

BETTIE SERVEERT

Palomine

(*Guernica/All formats*)

CLANGING NETHERLANDERS

Bettie Serveert named themselves in tribute to '70s tennis ace Bettie Stove and bash out their raw chunks of crude guitar pop in tribute to the Pixies, Throwing Muses, Cocteauus and everyone else on parent label 4AD. Happily, their reading of Anglo-American art-noise loses its teeth-grinding momentum in translation and gains a wonky melodic sensibility.

Singer Carol Van Dijk tries to get all mournful and bittersweet in an Edie Brickell vein, but her English-as-second-language lyrics and mellifluous mouth-full-of-marbles phrasing give each composition a fragmented, disclosed aura. None of which is helped by the unruly belches of guitar and stacks of sonic crockery which crash around her with alarming frequency..

Challenging themselves to fashion something beautiful from their desolate lot, they score with the crunchy hymn to friendship 'Palomine', here included as both clenched-fist stomper and much more approachable strung-out slowie. They also soar above their surroundings with 'Brain Tag', a sobbing and swooning sprawl, strangely only included on the vinyl version as a free seven-inch single.

Everything else aims for the clatter-pop classicism of Velvet Crush or the Lemonheads – guitar, bass, drums, *wallop* – but lacks sufficient focus or emotional impact. Scrawly tunes, cloudy observations, open-ended sentiments ultimately leading to an unsatisfactory, half-digested aftertaste. Nothing is actually *bad*, but nothing sets the heavens aflame and sends you screaming for the toilet with its bowel-opening magnificence. Promise unfulfilled. (6)

Stephen Dalton