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JACK OF NONE – WHO SHOT BUKOWSKI?

BY JER@SBS ([HTTP://SLEEPINGBAGSTUDIOS.CA/AUTHOR/JERSBS/](http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/author/jersbs/)) / ⌚ JULY 7, 2017 / 👁 70 / 💬 0

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Jack Of None – *Who Shot Bukowski?* – Album Review

There aren't too many bands that I've been looking forward to coming back as much as this one – Jack Of None is by far one of my favorite projects out there right now for its combination of cutting edge sound, dark & brilliant poetry and all-out efforts to form an unbreakable bond between art & music. I felt like they completely broke new ground with their debut record, *Who's Listening To Van Gogh's Ear?* (<http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/jack-of-none-whos-listening-to-van-goghs-ear/>), and they went on to score a spot on our yearly top-ten list as a result, placing high-up on the list when all was said & done at the third spot, voted by YOU, our readers. To be truthful, I was both pleased and somewhat surprised at the results...I honestly don't know if I expected as many people to 'get' this band as there were coming out to support them in our yearly reader-vote for Best New Sound; I suspected long ago that our regulars who hang out at this page continue to look for something truly creative, new and innovative – Jack Of None (<http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/best-new-sound-2016-nomination-jack-of-none/>) placing 3rd on our list confirmed that for me. Hearing that they had a full-album being released again in 2017 was even MORE inspiring... I think music like this NEEDS to be made...and with two albums in two years-time – it's clear the members of Jack Of None feel that too. The creativity, skills and passion run deep in this band...they've got the kind of ideas that keep musicians awake at night...and sounds that are tremendously vivid & menacing like they thrive in the shadows.

They do have some factors that are likely stacked against them even further, as if an artistic music project needs any further difficulty finding a way to listener's ears. Those that are familiar with the music of Jack Of None (<http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/sbs-podcast-ep-020/>) know somewhat what they can expect to hear this time around...they'll have to work harder on this second record to make that same shocking impact. They'll also have to deal with the high expectations that people likely have for this album, given that their debut was so freakin' brilliant...the challenge to continue to do something REAL without duplicating themselves on their new album *Who Shot Bukowski?* There's also the notably less-present brother Julian Syjuco on this album as well – another factor that could potentially impact the music, sound and even mindset of Jack Of None when you consider that the band is made up of two brothers and one sister. Make no mistake...EVERY challenge, obstacle and obstruction exists in the way of a band like this already...to have even more of the odds stacked against them this time around could make it even tougher to win people over.

But if there's one band I'm confident in right now that will find their way and rise to the occasion – it's this one.



JACK OF NONE
WHO SHOT BUKOWSKI?
COMING SOON IN 2017



(http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Jack_Of_None_Pic_01.jpg)

Who Shot Bukowski? – I honestly wouldn't know the answer to that...I simply haven't read enough of his work or know enough about him to even understand the riddle here when he apparently died of leukemia. But I make zero assumptions about being able to follow this band down every rabbit hole they want to take us down...or maybe I just know better in the wisdom of my old age. That being said – the subject itself seems like a well-suited one for Jack Of None...Bukowski often wrote gritty, darkly, direct and to the point – and his personal life was rife with details of sexual encounters. Jack Of None is not afraid to take us into similarly bold terrain...and within that realm, they understand the intensity & artistic/sexual energy that can also occur; they don't shy away from any topic and I doubt they ever will.

Just so we're clear though...that's about all I've got on what I know about Bukowski...from this point on, it's just about what Jack Of None has brought to the speakers on this follow-up to their debut. If there are references to his work, they'd likely be lost on me...but most things are – I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed; I just know what sounds good.

So...whether or not you're familiar or unfamiliar with the music of Jack Of None – ABSORB this one! I know a lot of my peers out there like to listen to something and fire off their mouths on their pages less than 24 hours later...my brain doesn't work like that (Read: Not Work Good) and no one's music deserves that anyhow. Even if I tried my best...this is the kind of album that needs some serious spins to catch all the radness and get right into it. A.G. Syjuco sounds determined to make it tougher for you this time around right off the bat with "Strangest Bedfellows" and adding in one tremendous wicked, but damn near bizarre lead-riff into the mix of this first tune. And this would be my point...because at first, that might sound seriously strange...but chances are by the next time you hear it, you'll be just as addicted to the sound of it as I was. It's every bit as much of a hook in this opening tune as the surrounding additional programming from A.G. and strongest parts of the vocals from Maxine Syjuco. It's an intriguing song to lead us into the album...every second sound shrouded in mystery and potential danger...Maxine's use of a whispered-twist on a nursery rhyme in "Strangest Bedfellows" certainly doesn't make the atmosphere of this first track sound any less creepy, that I can tell ya!

Speak-n-Spell in the house! A.G. gets all kinds of creative on "Sticks And Stones" when it comes to the electro-elements and samples involved...and I'm not entirely sure if it's him laying down the UNREAL solo on this second cut or brother Julian, who makes his entrance into the album on this tune. LOVE the way that Maxine performs this one...in general I'm a big, big fan of the way she weaves her poetry into Jack Of None's music – she always finds a unique approach, cool effect or badass line to repeat. She sounds absolutely crisp, stylistic and sexy on "Sticks And Stones" – the kind of voice that sounds like it could just as easily kiss you as it could kill you. She's right into this one though – rightly so; the guitars are completely off-the-charts awesome and really, so is the programming here – I love how A.G.'s got this track set-up, the breakdowns, the added electro-elements that creep in during the

middle, the pacing of it all...it felt as if the album sprang to life on "Sticks And Stones" in a more accessible way than the more offbeat ideas of "Strangest Bedfellows." The main chorus of this song, threaded with guitar solos throughout it, is absolutely killer...love the energy in the vocals and the way they flowed and the way they've set the music up to be just as spectacular surrounding those moments in the song.

Working with A.G.'s hypnotic guitar tones & crunchy chorus on "X-Y-SEX" – Maxine puts in a seriously lively turn on the vocals and some incredible wordplay on this one that a poet can really appreciate. She makes these streams of consciousness come alive with brilliantly entwined musings on gender, sex and the questions that come along with both. I'll admit that part of me wanted to resist this one...I felt like a repetition of letters X-Y-Z in the song was all-too-similar to how I feel about counting in songs, which I'm entirely done with. In the end, I couldn't ignore how smartly written the words were and how cleverly they played upon their meanings...so she won me over. Maxine's also undeniably found the groove in "X-Y-SEX" to put in a really vibrant performance, sounding up close & personal in the verse and nearly robotic in the chorus as A.G. grinds the guitars & glitches the electro-beat. Deadly low-end in this tune.

I will also admit that if this was my first time listening to Jack Of None (<http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/sbs-podcast-ep-006/>), while I'd still have been impressed with the level of execution and extraordinary ideas – it would have been tougher to get into over the course of these first three songs in comparison to that initial impact established on their last record. Not that anything we've heard is bad whatsoever – just tougher to absorb on that first listen or two. That being said – *Who Shot Bukowski?* is about to raise its game up track-after-track from this point on, so buckle up, buy the ticket & take the ride. And YES that last part is paraphrasing Hunter S. Thompson...I already mentioned I don't know enough about Bukowski to even try to quote him. The point is – Jack Of None really starts to shift the gears on this album and flex their creativity even further here as "Dear Georges (Vous Petit Monstre)" begins.

What a song! THIS is why I like the combination of music and poetry as much as I do. A.G. takes us into the deepest depths of the dark on "Dear Georges (Vous Petit Monstre)" – and LISTEN to the inspired lyrics that Maxine's come up with as a result. She really takes us into a full-on story here...the words on this cut are some of my absolute favorites on this record. Creative as ever, she puts in a wicked performance that ranges from haunting whispers to a deadly & direct narrative – even some French too! A.G. is not to be outdone here though – so it's a good thing they're working together; dude brings it with some seriously ruthless guitars and even uses a full-on scream-sample as part of the beat later on in the chorus of the song – how rad is that? The atmosphere of "Dear Georges (Vous Petit Monstre)" sounds like the exact combination of creativity, crunch, mayhem and mystery that so often leads this band to their most extraordinary & unique tunes – I loved it.

If it's a slightly more accessible sound they're looking for to at least open the door for people to come in to listen to the rest – the single they're looking to release is "The Brainwashers." A.G. absolutely SLAYS the music on this cut, creating an electrified-rock cut that hits the mark 100% dead-on...and between him and the way that Maxine both brings it to the mic and is edited within this song...I dunno...they might just have what I'd consider to be one of their strongest tunes here, if not their strongest ever. Between the music and the editing, the vocal-flow and the lyrics – I honestly struggle to figure out what I like MORE between them all, because everything seriously stands out

for all the right reasons here. Orgasms, panting-breaths, wild cuts on the vocals that add SO MUCH to this beat & to the music – Jack Of None throws the kitchen sink into this cut sounding bold, sounding confident and sounding like they're making the music they really love to make on "The Brainwashers." Maxine works the syllables and cadence of the flow with exceptional timing and a devilish tone in a socially-aware song of rebellion.

But what's THIS you say? Jack Of None is about to get JAZZY with it? I mean...they kind of do on "Polyamorous Serial Monogamist" don't they? And...AND...doesn't it like...work unbelievably well? I'm assuming it can't just be because most people come with a set of ears of their own...and as long as they work and are located on your face, I'd assume we'd all agree this cut rocks? I'll admit to being much more of a fan of the verse on this cut than I was of the chorus...I think a lot of that has to do with it all really sounding a lot different than I've ever heard Jack Of None before. I mean...come ON people – this WORKS! That verse is entirely mesmerizing...the jazzy nature of the vocals and music together have the band firing off in an entirely new direction, which serves this record well by adding yet another dimension to its sound – one that undeniably seems to suit them. Which is odd in itself really – when I think of Jack Of None I think 'darker' in terms of the sound, atmosphere and themes; the verse on "Polyamorous Serial Monogamist" defies their own logic, yet produces a spectacular result. And as far as the darker stuff is concerned...don't worry, they've got something for you too – the chorus is loaded with startling imagery that sounds just as deadly as it does sweet. Overall, it's a really well balanced idea that shows just a tiny glimpse of the fact that this band could just as easily do light as it does dark – and Julian is back in the mix to lend an assist on the guitars for the second of three times on the album.

"Again." LOL. A.G. – what are you on brother and where do I get some? A six-second inclusion on Who Shot Bukowski serves as a quick rewind to a new beginning as Jack Of None comes out storming in the first of the final-three songs with looming authority on "The Princess And The Pistol (Can You Feel That?)." Another solid candidate I'd think for the lead-single off this record, "The Princess And The Pistol (Can You Feel That?)" grips firmly, rips and shreds from verse to chorus and back again. Really ingenious programming from A.G. – this dude understands how to create intensity in all-forms from the upfront electro, to the more subtle & what sounds like backwards vocals laced into the mix of the ending. I'm not going to profess I've got any kind of knowledge as to HOW he does what he does – but MAN does he get it RIGHT. Between the production and the editing, this guy sparkles and shines on the music, mix and sound of these tunes – the balance has been immaculately focused and the music has been loaded with details of all kinds to make songs like "The Princess And The Pistol (Can You Feel That?)" massively entertaining & sounding HUGE. The hooks are extremely large on this track – Maxine makes sure to use each moment to her advantage...and whether in the flow of the verse & chorus or in the avant-garde vocalizations surrounding her main leads, she sounds increasingly confident and decidedly powerful.



(http://sleepingbagstudios.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Jack_Of_None_Pic_02.jpg)

Maxine has a real gift when it comes to expression however...whether it's through the writing of her words or the way she delivers them, she's an insightful innovator of the microphone and able to get the message across & energy correct in her every movement. With a similar sound to "Unravel Me" (which I still LOVE) from the past-record, "Little Devil Girl" has those same exquisitely-erie qualities and is a perfect example of how Maxine's talent for performance art can raise up the level of the words in any situation - she COUNTS in this song...and yet, I didn't even hate it! "Little Devil Girl" is like her own twisted take on a nursery rhyme or children's fable...I suppose it's because of that fact that I didn't mind the counting...it seemed to fit here better than it does in just about any other song. And like...I say 'children's fable' as in like, the stories you'd read to your kids if you wanted them to stay awake with nightmares over the next month or scare them into doing their chores or leaving home altogether... that kind of fable. The kind of atmosphere on "Little Devil Girl" once again proves that Maxine understands the

energy, mood and tone to put into her vocals to match the kind of music that A.G. comes up with – they're family yes, but I know TONS of families that don't even get along, whereas these Syjuco's all work incredibly well together whether there are two or three of them on any given track.

Though I've already backed choices like "The Brainwasher" and "The Princess And The Pistol (Can You Feel That?)" as solid picks for singles on this record...the majority of me wants to support the final track of *Who Shot Bukowski?* called "Tenderly, She Said" as the number-one choice. It is my absolute hope that people will latch onto this track... because I felt like this song leaves us potentially on notes & tones of a style that Jack Of None is slowly morphing themselves towards. The electro samples & beat of "Tenderly, She Said" are expertly produced & placed by A.G. – and the song itself, is notably more 'tender' than the other certainly by comparison. The beauty in the acoustic guitar-line, the vicious bite of the low-end just CRUSHES and KILLS it, the electric lead-solo...it all adds up to something that sounds seriously incredible to me once that beat & the vocals come in. Reminds me a lot of the feeling I get when I listen to "Antistar" by Massive Attack. Really digging the twinkling piano keys and the added elements in this electro-laden atmosphere – A.G. – does that stand for A-Game? This is the way to end a record! Maxine has never sounded more perfect than she does on this performance – it is stunning, captivating and perfectly suited to the music, which in turn is equally well-suited to the gorgeously poetic words she puts in here. Julian is back once more to add some additional flavor through the guitars...this track wouldn't be the same without him! "Tenderly, She Said" is the ultimate sonic experience...from the vocals to the music, ideas to the execution, I was absolutely blown away by just how well an environment so different than their normal bizarre-vibe worked for them. Like...Jack Of None – are those FLUTE sounds in the mix here too? A.G. has once again thrown EVERYTHING into the mix of this one, yet he hasn't overdone a single solitary element – and as a result, "Tenderly, She Said" really leaves us with the memorable impact we're always desperately seeking as listeners for that sense of completion when listening to a full album.

Mission accomplished as far as I'm concerned – this album didn't let me down in the slightest and I had massively high expectations for Jack Of None. *Who Shot Bukowski?* confirms that this band is limitless in their creativity & courage...that they're boldly leading the way in artistic music in today's world. I think they had the odds stacked even higher against them this time around than they had with the advantages of the initial shock and impact they made with their debut album...but I'd be lying to you if I said I was surprised about the fact that they not only rose to the challenge here, they exceeded expectations. This band has shown genius-levels of innovation & ideas, and their level of execution mixes flawless with perfection every single damn time. Another album, another triumph for this crew, as I'd have expected.

I remain a gigantic fan of Jack Of None...because they've given me EVERY reason to stay that way.

Stay tuned on the details of the release of *Who Shot Bukowski?* – due out any time THIS MONTH in July – get the details on where to find it at the official homepage of Jack Of None at: <http://www.jackofnone.net/> (<http://www.jackofnone.net/>)

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CDBaby: <https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/JackofNone> (<https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/JackofNone>)

Check out a rad trailer they put together as part of the videos for their last album below whilst we wait for an all-new one!

JACK OF NONE - "Confessions of a Chop Chop Lady" [Trailer]



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