



Having been converted to the Welsh trio's idiosyncratic charms with poet-novelist-playwright Lyndon Morgan's tortured talk-sing vocal style and narrative lyrics with their Haiku album, I was wondering if they'd keep me in thrall with their third album. No problem. There's not much digression from the blueprint with stripped back acoustic gothic folk-country punctuated by the occasional rock howl (such as the desert storm reverb that opens Fairytale) serving as the bedrock for the stories of raw nerved losers and lovers filtered through Morgans' durable Cohen, Dylan (most obviously so on the opening One Day When God Begg My Forgiveness), Brel, Reed and Henry Miller influences with the songs crackling with sexually upfront dark romanticism.

With only five of its 12 songs clocking in under five minutes and Morgans not given to long instrumental passages, there's a lot to chew over. His heart quivers through searing self-examinations and memories of loves burned, twisted or left behind on the likes of the cascadingly plaintive title track, mini-screenplay The Republic of Howlin' Wolf, the obsessive dysfunctional relationship duet Fairytale and a gorgeously heartbroken Jerusalem Road, or such sad closely observed snapshots as Childhood Skies, a delicate longing The Waitress From Yorkville, Toronto, and the epic stripped back Souvenir. They even turn in a wonderful, slow dance, cracked soul version of the Clash's Janie Jones that could have come from the vintage days of Dr Hook's Shel Silverstein balladry.

Almost indescribably wonderful, for those new in Songdog town, if you happen to have any Tindersticks, Nick Cave, Mark Eitzel or Lee Hazelwood albums knocking around the house, then this will prove a very suitable companion.

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