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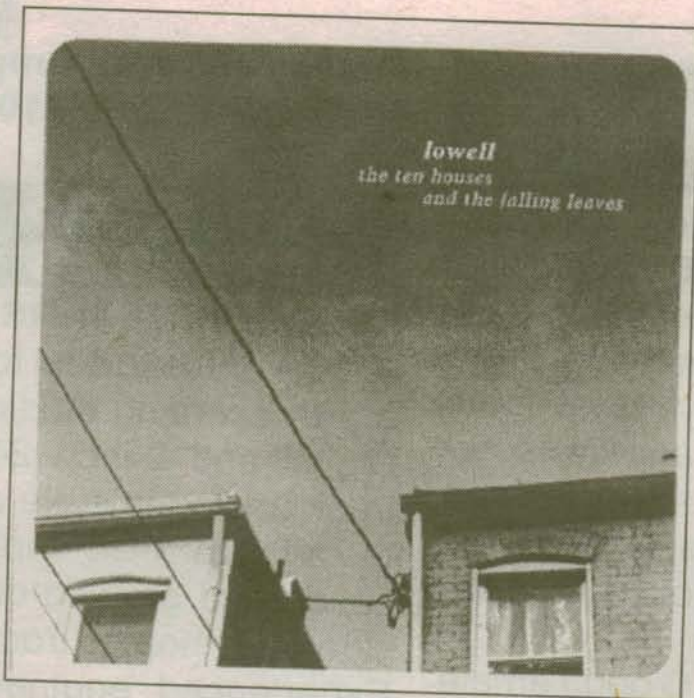
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Lowell *The Ten Houses and the Falling Leaves* (Independent)

It's easy to cringe when you hear the term "college band." Those two words conjure up images of rock star dreams and bad cover songs. Luckily, there are great bands throughout the college towns of America that produce high-quality original music and Lowell is one of them.

On their full-length debut, *The Ten Houses and the Falling Leaves*, Lowell showcases their indie chops and their ability to write dark but memorable rock music.

Borrowing a page from the Superchunk guide to songwriting, Lowell's sound is based on the driving guitar work of Gregory Rago and Michael Nestor. Michael Cichocki on bass and Chris Shelley on percussion serve as the solid and steady rhythm section that rounds out the line-up for the band.

Songs like "The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills" and "The Big Chill :: My Postmodernist Dilemma" are representative of the overall sound of the album. While individual tracks may not stand out on their own, the collective work of *The Ten Houses and the Falling Leaves* is very impressive.

Having mastered the concept that you must have a long and unrelated song title to make it in the world of indie music, Lowell also shows that they have also mastered their own sound and playing as a unit to produce that sound.

A big part of Lowell's sound is the use of dynamics to help add expression to the music. Throughout the 12 songs on *The Ten Houses and the Falling Leaves*, the band proves that it can build a sonic landscape that can lull you into quiet places before soaring you to varying heights. The subtle nuances of dynamic control are what take a seemingly ordinary song and make it a truly memorable listening experience.

While Lowell may not present the listener with anything groundbreaking, they have managed to put together an album that shows a musical maturity beyond their years. One listen to *The Ten Houses and the Falling Leaves* and you will understand.

-Greg Yost



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