



ROLLERCOASTER MANCHESTER UNITED

NABBAN T. HAQUE

We each get our thrills in different ways. Some of us go to theme parks. Some of us go bungee jumping. Some of us watch horror movies. And then there are those of us who watch Manchester United's games.

Watching the Red Devils play has never been for the faint of heart. Whether the boys play well or not there is always a little bit of unpredictability about them. This does not restrict itself to the recent years of transition at Old Trafford, but includes the Glory Years of Sir Fergie the Hairdryer as well.

In those days recently past, when victory at home was all but assured, the team still had a tendency to play with emotions. One need only look back to that 3-2 victory over Sunderland a couple of years ago. Conspiring to concede against mid-table opposition, and then

dashing their hopes amid a wave of relief on the Stretford end, was all in a day's work.

Much of this was down to brand of Helter-Skelter football many of us had grown to associate with the Red Half of Manchester. There was no dallying in possession, no wasting of time. Arsenal can attest to as much with what had seemed like a billion year losing streak against the Reds ever since Ferguson worked out the Invincibles. "Take your time and pass it around", he probably said to himself. "We need only one minute and three passes to score."

These days, however, the story is quite different, with some similarities we probably don't want. The shoe seems very much on the other foot, and in trying to adopt a more Arsenal-esque style under Louis Van Gaal, we've adopted some unwanted Arsenal frailties. The quick counterattack is a thing of the past; there

is much more in the way of passing without purpose.

For those of us that have grown accustomed to the quick-fire blitzkrieg tactics of the Sir Alex era, this can at times be quite draining. It seems against the soul of Manchester United, and this internal strife is reflected in the players' performances. They seem distinctly uncomfortable with this new identity, unsure of what to do with too much time on their hands.

Yet this is still Manchester United, and United are anything but predictable. Just as we begin to despair over the constant and endless circles in the middle of the pitch, something seems to spark. The incessant repetitions of back passes are, in rare instances, mixed with flashes of pure brilliance. We see shadows of what the team may become, with flowing passing moves reminiscent of the great Brazil teams of the past.

The end result is that while we lose or draw more, there is still no telling what the team is going to produce. They can shred Liverpool on one day, and lose to West Ham on the next. They tease, and then they deny. They provide magic and then muck. They promise a top four finish and then follow with performances worthy of relegation. So what can we fans hope for? Well, in the name of all that is good and holy, don't go nine years without a title and please come up with some form of consistency in the results. Otherwise, my poor heart can't take it.

Nabban Tahsin Haque is a daring explorer brave enough to explore the sick and twisted world of his own imagination. He is also the secret leader of the officially unofficial Manchester United Fan Club, and enjoys the carnage of computer to computer combat. You can reach him at nabban.haque@gmail.com

Embers In Snow: Consistently Good

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

Northern Tales is the second EP by Embers In Snow, Bangladeshi musician Rakat Zami's indie/atmospheric music project. Released on the 5th of May 2016, the EP features three tracks and continues Rakat's tradition of experimental yet accessible music.

The first track is named "The Woods." There's an image that probably comes into your mind when you hear that word and the musical landscape will only reinforce it. The song lasts for more than eight minutes and the entirety of it is a big blast of serenity, even when it gets exciting. Sometimes, even happiness can be explosive, or so the track made me feel.

"Pavements" is a shorter track, timing in at around five minutes. The song conceals pain, some of it expressed directly, some of it made subtle. The music, with its slow pacing, only reinforces the punch the lyrics are packing. It's haunting. That's the most accurate way to describe this song. The five minutes

felt like a tragic drama slowly being played out in front of me, or in my ears, even though at the root of it was a somewhat basic melody being played in a loop. This was my personal favourite from the EP.

The final track, "Snowland," is a love song, at least at first sight. While the lyrics on the other two are commendable, the musical arrangements steal the spotlight on those. On this track though, the songwriting stands out. The approach is very simple but the words are powerfully strung together. Don't get me wrong though, the ambient arrangements are still pretty amazing.

With just three songs, it might not be that easy to identify the ways in which Rakat's music has changed over the years but the signs are there, especially if you're an old fan. This was a strong musical statement from the young Bangladeshi musician. With a second EP under his belt, a full length album shouldn't be that far off.

EP
REVIEW

NORTHERN TALES
EMBERS IN SNOW