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Music: Strive: Fire

Our Take

The piano driven pop rock genre has absolutely exploded in the past couple of years, from everyone from The Fray to Copeland offering their different takes on the genre. One of the newer acts to try their hand at the genre is Chicago's Strive, who has already made it clear who their target audience is by licensing their songs to serve as backdrops to Keeping Up With the Kardashians and The Real World. But though their target is obviously the mainstream, how will the indie crowd who is eating up bands like Copeland react? The band's debut, Fire, reveals that the indie crowd may still enjoy this group even if they aren't up to the level of many of their favorites.

One element that helps Strive out is the fact that their songs were actually written by front man Derick Thompson. In a time where many of the bands of this type are handed songs by song writers and are simply meant to attract radio listeners, it is nice to see that Strive writes their own material that feels genuine. As one might expect from a band of this type though, it seems that many of the songs are romantically themed but the overall feeling here is positive rather than negative (this certainly isn't an emo group). Thompson has a great voice and though it may be a little too poppy for some of the male listeners out there I have a feeling females everywhere are absolutely going to eat this up.

Strive claims to take inspiration from U2, and this does show slightly in their instrumentals. The group has tried to emulate some of the dynamic instrumental arrangements of U2, though their styles are much more piano driven and more minimal in style. However, what will make or break this group for some people is their lack of bite. The songs on Fire are flooded with melody and lack any edgy riffs or hooks that will pull listeners looking for experimentation in. This is admittedly fairly cut and dry piano rock that does offer plenty of jubilant melodies, but without any edginess or bursts of energy it seems that Strive is destined for mainstream success more than underground recognition.

I have to give Strive credit though, as they have already recognized who their target audience will likely be and have created music that will thoroughly please listeners in that category. If you're looking for more experimental or edgy pop rock you may want to pass on this one, but if you want decent piano driven pop rock that isn't manufactured or overly repetitive then give Fire a listen. Whether or not their inclusion in the aforementioned television shows drives people away or not remains to be seen, but know that if you like plenty of melody in your music that this group is a safe bet.

<http://www.strivefans.com/>

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