

Music

Sound Advice: The Follow – *Up With the Sun*



The Follow's new album *Up With the Sun* is a thoughtful but repetitive endeavor. It's the band's fourth full-length album, but it adds nothing new to the musical landscape. Although The Follow is from Columbia, its popularity spreads well beyond mid-Missouri. More than 225 college and public radio stations have played the band's tunes, and the group hit the No. 2 spot on the MP3.com Alternative Artist Chart.

"Million," the brightest ray on this sunny album, begins with an electronic vibrating hum increasing in volume before it's suddenly drowned out by drums, guitars and vocals. An explosion of harmony results as lead singer Troy Rickertsen sings, "You are somewhere in my head..." The line might be directed to Rickertsen's wife, Amy. She is in the band and plays the keyboard and bass. Troy's high school friend, Mat Matlack, plays the drums.

The Follow's style parallels Coldplay. Both contain the slow singing style and similar song formats. Both quicken the tempo of the drums to signify the beginning of the chorus, and both frequently create breaks in the song with brief guitar solos. However, electronic sounds play a larger role in The Follow's music. The electronic component overwhelms the other instruments and diverts attention from the lyrics. "Somewhere Else" provides an excellent example of how electronic sounds can do more harm than good as the electronic components drown out Rickertsen's singing.

"Million" and "I Won't Change" provide some sweet listening through the satisfying blend of vocals with instrumental breaks and catchy lyrics. However, the other 10 tracks sound disconcertingly similar, instrumentally and vocally. The lyrics in nearly all the songs focus on the same heartwarming themes: love, God and freedom. *Up With the Sun* largely centers on affection as a motive for all action and generally celebrates it. It's rare for an album to focus solely on uplifting ideas, but The Follow does so and creates a lack of variety. Rickertsen's use of the same style of singing in every song intensifies the repetitive nature of the album. He sings the words slowly, always adding a syllable to the last word of every line. The Follow seems to have borrowed the age-old successful method of creating a new sound and then repeating it over and over because it works.

Somewhat more original, the album contains deep messages encrypted in these generic songs such as in "Anything at All:" "Locked inside/Soul within a bottle/Looking through the glass/at the ones outside so free." The Follow needs to escape its confining bottle and explore the possibilities of varying its messages and its song structure.

- Nisa Korte