

Pacific Noise



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polly panic

The deep brooding vibrato of Polly Panic's cello that opens her debut album *Painkiller* is a declaration that something ominous this way comes. When the near-scream of her voice arrives fifteen seconds into the first track "Soft Witness", it's clear that the foreshadowed ominous object has arrived. While a gothic-punk-rocker with a cello is a unique enough conceit on its own, Polly Panic's voice is still the most striking element of *Painkiller*. With the gothic-intensity of Evanescence's Amy Lee and sometimes the rough growl of Janis Joplin, Polly Panic's voice is well-suited to the industrial Tool-esque soundscape that she creates through *Painkiller*'s eleven tracks with drummer Devon Rocketship. While she often eschews intricate rhythm for notes and words drawn out for a few seconds each, she manages to create interesting rhythms on tracks like the breathy "Mother" and the slow and moody "Bones". Like fellow indie-darlings Devendra Banhart or Joanna Newsom, Polly's voice is an acquired taste that rewards those who acquire it, though many of her more strained tracks don't have the payoff of Banhart's or Newsom's. The songs that scream become more subdued with each listen and acquire a delicate beauty on tracks like "Red Dress" or "Bones". The punctuated beats of Rocketship's drumming stands in stark contrast to the protracted notes of Panic's voice and cello, but serves the sound well to propel the music forward. While Polly's voice delivers the intensity demanded by most tracks, a few tracks seem to strain her vocal chords beyond their limits and she seems to be holding back like an injured athlete or stretching notes till she sounds short for breath. But overall it has a lot to offer and makes me excited to see what's to come.