



Jai Agrish - Automata

2000 Blue Bunny Records

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Hooks that will wake you up the next morning, cycling loudly through your mind, Jai Agrish tells us more tales of his magnificent mundane in the debut project *Automata*. How lo-fi staff loops, a drum machine, and minimalistic, sparse instrumentation can be herded into such pop mastery is beyond me. But it is done, nonetheless. Truly a post-modern renaissance man, Jai offers just one more reason for us all to despise him in our petty jealousy with this musical work. Because apparently critically lauded writing, a grassroots legend perzine (*Flygin*), and deft photography were just not enough to keep his hyperactive right hemisphere content. He had to show off by dropping a cosmically crafted record on our doorsteps, too.

Jai's keen perception of composition, an awareness brandished in his zine layouts and photos, plays strongly into this disc, and *Automata* stands as a whole piece - something that must be listened to from beginning to end; something that could theoretically pitch strong singles, but that refuses to dignify such impudence. "How You Dream" tries to run away from home, though, and showcases Jai's surprisingly pleasing vocal strains. As he moons on about lying down, or something or another, a strong desire to ignore the words and just bathe in his penitent patriarchal tones is created. This is a voice that we should all have heard while being tucked into bed as children. "Somerset Streets" could very well be the perfect anti-pop song, without even trying. Things get a little weird as the album progresses from soothing to cheeky, and the last few tracks boldly venture further and further into Collocovision land; a place where Jai's innocent faith skips along tinny beats and suburban streets. His "Jesus Song" is probably the most unique and heart-warming piece of lo-fi wonder, and as Jai playfully tells us about how he's "got Jesus in [his] heart" we are forced to either recoil in defensive mechanism or sing along in healthy regression.

The indie-rock spirit meets the aesthetic of pop, and what wins is completely irrelevant. Now if I could just get over my bitterness toward Jai's overwhelming collection of natural talents...

Earl Campbell

Ordering Info and Audio Samples: FlyginWeb

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