

the appleseed cast



SAGARMATHA
Available Now



Find a Band

Search

[login](#) [new releases](#) [top albums](#) [forums](#) [news](#) [features](#)

[home](#) [metal](#) [alt/indie](#) [punk](#) [rock](#) [hip-hop](#) [pop](#) [other](#)

Sholi Sholi

Full Review

User Ratings (11)

4

Nick Greer STAFF ([126 Reviews](#))

excellent 2009-02-16 | [29 comments](#) | [1,239 views](#)

Summary: Sholi's debut LP is an intelligent indie album that hinges off of unexpected contrasts and a truly amazing drum performance.

Two and half years ago I was driving home and listening to Stanford College Radio. Emerging from the needlessly esoteric setlist that likely contained Chilean dubstep or Icelandic black metal came beautiful, fluttering drumming and a wistful guitar arpeggio that woke me from my highway coma. What I heard was the free time opening to "All That We Can See," a track that leapt out at me, not just from the strange college radio fare, but also in terms of the indie genre as a whole. Sholi's style balanced being impressionistic, emotive, and hypnotic with being taut, invigorating, and intelligently composed. Not that indie artists never do that, but rarely do you get a band that strips indie of its bombast and production gimmicks and replaces that with instrumental interplay and musicianship. Not the since the late 90s and early 00s, when bands like Cursive and Karate were still considered indie did such a sound thrive. Now, after a three-song EP, a split with The Dead Science, and a covers EP (they did a great version of "The Sprout and the Bean"), Sholi are releasing their first official full-length on Quarterstick Records.

A listener first encountering *Sholi* might grasp for similar artists in an attempt to contextualize Sholi's elusive sound. Minus the Bear's most recent album, *Planet of Ice* comes to mind when considering the longer tracks on the album, and singer Payam Bavafa's voice certainly resembles Jake Snider's, but the synthesizer and prog influences are no where to be found. Indie groups of the late 90s that paid their bills on clean-tone guitar arpeggios and emotive vocals like Cursive or Sunny Day Real Estate seem comparable, but Sholi work those in for texture and groove rather than melodrama. Another band from that era, Karate, similarly incorporates slight jazz inflections in their otherwise streamlined sound, but Sholi's similar ideas manifest in the bravado drumming of Jonathon Bafus, as opposed to the guitar playing of Geoff Farina. There are even flourishes of math rock in the mix with alternating time signatures and heavily hammered guitar patterns, and until the vocals entered on "Contortionist," I thought I was listening to some recently unearthed Off Minor B-side. Clearly, Sholi can't be cornered by their influences and similar artists, as their sound has incorporated a range of familiar instrumental tactics without any



Tracklist:

1. All That We Can See
2. Tourniquet
3. November Through June
4. Spy in the House of Memories
5. Any Other God
6. Dance for Hours
7. Out of Orbit
8. Contortionist

1 dig it

Release Date: 2009

You Say:

3.5
great

Classic - 5

Explain My Rating

User Rating Distribution:



On **1** Lists

Recommended by Reviewer:

Karate - Unsolved
Minus the Bear - Planet of Ice

Members Also Liked:

Brand New - Deja Entendu
Bon Iver - For Emma, Forever Ago
mewithoutYou - Brother, Sister
The Microphones - The Glow pt.2
Neutral Milk Hotel - In the Aeroplane Over the Sea
Kayo Dot - Choirs of the Eye
Pixies - Doolittle
Brand New - The Devil And God Are Raging Inside Me

of the associated baggage. The songs are certainly ecstatic and enjoyable, but with a level-headedness and reserved quality that similar bands forget during epic wankfests or heart-on-the-sleeve vocal performances.

Much of this composure and patience originates in Payam's excitingly droll vocal delivery. His voice escalates to points where he is shouting or singing at the high end of his range, but somehow his tone always feels just detached enough from his own delivery to keep Sholi's songs from derailing. More often than not, Payam sings headily and elongates his melodies, allowing them to wrap around phrase endings, which gives his vocals a penetration they may not have enjoyed considering the surfacey quality of his melodies. Overall, his vocal performance is probably the single biggest agent in Sholi's tendency to enrapture the listener. Contrasting Sholi's hypnotic side, is the more immediate side created by the instrumental performances featuring Payam on guitar and Eric Ruud on bass. These two parts are the main reasons I've made comparisons between Sholi and bands like Cursive. Tim Kasher's guitar strategies from *Domestica* seep through the seams with Payam and Ruud engaging in a lot of contrapuntal exchanges and big chord progressions that create a textured thicket of melodic and harmonic ideas. The playing is a little more rugged and emotive than the reserved vocals, counterbalancing those two elements nicely. The glue that binds these two opposing forces is the drum performance of Jonathan Bafus. Bafus is at once a machine, producing accurate and technical beats to cradle the verses and choruses, but also refreshingly loose with his playing, favoring pointillistic explorations of his entire drum kit. The level of detail and difficulty he works into his parts requires a dedication to technicality that aligns his performance with the guitar and bass work, but the way he approaches smearing together different sounds and creating neverending fills is an essential part of Sholi's rapture.

The final clue in the mystery of Sholi's sound is the way they construct their songs as units, which, unsurprisingly, also tread the line between being harmonically-driven and texturally-driven. For example, look at the alternating passages of "Spy in the House of Memories." The song is content to break down into longing, ambient passages, only to jump back into sections that gives the listener cadential turnarounds. "All That We Can See" is a balancing act between the free-time drumming and the anchoring guitar arpeggios that escort the listener into the comparatively stable verses. Maybe the most seamless blend of the two philosophies comes on "Contortionist," where the drumming continuously propels the song along its rapid pace, but does so with beats so shifty and elusive that the listener never quite grasps them. On top of that, the gyrations of the guitar and the smooth Rhodes piano only further this quicksand-like musical phenomenon. The album goes out differently than it came in though. Instead of expressionistic musicianship and open-sounding chord voicings, the album winds down on one of Sholi's more harmonically stable and deterministic progressions, only to fizzle out in a smooth ambient fade. It is with these curious contrasts that Sholi makes their mark. Their self-titled LP is diaphanous and elusive, but leaves the listener deeply moved nonetheless.

 [Email this Review to a Friend](#)

Recent reviews by this author

[PSY/OPSogist Suffused With Static](#)

[Aussitot Mort Montuenga](#)

[Dela Changes of Atmosphere](#)

[Dead to Me Little Brother](#)

[Ganon As Above, So Below](#)

[Grails Doomsdayer's Holiday](#)

Comments:

[Add a Comment](#)

Page 1 of 2 | [Next >](#) | [>>](#)

redskyformiles

Album Rating: 4



Comments: 2180
02.16.09

I'm a couple songs in and I must say, this is pretty good.

Digging: [Coroner - No More Color](#)

SeaAnemone



Comments: 150
02.16.09

Sweet album art... this sounds like something I'd like.

Digging: [The National - Boxer](#)

NortherlyNanook

I gave this a listen yesterday, and it's very good. This style of indie is usually pretty