

KOWLOON WALLED CITY

GAMBLING ON THE RICHTER SCALE

On *Gambling on the Richter Scale*, their first full-length (and first outing with Virginia's The Perpetual Motion Machine), Kowloon Walled City add a touch of finesse to the grinding pummel introduced on last year's *Turk Street* EP. Listen to the snaking guitar line opening "Paper Houses," the brief solo on "Sleep Debt," or the tremolo picking closing "Bone Loss" and you'll hear it: Kowloon Walled City have discovered the guitar.

Not to worry, this is no wankfest; Kowloon Walled City (guitarist/vocalist Scott Evans, drummer Jeff Fagundes, bassist Ian Miller, and guitarist Jason Pace) won't win any hot-licks, dick-measuring contests. It's all about girth anyway, and the group's always had that in spades, with *Turk Street* drawing comparisons to Neurosis, The Melvins and other low-end explorers, from the '90s AmRep roster to the current crop of sludgecore contenders.

It's not just the guitars, either—"Diabetic Feet" is the closest Kowloon Walled City could ever get to a prog opus, and the nimble rhythm work on "Clockwork" showcases Fagundes as the band's real secret weapon. Evans' vocals are more varied as well, in both treatment and performance, adding further dynamics to the leaner, meaner KWC presented here.

Even the recording—captured once again by Evans in the band's rehearsal space—reeks of refinement. Two years in and the band's growth is apparent. There's some wind in these sails, coming off a year of playing shows and songwriting, goofing with alter ego Snailface, playing NoisePop, and collecting great press from the likes of *Thrasher*, *Terrorizer*, and a slew of other publications and blogs.

Of course the rumble's still there: the crushing heaviness, the churning and lurching, the tempos that drag like continental plates. Tectonics, as it happens, are a theme here. Note the album art, with smoke rising from the band's hometown of San Francisco, freshly leveled by the 1906 quake. It remains a very real threat on the left coast, and a versatile metaphor at that—crumbling economies, deep tears in the social fabric, war and brutality, humanity's blind march forward... take your pick. The further we get on our collective road to nowhere, the more heavy music becomes the most suitable expression. And as *Thrasher* put it last year, Kowloon Walled City *is heaviness*.

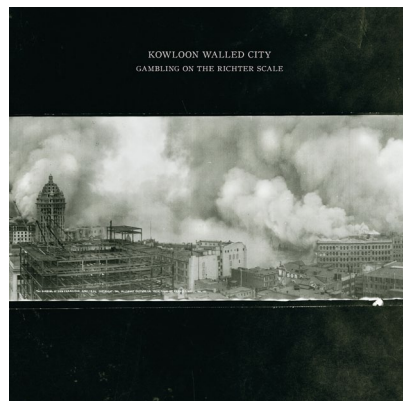
The curious can pick up *Gambling on the Richter Scale* on LP with included CD, or—like the *Turk Street* EP—download it for free.

Gambling on the Richter Scale sinks the band's tremendous weight underground, then goes all tectonic on our asses. Rating: 8/10. *-Decibel*

If you're in the market for some heavy, catchy as fuck, noise rock, okay, maybe call it metal, then *Gambling on the Richter Scale* is IT. *-Aquarius Records*

This is the heaviest record of 2009, and with that on its resume, it deserves to be labeled as nothing less than completely mandatory listening material. Rating: 9/10. *-Lambgoat*

One of the best contemporary acts representing The New Wave Of American Noise Rock. *-MetalSucks*



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