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## ***The Holy Modal Rounders... Bound To Lose***

Starring THE HOLY MODAL ROUNDERS, SAM SHEPARD and DENNIS HOPPER

### **long synopsis:**

The legendary bad boys of folk, the Holy Modal Rounders, are currently in their fifth decade of creating surreal American music. When fiddler Peter Stampfel collided with guitarist Steve Weber during the early 1960's folk explosion in New York City's Greenwich Village, the two musicians formed a powerful bond based on their shared fascination with American roots music and altered states of reality. Dubbing themselves the Holy Modal Rounders, Stampfel and Weber soon became standards on the Village folk circuit with their bizarre original compositions and absurdly irreverent versions of traditional folk songs. Weber and Stampfel performed and recorded with the infamous Lower East Side rock band the Fugs for two years before expanding the Holy Modal Rounders from an acoustic folk duo into a psychedelic country rock band. Over the course of the sixties and seventies the Rounders recorded several landmark albums, skirting the fringes of fame by playing alongside everybody from Ike and Tina Turner to Pink Floyd and the Velvet Underground. They also achieved popular recognition for their memorable contribution to the soundtrack of the 60's iconoclastic film *Easy Rider*.

In the early eighties, Peter Stampfel settled down to raise a family and pursue other musical projects in New York City while Steve Weber and the rest of the band relocated to Oregon, quickly becoming local favorites in the rowdy Northwest music scene. After almost twenty years of live shows and hard living, Weber returned to his mother's Pennsylvania farmhouse in 1998 to recuperate. After reconnecting with his estranged musical partner, Weber discovered Peter had become a sober, professional father-of-two, eager to pick up where the two had left off. Now, after forty years of countless line-up



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changes, drug addictions, break ups, and breakdowns, the Holy Modal Rounders are once again recording critically acclaimed albums and performing unforgettable live shows.

The film, ***Bound To Lose***, spends over three years with the band and explores the complexity of Stampfel and Weber's fraternal love/hate relationship as it unfolds onstage, backstage, and in their private lives. After the success of their 1999 comeback album, "Too Much Fun", old bandmates join Stampfel and Weber for a dizzying and ambitious West coast tour. Often resembling an old married couple, Stampfel and Weber compulsively bicker as they struggle to navigate the daily confusion of life on the road. Well received by crowds largely baffled by the fact that these fast-living folk legends are still alive, Stampfel and Weber's live shows are a rollercoaster of onstage arguments and eccentric performances. In the course of a minute, it is not uncommon to witness a bitter fight over forgotten lyrics or key changes melt away into affectionate hugging and giggling. Even if songs like "Random Violence", "Boobs A Lot", and "Fucking Sailors in Chinatown" fail to entertain the crowd, Weber and Stampfel's onstage chemistry is always captivating.

Back home on the east coast Stampfel and Weber try to maintain their newfound momentum by rehearsing and playing gigs all over the east coast. Old tensions resurface, however, and imperil the fate of their upcoming 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary show in Portland, Oregon, which turns out to be just as unpredictable as everything else in the band's shaky history.

While getting to know these two alleged musical legends, ***Bound to Lose*** also chronicles the band's history and explores the influence of their work through interviews with Village Voice rock critic Robert Christgau; former band member

Sam Shepard; Fugs founders/poets Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg; actor/director Dennis Hopper; Photographer John Cohen; fellow musicians and fans Peter Tork, John Sebastian, and Dave Van Ronk; as well as Ira Kaplan from Yo La Tengo and music



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journalist Byron Coley. Other drop in appearances throughout the film include Loudon Wainwright III, Wavy Gravy, and Barry Melton of Country Joe and the Fish fame.

The Holy Modal Rounders are true originals in American underground music. ***Bound To Lose*** documents their sometimes ugly, but intensely amusing story and examines the marriage between creativity and addiction, the durability of friendship, the survival of America's counterculture from the 1960's, and ultimately the compulsive dedication of the artist.