

Cymbals Eat Guitars, *Why There Are Mountains*

The sweat's the first thing everyone notices. It's hard not to, as salty trails drip from the pores of Joseph D'Agostino, the yelping, riff-raking frontman of Cymbals Eat Guitars.

Here's why he can't seem to stay dry: Pitchfork's "Best New Music" tag—plastered across a rave review of Cymbals' self-released debut, *Why There Are Mountains*, six months before its official release—was just the beginning of the band's rise to notoriety. A calling card to toss around from time to time, sure, but not something they were about to rest their entire record on.

"We had no fucking clue what we were doing in those first few months," admits D'Agostino, quite matter-of-factly.

"There was just this giant rush to keep up with hype that's beyond us," adds drummer Matthew Miller, who co-founded the group in 2007, the year they found their sound through elaborate demos with the Wrens' Charles Bissel. Demoes that were developed even further during proper studio sessions with Kyle "Slick" Johnson (Modest Mouse, The Hives). Like many other early adopters, Johnson discovered CEG on New York's Lower East Side circuit, playing the kind of caustic set that's earned the attention of ABC News, *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, and the Pitchfork people, who continue to support the group's every move. That includes a CMJ roundup with the following pull quote: "[D'Agostino] was sweating profusely by the end of the first song, and spent the rest of the set contorting violently and playing his guitar like it was trying to eat him...Cymbals weren't just loud, they sounded monumental."

Hype-raking live reviews aside, there's this important detail to consider: *Why There Are Mountains* is an actual *album* in an era of diminishing downloads an attention spans, a 'grower' that dishes out simple pleasures with every spin. Meaning everything from shades of shoegaze (the patient, feedback-bathed passages of "Share") to subtle Motown nods (the buoyant bass lines of "Cold Spring," the breezy horns of "Indiana"). Not to mention pure, unadulterated chaos, as embraced in the gate-crashing "And the Hazy Sea," the tension-building "Like Blood Does," and the throat-singeing denouement of "Wind Phoenix."

As for what's next, well, they're figuring that out one track at a time, as D'Agostino's carefully-cultivated cuts are complemented by Miller's Wire-y rhythms, the wobbly low-end of bassist Matthew Whipple, and the Technicolor textures of keyboardist Brian Hamilton.

"I've played in a lot of punky bands where no one cared about the final product—about the actual *craft* of songwriting—and that was always very frustrating to me," explains Whipple. "I was always the guy glaring at someone else for not

getting a part right."

Not here. As D'Agostino adds, "A song needs to raise the hairs on my neck at least three or four times before I'm happy with it. What's the point otherwise? That's the whole thrill of playing and why we're doing this in the first place."

"It's pretty simple," says Miller. "If something doesn't sound right, we're not gonna play it."