

fiorealbumreviews

Tyler James Perry

Artist: Red Light Driver

Album: ...and now we can be ourselves

Label: MFT Records

Get ready for an atmospheric ride. That's what Indianapolis-based band Red Light Driver's debut album takes you on. What at first glance appears to be a catchy rock and pop release, *...and now we can be ourselves* has been carefully wrought with a multitude of spacious layers, giving the entire disc a psychedelic spirit.

"The Long Face" is an upbeat number that seems to borrow from David Bowie and the Cure. The dreamy, echoic ring of guitars creates a world of its own making you feel like you're in outer space. Lead singer Derek Osgood's deep voice gives off vibes of both Joe Jackson and Bowie. In addition to the radiant stratum of guitar lie ethereal layers of background vocals swimming in and out of the speakers creating the ultimate space rock jam.

One of the best tracks on the record is the lively, feel-good triumph "Manic Saturday". This piece continues the theme of spatial incandescence with enough energy and creatively crafted distortion to fill your head as well as your ears. The band is successfully able to take a new wave style and mix it with

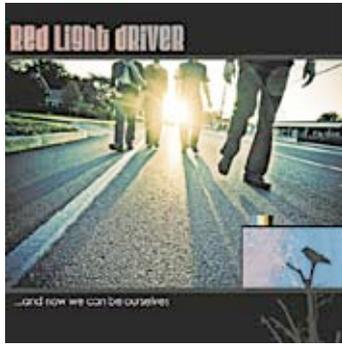


Image courtesy MFT Records

a modern rock earthiness to give them a unique sound.

Osgood's vocals carry "Buddha Johnson (So Awake)" through the indelible verses into a chorus redolent of the Police. Like most works on the album, the band manages to provide a mix of rock both old and new, and the end result is an original sound. Although there is a definite '80s pop/rock feel to the record, a nuance of music from both before and after that decade exists as well.

...and now we can be ourselves is a breath of fresh air for fans of many different eras of rock n' roll. While there are many bright spots on the album with their eclectic sound, it does tend to get a bit repetitive to the point where some songs seem like one big continuing piece. That's not to say there are any "bad" tracks per se; everything on this disc was orchestrated quite well, which should be aesthetically pleasing to many fans of space rock.

Artist: Julie Doiron

Album: I Can Wonder What You Did With Your Day

Label: Jagjaguwar

Canadian songstress Julie Doiron has all the trappings of the female indie musician du jour—thick blunt bangs, a babbling, breathless voice somewhere between Feist and Kimya Dawson and, on the cover of *I Can Wonder What You Did With Your Day*, a vaguely craftsy, home-spun image. Before first listen, she scores a suitably high hipness-rating, and college radio fans can breathe easy and proceed with the listening session.

The journey through Julie Doiron's newest album is a peaceful one, comforting to fans of female indie rockers of the '90s. The Juno (Canadian music award) recipient has been performing for over 15 years in both Canada and the US. From a local perspective, you might have heard Doiron's sweetly despondent "No More" on WIUX automation back in early 2008.

The opening track of *I Can Wonder*, "The Life Of Dreams", has a soft, minimalist approach with only Doiron singing and playing guitar. The just-over 90-second folk ballad is driven by steady acoustic strum-



Image courtesy Jagjaguwar Records

ming quite similar to Elliot Smith's guitar work in "Needle In The Hay". The short piece acts as a great intro to the eclectic folk/rock collection.

Doiron plays with a full band on "Spill Yer Lungs". The song begins with pounding bass and electric guitar that sound like they were lost works from a Neil Young and Crazy Horse record. Doiron's dulcet voice and acoustics provide the perfect offset for the thunderous layers in the background. This piece is a success because it's not always clear which direction it will steer, as it perfectly blends a subtle garage band sound with that of the '60s folk. Aside from the great music guiding "Spill", the melody Doiron sings in the chorus is infectious enough to be stuck in your head for days.

"Heavy Snow" shows her once again taking peaceful music and mixing it up with a tinge of hard rock. The juxtaposition of the two extremes make this song seem like a calm before the storm, as you wonder what it might build up to. She chooses to use her vocals to paint a beautifully echoic melody instead of a frenetic interlude. The song is like a vaudeville show, where the milkmaid ambles through the woods, unaware of that ne'er-do-well wolf-villain slowly circling her. This song works well with Radiohead's "Polyethylene" 1 & 2 as a digestif, and like many of the songs on this record, her voice is what you will ultimately remember most.

Final Verdict: *I Can Wonder What You Did With Your Day* is at first glance easy to dismiss or like. Spend a little time on the tracks, and you'll find more beneath the indie sweetheart exterior. More specifically, a dreamy voice that can slyly evoke a nightmare, or make you break out into an air guitar solo, or at least break into your box of tapes from the mid-'90s.