

The Max Levine Ensemble - OK Smarty Pants

Contributed by Bob
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The Max Levine Ensemble - Ok Smarty Pants (Plan It X Records) TMLE often gets throw/categorized as poppy, political, punk rock. And I think as you get older, the music you listen to changes and this album marks a change in the band from a lyrical and musical standpoint. This album has cross-pollinated musical styles and the lyrics are just as clever/tongue-in-cheek. The album represents a more harder edge the band has developed since they became a three-piece. This is also their first full-album in a couple years and they are not short on what they have to say. This album expresses the sort of frustration anyone in their early twenties living in a big city in the midst of a identity crisis. At their CD release show, I was sort of taken aback at all their old friends/old band members I saw at the show. They all seem so grown up and bearded. And that's what this album is - grown up, but Spoonboy, Bepstein, and Nick still remain true to the original spirit of the band. This album is also more personal and angry than their past material, but do not let all those big words used in the intro paragraph in the booklet scare you.

"One Click" is a quick song that has ended before you can almost catch onto the meaning. That and the catchy "firetoowwwweerrr" seem to share similar themes of holding onto things before they are gone. "Aren't All Song Political?" is about change and how hard it is to change and you cling onto the past. The songs melt into each other as stories and statements about modern life that its hard to write about just one. Spoonboy's songwriting has only gotten better from the last TMLE album and his solo album. His words paint stories in only a couple phrases "Nuclear Radio" does so much in under three minutes.

"The Accident" sounds loud and aggressive with Bepstein shouting with Spoonboy on the chorus and with Nick proving why he is one of the most talented drummers in the area. "Love Capitol L" is another song that mentions familiar topics about relationships about someone who is "firecracker." "The Loss" is another short song being under a minute, but the words and music hit you in the gut. "Summer Like A Season" is another story song that sounds like it could have easily come from an old issue of Cometbus. "I Loved To Watch Them…" is straight out punk rock about getting older and realizing things change. (I love any song that uses the word "oscillating.") Things change, but its hard growing up and that is what this album boils down to. It is an album of change for a band that has been on stage since they were in high school. The band has created another masterpiece and I know it will only get better with time. This album can be enjoyed by anyone, not just people in their community. It represents the open minded ideal of everyone going through this not just their friends or family. It's inclusive and unlike how much of the punk rock music being so exclusive.