

You set the CD in its tray and hit the play button, find a comfortable seat to relax and begin to listen... the music starts out nicely enough but then only a minute into the disc... the quiet voice of Dean Roberts paradoxically sings the lyric, 'yr a bunch of cunts, the lot of yuz' over acoustic guitar and plodding piano notes followed by slow-motion handclaps. Did he just say that? From this moment on, Dean Roberts et al have your attention. "Uneasy Flowers", the new album from Autistic Daughters is their second and a continuation of their earlier work, "Jealousy and Diamond" in which they defy genre in their experimental exploration between improvisation and carefully-crafted minimalist-pop compositions. The album pushes deeper into the songwriter territory of Dean Roberts that began a few years ago with his acclaimed solo album, "Be Mine Tonight". On this album, he has decided to focus thematically around a character named Rehana and issues of disappointment by others and from others as well as a good dose of allusions to liquid for good measure. The lyrics are obtuse at times, but only so as to keep interpretation open, not to be pretentious. Songs borrow lyrics from each other in a self-referential way and there's even mention of a Rehana junior to complicate the questions and deepen the mysteries. All of this points to an enclosed and fragmented world; a collage of imagery that the Autistic Daughters have pasted together using sound and text in a beautifully holistic way. The production is pristine and the subtleties of the arrangements allow each instrument to take a turn so as to allow sufficient spaciousness, never crowding. There is a cinematic quality of unyielding dreariness to the atmospherics and ambience but the music remains understated and subtle only rising on occasion to tastefully accent the mood. It would be easy to mistake this as quiet and harmless, but a dark underbelly to the music and lyrics slithers across the desert-like soundscapes carrying with it just the right amount of venom from Roberts' pen. If this is your first encounter with the Daughters, it might interest you to know that the group come from a long history in the avant-garde... with Dean Roberts on vocals and guitars (Thela, White Winged Moth), Martin Brandlmayr (Trapist, Radian, Kapital Band 1), and Werner Dafeldecker (Polwechsel, The Year Of) on double bass and guitar. They also enlisted cohorts Martin Siewert (Efzeg, Trapist, The Year Of) and Chris Abrahams (The Necks) to join in the songwriting process making this quite a dream team of sorts. If Labradford, Talk Talk, Low, and Jim O'Rourke are among your collection, I'd recommend you check this out and see what you're missing.

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