

www.adequacy.net

Recently, there have been a few bands in the indie scene that have taken their level of composition up several notches. The Appleseed Cast and Ativin both come to mind as bands on the forefront of putting mood and tone as a priority over a particular structure. With this strategy, these bands have not only improved their sound, but have also helped take the indie scene in a new and exciting direction. Although the recently released material by these groups is exciting and cutting edge, there is another group that could give these mood masters a run for their money.

My Education is a 7-piece band out of Austin, TX that has just released a self-titled EP that should open some eyes in the indie scene and make some labels take a look. Their sound is firmly rooted in the indie-rock style, yet the subtext of their EP adds somewhat of a grand feel to the mix. The band seems to have gotten their sound down to a science. The EP features a beautiful mood, cascading guitar lines, and intriguing atmospheric to boot. There are no vocals on the record, but that does not lessen the effect of the sound on the listener. In fact, the band does such a great job of immersing the EP in its wondrous sound that vocals could possibly even act as a distraction.

"Concentration Waltz," the first track on the EP, opens quietly. It's reminiscent of some of the 80's albums of The Cure in terms of mood. The guitars sound alive and fresh as their light tones invoke feelings that most records can't touch. "Lesson 3" follows down the same trail that "Concentration Waltz" started the record on. It's an equally beautiful track chock full of delicate instrumentation and feeling. Things do get a bit more intense though as the volume cranks up about midway through the song right when every instrument seems to be hitting it's stride. Very nice!

"Nightrider Meets the Waterfall" is a head-nodding, rocking number that changes the pace a bit, but it isn't quite as appealing as the previous tracks. Although the song is tightly played, it doesn't seem to suit them as well as the more atmospheric material. Following that track, "Deep Cut" and "Crime Story" are more akin to the first tracks on the EP and come off like a warm blanket of sound to the listener. They feature an equal amount of delicate instrumentation. The synth sounds are more at the forefront on these numbers and add to the already engaging mood of the EP.

Although this record is self released, and therefore possibly hard to find, fans of atmospheric indie rock should take the time to track this release down. Their "Education" is one worth knowing about.

www.babysue.com

My Education - 5 Popes (Independently released CD, Guitar/instrumental)

Five lengthy compositions featuring swirling guitars and cerebral rhythms. Austin's My Education has a sound that reminds us of Tristeza. The overall mood of the song takes precedence here. There are no easily discernible melodies. The band's chord progression mania builds in intensity and shifts in levels during the execution of their songs. "Concentration Waltz" is an appropriately titled dittie that'll wash your brain out and leave you laying underneath the kitchen tank. "Lesson 3" is more subtle at times, while still allowing the band to rock out (rather than "rock in"). "Nightrider Meets the Waterfall" is a strange excursion and contains some noisy moments. "Deep Cut" is a beautifully moody piece and definitely our favorite. The album closes with "Crime Story," with its many shifts in tone and almost orchestral layering. Really cool guitar maneuvering here, but this CD probably isn't easy to find. Best bet is to e-mail the band at my_education@hotmail.com. Neat! (Rating: 4+++)

www.earpollution.com

Hailing from Austin, Texas, there is something quietly, beautifully, deceiving about My Educations' debut, 5 Popes. At first pass, the unsuspecting will write off this five-song self-released EP as Mogwai mimicry. Those willing to give the album the courtesy of a second listen might hear the deeper possibilities, something akin to San Francisco's Tarentel or Australia's The Dirty Three. But by listen three, those with perseverance will be caught up in the rapture of something that, while not entirely sonically unique, is still time well spent in their stereo.

All instrumentals, the songs on 5 Popes teeter between quiet solitude and distorted frenzy. Unassuming guitar lines are picked against dirge-like beats, slowly climbing towards a furied cacophony of distortion and heavy-hit cymbals before settling down into a quiet release that oftentimes lingers on the sparse notes of a piano or the distant hum of viola. It's all not up and down, however. "Lesson 3" shifts elegantly between a somber verse and chorus before letting go out onto the open road. With its overcharged guitar riding a propulsive bass line, "Nightrider Meets the Waterfall" is a musical handshake between Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine. The song's middle passage opens up into a wide open space of rolling keyboard notes against a dark horizon of distortion-strangled guitar.

No, My Education has not reinvented the wheel here. What the band has done is given us a great album whose sounds supercede expectations. For a self-released debut, 5 Popes is strong both musically and artistically; a release that will keep growing on you with each listen.

-Craig Young
[04.22.2002]

www.almostcool.com

After last year's amazing *Tired Sounds Of*, one might think that anything related to *Stars Of The Lid* would hit the ears like an aural narcotic. That album was so full of warm, sweeping sounds that it could keep me warm if I were trapped in a blizzard without a coat (but somehow managed to have headphones with me). That might be a little bit of an exaggeration, but although *My Education* shares a member with the above group, they sound nothing alike. In fact, *My Education* likes to rock out (or, as they mention, 'rocking in is just as good as rocking out'). A bit like *Tristeza* with less synths or somewhat like *Tarentel* if you boiled their songs down into slightly shorter songs.

Mixing multiple layers of guitars and enough little flourishes to help round out the edges (strings, glockenspiel, organs, piano, etc), the group is downright dizzying at times, while at others they tighten up the reins and barrel straight away. Wasting no time getting started, "Concentration Waltz" begins with a simple guitar melody on which percussion and a rumbling bassline slowly meld. Another cascading guitar sound washes over the whole thing, and eventually the track builds into a crescendo that's thunderous enough to most likely even please fans of *Godspeed You Black Emperor*. "Lesson 3" again works the quiet to loud dynamic, but takes a slightly different road in getting there. Starting out with some nice interplay between guitar and piano, it weaves some pretty melodies together before launching into a blistering build in which all guitars are blazing and the percussion is pounding. It winds down into a quieter section again, adding some vintage organ sounds before launching back into rock-out mode. Running nearly 9 minutes long, it's a back and forth battle, but one the group does pretty well.

The group doesn't simply work the one formula over and over again, though, and that's evident by the hilariously-titled "Nightrider Meets The Waterfall." Taking off right from the start, the track is nearly the inverse of the quietly building opener, going like mad for nearly the full duration of the track while only taking some short, quieter (which is relative given the overall nature of the track) breather moments before bringing it on again.

With only 5 tracks, the disc might look like an EP on the outset, but with a running time of almost 40 minutes, it's actually closer to a full-length. Although there are tons of groups out there doing the instrumental rock thing, *My Education* is still doing enough things different to stand out from the crowd. They've got a great sense of dynamics, lulling you with a pretty melody before dropping off into rock action, and they use enough variety in their instrumentation that things are kept fresh. At the end of "Crime Story," when the viola and violin are squalling alongside the layers of guitars and pounding drums, it's easy to once again be reminded of the aforementioned *GYBE!*, but that's not such a bad thing in my book. A touch of all the groups above and even a bit of *Mogwai*, this is an excellent little release from a group that most people probably haven't heard of.

Rating: 7.5

www.normanrecords.com.

One of my faves of the week is the My Education CD which is an absolute stormer. Quality post rock The lead track on this CD is absolutely fine example of a quality instrumental. I'd go as far as to say that they don't actually come much better. It's a lilting uplifting tune with lots of guitars and strings and it's an absolute killer. The rest of the album is noisier and is shoegazey/ space rock in places whilst still being quite rock.

Here's another fine example of a Texan band doing the right thing. The band features former and current members from Stars Of The Lid, Ultrasound and The Cinders. Sheer quality and destined to be one of my faves of the year.

www.splendidzine.com

It's really difficult to criticize an instrumental album -- the band can play, obviously, if the band members are making noise, and if the band creates dissonance, who's to say the players are not imitating Philip Glass or Arnold Schoenberg? The most pleasing of these albums are the ones with obvious melody, as the critical benchmarks are easy to rate: is the band in tune, do all the band members sound like they know their instrument, do they do anything funky with it. 5 Popes is My Education's definitively positive answer to all of those questions.

"Concentration Waltz" noodles about with a few chords and employs crashing reverb in an imitation of Hendrix at his most stoned, piling all of the notes into a mountainous crescendo before settling out onto a flat, chiming melodic plain. The drum continues to pound out its unchanging rhythm, a one-color weft to the multi-hued warp of guitars. "Lesson 3" is slower, pensive and wistful, like the best of '70s prog rock bands fiddling around after a long recording session, attempting to create a hidden track. The guitars and bass roar and crash in the background while once again the drummer, Sean Segler, plays his kit like he's at a practice session. He sounds as though he has been promised a cup of tea at the song's end and is thumping his heart out for it, without variation in tempo -- it's a good thing, really, anchoring the wildness of the guitars and the god bass. "Nightrider Meets the Waterfall" sounds a bit like the opening to Jeff Buckley's "Grace", and the sharp melding of chords bears an aural resemblance to a waterfall -- it's the rushing together of noise. "Deep Cut"'s violin adds a mournfulness that's so mood indigo it's inky. All of the songs share melodic ideas, so they flow well, like one long orchestral piece, allowing the listener to hear the individual ideas in each song more clearly.

5 Popes' thematic thrust is as enigmatic as its title, but the music is also relaxing enough that you can enjoy it while you get the ideas that you want from each track. Listening will be an education. -- Jenn Sikes

www.mundanesounds.com

Sometimes things that seem to be knock-offs tend to be better than the things they immitate. When I was a teenager, I had a friend who taught me that better doesn't necessarily have to mean more expensive. For example, the companies expensive brands of cigarettes that I would smoke would also make cheaper cigarettes, often using the same tobacco. Potato chips, especially BBQ-flavored, would often be more filling and much tastier than the premium-quality chips. Same thing with colas. Why pay a buck for a name-brand drink, when, for the same price, you can often buy two or three, if not more, of a store-brand that tastes virtually the same?

Occasionally, though, this idea can apply to bands. My Education is an eight-piece Austin band who, if anything, bear a terrible resemblance to a band called Godspeed! You Black Emperor, as well as to their local comrades Explosions in the Sky. My Education, whose members have been in other notable bands, including Godspeed labelmates Stars of the Lid, are no mere rehash of pre-established styles, nor do they sound like mere knock-offs. Taken by themselves, the songs on 5 Popes could easily fool the unsuspecting hipster.

5 Popes is My Education's self-released debut, and, to be honest, a finer debut couldn't possibly be found. Shimmery guitars, dosed with a heaping helping of atmosphere and a hint of that wonderful Texas psychedelia is the general course of action for My Education. Starting with the increasingly dramatic waltz beat of "Concentration Waltz," the song builds up and up and up into heaven and is returned safely to the ground. Moving into "Lesson 3," the gentle guitars blossom into a loud, mind-expanding symphony. "Nightrider Meets the Waterfall" is a more "straightforward rock song," that quietly fades to silence. And so the style continues with "Deep Cut," until the final number "Crime Story" which is clearly as grand and epic as you would expect; after all, with it being the final song, you would expect a Very Big Finish, and My Education do not disappoint.

If Godspeed You Black Emperor! are tapped in to the desolate and dark nature of northern Canada, and Explosions in the Sky channel their arid West Texas background, then My Education are surely the sound of Central Texas. Their music captures the big skies of the Texas flatlands, while also blending in the dark, empty spaces of the woodlands of East Texas. 5 Popes is the sound of two barren regions coming together--a blend of sky and forest, emptiness from above, and isolation and loss from below. My Education are surely a band to pay attention to; no mere imitators of style are they--for the sound that they have found is, indeed, all their own.

<http://www.stltoday.com/>

My Education, "5 Popes"
(No label)

The Hylozoists, "La Nouvelle Gauche"
(Brobdingnagian Records)

Two all-instrumental records that couldn't be further apart. My Education, from Austin, Texas, play a very minimalist effects-heavy "space rock," where the Hylozoists, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, play in a very musicianly style, using pedal steel and banjo. Oddly, both use some combination of violin, viola, and cello. To me, the Hylozoists sound like a novelty -- a very appealing novelty -- whereas My Education actually sounds like they're trying to say something besides "hey, look at me, don't I play good?"

www.opuszine.com

There's no denying the fact that, regardless of how many times I hear it, the sound of a slowly building wall of guitars, rolling and cascading like waves, to an inevitable climax, will always put a smile to my face. From My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive to Mogwai and Godspeed You Black Emperor!, this "wall of sound" thing has been done a thousand times, and it'll be done a thousand times more. Some do it better than others, some will come off like pale imitations while others can make it sound like the most exhilarating thing in the world. My Education falls squarely in the latter category.

True, My Education isn't doing anything that hasn't been heard before, at least not if you've listened to any of the aforementioned artists. And perhaps the best way to quickly describe My Education is to imagine Mogwai if they'd continued in the vein of earlier songs like "Ithica 27-9", "Summer", or even "Mogwai Fear Satan". But that isn't meant to imply that My Education's songs are formulaic or mere rip-offs, especially when they're anything but. In fact, I found myself completely floored at how they breathed new life and appreciation into musical elements that I've always loved.

My Education's greatest asset is their ability to balance their quiet and loud sides, pouring equal time and detail into both. Their quieter moments are intricately written, with gentle piano and string touches deftly interwoven with the interplay of their guitars. And when My Education decide to kick things in overdrive (and believe me, they do), it feels completely natural and organic. Furthermore, they don't toss off their quieter moments just for the sake of assaulting the listener with all manner of guitar abuse. Even in their loudest moments, you can still hear traces of their music's finer aspects smoothing and refining the sonic assault.

It's an approach that makes for a stellar EP, providing one of the more consistent and enjoyable listens I've had in a long time. I've listened to this CD countless times, and despite only having 5 tracks, it has yet to get old. I love the way that "Lesson 3"'s sparse piano notes make a perfect bedfellow for the chiming guitars, the way that even when the guitars reach their crescendo, the piano's crisp notes still ring out from the maelstrom. "Nightrider Meets The Waterfall" is the EP's rock n' roll track, it's opening minutes reminiscent of "99th Dream"-era Swervedriver. However, the final minutes take a deeper, more spacious turn with lazily drifting guitars circling over jazz-like drums and a deeper groove.

The EP's finest moment, however, is reserved for "Deep Cut". Gentle cascades of piano and guitar drones imply a sense of peace and contentment. Even as the song reaches its inevitable climax, it still retains those gentler sounds, just giving them a little more oomph. And the album closes with the 9-minute "Crime Story". At times, the caterwaul of guitar and violins stretches towards Godspeed territory, but ends with a graceful, piano-laced denouement (and thankfully, no apocalyptic or cryptic utterances). All in all, an incredible EP that promises even better things on the horizon.

Reviewed by Jason Morehead
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