

SPOTLIGHT



Dan Dion

HARRY SHEARER

A multitalented comedy legend takes his funny songs seriously

HARRY SHEARER RARELY RESTS. "I don't watch a lot of crap," he says. "And I don't eat lunch. You'd be amazed what you can do with that extra hour every day."

Considering his stunning productivity over the years in films, television, books, radio and recordings—his latest, *Can't Take a Hint*, follows a string of Grammy-winning comedy albums—merely working through lunch would hardly seem to suffice. Shearer's new record features an all-star cast that includes Fountains of Wayne, Dr. John, actress Jane Lynch, singer Jamie Cullum, Brian Wilson, guitarists Steve Lukather and Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, and singer Judith Owen, Shearer's wife of nearly 20 years. Shearer originally wrote several songs for *Le Show*, his long-running National Public Radio program. "On my best day I'm an OK bass player," says Shearer. "I can also sing certain things. But I might not be the best person to sing some songs, so we got people like Jamie and Dr. John to take the lead on those."

Given the array of personalities, rich arrangements and varied genres that distinguish each track, Shearer is more a master of ceremonies. "I didn't have a definition of the record when I started," he admits. "When someone asked me about it the other day, I realized with the list of

guests and the very eclectic stylistic array, it's like a variety show."

Unlike his earlier album *Songs of the Bushmen* and the wide-ranging commentary he shares on *Le Show*, *Can't Take a Hint* is light on political posturing. There are a few good-natured swipes at the man who attempted to transfer his 15 minutes of fame into a run for Congress ("Joe the Plumber") and Sarah Palin ("Bridge to Nowhere"), but the subject matter runs a wider gamut, from the annoyances of airport security ("Touch My Junk") to big-name product nods ("Celebrity Booze Endorser"). "People think of comedy records as a guy doing stand-up," says Shearer. "So I figured I might as well do something that fits what I enjoy, making songs. I moved it up a notch by having all these great vocalists and instrumentalists contribute."

Known for his roles in such films as *This Is Spinal Tap* and *A Mighty Wind* and his Emmy Award-winning voiceover work on *The Simpsons*, Shearer is preparing to play former president Richard Nixon in a U.K. TV series—but hopes to tour once it's complete. "When I was in Whole Foods recently, I saw this sign that gave me the perfect name for my band—Young White Coconuts."

—Lee Zimmerman

