

many instruments and a madcap metronome. That part doesn't last long, either – another twist, and what sounds like all of the band's eight members are shouting incomprehensible lyrics, a co-ed Le Tigre without matching outfits or dance routines.

Most of *In Case We Die*, the band's second album, continues in a similarly unpredictable fashion. No single genre defines these Aussies, no pat term exists for a group that uses more than three dozen instruments (including hand and power tools) to create songs that cross the map from surprisingly spare to intricately detailed. (A graph in the liner notes cleverly shows which instruments were used on which tracks.)

Strings sweep through "Maybe You'll Owe Me," as one of the many vocalists sings "There's no way that I'll sleep when you're near me." Whether he's charmed or frightened is left up to the listener. The following song begins with the female singers chanting, "She said you'd given up/ Your folks told me you should be left alone/ On a mountaintop/ Knocking the aeroplanes down with stones." The melody is handed off to the male voices, then bounced back to the women, the pattern slightly changed, smoothed into a lullaby as the song fades out, only to transform at the last minute into a layered horn piece.

One of the oddest (and most endearing) things about Architecture in Helsinki's sound is the impression that no single member of the band is the leader. Each song sounds like the product of eight different minds and talents, and while certain voices



Architecture in Helsinki

appear, here and there, to take the lead, the reins are handed off before you can really get a fix on what exactly that member's distinct contribution to the whole might be. The natural question, then, is how does this egalitarian approach translate in performance? How many instruments can one band take on tour? It's got to be interesting – at the very least, just to see the band pull off "The Cemetery," with its dreamy *way-oh-way-ohs* lined up next to a bit that calls to mind "Ballroom Blitz," of all things.

Architecture in Helsinki plays with Mahjongg, StopSignGo and Hot Sack O' Nuts at 8:30 pm, Thursday, May 26 at the WOW Hall. \$6.

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