



Music can spring from many places in the tangle of emotions that exist within the performer's soul – hate, fear, lust (and let's not forget our old pal greed) – but its greatest power is often exerted when it comes from what might be the most layered and complex emotion: love.

The third release from the Seattle-based Jason Sees Band, “A Single Frame Passing Through the Light,” does indeed come from a place of love, as well as sorrow. Sees wrote and recorded the songs for this album as a tribute to his wife Zandy, who lost her battle with cancer.

Sees' lyrics and raspy lead vocals are weighted with the psychic pain of that heartbreak throughout the recording, and his sadness dominates every note and beat. This produces some undeniably powerful music, but it also makes for more than a few songs that don't quite work.

It's plain that Sees has an ear for the jangle of power-pop guitar, the crack and thump of rock percussion and the swirl of space-pop synth, and that he knows how to blend these elements to produce crisp, tuneful pieces. For example, “Your Favorite Song” with its brisk, uptempo beat keeping a smile on its face while trying to disguise the tears in its words, is a highlight of the collection, along with the lovely ballad “Light Blue Light,” and the mid-tempo “Beyond the Galaxies,” which has an undeniable warmth to its floating electronic accompaniment.

But as the record goes along, the themes of love and loss become weightier and weightier, and aren't leavened by the music, which sounds more and more exhausted because its having to cart around that weight. The album's closer, “I'll See You Soon,” for example, has a lovely melody, but it's repeated so often that it simply loses its effectiveness.

Sees calls the work he did on this album “therapy,” and he's not exaggerating. It's clear from the first notes that this was a chance for him to work on healing his emotional wounds, and that's a good and noble and brave thing to do. I hope his next album is a more joyful – and hopeful – one.

Tags: [Jason Sees Band](#) [1]
[A Single Frame Passing Through the Light](#) [2]

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Links

[1] <http://shakefire.com/tags/jason-sees-band>

[2] <http://shakefire.com/tags/a-single-frame-passing-through-the-light>