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'Imprint' review: David Jacobsen and the memories that haunt

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Courtesy of Spotify

As a kid, we're told our words are like toothpaste. Easy to get out, but once that tube has been squeezed, you'd make a mess attempting to get it all back in. A striking metaphor that finds itself eternally applicable. Regardless of regret or longing to take it back, words and actions haunt. For David W. Jacobsen, that regret isn't one to be brooded over, but rather a reflection pool for improvement.

A student of the Berklee College of Music, David W. Jacobsen chooses to tackle raw and real human strife in its most stripped form on his newest album, "Imprint." The songwriter has described his newest effort as, "a short singer/songwriter album about memories that haunt, whether you realize it or not." A strong thesis only reinforced by its rhyming nature, the album tackles themes of regret and acceptance with a nuanced and aged perspective. Jacobsen harkens a majority of his influence to folk and bluegrass in regard to songwriting, with a barebones version of prog-rock upholstering most of the instrumentation. While maybe giving off a first impression of unseriousness, there's a certain organic quality that comes from such a raw form of someone expressing their truth.

"I just wanna give people something they can connect with. You know, whether I give them a laugh, give them something they can relate to, or they walk away humming a melody, I want there to be a point to what they're listening to," Jacobsen said.

While he says his music isn't entirely autobiographical, here it's perspective that takes precedence over presence.

"If you walk away thinking [Imprints] is all first-person narrative and earnest, then I did a good job," Jacobsen said.

For Jacobsen, relatability is the name of the game. Describing life as "the sum of what came before," "Imprint" is a one-way trip down memory lane, though taking some the alleys and streets most would avoid. Rather than lament or try to suppress, here Jacobsen takes full responsibility regardless of if the scenario is even his to begin with. Tracks like 'Maple Street' choose to sit with regret rather than flush it down the toilet, with lines like "Damage done, cracks accrue." Where youthful ignorance might try to justify or make sense of sour situations, a seasoned songwriter and a weathered man knows the world keeps spinning, unbothered by what you've afflicted it with.

By no means is this record dreary, however. Even if Jacobsen ruminates over all his sore subjects, there's a level of humor in his acceptance that one just has to admire. The midway point of the record is highlighted by "About Last Night," a humorous look into romantic encounters fueled by substance more so than it is passion. The song "Filler" exists exactly as what the title claims it to, yet hilariously failing to achieve its goal of that half-hour play time. Where so many songwriters choose to wallow in their misery and paint a permanent picture of despair, Jacobsen's more realist attitude sits with those dour moments for the sake of self-reflection.

Jacobsen's journey music has no doubt been a unique one. A once-aspiring composer, his palette is equally as broad as the wisdom years in the industry has garnered him. Extraordinarily knowledgeable and humble, being true to character is top priority for the musician. Quoted as saying "there's no reason to make something you don't wanna make if it's not getting consumed," "Imprint" is a 28-minute dive into that notion, and its genuine spirit may catch a lot of listeners by surprise. In place of dramatized lyrics and egregiously coded metaphor that so many modern songwriters berate us with, it's a nice breath of fresh air to have a soul that's as matter of fact about this life as ever. For Jacobsen, true fulfillment doesn't come from being who you want to be as much as just simply living with who you are.