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System and Station "Here is Now"

Some albums are easily inviting, while not quite challenging the listener to do anything but bob along. In contrast, System and Station give fans a healthy dose of daring, difficult, and at times perfect pop/rock songs, as is the case with the intricate "Find the Shore," which sounds like a cross between Guided by Voices and At the Drive-In on sedatives. Meanwhile, there are straightforward, elegant pop/rock nuggets such as "When You're the Witness," which mixes moods throughout without much hassle or problems. Although the band seems immersed in indie rock, there are some glimpses of mainstream influences during the haunting, tension-building "I'll See It When I Believe It," which sounds like a hybrid of Keane and Manic Street Preachers. System and Station never repeat themselves on this album, with "No One Could Know" wrapping itself around a quaint little melody before changing tones into a dreary, ambient-tinged bridge.

Guitarist/singers RFK Heise and Palmer Cloud complement each other well during "Give Us a Sign," which veers back and forth between a Sting-like jazzy brand of pop and a full-bore power pop effort. This passion dissipates during the rather tame and tepid "Ghosts," with only a few fleetingly good moments bringing to mind an Audioslave B-side. This is made up for with the tight and relaxing "Awful Shame," which takes its time fading out. If there's one "mainstream" or radio-friendly rock tune, it's the heavier, edgier "Future of You." The closing title track has some lovely harmonies over the melancholic opening; it could be construed as a cover of a tune by the Rembrandts. Dreamy without being overtly lush before driving headlong into a solid rock arrangement, it is a fine coda to what is an equally fine and adventurous album. ~ Jason MacNeil, All Music Guide