

Songdog – A Life Eroding

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Some music is like a one night stand – take R. Kelly for instance. It's a kick, sure, but it's no keeper. Songdog's not like that. Every album is a concept album, on which every song is memorable. Songdog will stick with you long after you wish they'd take a shower and go. They'll leave their things behind, and you'll cry over them when you finally move out. Next time your heart gets pulverised remember: "Love breaks hearts like a kid squashing flies."

Moving on to more upbeat misery "Obediah's Waltz" is a joyously jealous sailor's song in which "all who have touched her must die."

It's hard to tell if the messy-love song, "Gene Autry's Ghost" is about a real chance meeting with a washed-up ex from student radical days, or an imagining of what might happen – the circular harp could be a noir-country nod to the dissolves of 80s soap opera dream sequences, or to foolish late night optimism.

Do relationships ever really change? "3.30am" explores the gorgeous destruction of a unrequited love; a portrait of how some people will always fuck you the same way, if you let them the same way. Stupidity, unlike love is eternal, even if the girl is wearing her "bullshit-proof vest".

This band is mercenary in their insistence on making you feel, and while they throw any instrument at your heart without mercy, the arrangements remain sparse, delicate and desperate, leaving space for you to feel. You'll recognise yourself (if it's you) and others at their most pathetic and laughable (if you're on the outside). There's nothing pretty about this music, but everything beautiful, and the lyrics are pure poetry – always tragic but never depressing.

This is theatrical song writing, each vignette a filmic black comedy that will never make it to radio but that fans will play to death, probably alone in their one-bed flats. The few people who find out about Songdog will never forget them. And *A Life Eroding* is all about the unforgettable, small experiences. It's laced with (perhaps involuntary) allusions, to Gerry Rafferty's "Baker Street" on "Elaine" and to Tom Waits drunk on "Obediah's Waltz". Each song is country music (make that lonely music) but made by people from a dark, wet Europe, where a few dirty words - "I went straight for his balls" mean a lot, outside a kebab shop in the rain. What do you call that? Straight camp?

Oh, you know what... fuckit. Any pretentious music-reviewer-idiot waffling I can do is pointless. You have to actually hear this. I feel when listening to this the way a reborn Christian feels about Jesus, except I don't think Songdog would claim to save your soul, at least, not from Satan.

PS: if you are a fan of great music that means something, you'll be glad to know that Songdog have four albums (all pretty brilliant, all available digitally) in which you can lose yourself and find yourself again. As I said before – they're no one night stand band. I'm happy to be committed – I should have been, long ago. As a reviewer, I've officially lost my dignity. I really thought I wouldn't hear anything as good as Elbow's, or Thandiswa Mazwai's last album for a lot longer than this. Lyndon Morgans songwriting talent touches... no, molests... that of my song writing hero or all time, Paul Simon.

Translating for God (sort of) Songdog say: "Any fool could translate, but i'll do the honours if I may – [God] says there's so much sorrow in the world" - a beginning that matches the funniness, fermented philosophy and filthy romance of this brilliant fifth album.



A Life Eroding



Label: One Little Indian, 2010
Genre: Country/Folk

Our Rating: ★★★★★

Reader Rating: ★★★★★