



ALBUM REVIEW

FABLES FROM A MAYFLY

What I Tell You Three Times Is True

RASHEED KHAN

Has it been a while since the last time you sat down, closed off the world, turned up the volume, and paid attention to everything an album has to tell you?

Good, 'cause you'll be doing that today, hopefully, and you'll be listening to *Fables from a Mayfly: What I Tell You Three Times Is True* from front to back – especially if you're a metal fan, because this is alternative metal at its peak. After you're done with that, you might want to go have a look at Fair to Midland's existing catalogue.

Let's first take a look at the song-writing structure. This is the most easily digestible aspect of the album, running on a pretty simple verse-chorus-verse-bridge-chorus most of the time, sometimes adding in a pre-chorus too which is likelier to attract the average listener.

Their instrumental structure is not exactly new by any means. In fact, you'll hardly find any "original" bands anymore, but that's not what Fair to Midland and this album is about, because it's their presentation of everything that's so appealing.

Taking a moment to introduce the band members, you've got Darroh Sudderth as the incredible lead vocalist; Cliff Campbell on lead guitars with awesome riffs, licks and tones; John Dickens on bass and Brett Stowers on drums, both of them keeping things simple but clever and fun; and finally, Matt Langley on keys, twinkling his way over the maelstrom of noise and owning the parts where it's just him playing solo.

This combination of instruments usually goes two ways. One way is to walk into softer territories such as bands like Coldplay, The Fray, Something for Kate, etc. have done. If that isn't the case, keyboardists are usually found within progressive music where they're simply there to stay in the background to assist in soundscaping, or so that people obsessed with musical technicality have more things to

turn them red in the face. However, Fair to Midland carve out their own territory, alternating between loud and quiet, their compositions catchy yet tricky to play. This is quite obvious immediately from their opening track, "Dance of the Manatee" which dances between heavy and soft interludes with disconcerting grace. Seriously, it's been over ten years and I STILL can't get over how awesome this song is.

Having said all that I will about instrumentation, let's take a look at the lyrics. The first time I listened to this album six years ago, I'd paid the lyrics the barest amount of attention and I hate myself for that. I'd been intending to re-listen to this album for all these years, and I did just

that, all the while reading through all the lyrics. Honestly? I was blown away by the poet that is Darroh Sudderth. If you've ever written lyrics, you'll know that adding in technical words in a song is difficult, because it just doesn't sound normal when you start singing it. What's intimidating is that not only does he do it with slightly irritating ease, he remains poetic and rhythmic throughout. He maintains this strange sense of child-like imagery with his lyrics – playful yet cryptic and slightly dark. Take a look at this excerpt from "A Seafarer's Knot":

*Lucky are the leaves of the clover,
 She's diggin' for chemistry with the butcher's tools,
 Shifty are the eyes of the gambler,
 He's making his tricks his trade, and a job well done.*

Reading up everything, you'll understand that Sudderth has all the skill of a hip-hop lyricist. His lyrics are where you start understanding the theme of the album a bit more, because it certainly sounds like fables from a mayfly. His ability as a storyteller is incredible and it's wonderful how he injects emotion into everything he sings. If I had to sum it up in three words: World of Warcraft.

Now, after all this, you might be thinking something along the lines of, "This is a rather one-sided review, is there anything about this album that doesn't cash in on the idea of auditory gorgeousness?" Well, all I can say is indulge yourself in Fair to Midland with the knowledge that they have accumulated substantial debt, have been on an indefinite hiatus for five years, and are possibly never returning. On that note, as a devout fan of them, I'll go scream into the uncaring void now. Bye.

Rasheed Khan is a hug monster making good music but terrible puns and jokes where he's probably the only one laughing. Ask him how to pronounce his name at aarcvard@gmail.com

