



ALBUM REVIEW



Snakes and Music Play Well Together

By JULYSSA LOPEZ

Last week, my roommate and I met a group who was touring with an indie band from Minneapolis on the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. When asked about their music, they were quick to liken themselves to the legends Pavement, Spoon and the Decemberists.

Twenty-four hours after meeting them, Snakes and Music's *Isabelle* spun inside my CD player. A voice similar to Pavement front man Stephen Malkmus rung out in an offbeat, off key vibrato. Thinking back to the band on the promenade, I became instantly afflicted with the fear that every new indie band out there is just trying to imitate a legend. As *Isabelle* played on, it became clear that Snakes and Music isn't imitating just anyone. On their new CD, it's apparent they can accomplish the same indie flavor that Pavement once delivered, but they somehow make it their own through seasoned, well-constructed tracks.

Isabelle, Snakes and Music's second formal release, is not up there yet with the mystical magic of *Slanted and Enchanted* or *Crooked Rain Crooked Rain*. The title song of the album comes first with a catchy guitar twang, but the lyrics fizzing out of the speakers are nearly indecipherable. Upon first listen, the nasal screech of vocalist Andrew Low, formerly of the band *Jazz June*, is obtrusive and almost annoying. The song changes to a slower tempo somewhere in the middle, rather impetuously, in a form that is raw and unpolished—similar to the rest of the disc. It then reverts back to the original chorus, and continues on for another minute or so, making it too long and repetitive.

Yet, "Please Explain" is softer and

a less irksome track better displaying sounds to come. The guitar arrangement is melodic and gentler than on the first song. Additionally, the arrangement complements Low's voice, revealing its chilled-out Havergal-esque qualities.

Following the same laidback path are the tracks "Hope Texas Treats You Like A Queen," "Heavystings," and "Burn the Bushes." They don't carry the same kinetic energy of the first song, but they do have stuck-in-your-head-for-hours power.

"Philadelphia," "Sleeping on the Couch," "Cleaning up the Mess" and "Shut up That's Why" are sleepier, more lethargic tracks with a poignant simplicity to them. Slowed down and relaxed, they allow Low's tone to lower in a heavier, more hypnotic lull.

In the grand tradition of good-humored indie musicians (like Sufjan Stevens) Snakes and Music inserts little goody bags in the form of random one-minute tracks. These include the instrumental Cajun-spiced "Take Me Down to the River," the obscure "Headsparks," which sounds like the recording of wind during a violent squall and the banjo-infested "Snake Bites." No lyrics, just the recurring sounds lace in and out until the songs are over.

By the time "Isabelle Revisited" pulsates on, the ear is much more accustomed to the standard off-scale indie-alternative voice of Low. A combination of bells and drums make the end track nostalgic of Jack and Meg Whites finale tracks of the *White Stripes* release "Well It's True That We Love One Another."

Snake and Music is definitely a still under-the-radar indie band, but with the help of *Isabelle*, that fact is subject to change.

a certain pretentiousness that goes along with the songs and the messages behind them but in *Lostprophets*' case this is far from the truth, for the most part.

Watkins' lyrical abilities are often phenomenal in

if my heart will ever mend," The blandness in and of itself may be reason enough for the song to fail in gaining much popularity.

One of the catchiest choruses I've ever encountered in