



FIDLAR

FIDLAR

Mom & Pop

ESM Rating: 9/10

expertly mixed Black Lips' brand of flower punk with early '90s grunge. Ending on one-two punch of "Cocaine" (noisy and incoherent) and "Cheap Cocaine" (rawer and more acoustic-based) might indicate a bit of laziness on **FIDLAR's** part. Or it could just mean that these guys truly don't care what anyone thinks of them. You decide which attitude holds more weight.

East Coast tour dates? Nothing right now except one April 1st date in Chicago. But unleash these guys on a Surf Expo party or video premiere, and East Coasters would definitely go nuts. Stay tuned to www.Fidlar.Tumblr.com for updates.

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Shugo Tokumaru
In Focus?

Polyvinyl

ESM Rating: 9/10

Listen if you like: Precious indie-pop, schizophrenic art-rock, charming freak-folk, The Flaming Lips' more tender moments, The Beatles' far-flung experimentations, Devendra Banhart's eccentricity, anyone with an all-encompassing worldview of music's universal beauty.

First impressions: Is **Shugo Tokumaru** singing in Japanese? Do his single-word song titles refer to the lyrics or the stunning visuals that come to mind when listening to his painstakingly orchestrated pop brilliance? How does one man do all of this himself? And do any of those questions matter when being overwhelmed by his tidal wave of symphonic excellence?

The nitty-gritty: The flute loop and fantastical samples that serve as the foundation for "Katachi" will draw you in instantly, even if **Shugo Tokumaru's** Japanese lyrics might push you away. But not understanding the man's words does nothing to undermine the beauty of *In Focus?*, which was written, performed, recorded, and produced solo. Songs like "Decorate" bring bands like Animal Collective to mind, while the rubber-ducky squeaks and frenetic toy xylophones of "Gamma" come off like the soundtrack to a fascinating circus-in-miniature. Trying to explain further cacophonies of elegant layering on "Call" and "Balloon" feels trite and pointless — how do fairly standard words written in English contain the worldly, exquisitely precise multitudes of **Shugo Tokumaru**? Just see the jaw-dropping Internet response to the stop-motion video for "Katachi" for evidence of how enamored everyone is with this guy.

Other recommended tracks: *In Focus?* is that rare album that rewards cohesive, all-at-once listens. But there are definitely highlights, even if some are more unexpected than others. The fractured ukulele of 29-second "Mubyo" and intricate six-string work on "Micro Guitar Music" transported me to a distant auditory planet, while "Poker" achieved the rare feat of channeling oddball French pop from the 1960s. Similarly, "Ord Gate" takes some cues from pastoral British rock of the 1970s, while "Tightrope's" elegant simplicity proves that **Shugo Tokumaru** doesn't have to go nuts to succeed. But "Helicite (LeSeMoDe)," "Shirase," and "Down Down" are the clear highlights here, speedy folk, baroque pop, and dusty country-and-western bringing **Tokumaru** down to earth just enough to appeal to anyone with an ear for excellence.

East coast tour dates: Two Texas dates and one Louisiana date in early March, which follow a quick west coast run the two weeks before. Please, if get the opportunity, go see **Shugo Tokumaru**. You won't be disappointed by the man's ambition and skill. Visit www.ShugoTokumaru.com for more updates.

[Shugo Tokumaru - Decorate](#) by Polyvinyl Records



He's My Brother
She's My Sister
Nobody Dances In
This Town

Park The Van

ESM Rating: 8/10

Listen if you like: "Flamboyant folk," "psych-acoustic," "estranged and glamorous" pop, "vaudeville-y" rock. These are all quotes from **He's My Brother She's My Sister's** press one-sheet for *Nobody Dances In This Town*, and they're all certainly applicable, as are comparisons to fellow Los Angeles collective Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeroes.

First impressions: But there's a lot more going on with brother and sister Robert and Rachel Kolar, Lauren Brown, Oliver Newell, and Aaron Robinson. For one thing, Brown provides full-body percussion and tap-dancing drumming to the theatrical mix. At its root, this quintet mixes dusty Americana, parlor pop, and even jump blues into its upbeat folk-rock blend. And opener "Tales That I Tell" personifies that perfectly with a raucous stomp and honey-dipped vocals.

The nitty-gritty: "Let It Live Free" is even more invigorating, sprinkling Gypsy grooves into its juke-joint simmer, while "Electric Love" features a sexy slink and "Let's Go" gallops by with a hint of honky-tonk vocal tradeoffs. Of course, maintaining that level of dynamism across 11 songs isn't exactly easy, and "Same Old Ground," "Touch Of Lightning," and "Slow It Down" are all catchy if a little light on substance. Nothing wrong with pop sheen, though; **He's My Brother She's My Sister** were recently chosen by Starbucks for the mega-corporation's "Pick Of The Week" campaign for good reason. But this group's raw power is best personified on *Nobody Dances In This Town* closer "Can't See The Stars," which is easy to picture as a rousing live-show encore as well.

Other recommended tracks: Like their good friends and former tour mates Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeroes, **He's My Brother She's My Sister** actually excel when they turn things down to a slow boil on "Wake Your Heart." You can't deny the allure of that song's impassioned group vocals, or the quirky retro vibe of "Clackin' Heels," which highlights Lauren Brown's tap-dancing skills. Further vintage crackle emerges from the dust of *Nobody Dances In This Town* on "Choir Of The Dead," which sounds as haunting as its title.

East Coast tour dates? **He's My Brother She's My Sister** i yet another west coast band showing plenty of love to the East Coast. Starting February 20th in Texas, they play Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and the Midwest. Visit www.HesMyBrotherShesMySister.com for details.

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