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Jack of None

The Tattle Tale Heart

Playfully naughty lyrics might have been the first thing I noticed about Jack of None's *The Tattle Tale Heart* EP, but there's more to this record created by three Filipino-born siblings, A.G., Maxine, and Julian Syjuco. Things change from sultry to sinister on a dime, and the album's combination of murky, atmospheric industrial rock with dark and poetic spoken word vocals make it unique and compelling, just the right sort of slightly uncomfortable listening.

The EP kicks off with "Strangest Fellows," a track that blends subversive lyrics with rhythmic and moody instrumentation and a healthy amount of weird sounds and sampling. At times seductive, with lyrics asking "Can you taste me / Am I sweet," things start to get downright disconcerting when vocalist Maxine Syjuco delivers nursery rhyme lyrics made even more unnerving by the use of pitch-bent vocals. The flow of the lyrics adds to the level of unease: an inquisitive passage is followed up by the declaration "I've got the gun."

"X-Y-Sex" exists as somewhat of a riddle, with Maxine's wordplay being at the forefront of a track that examines the nature of relationships and sex. Considering that most rock and pop focuses on boy-girl relationships, it's somewhat refreshing that the lyrics here include the notion of same-sex coupling. The quietly tense instrumentation eventually works itself into a frenzied section of snarling guitar and echoing vocals that only reinforces the track's mysterious nature, while the subsequent "Dear Georges" delivers the album's most obviously **Nine Inch Nails**-like offering, with its lurching bass, ominous piano, and rich combination of ambient tones nailing down the sound, along with creepy vocals that range from whispers to screams.

Closer "Polyamorous Serial Monogamist" is perhaps the album's defining track, moving from frisky to fearsome

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from one lyric to the next: the line “Kiss me here and kiss me there // Kiss me everywhere” segues into “I’ll skin your lips and skin you bare // I’ll skin you everywhere.” Tension is slowly cranked up at various times throughout the track, with bubbling electronic accents establishing mood. I also liked the off-kilter sense of harmony present here as well as at various other points throughout the album.

Ultimately, *The Tattle Tale Heart EP* is more than capable from a sonic standpoint as well as being intellectually and artistically satisfying. Knowing virtually nothing about this band going in, I found this album both surprising and enjoyable. By its nature, art rock isn’t everyone’s cup of tea, but I’d certainly recommend Jack of None and look forward to perusing some of their other output.

7.8 / 10 — **Andy**

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