



Flowerbooking^{INC}

THE LIFE AND TIMES

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If you were forced to guess what a band sounds like based solely upon the bands they've toured with, but without actually having heard them—as we're all forced to at one time or another—you'd be pinning the tail on the proverbial donkey with The Life and Times. Seemingly odd tour pairings with bands like the Johnny-Cash-flavored Murder By Death, indie folkster William Elliot Whitmore, ultra-heavy sonic juggernauts Pelican, Japanese atmospherists Mono and the urgent rockists Sparta and Engine Down have all made for smart mixed bills and paid dividends in many new fans for them.

Live, the bright light and intense heat put off by the three lights The Life and Times bring on tour with them have not only given each of them exquisite tans on one arm, they provide a visual representation of what is happening on stage. As the blinding white lights bounce off their guitars and cymbals and around the room, the resulting lights and shadows are apt metaphors for the sound of three people creating mountains of sound and blissful mood.

Allen Epley (gtr/vocs), Eric Abert (bass/moog) and Chris Metcalf (drums/cymbals) have added to the disrepair of interstates across the US throughout the '90s as members of Shiner, Ring Cicada and Stella Link, respectively, and have seen fads and styles fade at about the same rate as cheap jeans. The Magician EP (Stiff Slack), their fourth overall release, is a fad-free snapshot of a band that's constantly morphing from a dragon, to a butterfly, to blinding white light, to a bird, to Godzilla, and back again, often within the space of just one song.

Writing recently for The Magician, the band couldn't help but notice the ease with which each song was crafted. The obvious difference between these songs and those found on their critically well-received debut CD Suburban Hymns (DeSoto) in 2005 was that they had found their M.O., their *raison d'être*, or whatever you want to call it, and it has produced a streamlined style that is also constantly, but effortlessly evolving.

A song like "Hush" gives the impression of what a Kevin Shields wet-dream might sound like with its rolling, overdriven sonic tidal-waves topped with Epleys' powdery sweet vocal. "I Know You Are" begins with a simple 7 note theme that Doug Martsch might've written before it spins into a cauldron of whirling colors. Aberts' Roger Waters inspired bass lines on "Killing Them Softly" and "Ave Maria" reveal their more Floydian tendencies, while "The Sound of the Ground" offers a simple guitar melody repeated ad nauseum until its' zenith is ultimately realized. These solar vs lunar atmospherics are always balanced by Metcalfs' Bonzo-sized beats, of course.

June of 2006 saw the release of an eponymous split 10"/CD and subsequent two week tour of Spain, both of which included the fine Barcelona-based band Nueva Vulcano (ex-Aina). Now, the fine Japanese label Stiff Slack Records, (Mercury Program, 31 Knots, Shiner, Mates of State) had offered up a home for The Magician at a time when Kim Colettas' DeSoto Records had entered a self-imposed long-term slumber. Plus, it gives them a chance to knock back a few Sapporo tallboys from vending machines while on a headlining tour of Japan in October 2006.
