

Review

by Tim Sendra

Anyone who has followed the Kadane brothers over the past almost 20 years first as Bedhead, now as the New Year pretty much knows what to expect from a new album released under their guidance. You're guaranteed chord progressions that start off quietly and build and build until the speakers are overflowing with chiming guitars and your heart swells at the restrained majesty of it all. Count too on Matt Kadane's poignant, almost spoken vocals and glum lyrics. Take it to the bank that your listening experience will be emotional and fulfilling. On their third, self-titled, album the New Year continue to take steps away from the sound that while in Bedhead they cultivated to perfection. Bedhead's songs were more about the spaces between the notes, the way the chords meshed together, and an overall hushed bleakness that gave the songs a decidedly melancholy appeal. The New Year feels more song based with a richer, more arranged sound and a punchier rhythm section. Sure, Bedhead had uptempo songs and could rock on occasion but the New Year has a barely harnessed power that fills up a room. The solos the brothers tear off on rockers like "The Idea of You" or "The Door Opens" have real emotional power; indie rock stalwart Chris Brokaw is typically thunderous on drums, and the whole band can raise quite a ruckus when they try. The songs and overall feel of the New Year is much sunnier too, almost fun at times. "The Company I Can Get" is uncharacteristically lighthearted lyrics about taking all the friends they can get, even the "redneck in the red Corvette," almost provokes a chuckle, something that would have been unthinkable in the Bedhead days. Of course, it is still the Kadanes so it's not exactly a Polyphonic Spree record, there is still plenty of quiet grace and melancholy to go around. Another slight change on *The New Year* is the use of pianos as both part of the ensemble and taking the forefront on the ballad "Body and Soul." Though at first glance it almost seems heretical to add piano to such a perfectly balanced sound, it actually works well. Indeed the whole album works like a charm, the Kadanes songwriting has never been better, and the attention to sonic detail pays off throughout. Songs like "Seven Days and Seven Nights" and "Folios" are among the best the brothers have ever put on record, and that's saying a lot. *The New Year* also stands as an equal to the brothers' best work and that makes it absolutely essential to any card-carrying indie rock devotee.