

# The Boston Globe **cd** report

## Cigarbox Planetarium

January 10, 2003

NEW ON DISC

**CIGARBOX PLANETARIUM**

*Oh! Tonito*

The mid-'90s lounge-music revival has all but gone away. However, from the smoldering embers of the mini-craze a few sparks have stayed alive. One is Cigarbox Planetarium, the DC-based duo of organist Deanna Pineda and guitarist Andy Charneco. The 15 instrumentals on their debut sport cheeky titles and are propelled by the rhythms of a Casio and an electronic drum box. One could draw the wrong conclusion from such data. While the track listing includes such numbers as "I Clone Me," "Zombiessence," and "Bowler's Hat Nightmare," their actual sonic life is quite a bit more resonant. They draw from the world of spy movies and suburban bossa nova parties but are

not limited to those sources. One of the set's strengths is its diversity. From "Homicide Kills" and its echoes of "Get Smart" to the near melancholy of "Listing Attic," the pair understand the dynamics of a well-paced album experience. Eschewing production flourish, they let the well-honed arrangements speak for themselves. Charneco's guitar tone is from the cleanly articulated, light vibrato world of surf music (they dedicated the CD to Finland's Laika & the Cosmonauts, one of the finest purveyors of contemporary surf-inspired instrumentals). The lounge revival may be dead in the water, but Cigarbox Planetarium are bobbing about in the pool nicely.

DAVID GREENBERGER

PRICE \$3.95

AUG. 18 & 25, 2003

# THE NEW YORKER

## CLUBS

**SIN-É**

150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077) — ... Aug. 25:

The endearing D.C.-based instrumental duo Cigarbox Planetarium stops by with its self-described "mood-musical cocktail-twang bossatiki surfanova spaghettiwesternish outer-spy soundtrackesque instrumental lounge." Hammond organ, a Casio keyboard, and a Ventures-like guitar combine for delightful fifties-and-sixties-tinged soundtrack stylings (a touch Nino Rota, a touch Henry Mancini). Be sure to order a Martini.

18 THE NEW YORKER, AUGUST 18 & 25, 2003



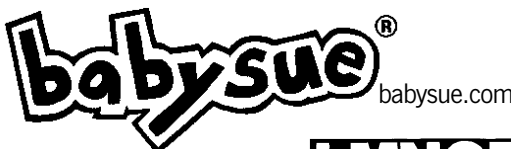
www.allmusic.com

Artist: Cigarbox Planetarium

Album Title: Cigarbox Planetarium

AMG Rating: ★★ ★

Peculiar name, peculiar music. It's hard to tell if the duo is downright serious about its bossa nova jams or just having fun with what they have to work with (a keyboard, guitar, drum machine and other odd items). Titles such as "Frankenstein on the Beach" and "Trouble is My Beeswax" should hint at the latter and pay homage to their influence from surf rock. With preset rhythms (sometimes not too far off from Wesley Willis), the Washington, D.C. band bestows twangy vibrations from a vintage Fender Jazzmaster guitar, Hammond organ and Casio keyboard, producing mood music for those who don't take mood music too seriously. It does in fact revive classic bossa nova and lounge but with knowing winks and quirks, which hopefully won't have Stan Getz or Henry Mancini rolling in their graves. If anything, Cigarbox Planetarium deserves points just having the nerve to record something like this. — Kenyon Hopkin



[babysue.com](http://babysue.com)

December 2002 Review by **LMNOP**

### Cigarbox Planetarium - *Cigarbox Planetarium*

(CD, Oh!Tonito, Modern lounge music)

Pleasantly simple. Cigarbox Planetarium is the duo of Andy Charneco and Deanna Pineda. Charneco plays guitar and drumbox, Pineda plays organ and casio. And...that's it. No guest artists. No elaborate overdubs. No thick layering of instruments. No elaborate mixes. This duo shows great restraint in their approach to music...and the concept works marvelously. These simple drum machine driven tunes are subtle and sparse. The keyboards are matter-of-fact...and the guitar playing is strangely fluid and hypnotic. We enjoyed the "lounge movement" that happened a few years back and were disappointed when it seem to drizzle out into nowhere. These two folks don't seem to be trying to reignite or reinvent the movement. Instead, they are just producing puzzling and inventive modern mood music. We are almost always impressed when people don't try too hard. Charneco and Pineda don't have to. Their music speaks for itself. Well done. (Rating: 5++)



## NOW PLAYING

Washington City Paper March 21, 2003 49

### Cigarbox Planetarium

#### Cigarbox Planetarium

*Oh! Tonito*

In an alternate universe in which Pee-wee Herman is Hugh Hefner, this Casio-driven 15-tracker is the soundtrack for *Pee-wee's Playhouse After Dark*. For those who think "Mecca-lecca-hi-mecca-heinie-ho" needed more heinie. —Dave Nuttycombe

# SPLENDID

splendid > reviews > 10/9/2003 [www.splendidezine.com](http://www.splendidezine.com)  
Cigarbox Planetarium . Self-Titled . Oh! Tonito

Many, many months ago, a writer new to our staff took a crack at Cigarbox Planetarium. The review she turned in was, frankly, frightening – the details have since been deleted, though we recall use of the word “wierd” (sic) – and the writer left our staff soon after submitting it. We planned to salvage it with some really intensive editing, but then the holidays rolled around, and people changed jobs, and...well, you get the idea.

It's time to correct that unintentional slight. Cigarbox Planetarium have provided us with another copy of their self-titled debut (a CDR copy with home-printed label and packaging that set the gold standard for such DIY output), and we can now confidently assure you that Cigarbox Planetarium isn't “wierd” at all.

The cocktail nation may have dwindled to a sovereign state, but interest in Esquivellian grooves endures, and those tastes will be well-served here. Comparisons to Combustible Edison are probably inevitable, though not particularly accurate; guitarist Andy Charneco and organist Deanna Pineda, rather than indulging in wacky big band percussion antics, have embraced cheesy Casio rhythm presets as a foundation for their instrumental explorations. It's familiar-sounding material – limber, surfy guitar melodies worming their way through thick, Hammond-y chords – but the Casio's sonic limitations give everything a sheen of unreality.

This doesn't affect the music's ability to create moods; “I Clone Me” reels out discordant, slightly grating melodic progressions that suggest freaky nuclear-age science gone wrong, and “Bowler Hat's Nightmare” is a richly disjointed dream sequence, while “Trouble Is My Beeswax” tops its sixties-style suspense theme with hints of supernatural mischief. On the more relaxed end of the spectrum, “The Celestial Pincushion” ends the disc in luxuriant style – it's as sublimely relaxing as a Hawaiian beach, save for the plummy synth flute accents that wander through the scene like a Ray Lynch album on walkabout.

To Pineda and Charneco's credit, Cigarbox Planetarium never falls victim to its limitations. Pineda's Casio is exploited for its kitsch value, but the arrangements themselves aren't jokey (something that can't be said for Combustible Edison); they're as rich and detailed as the duo can make them, full of the noodly, jazzy guitar-work and thick, atmospheric organ action that made lounge music so exciting when the world re-discovered it during the nineties. The duo's instrumental approach is the only potential disappointment; their web site and press materials reveal them to be smart, funny folks, undoubtedly capable of writing clever lyrics.

When I first attempted to listen to Cigarbox Planetarium, my confused PC somehow launched two player apps and began playing the disc twice, with ten seconds of lag between the two tracks. For a few seconds, I wondered if our departed writer had actually been right – it sounded pretty weird, or even “wierd”. Once I fixed the problem, I was left with clever, inventive lounge music – perhaps not the trendiest thing in the world, but well worth hearing.

– George Zahora

Richmond <sup>SM</sup> Arts & Entertainment  
.com Have fun with it



RADIO - The Bopst Show  
Chris Bopst  
Richmond.com  
Wednesday January 15, 2003

**Cigarbox Planetarium:  
Self Titled Debut CD**  
(Oh!Tonito Records)

Hailing from our nation's capital, the Cigarbox Planetarium reinvents the bubbles in the wine of Lawrence Welk, as few would dare, let alone pull off with such dazzling grace. The group lovingly explores the depths of all that can be considered lounge music without falling into the trap of its deplorable cutesy excesses. The clean-picked, distortion-free guitar mastery of Andy Charneco takes center stage on the group's debut recording. Supported by the nimble keyboard styling of Deanna Pineda and drum machine, Andy's guitar is a pleasure to behold as he gives the songs their shape and melodic depth. The tunes are crafted in the vein once mined by England's late great Shadows with nods to Fellini's seminal soundtrack composer, Nino Rota, and the Little Rascals' criminally neglected composer, Leroy Shield.

There is a devious wit to all these compositions that invoke unabashed joviality free of irony. The Cigarbox Planetarium are the perfect complement to all your future cocktail parties and that, my friends, is a trick that is mighty hard to pull off. This is one thoroughly enjoyable recording.



Issue #28, Feb-June, 2003

This Washington, D.C. instrumental duo (Deanna Pineda on organ and Casio; Andy Charneco on guitar and drumbox) plays original music that draws on spaghetti western soundtracks, Joe Meek, the lounge scene, and Laika & the Cosmonauts for inspiration.

Their compositions are carefully constructed – alternately possessing a dreamy/moody quality and an angular dissonance. Although Pineda occasionally takes a turn at soloing, her keyboards more often provide a solid foundation for Charneco's expressive and fluid guitar work, which tastefully employs his whammy bar without resorting to grandstanding.

With intriguing titles like, “Night! Oh, the Sad...” “At Sun Two Dogs,” and “The Celestial Pincushion,” Cigarbox Planetarium's eponymous debut continues the lineage of their influences and is likely to please fans of all those genres.

–Michael Greenberg



February/March 2003  
University of Winnipeg

CIGARBOX PLANETARIUM  
self-titled

Cigarbox Planetarium is a Washington, DC instrumental duo that were simply tired of the typical band experiences and wanted to do something completely different. Apparently they wanted to be the B-52's of lounge music! What does it sound like? It's Esquivel spaceage bachelor pad, it's tiki lounge, it's bossanova, it's hockey arena organ, it's House of Frightenstein, all at the same time, but it works. Deanna Pineda and Andy Charneco take their music seriously, but not too seriously. Their delectable blend of Hammond organ, Casio keyboard and Fender Jazzmaster guitar will have you reaching for the gin and vermouth in no time. (Oh! Tonito, [www.ohtonito.com](http://www.ohtonito.com)) – Broose Tulloch

# IN MUSIC WE TRUST

Issue Fifty-Six / January 2003  
[www.inmusicwetrust.com/articles/56r12.html](http://www.inmusicwetrust.com/articles/56r12.html)

**Cigarbox Planetarium**  
**Self-Titled** (Oh! Tonito)  
By: Alex Steininger

Cigarbox Planetarium is an instrumental lounge-pop record. From the Casio and Organ-created atmosphere through the rain drop guitars and back beat of the drum box, Cigarbox have you pondering the deeper questions in life while you absorb yourself in their thinking sounds. From the dreamy to the bright-eyed, the creative pop concoctions here are mesmerizing, as you often find yourself sitting on the couch stoned by their sounds. I'll give it a B-

## On the Town

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NIGHTWATCH • SPOTLIGHT • RECORDINGS • FARE MINDED

### Dip Into Cigarbox Planetarium

By ERIC BRACE  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

One of my favorite questions to ask any musician is, "How do you describe your music?" It's a question most hate to answer. Musicians rarely want to categorize themselves, preferring to leave that to folks who get paid to do just that.

#### Nightwatch

But **Cigarbox Planetarium's** keyboard player, **Deanna Pineda**, practically couldn't wait to define the duo she's in with guitar player (and significant other) **Andy Charneco**: "We play lounge-bossa-tiki-surf-a-nova-spaghetti-westernish-instrumental-pop.

Perfect.

And the thing is, she's exactly right. That *is* what Cigarbox Planetarium plays.

It's one of the most original and grin-inducing bands I've come across on the D.C. scene—or anywhere, for that matter.

Cigarbox began in 1999 after Pineda and Charneco knew they wanted to put a band together and were just sifting through pop culture to decide on a direction. "We were listening to a lot of [Finnish surf-guitar instrumental group] Laika and the Cosmonauts and thought we should do something like that," Pineda says. "Then for a while we were going to be a banjo and violin duo, but then we settled on this."

"This" is Pineda coaxing dreamy melody lines and chunky chords from her Hammond electric organ while

Charneco plucks and twangs and bends notes out of his vintage Fender Jazzmaster guitar (a favorite of surf guitar bands of yore). While Pineda is classically trained on piano and violin, Charneco developed his considerable guitar skills in local bands such as **Fidelity Jones** and **the Hidden Persuaders**.

They give us lucky listeners their two-person (plus drum machine) instrumentals of cover tunes such as the theme from "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," "Telstar" (by British '60s instrumental band the Tornados, the first No. 1 hit by a British band), and several Antonio Carlos Jobim bossa nova numbers. There are also an increasing number of originals making their way onto the set lists.

Some of those have been reworked versions of songs from Charneco's two solo CDs, but most are being composed by Charneco and Pineda specifically for Cigarbox Planetarium. "On our demo tape, we recorded a lot of covers," says Pineda, "but for the CD we're recording, we hope to write all originals."

Cigarbox Planetarium performs Saturday at Galaxy Hut in Arlington (703/525-8646), with moody Richmond songwriter Patrick Phelan, and Sunday at the Rams Head in Annapolis (410/268-4545) opening for Dan Hick & the Hot Licks.

■ To hear a free Sound Bite from *Cigarbox Planetarium*, call Post-Haste at 202/334-9000 and press 8130. (Prince William residents, call 703/690-4110.)



BY JIM SAAH FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

If the music of Cigarbox Planetarium (Deanna Pineda and Andy Charneco) seems to defy description, then just ask them. They'll happily do the job.

