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Autistic Daughters - Jealousy and Diamonds

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Artist: Autistic Daughters

Album: Jealousy and Diamonds

Label: [Kranky](#)

Review date: Nov. 11, 2004



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Be Mine Tonight marked guitarist Dean Robert's return from a lengthy period out of the spotlight, his first recording since the wonderous *And the Black Moths Play the Grand Cinema* in 2000 (recently reissued on Staubgold).

Starting with the post-punk group Thela, extending his wings amid the more experimental trappings of White Winged Moth, as well as being a part-time member of American avant-folk unit Tower Recordings, Roberts has gradually shifted his focus from abstract electronic soundscapes and texture-building to songwriting and arranging.

The tracks on the Autistic Daughters' debut, *Jealousy and Diamonds*, sees the New Zealander (now operating from his base in Vienna) continuing his exploration of the boundaries of songcraft, patrolling territories previously and still inhabited by David Sylvian and Bark Psychosis.

Returning to the band format, playing alongside bassist Werner Dafelecker and drummer Martin Brandlmayr (who perform in Polwechsel and Trapist/Radian, respectively), seems to have provided Roberts with renewed confidence and vigor. Certainly, *Jealousy and Diamonds* is a far bolder statement than its predecessor, and all the better for it. Where, previously, the songs have seemed like mere sonic fidgets and half-drawn sketches, they now possess a restrained definition that recalls Leeds based indie miserablists Hood at their

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most potent. Opener “A Boxful of Birds” suddenly bursts out of its sinewy tension and into sparks of life, with Brandlmayr especially upping the ante, whipping up a mini-state of emergency. Such dynamics could describe the album’s creation – live performance, followed by edits and enhancement in the studio.

But don’t expect a continual field of bombast – for the most part, understatement is the statement being made. Beautifully brushed percussion, tenderly plucked strings and softly spoken vocals conjure up a scene of fallen leaves on a damp Autumn morning. A version of the Ray Davies penned “Rainy Day in June,” is transformed into one of the best tracks The For Carnation never wrote and forms the clearest declaration of Robert’s intent. But all seven tracks here strike the right balance between rock and electronics, improvisation and composition – a great achievement.

By Spencer Grady

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