of the title track from 2006's *The Bunny Boy* is apparently unclear even to the band. *I Am a Resident* doesn't celebrate the musicians involved. It's a crowd-sourced tribute to the Residents themselves, as a chant of "We are the Residents!" at the end of the first disc makes clear. The group is pushing 50, and *something* had to be done to celebrate—something to capture fans' interest amid the sea of largely unpromoted and unheralded concept albums, steeped in garish killer-clown imagery, that comprise the bulk of the Residents' latter-day work.

The people who will find *I Am a Resident* most attractive will be the actual musicians who contributed to the project—who will be delighted to hear themselves on an official Residents release—and longtime fans for whom these songs mean something. This is not a trifle for those who heard Primus perform "Hello Skinny" and wanted to scope their freak-scene forebears (though "Hello Skinny" does appear frequently here). If you haven't spelunked into the deepest corners of the Residents mythology, the 10-plus-minute mashups that make up the meat of the record will just scan as loosely organized Cronenbergs made from Residents-flavored cues.

If you've read this far, you're probably a fan; if not and your curiosity is piqued, understand this is not the place to start. Here are some better introductions: *Duck Stab!*, *Fingerprince*, *Commercial Album*, *George & James* and *Eskimo* if you can abide a little faux-ethnography. If you like what you hear, there are nearly unlimited depths to explore. *I Am a Resident* should be one of the latter stops on your journey.