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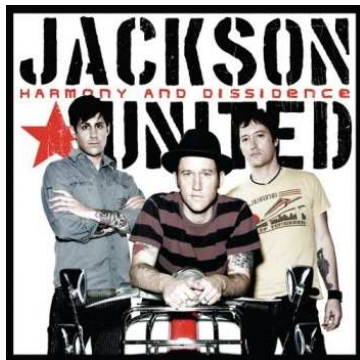
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[REVIEWS: JACKSON UNITED - \[ALBUM\]](#)


ARTIST: Jackson United - [Album]
DATE: 10-22-08

REVIEW BY: Bill Adams
ALBUM: Harmony And Dissidence
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Now Playing: 'Damn You' from Harmony And Dissidence

Some side project bands seem destined to appear. For example, when Kim Deal broke away from The Pixies to get some more of her music heard out from under the watchful eye of Frank Black, it made sense; when James Iha did the same thing a few years ago apart from Smashing Pumpkins, no one was shocked and no one faulted him in the slightest. That Jackson United's debut long-player has surfaced, however, is quite a shock. Front man/guitarist Chris Shiflett has, to date, cut an impressive living as a guitarist-for-hire with such notables as Me First And The Gimme Gimmes, Viva Death, No Use For A Name and, most recently, Foo Fighters – needless to say, the man does not suffer from a surplus of downtime. Even so, *Harmony And Dissidence* doesn't sound like a tossed-together affair in the slightest; rather, it sounds like the guitarist's next most logical step.

Comprised of Chris Shiflett, together with brother Scott (who has been know to play with Mighty Mighty Bosstones and Face To Face as well as also toiling at Viva Death) and guitarist Doug Sangalang, Jackson United can't help but have an all-star feel (drumming duties are split on this record between Taylor Hawkins and Dave Grohl) but, blessedly, the band earns any praise they may garner by blazing through this fourteen-song set without trying to stand on anyone's name for appreciation.

Even with that said though, it's difficult not to make comparisons. The hints of all of the individual members' 'other' projects (most notably the clean, tidy ska of The Bosstones and the charging delivery of Foo Fighters) do weigh heavily into the overall sound of *Harmony And Dissidence*, but those similarities are more a mark of the crossover of individual style; the record is totally unique and unusual in that those familiar elements have been revamped and re-conceptualised to the point those unfamiliar with the band's pedigree love it for the strength of the songs themselves rather than simply respect it for the star power involved. Songs including (but certainly not limited to) "21st Century Fight Song," "The Land Without Law," "Damn You" and "Lifeboat" ride no coattails and instead find the band members smashing their heads hard off the punk rock again as their guitars (of both the pop-punk and ska varieties) singe everything in sight and Shiflett turns in better vocal performances (very similar to The Killjoys and Limblifter actually) than half of the full-time punk rock singers he's worked with previously; it's actually pretty incredible how well the band carries these proceedings off – given that they're all sidemen.

As the record winds to a close, Jackson United does bow to one of the conventions normally associated with a "side-project band" status: the obligatory cover song. That's a little different here too though; while usually a trite cover of a Beatles song is de rigeur in situations like this, the Shiflett brothers agree instead on a great song by Billy Bragg and streamline the arrangement to more closely resemble "Another Brick In The Wall (part 2)" in keeping with the 'doomed youth' lyrical theme.

As ambitious deliveries where no ambition is really required go, listeners would be hard-pressed to find better than this cover of "Help Save The Youth Of America".

Given that everyone in Jackson United is currently committed to other engagements, it's difficult to know how far the band will go. If history is any indicator, Jackson United could very well exist only as an overflow valve that the Shifletts will use to blow off some steam but, by the same token, given

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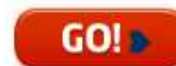
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