



NYC'S Punk n' Roll Magazine

the inevitable breakups

What's love got to do with it? Ask the Inevitable Breakups . . . they'll name names and tell you about Justine and Stephanie and all the other things that inevitably go wrong. You know those old movies you sometimes catch on TV? It's a basic boy meets girl plot where the headstrong guy bumps up against the very independent gal who's just a little whacky. They're like fire and ice, but in the end you just know they're gonna hook up. At some point the guy's colorful and cliché-prone sidekick announces, "Joe, I tell ya that doll's got you spinning like a top. And I'll tell ya something else. You're falling for that dame like a ton a bricks and she's gonna have ya wrapped around her little finger before you can say Jack Dempsey!"

Well, the inevitable does happen, but if the Inevitable Breakups wrote the script, yeah the guy would still get the gal but by the last act she'd cruelly dump him and run off with the colorful sidekick. Love's disappointments may be a recurring theme throughout a lot of their songbook, but the Inevitable Breakups deliver these songs not with melancholy regret and longing, but with biting testimony via Daniel Stampfel's urgent and stinging vocals. The music is up-tempo, powerful and despite the lyrical content, very pop oriented with strong melodies and hooks aplenty. And for boy/girl stuff, this is pretty heady. At Tribeca, they opened up with the extremely catchy "Justine." This time the lover's rival is another city (L.A.). On "My Mind Is Weak" he laments not so much that his lover left him, but the fact that he misses her. All is not so tragic. "Baby, You Just Fill Me Up" is an ode to the simple mundane pleasures of being in love and the Breakups recall the excitement of early sexual exploration with a cover of Tommy James and the Shondell's "I Think We're Alone Now" (although the Shondell's "(My Baby Does The) Hanky Panky" would have fit this band just as well).

Stampfel is an impressive frontman and the center of attention: at times beating his Rickenbacher into submission, backing away from the mic for a little victory dance now and then, and letting loose with an flurry of rat-a-tat-tat vocals; but this music depends heavily on the beat and it takes flight via the rock-steady rhythm section of Evan Silverman on bass and M. Daniel Peña on drums. Peña is a monster on his kit. When called upon, he can pound out incredibly powerful rhythms of rage and redemption. They also had a second guitarist this night, but when I saw them at a subsequent CBGB gig they performed as a trio (and sounded no less impressive). Daniel Stampfel said this was a temporary situation and also told me they were again in the process of recording, with a possible seven inch vinyl (!) in the plans.

The Inevitable Breakups current release, the 2002 EP No Wonder You're So Beautiful (co-produced by Television's Richard Lloyd), is a little jewel of a recording. It may be a bit more on the pop side than their live shows (with a different lead guitar and bassist), but is just as enjoyable.

Commentary and photos by Jeff Rey
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