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Black Leather Birds – The Color Of Memory

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Black Leather Birds – *The Color Of Memory* – EP Review

Bring. It. ON!

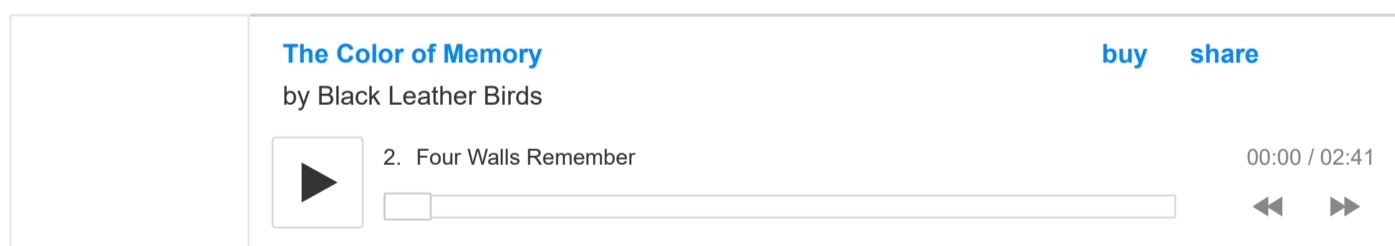
Anyone out there that knows anything about me and my personal listening habits, varied as they may appear, already knows full-well that I'd listen to absolutely anything from the mind of A.G. Syjuco. Over the years I've had the privilege of checking out his music here on our pages in his band [Jack Of None](#) – he's proven to be an absolute superhero of the studio-boards, both in front of'em, and behind'em too. The man's got a genuine gift for harnessing his insane levels of creativity into textural experiences unlike any other out there I can think of...and now you're telling me I can get MORE of that in my face-holes via the music of Black Leather Birds? Sign me UP sir, yes please! A.G. is always a massive inspiration to me.

All that good stuff being said, I don't want a single one of you out there to get this review twisted in the slightest – the very last thing you'll ever find me doing is discouraging [Jack Of None](#) to continue, because the music that band makes is flat-out incredible...has been ever since I started listening & they're like, three or four records deep now into their career together. I highly suspect that what we've got here is another creative outlet for A.G., which I also suspect he NEEDS, or he might just straight-up implode. I get the feeling he has the desire, want, and skill to make enough music to fuel the output of several bands...so having another place for him to do that, in my opinion, likely isn't going to take him away from [Jack Of None](#) in the slightest – it's gonna keep the motivation to make MORE music, even stronger. So don't PANIC you [Jack Of None](#) fans...I'm positive it'll only be a matter of time before that family-based band starts up again...and in the meantime, you can feast your fucking ears on Black Leather Birds y'all! There is like...sixteen & a half-minutes or so that you just can't miss out on this year if you wanna call it complete by the end of 2021 – *The Color Of Memory* is an essential dose of the creative-side of sound that your speakers are craving, I guarantee it. But c'mon now...it's A.G.! What else could we expect? This dude is absolutely superhuman when it comes right down to his capability & cleverness.

And as you'd assume, he will not disappoint ya here in this solo side-project, whatsoever. It's important to note that, A.G. has designed this record and its six-cuts to be played without breaks – but believe me when I say, you'll have zero problem sticking around for everything *The Color Of Memory* will have to offer your ears in that regard. It's also a record dedicated to his father, the legendary Cesare A.X. Syjuco – a man who is renowned throughout the Philippines for his extraordinary contributions to the world of art we celebrate today on an international level. I'm all about it – not only do I love the familial tie-in here, but YES – revere this incredible man! Not only does he have his own groundbreaking talents in his own artistic endeavors, but let's be real here...he's also planted the seeds that sprouted into A.G., Maxine, and Julian Syjuco – all three incredibly talented siblings that make up the core of Jack Of None. I don't know much about this planet of ours...but if these three kids don't make for one proud papa, I don't know what else possibly could – the Syjuocos embrace their creativity & talents every single day.

I will concede that, what always makes any side-project of any kind interesting to me, is how different will it be? Presumably, if what A.G. was workin' on would fit with *Jack Of None*, he'd take it over to Maxine & Julian and they'd be ready to rock with that...so I was instantly curious as to what the man would be up to here, and how much he'd deviate from what we hear in his full band as a solo artist in Black Leather Birds. When it began with "Our Angry Science," I did find myself thinking...'well how in the heck could that NOT be a *Jack Of None* song?' – because it could be, couldn't it? Add a little Maxine & Julian here & there...and you're ready to roll, new album in the works, here we go – right? Look. It doesn't even really have to BE that way...this is all just theory & conjecture...artists make music, and they do it for a plethora of reasons – and what we inherently love, is quite often what comes out of us – so by that measure, it was only natural that "Our Angry Science" would have some comparable sounds in the mix along the way for sure. It's got a savage KMFDM like grind to its behemoth riffs that keeps this whole cut crunchy and determined to catch your attention – and through the clever structuring and stellar production, how could it not? "Our Angry Science" opens like the gateway between the worlds of sound from A.G. – it's got just enough similarities to *Jack Of None* to get those existing fans right on board, and then applies a uniqueness through a more enhanced digitalized presence to generate that bit of separation we need to hear in order to understand why one song would go here, and the others over there. Plus you get these sweetened moments in the guitar breakdowns where the notes will sparkle & shine in playful contrast to the beastly way the rest of this song rages at ya with aggressive sound that would likely be considered a lot more rare to be found in the music of *Jack Of None* as well. It's always hard to say with art-music as a definitive thing...the creativity of A.G. could take his music anywhere, and at any time. Here as Black Leather Birds, there's likely just a bit more implied freedom to roam and be experimental without having to be cautious of whether or not there is space for anyone else to add something more to it...A.G. gets to express himself, however he wants to, without answering to anyone.

As this record progresses, you'll feel that break from what you'd associate with the *Jack Of None* sound creep in more as it plays on – but believe me when I say, I certainly ain't complaining in any regard. I dig the meatiness of "Our Angry Science" & its noticeably audible angst – A.G.'s ragin' right off the bat to start; but by that same token, it's also exciting to hear what he'll do to diversify his palette throughout the short set-list of songs to follow. Take for example, "Four Walls Remember," which is gonna be one of the cuts that'll haunt your bones for years to follow after you listen. You'll take steps right inside the room...it's gritty...you can almost feel the wallpaper peeling from the walls and feel the flickering fluorescent lights doing their best to establish some sort of stability...but there is clearly none to be found. Off not too far away from you, a radio is playing with a half & half mixture of savage static and the most pleasant of melodies...making this experience all the more malevolent and sinister somehow. *Spoiler Alert* – if you know how well A.G. tends to thrive in the dark, buckle the fuck up because this whole track is about to get super GRIM, and it's likely going exactly where you think it's going – but I'll tell ya this much...it certainly won't dull the shock when you reach its conclusion. You'll hear the scrawling of a pencil scratching frantic words onto a pad...you'll hear what sounds like the final drag of a cigarette...and you'll hear the shot you knew was coming at some point, eventually go off. Like a horror movie where you keep yelling, "don't go in there" – you know what these four walls are destined to remember and it sure as shit ain't pretty. Unless you're one of them Jackson Pollock fans, then hey, right on.



Does A.G. then go right onto the most accessible moment I've heard in any of the music I've heard so far with the friendliest & most inviting melody I've experienced on any of his records? Why yes...yes he does...because...of course? Expect the unexpected with this guy – I've been tellin' ya that all along. "Perchance To Dream" sends the record in a more peaceful & serene direction, if only for a minute or so before things start to get intense again, but the moment of reprieve we get couldn't possibly be missed. Plus, I mean, it just sounds freakin' great! I've long had myself a theory that A.G. would be able to more than thrive in just about any genre, perhaps outside of Country...but I suspect if he really wanted to and really put his mind to it, he'd have literally no problem with that either. Anyhow...the point is, you get more of a hybrid combination between the light & the dark when it comes to "Perchance To Dream," and it works highly in favor of Black Leather Birds. You have to acknowledge its sunnier side-up disposition in comparison to the bold artistic darkness we just plunged into with "Four Walls Remember" and how that plays a role in flowing right into this set of peaceful vibes A.G.'s got this third cut starting up with...that in itself is kinda twisted of course...but hey man, twisted is as twisted does yo. The dude plays with exceptional confidence and precision...you can hear it in the intricacies of his guitar playing & solo work, and especially in moments like around the two-minute mark where things get more bare & dialed-back into a hypnotic rhythm where the sound is more spread out. If there were faults to be found, we'd all hear'em at some point throughout this structure, but the reality is, A.G. is as pro as pro can be...and when it comes time to record, there's zero question about whether or not you'll get his very best. Time and time again, and in a variety of settings, he proves he's built of something different.

The man, the myth, the legend himself – [Cesare A.X. Syjuco](#) actually shows up on this record as well! Which...hmmm...might just be the worst thing that's gonna happen for a couple of you listening out there, because this dude gets right into "Everyone's Died" and holds nothing back on supplying your nightmares for the next year. I ain't gonna lie to ya folks...this is a LIGHTS ON record...as in, if you were somehow sitting in the dark when you began this experience, if you somehow made it past "Four Walls Remember" and all the way to "Everyone's Died" and you hear the masterful way that Cesare's vocal samples start to demon-up the place...this is right about where you'll be running around your house to turn your lights on for comfort. And God help ya if they start to flicker like you heard in the background of "Four Walls Remember," because that'd be enough to send me running screaming down the halls, I can guarantee it. Ever the master of sensory sound, A.G. has put a deadly track together to form the murky depths of "Everyone's Died" – it SOUNDS like he's stirring Satan's big ol' pot of souls in a huge human gumbo! With the ice-like scrape that happens at the very beginning, it really is like hell has frozen over...and the mysterious & dangerous atmosphere you'll find to follow, will do little to nothing to help you warm up. It might appear fairly non-threatening with the melodic guitar-line that runs through it...but make no mistake, this track sounds like a coiled cobra simply waiting to strike out; and rather than do so in one aggressive chomp, the venomous "Everyone's Died" is patient enough to chill with you...while you die along with everyone else. Absolutely deadly atmosphere & aura to this tune.

"Through The Pearly Whites." Which ones? Of the great white shark? Them some jagged teeth bro! It's like he's put together the anthem for that one nasty toothfairy that comes prepared with a pair of pliers to make sure the job gets fucking DONE. Highly interesting hybrid sound at work here once again from A.G. – for a moment, you'll feel like he's found the bridge between 90s break-beat Hip-Hop vibes and scathing Metal music as this song begins to morph along its distance. Black Leather Birds settles in squarely to a series of highly compelling parts as we listen...each carrying a cohesive melody at the core, but threading us through entirely different dimensions of sound, with the vast majority reaching hard into the digital realm. Never relying on any one part for too long, you get a smorgasbord of sensational sensory sonic mayhem and gripping intensity rolled into one here...and with the advantage of a bit more length to this tune being one of only two that cross the three-minute threshold on this record, it's clear that we also get to spend a bit more time with Syjuco's unbridled-but-precise creativity in the process. This does drift back closer to the edgy & enormous sound of his band [Jack Of None](#) (which again, to be clear...you'll never find me complaining about) – and A.G.'s gonna run that risk occasionally if he continues to go down the solo road every so often...like I said, that's natural. Still...knowing that it's both his brother & sister from that band that are gonna pick up the phone and be the ones to say – "HEY – how come we didn't get that cut?" is still gonna potentially make for the awkward family dinner or two. I'm kidding of course – this whole family is a group of dedicated creatives and amazingly supportive humans...they'll be celebrating this musical madness & A.G.'s latest triumph right along with him, 100%. You have to recognize how nurtured the creative genes of these fantastic Syjuco's really IS – and hence, I believe, is exactly why Cesare secured the dedication to this record – his encouragement, his guidance, and his example over the years has literally bred a powerhouse group of musicians and artists we love, and you simply couldn't even make a record like *The Color Of Memory* without that steering from day one. So congrats Poppa Syjuco – I can absolutely confirm you parent as well as you create art my friend!

What a weird world. Believe it or not, a forty-four second tune ain't even the shortest I've heard this week – how strange is that? Black Leather Birds finishes this experience in style with the quirkiness of "One More For The Road," which also brings back Cesare for the vocals in an admittedly friendlier version of himself than the last time around, if not still a little bit on the ol' haunting & creepy side of things. With its typewriter keys pounding away...it's like we're standing over the shoulder of Jack Torrance as he pounds out his infamous one-sentence manuscript, but like we're also hearing his thoughts at the same time, like we've got *The Shining* ourselves. Partly like finding Colonel Mustard did it with the candlestick in the conservatory, and part like listening to the ghost of a screenwriter's past – together they lighten the mood just enough, while still adding the shroud of haunting mischief to the air around you at all times. "One More For The Road?" I'd have taken two, no problemo. And I'll certainly take another record from Black Leather Birds at any point in time – this project was well worth the time it took for A.G. to create, and this whole record was a memorable experience & a half at the very least. Awesome to hear the guy find another remarkable outlet for his creativity like this...excellent that it's still a distant cousin to the sound & style he's trademarked over the years as well...and all-around, *The Color Of Memory* more than satisfies with its short set-list of mischievous musical mayhem & madness. I'm excited for the experimental, artistic crowd out there – you're gonna love A.G.'s new side-project for sure – and having another band out there willing to roam fearlessly beyond the fringe like this one is, will certainly always be welcome with open arms here. Awwwww! What a sweet way to wrap up such a horrifying sensory experience right? Yeah...well...like I told ya from the start...these Syjuco's are a lovable bunch – they make incredible music together, and apparently alone now as well – A.G.'s done the family name proud with this record as Black Leather Birds – I'm 100% stoked to hear this project continue on.

Listen to Black Leather Birds at Spotify here: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/2MUH5MPJ8IZGjHSXU911IY>

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Jack Of None - "Tenderly, She Said"



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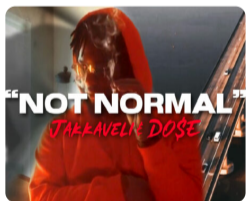
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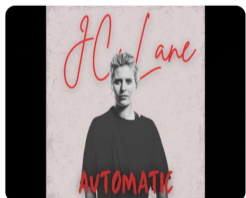
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