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REVIEW

Music Review: Jackson United - *Harmony And Dissidence*



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Like ex-Nirvana drummer-turned-singer/guitarist extraordinaire Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, bandmate and rhythm guitarist Chris Shiflett (also of Me First and the Gimme Gimmes) has looked to make a name for himself in a side project in recent years. While Grohl formed the impressive star-studded heavy metal side project Probot – featuring Lemmy from Motorhead, Max Cavalera and Kim Thayil among others – in 2003, Shiflett quietly put together Jackson United around that same period with his bass-playing brother Scott Shiflett (of Face To Face) and other punk rock veterans.

Jackson United's 2004 debut LP *Western Ballads* had a healthy mix of influences, but not all of the material was memorable. Hard-rocking tracks like the Weezer-esque "All The Way," the airy, twangy "That Curse" and the 1950's-backbeat-backed "Ok Alright" were among the highlights.

On JU's latest release, *Harmony And Dissidence* (Acetate Records), Dave Grohl picks up the drum sticks again (as he did for Queens of the Stone Age several years back) and splits those duties with current Foos drummer Taylor Hawkins, since Shiflett's group didn't have a permanent drummer at the time of the recording – now confirmed to be Joe Sirois from Mighty Mighty Bosstones. But its sound is more Face To Face than Foo Fighters, more punk than pop, and puts the POWER in power pop for sure, among other notable attributes.

On lead-off single, the political call-to-arms "21st Century Fight Song," Shiflett plays the part of the flashy guitar hero for a short solo, and together with the Clash-like reggae-inflected rocker "Undertow" and the California skate-punk of "Black Regrets," those three tracks get the album off to a promising start. Shiflett's further demonstration of his versatile guitar chops and genre-shifting tendencies include the punk-ish and ska-inflected "Land Without Law," one of the best tracks on *Harmony And Dissidence* and the respectable "The Day That No One Smiled," which hints of The Edge-like soloing. It's a song that could've been even better if its lyrics weren't so vague.

Elsewhere, veteran rock keyboardist Rami Jaffee (Wallflowers, Pearl Jam, Foo Fighters) guests and shines with his hovering organ work and outro piano solo on "Stitches," and Grohl adds some seriously slick grooves throughout half the record, including the multi-rhythmic, self-assured power pop of "White Flag Burning."

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