



albumreview

Portico
Progeny Blues
Copperspine Records

JILL GAMEZ
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Progeny Blues is Portico's second musical offering, following 2005's *Shape to Form*. While *Progeny Blues* isn't as initially arresting as their previous release, it does get better after a few extra spins.

"Two Killers" is one of the catchier songs on the album, with jingling guitars and an interesting vocal cadence making it the album's standout track. It's a very accessible song about the

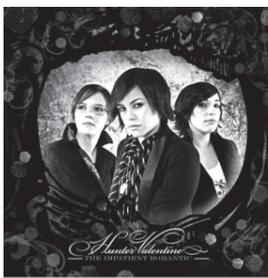
difficulty of speaking honestly in relationships, with lead vocalist Lyn Heineman sounding like a huskier-than-normal girl group. "High Walls" is equally engaging, with stronger and more assertive vocals, cheerier guitar lines, and percussion-driven rhythms. "The New Wild" even takes Portico's sound in a completely different direction, showcasing a down-tempo, Kathleen Edwards-style

country sweetness.

The one weakness of *Progeny Blues* is that the majority of songs don't take advantage of the varied instrumentation Portico is capable of. "Sincerely" is an exception, having a rich, orchestral sound—including a tuba and a baritone—which compensates for its overly earnest payback-themed lyrics.

"All Your Daughters" is the most lyrically mature track, with Heineman singing convincingly about familial discord and disappointment. While it starts off slow and has a long instrumental break, the sound swells majestically at the end with a choir full of airy, girlish voices.

Overall, *Progeny Blues* is a strong sophomore effort, with varied instrumentation and quality vocals—all it lacks is the immediate grip of *Shape to Form*.



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Hunter Valentine
The Impatient Romantic
High Romance Music

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Hailing from Toronto, Hunter Valentine dares you to fall in love with them. Their MySpace page states that the band have a James Dean-esque kind of power that makes people fall in love with you, but where you're too busy being beautiful and oblivious to care. However, on their debut album *The Impatient Romantic*, Dean's sexy pull isn't as self-evident as the band would like it to be.

Certainly, these three girls are quite beautiful—the cd cover shows them all dressed in black, bangs all swept fashionably to the same side. Hunter Valentine is a queer band

with a sizable following in Toronto, and people will surely compare them to Tegan and Sara. But these bands are fundamentally different, and Hunter Valentine provides a fuller rock sound than Tegan and Sara through their use of keyboards and bass. Also adding to the rich sound palette is Kiyomi McCloskey's technically accomplished voice—unlike Tegan and Sara, she can sing in tune and with soul.

Some of the songs tend to drift into pop-punk mediocrity, and the album generally lacks bursts of creative energy and originality that one expects when listening to a new band.

The songs mostly stick to the same tempo with the same standard and predictable chord changes.

The lyrics are of a girl-loves-girl variety, but they don't seem to delve very far past surface-level lyrics. When compared to a gay icon like Rufus Wainwright, Hunter Valentine have nothing new or revealing to say about homosexual love—or any kind of love for that matter. The title of the album suggests that perhaps the band is at least partially aware of its own flaw—these girls just seem too immature to be writing about love and relationships.

One can't forget how new this act is, however. With only this first album under their belt, Hunter Valentine has plenty of places to grow musically. If these girls had a chance to mature both musically and artistically, they could be a formidable force. *The Impatient Romantic* shows that they have the raw talent to back themselves up—now they just need the refined substance.



albumreview

Manchester Orchestra
I'm Like a Virgin Losing a Child
Favourite Gentlemen

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You'd think that if a band was called the Manchester Orchestra, they would either be from Manchester, or, at the very least be an orchestra. But the Manchester Orchestra is neither. Despite their obvious shortcomings, however, their debut album, *I'm Like a Virgin Losing a Child*, showcases the young band's energetic lust for falsetto vocals and stinging guitar tones.

The Manchester Orchestra—whose

average age is a tender 19—have only been around for about a year and a half, but have already toured with such greats as The Flaming Lips, Wilco, and Built to Spill.

Their debut, while not perfect, does contain many diverse and often catchy songs. The opening track, "Wolves at Night," sets the limelight on lead man Andy Hull's full vocal range and maturity, a feat accentuated by the fact

that he's barely out of high school. Thankfully, the rest of the album flows smoothly off of the resonance that "Wolves" creates.

Unfortunately, the album starts to lose momentum during songs like "I Can Feel Your Pain," and "I Can Barely Breathe." If the intent of these songs is to be emotional and deep, they have failed—miserably; they sound melodramatic and self-indulgent. But back on the bright side, the MO's debut does have many tracks their achieve their intended purpose, such as "Colly Strings," the perfect six-minute cathartic closer.

The Manchester Orchestra has a few problems, but *I'm Like a Virgin Losing a Child* is engaging enough to deserve at least a MySpace hit. Not bad for a band from Manchester—by way of Atlanta, Georgia, that is.



albumreview

The Riff Randells
Doublecross
Dirtnap Records

SARAH SCOTT
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Regardless of hether or not you've heard of them, the Riff Randells are not a fresh new band; in fact, the girls have been performing together since they debuted in Vancouver back in 1999. They've toured Canada, the United States, and Japan, and released multiple singles across the globe. However, *Doublecross* marks their first full-length album, and that gives reason for the

music scene to sit up and take notice.

The album is filled with catchy, upbeat tunes—the band has clearly honed their pop-punk sound over the past eight years. Though a full, eleven-track album—with ten original Riff Randell tracks and a cover of Little Girls' "Bandana"—*Doublecross* clocks in at just under twenty-five minutes, with no songs stretching past the

three minute mark. But despite this, the album is fun, enjoyable, and even a little bubbly at times.

Teenybopper songs like "Traitor of the Heart" and "The Only One" may seem immature to some, but you can tell the Riff Randells were singing with smiles on their faces and basking in every second of each song. Even the whiny "When You Go" and the jarring title track don't get annoying, providing some contrast to the rest of the sickly sweet album.

The Riff Randells may be flying under the radar for now—and have been, for almost a decade—but that will inevitably change once *Doublecross* starts circulating to a large audience. Do yourself a favour and grab it early, so you can say you were there before the fame, fortunes, and drugs tore them apart.



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