

James Edwyn & The Borrowed Band

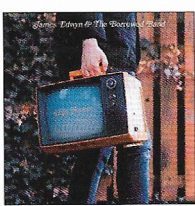
HIGH FENCES

Dead Records

Collective

★★★★☆

A perfect performance from this Glasgow based band



Fully honed after a summer of playing many of Scotland's music festivals Glasgow sextet, James Edwyn & The Borrowed Band were fighting fit when they recorded HIGH FENCES, their second album. It's evident from the opening bars of '*Passing San Ysidro*', a gloriously refreshing slice of country rock that rides along like an LA freeway song with a Celtic passion - Eagles meets The Waterboys if you like.

Throughout the album Edwyn and his colleagues recall some of LA's finest denizens (Little Feat and Jackson Browne come to mind) while remaining fairly rooted in their homeland. Edwyn's voice retains a bit of a local burr while he's well able to hit a soulful groove, aided and abetted by Emma Joyce's harmonising. The band meanwhile can turn out a pedal steel flavoured delight like '*Pushing Statues*' or churn up a funky stew on '*Get Back Up*', a song which reeks of country funk with Gospel undertones. '*Try Not To Think Of Now*' is a fully realised update of the sound familiar from Jackson Browne and Warren Zevon records with piano driving the melody and slide guitar squirreling throughout, Ronnie Gilmour ably capturing the wily playing of the likes of Waddy Watchel and David Lindley.

While they can capture that LA vibe with a consummate ease they also cast further afield. '*Starlet*' veers from bedsit romance to guitar starred anthem as Edwyn sings of the eponymous doomed creature, the song as perfectly realised as the best of Prefab Sprout. '*Quoting Sagan*' is a Dylan like tale of someone lost within fantasies of aliens while Taking Liberties rumbles with a slight martial beat as Edwyn addresses the perennial conundrum of us and them, a relationship gone wrong perhaps but delivered with a wonderful band performance, dramatic and filled with Sturm und Drang. '*Burning Man*' is another dramatic performance, burnished with glistening guitars along with a mournful organ it again ebbs and flows wonderfully as the band reflect the moods thrown up by the lyrics. The album closes with the reflective farewell of '*Doubts*', another finely crafted and excellently played song, the harmonies drifting off into the distance as the song ends.

HIGH FENCES is a mature and incredibly well played set of intelligent songs set in a folk/country/rock milieu and it's highly recommended.

Paul Kerr

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