



Reviews:

Les Étoiles come full circle on “Alight, Alight”

Soren Spicknall
WIIT STATION MANAGER

Eight years after the quiet 2008 release of his debut album ‘Never to Alight’, UK native David Fitzpatrick begins his latest release with a refrain of the closest thing that first LP had to a title track, “Empty Carriage.” While a back-to-back listening of both the original and the new version, titled “Empty Carriage (Return Journey),” reveals a significant increase in production value over the course of the last decade, it also demonstrates how remarkably stark Fitzpatrick’s work has become under the moniker Les Étoiles. The 2008 recording already seems minimal when first heard, accented only by quiet guitar strumming, atmospheric keyboard, and somber bells, but the reimagined recording released as part of this summer’s ‘Alight, Alight’ is even more sparsely composed, with only a piano keeping the melody company. This introduction serves as a blueprint for an entire album to come, a quiet release even in the career of an artist primarily defined by his music’s dreamlike qualities.

Released like every Les Étoiles album before it, on London-based netlabel Records on Ribs, home to artists as diverse as the academic Hip Hop of Talk Less, Say More and the all-out psychotic break of genre-hopping “dreamy noise” group Strap The Button, ‘Alight, Alight’ is the artist’s fifth to date. Les Étoiles’ basic formula has always been reliable: Fitzpatrick’s masterfully controlled baritone washes



Image courtesy of Les Étoiles

over a foundation of minimal minor-key piano, the former often layered against itself for a symphonically intimate effect. What’s most remarkable here is that those two building blocks encapsulate the entirety of this album’s sonic landscape, free from the experiments with guitar, synthesizers, and unobtrusive electronic percussion which punctuated previous works from Les Étoiles. The emotional intent here seems to be reflective both in style and content, its songwriting scope localized and its pared-down accompaniment permitting a focus on lyrics. ‘Alight, Alight’s’ entire tone seems to bring a mental close to each of Fitzpatrick’s previous albums, a possibility hinted at in its name and its description on the artist’s Bandcamp page, which declares it “the closing of a circle, or the completion of a long journey home.”

While Les Étoiles has never found significant recognition beyond the small community which surrounds Fitzpatrick in England, the project’s discography will always stand on its own as a testament to the potential of new beauty to be found in piano minimalism, a facet of music that some would consider played-out. Some fans may prefer older albums for their more fleshed-out instrumentation, but ‘Alight, Alight’ is proof that Les Étoiles remains compelling even in David Fitzpatrick’s most basic form. 7.1/10

Union Board’s Hawks Coffeehouse continues into its fourth year, now on Wednesday nights

Reno Waswil
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

For those uninitiated with Campus Life, Illinois Tech’s premier event programming organization, Union Board (UB), has been a historic presence on this campus and promoter of its goal “to have fun” since its founding in 1938. UB is known for putting on what is by far, the most, and some of the biggest and best events every semester, thanks to the deep dedication of its members and its communal experience and know-how. Although not as big as what are referred to as their “Traditions” events, (e.g. Homecoming, Spring Formal, and MTCC Late Niite) Hawks Coffeehouse has been one of the most consistently popular and longest-running periodic events, enough so to bring it into its fourth continuous year this Fall 2016 Semester.

Although it has seen changes in its names, logo, and a few other features throughout the years, the mainstays of the event have stayed the same and have been passed down from lead-programmer to lead-programmer: UB’s Music Committee recruits student, local, and national, usually pop and folk-styled musical (and poetry) artists to do performances for anyone in the student body who wishes to attend. This is paired with hot drinks (e.g. coffee, tea, hot chocolate, apple cider) and usually a sweet treat of some kind. Every other week, from 7 to 8 p.m., students gather in the MTCC Welcome Center (the area off to the side of the State Street doors into the MTCC) to drink in the music or what have you, the good spirits, and the coffee and let the day wind down. Thanks to Alien Sound and Lighting’s consistently reliable and expert support, Hawks Coffeehouse (often called

“Starhawks” or just “Coffeehouse”) has never failed to be an enjoyable experience to those lucky enough to be able to attend, who come to watch, do homework or read, and respectively socialize.

One major change that was decided last year by the UB Executive Board for the event as it enters this new academic year is that instead of having it on Tuesday nights as it has been since its conception, it is now going to take place on Wednesday nights 7-8 p.m. According to Union Board’s Music and Dance Chair, Citlali Bueno, the change occurred because students were consistently unable to attend the event for a set of the same regularly timed classes. It was deemed worth changing it for at least one semester to see if the new time would be a better fit, as well as to better coordinate this event with other regular on-campus UB event, “Wishflix” a monthly movie

event on Wednesdays at 9 p.m. in the Wishnick Hall Auditorium.

The first performance is scheduled for Wednesday, August 1, 2016 featuring multi-instrumental “looping-artist” Noah Hoehn to kick off the start of the biweekly event. The following performers are scheduled to be a set of student performers (still being worked out) on September 14, Nelly’s Echo on September 28, Lakin on October 12, Poet Neil Hilborn on October 26, Dan Henig on November 9, and what UB hopes to be a Hawks Coffeehouse Student Performer Cabaret for the last event this semester on November 23. Those interested in taking part either this semester or in future semesters are advised to email music@ubiit.org.

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