

# Ra Ra Riot enters the Indie rock scene with 'The Rhumb Line'

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The Syracuse, Ny. based band Ra Ra Riot delivers a sophisticated blend of indie rock, string instruments, and hauntingly catchy melodies in their debut album "The Rhumb Line."

"The Rhumb Line" was released on Aug. 19 in the U.S. and Canada, and Sept. 29 internationally.

The album is dedicated to former friend, inspiration and drummer, John Pike, who died in June last year. Songs like "Each Year" and "Dying is Fine" are not the post traumatic songwriting of a grieving band.

The quintuplet formed two years ago and released a self-titled EP last year. Ra Ra Riot is Wesley Miles on keyboards and vocals, Alexandra

Lawn on cello and vocals, Milo Bonacci on guitar, Mathieu Santo on bass guitar, and Rebecca Zeller on violin. Cameron Wisch plays drums in all of the songs.

"The Rhumb Line" is moody

and melancholy at times, while at other times optimistic, bouncy and even cheerful. The moodier melodies act as a precursor to fall. The first track, "Ghost Under Rocks" opens up with heavy cello and bass followed by mournful humming leading into the lyrics, "When every little thing/ You own is looking back/ At you and starts to mean/ Less than it ever did." There is a depressing essence

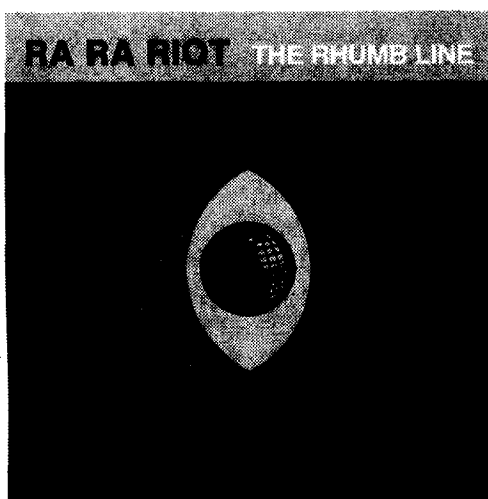


Photo courtesy of RARARIOT.COM

in fall and winter; a similar essence is felt in this song.

While the single "Dying is Fine" has a sullen title, the catchy dance appeal is obvious. The music itself happy, counteracted

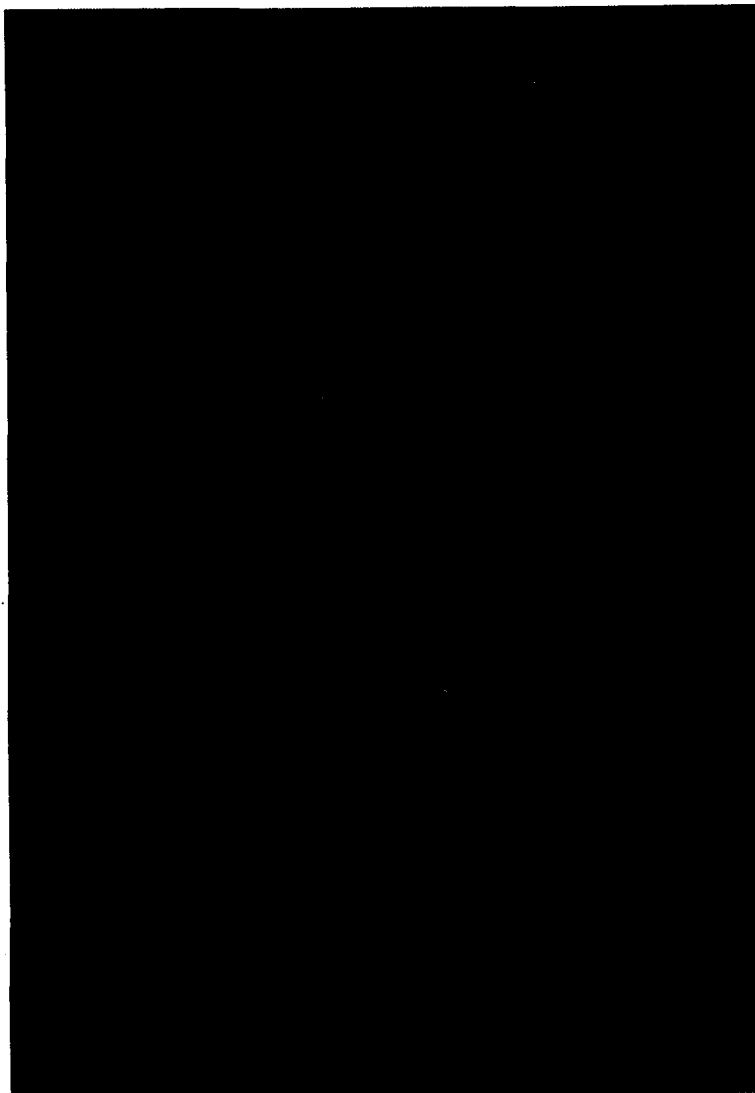


Photo courtesy of MYSPACE.COM/RARARIOT

by the lyrics, "Death oh baby/ You know that dying is fine but maybe/ I wouldn't like death

if death were good/ not even if death were good." So we dance do death, it may be morbid, but

the music is good.

Even happier is the song, "Can You Tell" which may be the cliché love song on the album, but just because it is cliché doesn't make it any less amazing. The string instruments enhance the music in a modern sense without sounding too much like "classical" music.

The vocals are a bit like Elliott Smith because they are wispy and hallow in some songs. There is no hard rock edge in the voice of singer Miles' who also plays keyboard for the band.

Those who are fond of bands like, Arcade Fire, The Maccabees, Cabin, Grand National, Zox, Cursive, Los Campesinos, The Hibernauts, Mere, and Cut Off Your Hands may be interested in checking out Ra Ra Riot.

For the first attempt of a fledgling band, "The Rhumb Line" is a great album. For only being on the indie rock scene for two years, their music is mature and composed. It is going to be exciting to see how the band evolves over the next few years. Many tracks from The Rhumb Line are featured on the bands Myspace page and can be found at <http://www.myspace.com/rarariot>. The album is only \$10 can be found on the band's Web site.

# Sebold tops charts with 'The Lovely Bones'

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In April of 2004, Back Bay Books released a fictional novel by up-and-coming author Alice Sebold, which proved to be a chilling, yet poignant piece of work that soared to the top of the bestseller charts. Sebold's brilliant creation, "The Lovely Bones", is the heart-wrenching story of 14-year-old Susie Salmon, who is brutally raped and murdered on her way home from school one dark afternoon. After her death, Susie reaches her version of heaven, and watches in yearning from above as the people who were once a part of her life attempt to carry on with

their own lives without her.

This particular genre of story, one where the main character is looking down on the world from the heavens, is not one that was new to the literary world when 'Lovely Bones' was published. However, it is Sebold's beautiful way with words and descriptions

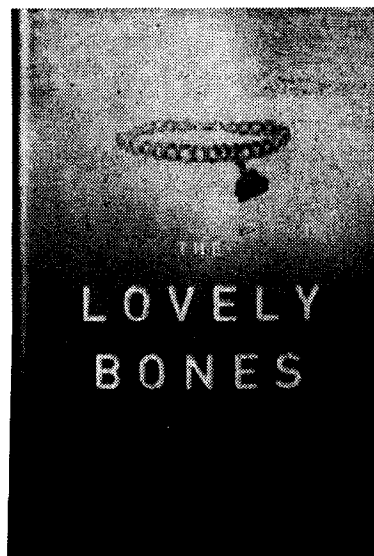


Photo courtesy of amazon.com

that make her novel so unique.

The bulk of the first half of this book deals mostly with the shock and grief the members of the Salmon family face when it has become a cruel reality for them that Susie is truly gone. There is also a strong element of mystery in this section as her father obsesses over the identity of her murderer, which the police

struggle to discover for quite some time. On top of missing her deeply, Susie's family struggles with the changes each of them subsequently go through, as her siblings grow up and her parents' marriage is tested by the cloud of trauma that hangs over them.

The most interesting aspect of the novel is how it morphs into a coming-of-age tale for Susie in her heaven, although she is essentially frozen for eternity as a 14-year-old girl. She learns about letting go, and how her loved ones on Earth will not be able to do the same until she liberates them from their grief by finally realizing that life is forever over for her, and it is not wrong to stop wishing to be back with them.

Sebold was a victim of rape once herself, and her experiences in coping with that struggle have undoubtedly made her a very reliable source of the devastating emotional detail necessary for this novel. However, she is also someone who can shed light on the brighter side of recovery and healing, even though this is channeled through fictional characters in her book. 'The Lovely Bones' is a compelling story that combines her knowledge of a gruesome life struggle with the wisdom of a person who has found peace in her life once again through it all.

Some words for the wise: store a box of tissues close by while embarking on this literary adventure.