



Raising the Fawn

The Maginot Line
Sonic Unyon
2006
B



Since their 2004 debut *The North Sea*, Raising the Fawn have been my go-to band for those early weeks of spring. There's something about their music that's eerily reminiscent of those first few budding days of the season, the ones that lure you out into the crisp sunshine without a warm coat or gloves and quickly cut you down with a freezing gust of wind or squall of snow. It's tumultuous and conflicted, evidenced by sweeping, schizophrenic shifts that perhaps those unfamiliar with weather in the Northern climes won't immediately appreciate. *The Maginot Line* has a title almost as dreary and foreboding as *The North Sea* had, a sense of vast futility and inescapable fate, and like that first album, the title belies the often bright and sparkling parts of the music. Those moments serve as a reminder that while a chilling breeze can paralyze, it can also invigorate.

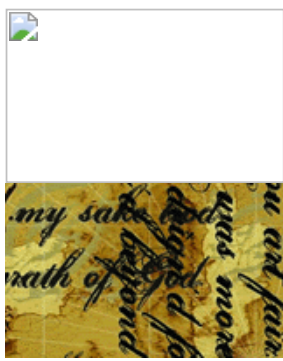
Point man John Crossingham will be familiar to some as a member of the extended Broken Social Scene collective, and some of the fuzzy dynamics and theatrics of that coterie finds its way into the mix of *Raising the Fawn*. With bassist/ Scott Remila and drummer Dylan Green, the band manages to carve their niche and create an atmosphere of their own.

A swell of e-bowed guitars and bristling overtones draws "Pyotr" back like a slingshot, building the tension that bursts forth as the band kicks into gear with "Carbon Paper." The song is a surging burst of energy, with jangling guitars ringing cleanly and clearly along the bouncing, vibrant melody. It's a tribute to a memory of a memory, an imprint or photograph, some shard of history that gives Crossingham a window into the lives of his grandparents, antecedents he never knew and yet is utterly bound to. A lesser songwriter would have painted this concept in drab tones of morose gray, funereal and distant. Instead, it's treated as something joyous, the discovery of a mortal connection, a genetic relationship that evinces itself not in terminal terms but as the impetus to continue, to grow, and to breed new life and vitality into the world.

The theme of renewal continues on the title track, where a fervent marching drumbeat ushers in the implements of change and constant, ephemeral motion; the language of creaking boards and hinges, of wind through trees and reflected moonlight, the harsh, blunt harvests of wheat threshers. All of these images are poised in opposition to that of the Maginot Line, the epitome of futility, fortified folly. The agents of change come sweeping through regardless, incessant, often violent, but inevitable and ultimately the emotional purgation clears the way for freshness, newness, and normalcy. The fire and smoke of "The Matador" serves a similar purpose, as it drives out and displace the characters and the seasons themselves.

The band escapes audio-fidelity for a pair of dimly lit and intimate odes, "Nocturne No.1" and "Nocturne No.2." The first exists only briefly, a scant moment where one might not realize the action has sunk beneath the conscious level of the rest of the album, the second stretches itself out at the end of the disc, taking its time to reinforce the preceding experience. Their hushed, quiet demeanor bookends the second half of the album, which is populated by the metronomic "Until It Starts Again," featuring some interesting acapella and the one-two punch of "The Cloak and the Veil" and "Gold and Red." Those latter two songs are gorgeous pop ballads, with "The Cloak and the Veil" revisiting conflict along the borders of Alsace-Lorraine and "Gold and Red" harmoniously remarking on the gravity of those persistent seasonal images. The voices wonderfully marvel at the axial turning of the Earth and how a look between two people can feel just as forceful.

When "Nocturne No.2" finishes its final strums, the album closes with a simple affirmation of love and affection that caps *The Maginot Line* with a glimmer. While those cold breezes might be fun and electrifying for a time, it's that little glimmer of hope and temperate days that, in the end, keeps us going. Raising the Fawn sees that end, and provides the satisfying struggle and drive toward it that make us appreciate that calmness and stillness so much more when it finally arrives.



Today on Stylus

Reviews

August 30th, 2007

- Crowded House - Time on Earth
- Odd Nosdam - Level Live Wires
- False - 2007
- Mother and the Addicts - Science...

Features

August 30th, 2007

- Vs. - Stop Making Sense vs. The Last...
- Movie Review - Ghost Rider

Recently on Stylus

Reviews

August 29th, 2007

- Angels of Light - We Are Him
- Minus the Bear - Planet of Ice
- Beatallica - Sgt. Hetfield's...
- Waldteufel - Sanguis

August 28th, 2007

- Liars - Liars
- Spokane - Little Hours
- Wiley - Playtime Is Over
- Various Artists - I Would Write a...

Features

August 28th, 2007

- The Diamond - The Beatles - 1
- Movie Review - LOL
- Movie Review - Hannah Takes the Stairs
- Interview - Rubens
- Interview - Young Marble Giants
- Movie Review - A Woman Without Love /...

August 27th, 2007

- Seconds - Stars - Heart
- Movie Review - Superbad
- Article - GhettoTech: The Bluffer's...

Recent Music Reviews

- Liars - Liars
- Rilo Kiley - Under the Blacklight
- M.I.A. - Kala
- Caribou - Andorra
- Okkervil River - The Stage Names
- Tegan and Sara - The Con
- Yeah Yeah Yeahs - It's Is EP
- Prince - Planet Earth
- The Smashing Pumpkins - Zeitgeist
- The Beastie Boys - The Mix-Up
- Interpol - Our Love to Admire
- Spoon - Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga
- T.I. - T.I. vs. T.I.P.
- Ryan Adams - Easy Tiger
- Simian Mobile Disco - Attack Decay...

Recent Movie Reviews

- Hannah Takes the Stairs - Joe Swanberg

