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Tropical goth metal romance

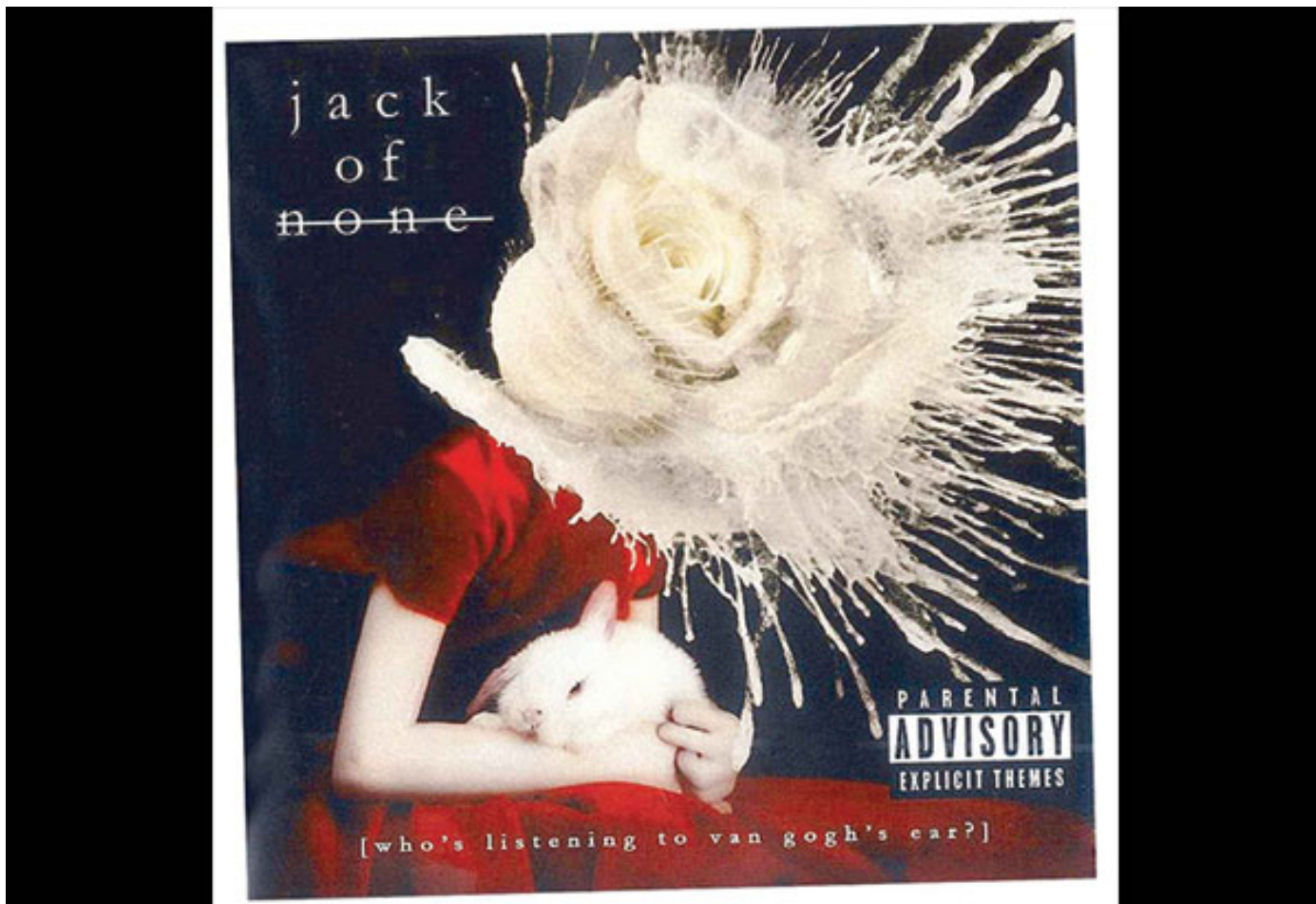
ZOETROPE By Juaniyo Arcellana (The Philippine Star) | Updated July 18, 2016 - 12:00am



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Just when we thought we were done writing reviews along comes this CD, Jack of None's "(Who's listening to Van Gogh's Ear?)" from the Syjuco siblings: AG, Maxine and Julian. Am relistening to it now after a number of times on the player, and by the time the writing is finished the album, too, might be done.

Hotel Carcass is one of the more memorable opening numbers in a while, with the bass and keyboard interplay, and a trumpet thrown in for good measure. The lyrics are a showcase of Maxine's poetry, or what we expect of her spoken word lines set to music, that ends not with a bang or whimper but with a meow.

Pater, Ignosce Mihi is a Latin metal-driven tune, on the back of the seven deadly sins. While we may not exactly know what it means, there is an un-doubtable atmosphere of the high mass with wonderful guitars.

Mrs. Stitcher is more of the same heavy-riff driven stuff, perhaps Addams Family autobiographical, but that's a cop-out way of reading it. The vocals expertly weave in and out of the wash of sound, a snake slithering in luminous light.

On the Streets, what a splendid goth-metal experiment, sort of Rammstein meets Laurie Anderson with bits of Malcolm MacLaren with that refrain of a lone fury in the background. Again, can't get enough of the guitars in this outing, you could almost see the skies above Remedios Circle at the magic hour turn from Adriatic blue to yellow purple to violet red. On the cusp of monsoon, too.

There's a YouTube video of *Confessions of a Chop-Chop Lady*, where viewers are forewarned of the graphic content. "Bang bang chew chew nibble nibble swallow

swallow’ is a chorus that is as frightening as it is beautiful, and explores the dark side as in cannibalism, necrophilia, all those taboo subjects given a touch of humor.



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As for *(But) Noise*, it seemed to have slipped by us the first few times. Forms of desire beyond yearnings, beyond neon, bright castles zigzagging with those keyboards skimming the ambient walls.

Fire Song is poem made flesh, dreams of smoke of Alice in the rabbit hole. You have to hear it to believe it. We don't use the word "genius" lightly, but this comes pretty close to it in terms of coherence in impressionistic verse, post-Baudelaire.

What a rock and roll in store for you in *There Was A Crooked Man*, we keep seeing the patriarch's face with his crooked teeth in the distance, while the wah-wah strikes and armies of guitars move forward.

The Witherling also seemed to have slithered by us at first, seemed to have withered away — but wait, there's more velocity in the drum beats than you bargained for, again saved by an unbearable lightness of techno, percussive machine, effects, among other weird and funny noises.

Unravel Me digs that constantly fading trumpet and guitar grid, with piano and vocals that evoke some kind of vertigo or is it sexual awakening, ravenous as it is one-of-a-kind sublime.

Nocturnes in Dorian is pure guitar care of AG and Julian, we can ask for nothing more, not even their sister's vocals which temporarily go *desaparecido* in the album's only instrumental cut. We can very much appreciate the brothers' sense of dynamics and urgency that however remains laidback, nothing hurried here despite the coiled musical score sheets waiting to pounce.

At the finish is *Poem for the Invisible* as bonus track, where the circle remains unbroken and complete and the sibs fulfill their prophesy not so much as siblings as musicians, poets, artists in this most significant trans-Pacific Pinoy album since "Blacksonny" at turn of the millennium.

This began many years ago in a band called Faust!, and today the kids are still at it, fulfilling their true calling. There's a poem I wrote somewhere on the cell phone, after one of those early mornings listening to "(Van Gogh's Ear)":

Jack of none: all the loiterers, malingers of this world could not care less about electronica, music of the masses with street poetry thrown in for good measure, it's as if they are indifferent to hearing the earth's creation and no keyboard flourish matters maybe what I'm trying to say despite the chronic rambling is that music is its own reason for playing drugs don't matter neither alcohol nor rule of thumb suckers the play's the thing and so let it roll for the jack of none nibbling on van gogh's wrinkled ear.

The bass guitar lives, lordy lordy, pudding and pie.

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