

A Selection of Published Reviews

Renegade Radio

Tyler Pantella

Band: Hair Police

Album: *Certainty of Swarms*

Label: No Fun Productions

Sometimes, very rarely, I hear a band for the first time and react with a broad grin. This happens when the music reaches some sort of unpredicted extreme. Hair Police are a noise rock band, the term “rock” being a subtle explanation of their framework of conventional instruments. And from the get go, *Certainty of Swarms* does just what I’m talking about. It opens with the song “Strict”, starting with a few seconds of amplifier feedback, reminiscent of the moment when a band plays live and everyone knows to pay attention. The following three minutes are absolute cacophonous mayhem. Distorted bass explosions, sirens, absent-minded drumming, and high-pitched screams lay down a texture that sounds complete and engaging. There’s a loose sense of rhythm. Subsequent tracks prove that Hair Police are capable of more than fevered mayhem. “Intrinsic to the Execution”, for example, leads the listener through a dark, psychedelic journey. The loose sense of rhythm calms into a drone of impending doom. The texture is more minimal, incorporating electronic swirls and breathy vocals.

Hair Police’s discography is dense and they’ve been around since 2001. *Certainty of Swarms* may have been my late introduction to the band, but it’s a great stepping stone into their work. They’ve released a split with Wolf Eyes and it’s really easy to see the similarity between the two bands. Anyone with a taste for experimental music, especially experimental music grounded somewhere between ambient and ultra harsh, will find something to appreciate.

Band: Carpathian
Album: *Isolation*
Label: Deathwish Inc.

I'm usually really weary of bands that have played the Taste of Chaos tour. It's a tour that epitomizes a lot of what I dislike in modern hardcore music. Hardcore is rooted in do-it-yourself ethic, yet a lot of the bands seem to borrow small elements from the music and package it into something digestible and not too different than the slop of mainstream rock. Carpathian, however, are leading hardcore into a direction I appreciate and enjoy. *Isolation* is a weighted journey into, I admit, typical lyrical themes: hatred, depression, self identity, distrust of society, and growing as a person. The words are up-front and honest, such as with: "I wonder if this is what it's like to be a seventies kid? Standing at the edge of the world, screaming 'I just don't feel like growing up today.' This whole city in shades of panic and pantone. We're on the run again this feeling in our bones."

Musically, fans of Comeback Kid and Verse will eat this right up. The guitar chords are heavy and uncompromising. The album is cathartic, uncompromising, yet produced smoothly enough to represent the band well. The songwriting is polished and detailed. Heavy chug-chugs combine with the spacey chords that are starting to appear in more and more hardcore bands. There's a scream in "Ceremony" that sounds so pained and real. This isn't as raw as most of the stuff I'm listening to these days, but it seems like it'll last longer. I want to see Carpathian live. Until then, *Isolation* will do just fine.

Band: Ghosts

Album: *Human and Natural History*

Label: Self-released

Ghosts have always been one of my favourite local bands. They've been around for eight years as one of Victoria's little secrets. The first time I saw them, I was enamoured with the experience – Ghosts play minimal, bare, carefully-constructed, incredibly catchy music. The guitar tone is soaked with delay and reverb, reminiscent of instrumental surf music, but in a completely different context. Their songs are soft and chilling, like sitting alone on a beach at dusk and looking towards the trees of Vancouver Island's coast. Something like that. They seem to borrow elements of garage rock, post-punk, 80's pop rock, and alt-rock. Their sound is not quite so easy to define, as is the case with most modern indie rock. It's definitely a conscious effort, and a sound I've heard in few other bands.

Human and Natural History is the most complete, detailed piece of recorded art they've produced, following the footsteps of *The Ice Storm* and a teaser EP *PR3LP2EP4*. The new album is full of the songs I've come to love over the past couple years. The production on *Human and Natural History* is much softer than the biting, enveloping aural experience of a live show. But it fits and works. The aesthetic appeal of Ghosts is beyond the music and they seem to put careful effort into all aspects. The album art is silkscreened and subtle. But most importantly, the music is catchy and addictive. It explores through warm bass riffs, organ chords, and that tasty guitar twang. The melodic hooks in each chorus will be stuck in your head for days. Brad's voice sings smooth and low, breaking in climaxes. If these guys toured, I'm sure they would catch a lot of attention. The introspective world they create is far out of the ordinary. This is almost definitely going to be my top album pick of 2009.