



TIGERS JAW

The very last thing I want to do – because it's tired hyperbole that's been perpetrated upon the listener a million times before – is suggest that any band has crafted a new and unprecedented sound by molding the many diverse traits of influential artists that came before. In other words, if I mention that **TIGERS JAW** sounds like it could seamlessly blend in with bands of the early 90's Chapel Hill indie scene just as well as it could amidst today's DIY punk sect, you might roll your eyes and mutter a few choice words in my general direction. Or if I remark that this scrappy young Scranton P.A. band – with all five members under the age of 20 – transmits like a grittier so-and-so or a poppier you-know-who but with the enthusiasm of that what's-their-name, I may lose your attention altogether.

Okay...duly noted.

With that out of the way, the honest-to-god-truth is that Tigers Jaw has written an absolutely stellar, twisted indie pop album that defies traditional categorization. And by "twisted," I mean that the band's latest **Self-Titled** full length tends circumvent conventional pop structures in favor of something a bit more high-energy and off-kilter while still adhering to a slacker groove and uniquely casual melodicism.

Let me explain: Tigers Jaw composes songs that are instantly engaging and memorable without traveling the easy route. Take for example the standout "I Saw Water," which is big, bright and warm with an earnestness that is usually scrubbed clean away once a band hits the studio. At the same time, the song crackles with electricity and whirling, youthful abandon. Taut with energy, it oozes punk rock gusto as guitars clang and buzz amid undeniable melodies that have been turned inside out and bent in 50 different directions. Never mind that nearly all of "Water" – and the majority of the album as well - is sung with two or more vocals in harmonic unison, with founding members Adam McIlwee and Ben Walsh occasionally swapping the lead. Tigers Jaw have no intention of bypassing their singularity in favor of a cheap hook or happy, major-chord riffs. Yet the album is certainly not without hooks or riffs. They're just not the kind that immediately smack you in the face or beat you over the head with their artlessness. They're more subtle...but last twenty times longer in your brain.

It's like that with all of Tigers Jaw's music, whether you're cozing up to fuzzy keys that galvanize songs like "Meals On Wheels" with a positively glowing undercurrent, or you're shaking your moneymaker to raucous, kinetic indie rock numbers like "Arms Across America" and "I Was Never Your Boyfriend." Even tracks like opener "The Sun" takes unexpected, unpredictable detours. Beginning straightforward enough with quick-paced, jangly guitars, it soon careens into a calypso-like beat before swelling into a collision of crackling noise and a rousing sing-along chorus. Through it all, Tigers Jaw pumps out relatively short, dynamic indie rock songs that end up sounding like sprawling pop masterpieces. That's no easy task.

Yes, you've heard this record many times before. It's Pavement's *Crooked Rain*, *Icky Mettle* from Archers Of Loaf and Superchunk's *No Pocky for Kitty* rolled up into one tidy, super-charged package. There are elements of Weezer, The Weakerthans and even The Microphones at work here. Still, play any of those albums back to back with Tigers Jaw and it doesn't sound like any of them. It's simply that this young band has captured their pioneering spirit without completely jocking the style. They've written an album that evokes a nostalgic timelessness and reminds a genre that it truly can sound fresh and innovative as long as it shows respect while continuing to evolve. Perhaps you really can shape your influences into something new and unique...and if not that, at least something totally awesome and worthy of repeat spins. Take your pick; both apply to Tigers Jaw.

Tigers Jaw is Pat Brier (drums), Brianna Collins (keyboard), Adam McIlwee (guitar, vocals), Dennis Mishko (bass) and Ben Walsh (guitar, vocals). The record was recorded by Joe Loftus at JL Studios in Wyoming, P.A. Prison Jazz Records will be releasing the album on September 23, 2008. The band's debut full-length, *Belongs To The Dead*, was released by Summersteps Records in 2006. For more info go to www.myspace.com/tigersjaw or www.prisonjazz.com. And yes, the band knows that there should be an apostrophe in their name.

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