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**Jonah Parzen-Johnson, Noah Garabedian, Aaron Ewing**  
*Reed's Bass Drum - EP*

iTunes

Anyone who claims to know me should be well aware of my mixed feelings on jazz – and "mixed feelings" is perhaps the kindest, vaguest way I can put it. In plainer terms, jazz and I are not friends, and so it was with great anxiety and a lumpy throat that I delved into the self-titled EP of Reed's Bass Drum, a relaxed, soft-Sunday-afternoon type of record spearheaded by the titular trio of Jonah Parzen-Johnson, Noah Garabedian, and Aaron Ewing. This New York-based sax-bass-drum band are pure worshippers of their craft, unyielding in their dedication to the lighter and lazier aspects of meandering jazz. While they certainly haven't made a convert of this particular nonbeliever – that would take a miracle of Biblical proportions and nothing less – Reed's Bass Drum have earned a healthy dose of my admiration for adhering to a stripped-down sound devoid of any pop hybridization.

And make no mistake: Without a doubt, this eponymous EP is the jazz equivalent of advanced calculus, mercilessly unkind to newcomers of improvisational music. Formless and non-linear, *Bass Drum* takes its joyful time exploring every little nook and cranny of its loving genre, offering nary an apology for its minimalist structure and other winding, circular riffs. Parzen-Johnson and company take delight in the cyclical nature of their journey, thus lending their music a formidable (if unnerving) respect from casual listeners. This is record is, in other words, the jazz equivalent of hardcore thrash metal, appealing to a thin-but-pure slice of dedicated acolytes.

The opening "Like Pepper" is, like much of *Bass Drum's* work, patient and unyielding, skipping and swirling for six minutes before giving way the seven-minute expose that is "Numbers or Letters." Likewise, the concluding "The Roost" pushes post-modern jazz interpretation for eight minutes. By the time the EP cascades into its soft ending, nonbelievers will feel like they've run a marathon on one leg, while aficionados will swear it has delivered aural nirvana. Though I'm of the former group, the truth undoubtedly lies somewhere in the middle, with the music of Reed's Bass Drum remaining true to a masterful if highly inaccessible form of jazz.



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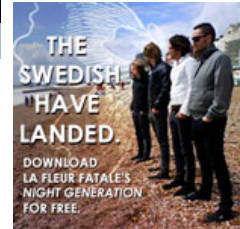
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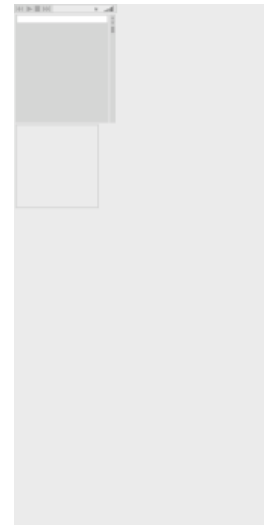


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