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Monday, June 13, 2016

Jack of None - Who's Listening to Van Gogh's Ear? review



Year : 2016
Genre : Experimental Poet Rock
Label : Independent
Origin : United States
Official site : > - [here](#) - <

Jack of None's full length debut LP comes to you as a massively abstract - is that an oxymoron? - auditory journey that inhales clear creative intents-, and exhales the well-tamed assumption of poetic justice in the most literal contexts possible.

As the respective ethos of the spoken/written word is of key importance for the central vocalist, - as she is a poet, first and foremost - the music chooses to deliberately bend to the will of these spoken messages: it willfully accepts the role of ornamental sonic tapestry.

The music is well sculpted, nevertheless, albeit polite. Never seeking to taunt the words, yet the valiant quality of a smartly varied dynamic range is clearly observable: something that is a rarity in today's production standards, where volume and loudness are assumed to be kings. Read on to know more.

The most optimal trait of this release is the fact that no musical segment of it has been left unattended when tailored to incorporate the spoken words into the fabric. The songcraft itself is a polite/safe blend of synthetic-, family friendly distorted guitars riffing along a massively sedated thrash metal vibe, covertly-, apologetically frequenting the shores of well researched harmonic environments.

These intriguing arrangements of colliding sounds of true invention and imagination are particularly elegant, and they oftentimes represent the highlights of a given build, regardless of the fact how they equally accept the law of the spoken poetry, seeking to reflect the respective moods of the words with due diligence. Seldom are the times though - IF any - when the music demands a grinning will of its own to challenge the oh!, so constantly assumed weight of the robotically delivered words.

As hinted, the words are offered almost exclusively along one particular narrative behaviour, and this is clearly a consciously selected-, self-imposed form of expression. If you will: a limitation. Do not expect a series of nervous breakdowns and/or a good old fashioned family friendly demonic possession. Everything is well-behaved, nothing will bite, everything is safe. You are free to keep all your expectations, none will be hurt in the process. Everything you choose to feel is riskless.

This narrative strategy tends to bring results that quickly become somewhat monotonous as far as the emotional register of the poetic delivery is concerned - but the meaning obviously is more important, and there is no power in effect that would seek to obstruct the listener from going for this very meaning. Never forget, we are talking about poems, primarily - poems that happened to be courted by musical arrangements.

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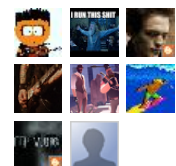


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The reality though is that SOME ears - maybe even Van Gogh's other one - will exhibit no care at all for the meaning of the words at a first listen, and will go for JUST the emotion, and you will find only one of those: introverted status reports, - it is not like that there is anything wrong with those - complimented by decently sculpted instrumental segments.

Musically, the album deserves credit for showcasing relevant harmonic ideas and interesting steps/glimpses towards sonic domains that seem to contain a whole lot of promise, and one remains curious to see where those ideas could evolve to, had they not be constrained to bend to the whimsical will of a type of poetry that never fails to toll each and every photons of a spotlight.

Check out the album [here](#).

JACK OF NONE is an experimental rock / art band split between Manila, Philippines and Chicago IL, USA. It is comprised of siblings A.G. Syjuco (principal composer on guitar, bass and synths), Maxine Syjuco (poet-songwriter and vocalist), and Julian Syjuco (guitar).

The band's debut album, "Who's Listening to Van Gogh's Ear?" was released globally in April of 2016. It is being described by critics as "haunting and thought-provoking", "a brave new day for OPM (Original Pilipino Music)", "progressive and bold" as well as "an odd, fascinating combination of poetry, art, and rock into a satisfying whole".

MAXINE SYJUCO is a poet and visual artist from Manila, Philippines. She is the youngest daughter of artists Cesare Syjuco and Jean Marie Syjuco.

Working mainly with photography, digital collage, painting and installation art, her work "possesses an intimate, philosophical, and often twisted voice in storytelling. Manipulating faces, unveiling poignant surrealities, and probing into abandoned rooms of the subconscious, Maxine authors dark, thought-provoking introspections of the human condition and its fragility -- conjuring a netherworld where ghostly images exist neither here nor there."

Her first book of poetry, "A Secret Life," was published in 2008 and received critical acclaim. Her poems have been translated into Polish and French, and have seen print in several international anthologies including the Asia Literary Review, The Poet's Guild Quarterly, Chopin with Cherries, and the 2011 Rhino International Poetry Anthology.

Maxine's exhibits and poetry-performances have taken place in venues as varied as the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, the Tokiwa Museum of Japan, the Hangaram Museum of Korea, the Art Takes Miami Exhibition in the U.S.A., and others.

AG SYJUCO is the eldest son of artists Cesare Syjuco and Jean Marie Syjuco.

At age 15, he was the lead guitarist, composer and arranger for FAUST!, an art-rock band of prodigious siblings that was discovered by MTV Asia in 1996, quickly signed to a major label, and disbanded 2 years later after releasing 2 controversial albums that included the historic "My Secret Identity" (MSI) in 1998 -- probably the first full-length album in the Philippines to be released for free on the Internet by a group of commercially signed recording artists. Abandoning his professional interest in music for the next eight years, he graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology from San Beda Alabang, and presently holds a management position in a multinational tech conglomerate.

His more recent musical endeavors include co-producing his Father's critically acclaimed album, "A Sudden Rush of Genius". On Jack of None's "Who's Listening to Van Gogh's Ear" he acts as principal composer, guitar player and producer.

A.G. currently resides in Chicago IL with his wife, Mica, and their daughter, Muli.

JULIAN SYJUCO is the youngest of five children of Cesare Syjuco and Jean Marie Syjuco. He is both an accomplished painter and electric guitarist of note.

He was recently singled out as one of the bright up-and-coming new generation abstractionists, and was featured in the National Artist Jose Joya Retrospective in 2012.

GyZ at [Bandcamp](#).

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Posted by GyZ at **9:29 AM**

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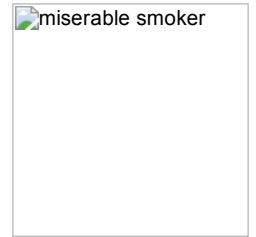
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