

Hectorina

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by: Michael K. Earle



It's May, it's hot and I am sitting outside of a local fest show at Tommy's Pub on Central Avenue. The inside is packed with folks and my band is on the bill with a band called Hectorina. As the night starts, we're all out on the porch laughing and joking about their sheer relief at having finally finished, after more than six months recording in Dylan's father's basement, their concept album "Collywobble." They're giddy. They're riffing on each other's statements with inside innuendo and jokey allusions to events they alone are privy to from the studio. It's all rather charming and frayed around the edges but with this nervous energy of having 'done it' (that elation that fills a body upon the completion of one herculean task or another). I'm asking questions, "Why concept album? What's the story?" et cetera, and they're all looking to Dylan Gilbert, the guitar player and vocalist, for answers.

You see, "Collywobble", as a project, was a sort of wipe-the-slate-clean situation. Dylan had a lot of songs that seemed to all touch on or come from the same or related subjects, then they started the band, and so hey- why not? Let's record them all as a concept album. That took half a year. That's like a whole baseball season, and that's a LOTTA games.

But what they got out of the process is, to me, one of music's great rewards: telepathy. You sit in a basement until 4am three days a week for six months with a dude, recording and

re-recording the same organ parts for a mini rock operetta, you're going to know what's on his mind. I will be specific: you will know so much about this guy you can tell when he has his "need to poop" face on. And that seriously pays off in musical telepathy. In short, the crucible of the recording sessions for "Collywobble" made Hectorina into the band you hear on their new EP/Mini-LP "A Thousand Jackals".

"Jackals" is the sound of a band that is locked into each other musically. The songs come alive in shambolic blasts of dissonance that break into melodic lines, screaming vocals competing with a fierce musicality from the instruments, with impressionistic lyrics- blurring the lines between the artist's experience and the song about the experience until all that's left is a color, a few buried truisms arranged carefully with the chaff and dazzle to create kind of a shrine to the ultimate in in-jokes. The songs are filled with subtle references that the band alone fully understands, but which compel the listener nonetheless. Perhaps this is why, for the first single and video, the boys chose "This Must Be Where Pies Go When They Die" (a 20 second ode to David Lynch and Agent Cooper's legendary love of a particular pie). It's probably the shortest song on the release, and you, dear reader, are quite within your rights to question a twenty second long song outside of a D.R.I. album. But what one realizes during a viewing/listen is that this song is fully formed. Twenty seconds is all Hectorina really needed to get in there, say what needs saying and get out. No frills.

Actually, this whole album has no frills. Recorded before "Collywobble" was released, "A Thousand Jackals" was put together on the fly. If the band themselves had not told me about the long sessions of writing lyrics right before they ran out of time, I would never believe it. This record does sound loose and uncontained. The songs change gears midway through, there are blasts of dissonant guitar and hoarse throat hollering going on, and yet: it never sounds slapdash. This album wasn't thrown together, it fell into place. Listening to other standout tracks like "Ice Dragons on Ice" or "King Coati", it sounds like the band stood together, turned on their amplifiers and just entered some mystic trance and autowrote these songs.

Hectorina is a deft weapon. Dylan, Zach and Johnny III's band has a group mind, crucial to creative endeavors. They have a common vision and know each other's skills and riffs with perfect fluency. It netted them a coveted spot in the residency rotation at Snug Harbor for January of 2014 and that's no short order. That five night residency reminds me of Coltrane at the Village Vanguard or Miles Davis, well, everywhere. Listen to Hectorina. Listen to "A Thousand Jackals". Maybe you will get a telepathic message or two.