

CHALICE HYMNAL

ALBUM REVIEW

Grails at their most diverse

ZOHEB MASHIUR

It is a sunless afternoon and a woman sits alone on her porch under the wind chimes. Bells and horns sound from the top of a great stone temple welcoming the evening tide. An unshaven man prowls the nameless alleys in the dead hours of the night, searching for you.

Synesthesia is what they call it when something stimulates more senses of the body than it normally should. Synesthetics can hear the flavour of their food and smell an image on a screen. It's probably not much fun to actually have the condition, but listening to Grails really makes me curious.

At their finest the band always comes across as writing music for pivotal moments in cinema. These films do not – and probably never can – exist. As I listen to “Silk Rd”, “Origin-ing”, “Smokey Room” and indeed the entirety of *Deep Politics* I really wish I could see for myself the scenes the band seems to be setting. *Chalice Hymnal* is their latest full-length release, the first since 2011, and I must say

that this one hell of a movie they're encouraging me to imagine.

The typical Grails track is a sort of moody, melancholic piece that heavily incorporates the sort of Middle Eastern and Indian influences lesser Western bands would use in an embarrassing attempt to “expand the listener's consciousness”. Even at their least artless Grails have never quite succumbed to the depths of tacky oriental fetishism; I've never heard a Grails track where it seemed the presence of an element weakened the composition. Theirs is the music of emptiness and destruction: the loneliness of a crowded room or the vaults of a great temple buckling down and disappearing into the sand. I

would put it that they tell different stories about essentially the same feeling, and by adding more and more colours to their palette Grails are simply finding new ways of approaching the theme without muddying it.



This is a palette formed from post-rock roots and tinged heavily with the sounds of the nebulous “East”, yes. Years of constant crafting have added a more classical western flavour, with introspective piano work and urgent strings. All this could have been heard on *Deep Politics* six years ago, yes. However the various

band members have since then worked on a variety of side projects: Lilacs & Champagne produces electronic music using samples collected from old TV and

Danish pornography, Holy Sons has a claustrophobic bluegrass sound, and the drummer is now in the prestigious Om. All these ingredients are present in *Chalice Hymnal*, a broth that's been stewing all these years.

I cannot yet say how good the album is. My favourite thing about Grails is how much stuff just happens in a single track. Every time you listen with attention you discover a new sound. Their music is played organically, with variations in each note and constantly shifting accents in the background. What is rewarding in the long term isn't even immediately apparent. I can say that is a solid album and contains possibly the fullest expression of what Grails is - truly a sum of its parts.

Listen to it if you are alone and want to see strange, sad new worlds crumbling. It's one of the most interesting experiences offered in music.

Zoheb Mashiur is a prematurely balding man with bad facial hair and so does his best to avoid people. Ruin his efforts by writing to zoheb.mashiur@gmail.com

THE COTERIE HAS ARRIVED



SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

The Brownie Coterie is, as the name gave it away, an online-based brownie bakery. In a sea of such businesses, why do they stand out? Read on to find out.

Envision the perfect brownie. Crumbly layers with a soft middle, bursting our flavours with every bite. Pretty sure you're hungry right now. You go to your nearest café, hoping to sate your craving for one of the best types of desserts around. You take a bite and you are filled with disappointment as the experience was nothing you had imagined it to be.

The Brownie Coterie aims to rectify that problem. They have a wide variety of brownies for everyone's different palates. Their brownie flavours are:

Best of Both Worlds: This is basically a cheesecake brownie, pretty sure everyone's familiar with the concept at this point. The cheese was very smooth, light, and creamy. It also meshed very well with the crumbly, yet chocolatey brownie base. A perfect delight for cheesecake lovers who want the base to be as good as the cheese. Price: BDT 130.

Simply Original: This is the no-strings attached, pure brownie. Crumbly base and top with an inside that literally melts in your mouth. The chocolate flavour does not feel too sugary or overpowering, it's the perfect blend. An absolute value for money deal at BDT 65.

Nutella Spell: Now I might be biased

ONLINE SHOP REVIEW



here because I absolutely adore Nutella but this one has to be the softest, richest, and most flavourful brownie I have ever had – and I've had quite a lot from many different places. The Nutella covered top and ganache coupled with a Ferrero Rocher at the top make for an amazing experience for the tastebuds. Price: BDT 180.

Death by Chocolate: Sounds morbidly beautiful but this brownie will kill you with its taste. Topped off with rich, melted dark chocolate with a very generous

amount of chocolate chips sprinkled in. Stay away if you have anything against chocolate (you monster).

Coffee Doesn't Disappoint: For caffeine addicts and brownie buffs, this is a match made in heaven. I would gladly gorge these down with my morning coffee any day without worrying about the health risks associated with consuming too much sugar. They're that good.

Mahia Marzana Khan, a student of the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka, is the brownie expert

behind the venture. “If 3 years ago, someone asked me if I wanted to have a business of my own, I would have laughed off the question. But as I gained various skillsets from my 3 years at IBA, I realized I could use them for starting an entrepreneurial venture. The idea of being your own boss and the 'swag' associated with it also played a part in my decision.”

The Brownie Coterie's Facebook Page Link: <https://www.facebook.com/thebrowniecoterie/>

All the order details are specified there. So, what are you waiting for? Treat yourself with some of the best brownies in town!

Shahrugh Ikhtear is a sub-editor at SHOUT who stresses himself out while trying to learn marketing. Send him pictures of Philip Kotler as blessings at fb.com/sr.ikhtear

