



Sholi

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Sholi

(Quarterstick)

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by [Matthew Fiander](#)

Upon hearing this record, it seems so unlikely that Sholi is a new band, and that this is their debut. There is a confidence in what the band is doing here that usually takes time to work up to. These are gnarled rock songs, but they're also intricately layered pop songs at the same time. And the way Sholi mesh those two, the immediate hooks with thick layers of musical curios, makes this debut the kind of record that can stand up well over time.

"All That We Can See" immediately shows off the breadth of the band's chops. The goes from cacophonous art-noise, to sinewy arena-sized rock to folk dirge, and back again. "Tourniquet" starts on a moody growling, guitars grinding against the asphalt as the song drives along. But then it eases into a soaring chorus, something more uplifting than combative.

These are the turns this record is full of. It marries disparate elements with a surprising ease. And though the drums wind tightly around the tracks, and guitars shift on a dime between pinprick notes and squalls of distorted chords, none of this becomes self-indulgent. Sholi are, at their base, a rock band, and the players never forget that. "Spy in the House of Memory" builds to a cinematic, post-rock break-out, only to be outdone later on the record by the throbbing, beefed-up freak out of "Out of Orbit."

But for every head-nodding rock blast, there's a delicate, patient piece to settle into. Closer "Contortionist" swirls with layers of guitar, whipping up atmosphere around singer Payam Bayafa that then draws that thick haze out, instead of breaking it with a storm of guitars. "November Through June" has insistent sprays of guitar, and is driven by Jonathon Bafus' galloping drums—that sound like all four of his limbs are working independent of each other, their perfect meshing of strikes seeming almost incidental—but the song rests not on musicianship but on a beautiful melody.

Sholi never sacrifice the hook in favor of their complicated sound. You can live in these songs and find the gems hidden deep in the tracks, but you can also get into these songs right off the bat, appreciating their straightforward tunefulness. Sholi surely descend from a class of swirling guitar bands that came before them—namely the likes of Polvo and Codeine—but they put far more emphasis on singing than their predecessors. Bayafa, aside from being a brilliant guitarist, is also a compelling singer. His lyrics are dense and impressionistic, but to hear his sweet bay is to feel the emotion embedded in those words. So yes, the guitar work is amazing, but Sholi are not a guitar band. Nor are they a rhythm band. Or a band based on lyrics. They are, instead, a well-rounded band. A little of all those things. They've done quite a bit with a debut, made something hooky enough to stick in your head, and built-up enough to stay there for quite a while. With one album, Sholi have done what a lot of bands take a whole discography to do. The only question is: What do they do next?

RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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