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AIRWAVES SPECTACULAR – LIGHT THE SEA

BY JER@SBS (HTTP://SLEEPINGBAGSTUDIOS.CA/AUTHOR/JERSBS) / ⌚ APRIL 8, 2018 / 👁 11 / 💬 0

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Airwaves Spectacular – *Light The Sea* – Album Review

If you're looking for a diverse & versatile sound – Airwaves Spectacular might just be the solution your speakers are looking for. You can absolutely hear the widespread range of influences in their music from the old-school to the present day, which becomes an asset & strength of this band as they shift, transform & adapt their own perspective in sound throughout the many twists & turns over the course of the ten tracks on their latest record, *Light The Sea*.

To say the music on this album jumps out at you would be to put it mildly – “Remedy” leaps forth immediately bursting into full-gear and before you can even blink, you're already in the bombastically bright atmosphere & piano-filled melody of the first cut. Love the energy here as they start up their new record...reminds me a lot of Eskimo Joe, which is always a good thing in my books. Tons of personality and character in the vocals, I love the additional percussion & atmospheric elements you can hear in the music, the electro edge it has and swirl of samples before it breaks down & comes back with controlled, smooth intensity fueling this track to a strong finish. Excellent clarity in the mix, smartly layered backing vocals...you can really hear everything crystal-clearly on “Remedy” and the entire idea sparkles as a result – Airwaves Spectacular are off to a great start with a single-worthy tune right at the beginning.

“Another World So Lost” puts the versatility in this band on display right away, as the sound of the record shifts into another dimension early on. I'll say this...ultimately, I really like the music and its sly & smooth sound...and I think it stands out for its lyricism; I think those words cause a few issues with the metering & flow by trying to say a bit too much at times, but for the most part, the added descriptions & imagery also count for quite a bit. In terms of accessibility...“Another World So Lost” has it fairly tough where it sits on this record...not a bad song by any stretch, but in terms of placement between the standout sounds of “Remedy” and the smoothness you'll find in the immediate hooks on “Spirit Assembly” to follow – I have zero doubt this record's second track will have to fight harder for your attention. On repeat listens, “Another World So Lost” begins to gel more within this diverse set and make its own impact, and overall it certainly speaks to the Airwaves Spectacular approach that consistently reaches for new ideas & sounds in effort to entertain with something truly fresh & new. I do both like and appreciate that it puts a lot of the pure intentions and sentiment that drives the heart of this project on display here in the lyricism...they're clearly socially-aware and on-side of the people. I also think that, the more you listen to “Another World So Lost,” the more those chorus hooks sink in.

That being said, I think the hooks on “Spirit Assembly” hit you immediately without a single second's pause. I'd go as far as to say there's a very good chance this is my favorite cut on the entire record...I could certainly make a great case for it. On “Spirit Assembly,” Airwaves Spectacular draws you further into the sincerity of their sound & style, revealing a bit more heart & melody in their writing and performance. The gentle sway of the music and delicate beat that comes with it set the stage for the vocals from Cyrus and Kayla to power the melody and become the heartbeat of this song, complemented perfectly by the subtle electro and piano along the way. What a seriously impressive combination...the more I heard this tune, the more I fell in love with what they're doing on “Spirit Assembly” – there's a hopeful, inspiring, and empowering sentiment that runs freely through the lyrics & sound of this song...the hooks in all parts are compelling & strong...big checkmark in the win column. The way that they add such cleverly subtle layers in the mix as a song plays on, building the atmosphere brilliantly or even stripping it all back like they do at the end...they really makes music that stands-out.

The immaculate electro-funk of “Redefine The Shine” really, really works. Musically, this whole track is straight jammin’ and supreme to listen to. Lead-singer Cyrus is absolutely awesome on this entire cut and delivers one of his most impressive performances by really cutting loose and letting his personality truly shine throughout this innovative & imaginative tune. I like the positivity you’ll find in the lyrics and attitude in the music of Airwaves Spectacular overall, but it’s a vibe & energy that exists on “Redefine The Shine” that really brings that charm & character to the surface even further. There’s a part of me that might want a little bit more from the chorus here... but that’s likely because the verse stands-out with so much awesomeness that you can’t help but turn this one up. I loved the breakdown of this cut as well, diving deep into a powerful moment with the low-end synth and coming back with a build-up that burns with a brilliant slow-intensity before they launch back into the chorus hooks for the finish. Really vibrant tune...definitely the kind of energy that catches our attention and holds right on to it. I’ll prove it to ya – check this out!

Airwaves Spectacular - Light The Sea CD release



But then like...DAT BASS! C’mon people – that’s about as smooth as it gets...when you hear “We Just Heard The News” and the wonderful way Chris is KILLIN’ it here, you’ll know exactly what I mean. On his standout bass-lines alone, this track is a serious winner...it also has a wonderful background layer of vocals from Kayla that hit the mark, along with a classic-vibe in the melody of the vocal-flow that sounds comforting in a familiar kind of way. I had moments where I thought the match of Cyrus’ sound really worked on “We Just Heard The News” and there were a few spots where I felt like he reached a bit too far with a performance that’s almost too amped-up at times to suit the chill of the vibe & background. What I do admire is the confidence and commitment he has...there are SO MANY different ideas, styles, influences, and sounds that play a role on this record, and every single time, he goes after the vocals without hesitation as he launches into different approaches, tones, and energy with the focus

required to make the experience a real one, no matter what the end results may be. There's courage in that kind of ability...don't even get me started on just how much potential exists with that kind of strength – between what you hear in both the vocals & music idea-wise, Airwaves Spectacular could go anywhere with their music, in any direction, & always come out with multiple valid reasons to spend time to listen. "We Just Heard The News" is no exception to that rule...I think the chorus is great...and that bass...THAT BASS is purely exquisite in every sense of the word. I really liked that incredible transition late in the song around the 2:40 mark and how it twisted & tweaked it once more to keep us listening intently.

So far, we've heard many songs that might remind you of Human League or New Order...and they take that energy further into the genre with a more Depeche Mode synth-laden sound on "Chasing The White Noise" – I think a lot of people will dig the sound of this song and the multiple layers that it contains. The sound of the verse between the music, beat, and synth-sounds, almost sounds like it would fit on Nine Inch Nails' *Pretty Hate Machine*, were it not for its inherent Cure-like attitude hanging in the atmosphere through the guitars, and brightness & style that Kayla brings to the chorus. "Chasing The White Noise" ultimately becomes something closer to Massive Attack or like Sneaker Pimps in its juxtaposition of sound & ideas – and even though the contrast of low-end & brightness are widespread, the balance here between the execution, writing, ideas, and performance, is impeccable. I think there's excellent potential for "Chasing The White Noise" to be a single at some point, it has multiple access points and a sound that commands your attention through the verse, switching to a captivating sound for the chorus that floats through the air in a mix of hauntingly beautiful haze & dreamlike mystique.

I think "Drive Slow Kayla" was probably one of the tougher songs to immediately get into at first; I think that both parts are certainly strong, but the contrast and divide between them seemed to be wider and less balanced on this cut...like the difference between the devil & the angel on your shoulders. I think the solo in the instrumentation around the 2:30 mark was more than impressive and a serious highlight moment on this song, and I think the sound of Kayla's vocals in the chorus are fantastically dreamy, inviting, comforting, glowing & warm. She puts in a beautiful & graceful performance throughout this song whenever she appears and her vocals soar sincerely in their tone, flow & sound the entire distance. Cyrus goes for a bit more of a theatrical approach to the mic...which he certainly pulls off well; like I said, wasn't so much the individual parts of the song so much as it was I had a harder time feeling like they belonged together under the umbrella of this one idea...if that makes any sense.

"If I Could Run Away" has some amazing things working for it...another extremely strong tune on *Light The Sea* overall. The rhythm & flow of the vocals works incredibly well with the electro-infused beat and colorfully imaginative sound that blossoms by the second throughout this song, contrasting cleverly with the melancholy of the lyrics & subtly empowering vibe they carry into. I'm...hmmm...I'm cautious about the early stages and main hooks of the chorus on "If I Could Run Away," because they come dangerously close to like, Debbie Gibson or early Alanis territory...and I think that, once you hear the depths that a song like their title-track "Light The Sea" delivers right afterwards, it becomes tougher to feel like that sweeter-than-candy energy fits this record, even though they've put a brilliant array of moods on display throughout the music on this album. I'm right on the fence with it personally, because I think at the end of the day, Kayla sings it well...it's not so much an issue of that as it is the retro-synths surrounding her – which, oddly seem to work just fine during the verse when Cyrus is singing it, bringing it closer to that flashy sound of something like The Killers. I think the rhythm of the vocal-flow of the verse

is definitely the main hook, and the exit out of the verse into the pre-chorus also works strongly...personally, one of my favorite moments on this record. Chorus-wise...I've come out of this one with a fresh cavity or two from the sweetness in the overall sound...but again, for those of you out there that like sugar in your speakers, this might just hit the spot for ya. For me – this record quickly became all about its title tune.

I'm big on ambience, art, & poetry...so for me, the album's title-track "Light The Sea" immediately caught my attention...the beginning of this song and the way it opens up is totally my thing. Smartly placed percussion, excellent transition between the song's main elements...it's noticeably more of an artistic effort and a welcome one. I loved the use of natural sounds in amongst the synth & electro, I thought the sound of the effects on Kayla's lead were great, and later-on into the song when it combines the spoken-word of the beginning in a call/answer approach as she sings with it was excellent too. The chorus really provides an additional highlight & memorable moment...loved the guitar sound and each time I felt like I was clinging on to the final moments where this song fades out, hoping it would continue on somehow & dive further into that fantastically hypnotic vibe at the end of this song. On the strengths of the idea alone, it's definitely one of my favorite moments on this record...facts are facts though, Airwaves Spectacular also really captured the magic in their performance as well and really maximized this opportunity to turn music into art. There's so much about this song that I would encourage them to explore further...because I think there is a real captivating, hypnotic, beautiful & engaging sound here that they've latched onto that still has so much more to give. Combining ideas and artistic inclinations together like this could lead this band into all kinds of unexplored territory in music that I could only imagine would be incredibly rewarding to break through into as musicians & creative-types...there's always something so satisfying about uncovering the unknown. "Light The Sea" does a great job of exploring a whole different side of the Airwaves Spectacular sound with incredible success. There's every audible reason on display to support why this song became the album's centerpiece.

It took me a while time to figure out what I wanted to say about this final track, "Life Costs Much More" – because all I could figure out at first was that the rhythm, energy, and groove is TIGHT and sounds perfectly amped-up. I'd enjoy listening to it at first with its crunchy chords riffin' it up on the guitars, but each time by the end, I was more & more sold on this tune. Then it dawned on me – they had added the most immaculate final ingredient to this song and to this record with that last tiny twist in adding a violin sound to "Life Costs Much More" at the very end...it was the audible cherry on top that pushed this good song to a great song every time I heard that moment spring to life. So good in fact, I almost have to wonder why they didn't slip that in there a bit more earlier on in the song to be truthful – it's a subtle sound in the music overall, but it absolutely has a maximum impact. I demand a remix! Just kidding – I have no right to demand anything else from this crew or from the music they've made on *Light The Sea* – they've tested out a ton of sounds, styles, and directions & really put themselves out there creatively, creating a compelling, interesting, and dynamic record to listen to with real variety in sound & style...and I admire that greatly. Airwaves Spectacular ends their record on seriously vibrant hooks and ideas that last – like, LISTEN to that percussion breakdown around 2:15 before they rip back into the chorus...moments like that are completely awesome and they've had plenty of'em along the way throughout this album. Those final moments though...C'MON...I need SO MUCH MORE of that...you will too...and as we like to say around here, that's exactly what that 'repeat' function is for. *Light The Sea* is ultimately quite a different record from a lot of what's happening out there

