

Norma Jean - Polar Similar (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 I. The Planet 3:03 2 Everyone Talking Over Everyone Else 3:27 3 Forever Hurtling Towards Andromeda 2:16 4 1,000,000 Watts 4:28 5 II. The People 2:14 6 Death Is A Living Partner 2:18 7 Synthetic Sun 3:50 8 Reaction 5:42 9 III. The Nebula 3:16 10 The Close And Discontent 2:34 11 An Ocean Of War 3:28 12 A Thousand Years A Minute 5:58 13 IV. The Nexus 10:40 Bass – John Finnegan Drums, Percussion – Goose Holyoak Guitar – Jeff Hickey, Phillip Farris Percussion – Adam Putman Sounds, Keyboards – Josh Holyoak Vocals, Guitar – Cory Brandan + Backing Vocals, Featuring – Adam Putman (tracks: 8) Guitar, Featuring – Josh Barber (tracks: 1, 2) Piano, Organ – Adam Putman (tracks: 4, 13)

Well, we all know about Marilyn Monroe, born Norma Jeane Mortenson. But what does this have to do with djent? Well, actually not much, but based on her born name is a band called Norma Jean, a group which also requires little introduction. With their newest record, Polar Similar, the band is back after their latest release Wrongdoers, which set the bar high for a band that is already quite accomplished. Dissonance and catchiness, do they even fit together? Well, in case of Norma Jean, they really do!

Speaking of Wrongdoers, people who loved this record will probably love Polar Similar as well. The record was released on September 9 via Solid State Records and features a total of eleven tracks. Norma Jean stick to their strength and compose songs that are groovy and catchy, but less chaotic than their older material. However, there is still enough unrestrained anger to spin your minds! Songs like “1.000.000 Watts” have at least as much power as described in the title, as this track is able to keep a whole audience in movement. The track also features a catchy chorus. In addition to their typical song structures, Norma Jean fit brief mathcore ragers on this record like “Forever Hurtling Towards Andromeda” or “Death Is A Living Partner”. The latter is an extremely heavy hardcore track, with black metal-esque, Oathbreaker-ish vibes and a Stray From The Path mood, combining blast beats, powerful breaks ala Slipknot, and influences from The Chariot.

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Singer Cory Putman's voice and the established Norma Jean guitar sound maintain the group's unique sonic identity through heavy hitting breaks, dissonant guitar squeals, and emotionally shouted and sung vocals. In fact, the mix of psychedelic sung cleans and articulate, heavy shouts fit perfectly into the band's musical concept. But let's talk about a song that might not get as much attention as the singles on Polar Similar: "Reaction", on the musical side, sounds like a Gojira track off their newest record Magma, with its progressive metal unique fare for the more hardcore-based group. This track also features an acoustic guitar alongside the track's heavy grooves, the catchy, psychedelic vocal line and accentuated drumming. These dynamics make for an outstanding song that promises to have amazing performance value. Overall, this track is an interesting outing for Norma Jean, that will hopefully be explored further in the future!

As the band explains, this record has a different, darker vibe than their previous records. Well, we all know about Marilyn Monroe, born Norma Jeane Mortenson. But what does this have to do with djent? Well, actually not much, but based on her born name is a band called Norma Jean, a group which also requires little introduction. With their newest record, Polar Similar, the band is back after their latest release Wrongdoers, which set the bar high for a band that is already quite accomplished. Dissonance and catchiness, do they even fit together? Well, in case of Norma Jean, they really do!

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There are a lot of typical hardcore and metalcore elements to be found in some songs. These elements lend to a catchy sound on the record, but Norma Jean have a very complex sound, with their diverse mix of mathcore, metal and hardcore. In conclusion, one should not nail down the genre of this band, as it simply is not possible to stick them into a box. However, if you were wondering, they don't really djent. If you already loved Wrongdoers, you will love Polar Similar as well. If you did not know Norma Jean before, this record might get you into them, with the album's catchiness, grooves, keen melodies, and aggressive attitude. Even if there are not a lot of contrasts, they feel extreme, such as in the brief clean section in "Synthetic Sun", one of the most powerful tracks on this record. Overall, the band is playing a mix of progressive metal, mixed with post rock elements and, of course, mathcore and hardcore. The result is an interesting record, that won't disappoint fans of the band, and also will be able to generate new fans. Make sure to give this a spin, if you are interested in proggy hardcore with mathcore-ish vibes and a very dark mood, similar to Russian Circles. ---itdjents.com

Taki ze mnie naiwniak, że nadal wierzę w wyciśnięty jak cytryna i do granic możliwości przemielony metalcore. Kiedy wraz z kolejnymi przesłuchanymi "metalkorami" nadzieja upada, najnowszą płytę Amerykanów z Norma Jean "Polar Similar" podsuwa mi z-ca naczelnego (i chyba winna jestem Ci ukłony Macieju!). Jeśli intro zaczyna się słowami "I hope you burn", to czemu by nie sprawdzić, ile w tym prawdy. I co się okazuje? Nadzieja wraca! Poparzyć się można.

Norma Jean istnieje od 15 lat i z poprzednimi wydawnictwami nieszczególnie gościła w moich głośnikach, za to "Polar Similar" długo z nich nie wyjdzie. Cytując jednego z kult-owych redaktorów: "co tu się odjaniepawla"! Płyta ma ciekawy concept: jest podzielona na cztery rozdziały: I. The Planet, II. The People, III. The Nebula, IV. The Nexus. Wspomniany pierwszy numer rozpoczyna I rozdział niskimi gitarami, ciężarem i duchotą. Wydany na singlu drugi numer Everyone Talking over Everyone Else brzmi jak wczesny KsE na sterydach, a w 1,000,000 Watts wyraźnie czuć ducha Deftones. Podkreścone nieco elektroniką utwory z połamanym tempem i solidną perkusją Claytona "Goose" Holyoaka, jaką uwielbiam, z idealnie połączonym wokalem na kilku poziomach: mówiony, krzyczany, śpiewany, wyrzeszczany, nie dają wytchnienia aż do kolejnego rozdziału. Co za metalcore'owa opera (i nie, to nie jest pleonazm)! The People wprowadza intro z automatyczną sekretarką i niepokojącym klimatem, by za chwilę uderzyć dźwiękiem i szybkim tempem w Death Is A Living Partner (przewrotny, ciekawy tytuł, swoją drogą). Synthetic Sun to uczta pięknie uzupełnianych riffów Jeffa Hickey'a i Phillipa Farrisa. I bardziej poukładany – Reaction – więcej stonowania, śmielszy skręt w stronę progresywności, mój faworyt na modłę wspomnianego Deftones czy Mudvayne z czasów "The End Of All Things To Come". III rozdział ponownie zaskakuje intrem – niemal bluesowe i akustyczne zawrośnięcie, trochę w stylu Zakka Wylde'a z solowych projektów. Komercyjnym hitem może okazać się An Ocean Of War z najbardziej "ułagodnionym" wokalem w refrenach, przeplatany krzykiem oraz znów wpadającymi w ucho riffami. Ukłon w progresywność znów pojawia się w przedostatnim A Thousand Years a Minute, ale to co Panowie z Norma Jean zaserwowali w ostatnim utworze, totalnie mnie rozdziera. Bo z jednej strony całociowo świetne, chwytające riffy, potężne brzmienie, fale dynamicznej perkusji jak na metalcore'owych gigantów przystało, a oni 10-minutowym, wręcz przejmującym zakończeniem wyciągają brzmienie, którego sam Chino (tak, ten) by się nie powstydził. Wyrwali mnie z butów!

Nie byłabym sobą, gdybym nie zajrzała do tekstów. I też jest ciekawie. W warstwie lirycznej Panowie nie bawią się w recepty na ból tego świata, ale zwracają uwagę na podstawowe wartości: nie kłam, kochaj, zaufaj uczuciom, uwierz. Podsumowując, zdecydowanie polecam sprawdzić, co Norma Jean ma do zaprezentowania! Tak zgrabnego albumu, przemyślanego

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pod każdym względem, włączając okładkę z czterema szczurami, i w takiej akurat stylistyce, dawno nie miałam przyjemności przestudiować. ---Joanna Pietrzak, kvlt.pl

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