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Mister Heavenly:
Out of Love
(Sub Pop)

Mister Heavenly is currently the only doom wop group on the scene, perhaps because they invented the still-hard-to-pinpoint genre. Reportedly pulling from a history of heartbreak and the soulful laments of 1950s R&B—although opener “Bronx Sniper,” with its snarls and heavy guitars, is more garage rock revival than anything else—Mister Heavenly possess a gritty sort of charm. *Out of Love* is a constant battle between love and hate, carefree pop vocals and guttural cries creating a demure angst guided by a romantic sensibility. Sometimes, you’re not sure what you’re listening to, but it’s strangely addictive.

Composed of an even stranger indie rock triumvirate of Nick Thorburn (Islands/The Unicorns), Ryan Kattner (Man Man), and Joe Plummer (Modest Mouse), Mister Heavenly boldly embrace their sonic grey area. The pummeling received after “Bronx Sniper” is swiftly remedied with the splattering tambourines of “I Am a Hologram,” which is then replaced with light-footed percussion on the chirping “Charlyne,” an ill-fated tale tightly wrapped in falsely presumed adoration. By the time eponymously titled “Mister Heavenly” comes around with its sprite riffs and handclaps—which make a reprise during the forlorn “Diddy Eyes”—layered beneath wails of self-loathing, the double meaning of *Out of Love* begins to take hold. Equal parts touching and brooding, homage and reinvention, the group’s twisted post-modern aesthetic unfurls with a sweet yet raucous determination.

Out of Love culminates with “Doom Wop,” the band’s concise thesis statement that emphasizes the doom with scratchy drone. “Your Girl” breaks out the saddle shoes, harkening back to those sweater-vested and poodle-skirted dancehall ballads with its Buddy Holly-style “wo-ohs” and softly-strummed melody. When followed by harmonious closer “Wise Men,” the closing argument presents the strongest case for this stew of musical pastiche spanning decades. You might be dubious at first, but doom wop is here to stay.

(www.misterheavenly.com)

***** 7/10 By Lauren Barbato