

Swing Low, Sweet Notes (*edited*)

Originally begun as an experiment in 1993, Low, led by the husband-and-wife team of guitarist/vocalist Alan Sparhawk and drummer/vocalist Mimi Parker, along with bassist Zak Sally, took the road less traveled in the grunge-infested music scene by crafting sounds appropriately descriptive of its own name. Dubbed the godparents of slowcore, Sparhawk, Parker, and Sally concoct their tried-and-true formula that consists of bare-bones instrumentation using minimalist song structure at glacial speed, reminiscent of the bleak wintry landscape of their hometown. Throughout its eight-year career, Low's true genius lies in its ability to stretch the content of its songs with so little material, creating tension and release with moments of silence. The weight of every note is suspended in the floating expanse of airy space, as evidenced in the terrifically soporific "See-Through" and the heart-rending "Shame" of *Long Division* (1995) and "Laser Beam" of *Things We Lost in the Fire* (2001).

As time progresses, Low adds more instrumentation (strings, keyboards, and tape loops) almost to the point of Swirliesesque background noise on "Don't Understand" on *Secret Name* (1999) and the delay-drenched "Do You Know How to Waltz?" on *The Curtain Hits the Cast* (1996). The band maintains its two-or three-note chord patterns, although there are more extensive progressions in other songs. Though pensive softness and slow pacing are what make Low readily distinguishable from others, it still consistently features sweeping mood and dynamic changes (yes, they do exist in rock music!) in *Things We Lost in the Fire*, unsettlingly quiet "Whitetail" peppered with slight dissonance and repeated cymbal brushing, and the postpartum depression anthem "Embrace." Sparse tinkling piano chords accompany Sparhawk and Parker's rich gospel harmony on "Medicine Magazines." The feel is unmistakably spiritual—a hardly surprising fact considering that Sparhawk and Parker are devout Mormons who often insert biblical references and events of church history in their lyrics.

Aside from sporadic tours in England, the band is currently there finishing the next record to be distributed later this year. This should keep any longtime, new, or potential Low aficionados on their toes in the meantime.

Swing low, sweet notes

Originally began as an experiment in 1993, Low, led by the husband-and-wife team of guitarist/vocalist Alan Sparhawk and drummer/vocalist Mimi Parker, along with bassist Zak Sally, took the road less traveled in the grunge-infested music scene by crafting sounds appropriately descriptive of its own name. Dubbed the godparents of slowcore, Sparhawk, Parker, and Sally concoct their tried-and-true formula that consists of bare-bones instrumentation using minimalist song structure at glacial speed, reminiscent of the bleak wintry landscape of their hometown. Throughout its eight-year career, Low's true genius lies in its ability to stretch the content of its songs with so little material, creating tension and release with moments of silence. The weight of every note is suspended in the floating expanse of airy space, as evidenced in the terrifically soporific "See-Through" and the heart-rending "Shame" of 1995's *Long Division* and "Laser Beam" of 2001's *Things We Lost In The Fire*.

As time progresses, Low adds more instrumentation (strings, keyboards, and tape loops) almost to the point of Swirliesque background noise on "Don't Understand" (of 1999's *Secret Name*) and the delay-drenched "Do You Know How To Waltz?" (Of 1996's *The Curtain Hits The Cast*). The band still maintains its two- or three-note/chorus pattern, although these are more extensive progressions in other songs. Though pervasive softness and slow pacing are what makes Low readily distinguishable from others, it still consistently features sweeping mood and dynamic changes (yes, they do exist in rock music!) in *Things We Lost In The Fire*; unsettlingly quiet "Whitetail" peppered with

slight dissonance and repeated cymbal brushing, the hope-versus-hopelessness of "July," and the postpartum depression anthem "Embrace." Sparse tinkling piano chords accompany Sparhawk and Parker's rich gospel harmony on "Medicine Magazines." The feel is unmistakably spiritual—a hardly surprising fact considering that Sparhawk and Parker are devout Mormons who often insert biblical references and events of church history in their lyrics. Aside from sporadic tours in England, the band is currently there finishing their next record to be distributed later this year. This should keep any longtime, new, or potential Low aficionados on their feet in the meantime.

