

Mp3 Totem Maples - Ars Poetica



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The surreal sequel to Trip to the Sun. It is poetry that breaks the mold. Spoken Word set apart. You just HAVE TO listen. 18 MP3 Songs SPOKEN WORD: With Music, EASY LISTENING: Mood Music Details: Spoken word for the music lover Local band, Totem Maples, merges music and spoken word, with a dash of faith and innovation. by Adam Pasion The Totem Maples have had shows on and off Sunset in Hollywood, been nominated for "Best Spoken Word Song" at the Just Plain Folks Independent Music Awards, played at the award ceremony, was offered a project for an MTV pilot with X-Patriot Studios and released three albums. So why aren't you listening? For those looking to break away from the whiny acoustic and emo bands, the Totem Maples (TM) are truly new and innovative. Composed mostly of APU graduates (and one hoping still to graduate), TM emerges on the scene. Named after the Algonquian word totem, which means "his relations," and an old maple tree that poet and alumnus Larry Handy used to write poems under, TM are simply poetry and music. They are a band without peer, but in a market that demands classification, they are most commonly labeled spoken word. For those unfamiliar with the genre of spoken word, it is an umbrella term that encompasses everything from political ramblings to slam poetry but even those terms don't adequately define TM. As Handy declares, "it's like a genre-less music. We have songs with harmonica, songs with the organ now, piano, electric guitar, congas, drums, turn tables, sound effects, you name it. You can bring a bagpipe in, just don't let it conflict. We are a very imaginative band, and the possibilities are endless." Within their genre, they are perhaps the only spoken word act to incorporate a full band, which goes far beyond the simple three-piece (guitar, bass and drums) formula. They incorporate Justin Punzalan on turntables, keyboards provided by Joanne Kim and Erik Elsey's percussion-everything from African djembes to South American goat toes. Also included is Matt "coffeehouse" Coleman, whose soulful acoustic guitar draws from influences such as folk singers

and jazz greats like Louie Armstrong. And if needed Coleman, throws in Irish tin-whistles, thick bluesy harmonicas and anything else that may come up. Brian Sadler finishes off the roster on electric guitar, as well as the new love of his life, his Hammond Organ. Each song has its own feel, like "The Musician" featuring harmonica or "DJ Kimochi vs. Scratch Mouth Master Owlyism," with beatbox and turntables. All of this is complemented by Handy's thoughtful and provocative poetry, of which Kim declares, "it's genius." His carefully crafted lines paint pictures of his own Los Angeles as a mistress with smeared lipstick, and at other times it breathes with powerfully honest, probing questions that make you reflect on your own faith. Handy's intensely personal lyrics reveal intimate daydreams about life, love, religion and anything else-moving at the speed of thought. He probes into Christianity, but theology is not his primary concern, as he writes about music, race issues and the monotony of life in a cubicle ("Reflections Beyond 9 to 5'). Handy's poetry is and always has been the focal point of the music. Coleman attests, "One reason all of us even started playing music in the first place was because of Larry's poetry...it's all based on what you're gonna hear vocally." While TM are made up of mostly APU alumni, and certainly all Christians, they cannot be (and all but refuse to be) labeled a "Christian Band." As a matter of fact, Handy tries to avoid classification, as he states, "I don't want to teach, I don't want to preach and I don't want to persuade-I want to inspire." The other members agree that their sound should not be lumped in any particular genre, especially one that has a tendency to pigeonhole artists. Perhaps the most insightful comments on Christian music came from Sadler. "My guitar is really Christian on the album," Sadler said. "The bends [of the guitar]: You can't hear it but I am actually sounding out scripture in them. I think its Leviticus that I got most of it from!" Nonetheless, the spirituality of the Maples inevitably exudes from their music. Such honest lyrics like the award nominated song "Gethsemane" go on to describe the inadequate views of God inherent in churches, atheism, New Age and even among theologians, who Handy declares, "limit You [God] to the left brain." The provocative and honest lyrics falling at the cadence of folk guitar and melodic piano is a new kind of experience. The music, "delivers thought to the listener but it also demands thought from the listener," Coleman said. "It's a home cooked meal, not fast food." (Article taken from the April 22, 2005 issue of The Clause; a publication of Azusa Pacific University)

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