The Residents make original music. I mean really. They have recorded nine albums and seven singles. They did not use any tape or have their pictures taken. The Complete Residents Handbook.

I have been saddled with an impossible task: write about the Residents, a band of nameless, faceless individuals whose music is virtually indescribable yet incredibly invigorating. Why bother? Because the Residents have continued to produce albums on their own label (Ralph Records) and are achieving a growing following despite their anti-ad-pup-star attitude. Some history will make all this clear.

Around Christmas of 1972 the group released their first record, a double-sided called "Santa Pop. 1972." Lyrics such as "Meet the Residents, their first album, famous for its cover—a disfigured portrait of the Fab Four. The band then recorded "Not Available," but didn't release it. The Residents were too young to put the record away until they forgot it existed, at which time they would release it (this didn't happen until 1981). Perhaps the most interesting album from the Residents early period is Third Reich N Roll, a tribute to the music of the sixties. The record is best described as "indecipherable"—the lyrics they used came from memory and filling in any gaps with their own improved bits. That's most striking moment is the track that combines "Hey Jude," "Take a Giant Step," and "Sympathy for the Devil." In 1976 the Residents met the four men that would become the Cryptic Corporation, the organization that oversees the Residents' work and affairs. The Cryptics seem especially suited to dealing with the Residents, each member contributes a vital part to the conglomerate. Horner, a film composer, John Kenny is a video artist, and Clay Clinton is a business agent. The Cryptics also shield the Residents from the influence of the outside world, a role that has proven the theory that existence outside the Cryptics, a rumor that neither group appreciates.

Now under the guidance of the Cryptics, the band continued to release records and albums on their own label. This was "The most un-compromising aggregation of musical junk, no matter how you cut it. Ever." This creative period saw the release of Fingertips, the band's weakest work. Not Available (finally), and Duck Stab/Buster & Glass, the band's rock-'n'-roll album. This is the Residents album that start-with—its got short songs, almost intelligible lyrics, and almost conventional instrumentation. In 1979 the long-awaited Eskimo was released. This was the band's recreation of Eskimo life with rural landscapes of bowling clubs, prison instruments, and "authentic" Eskimo chants. Careful scrutiny reveals that this ethnological forgery is an combination of the grog's brilliant studio-craft, and wicked sense of humor. The "authentic" chants turn out to be nonsensical rhythms ("Money, money, money, money, get some sauce") and commercial phrases ("We want Coke, oh yeah"). This masterpiece was followed by a disk version of the same (Discohol), and The Residents' Commercial Album, which consists of forty one-minute riffs (If I had recorded it, it would have been called Music for Commercial). With one epic already behind them, the band began recording what has become their "Mark of the Mole" trilogy, a massive Resident social commentary. Part one. The Mark of the Mole, tells the story of the appearance of the mole people, a subterranean race that emerges on the Earth's surface (somewhere in California I think) and is forced to deal with the attitudes and problems of modern society. Although the record employes no direct narration, the plot is easily derived from the

The Residents arrived in San Francisco in 1967, and immediately began committing

They have a warped musical vision to share. One such (unreleased) demo, The Warner Dance, is so bad that major record label (with no name), just a return address resulted in the band naming itself after the address of the reply (just think they might have been the Occupants).