Alkaline Trio – Broken Wing [EP] (2013)

01 – Balanced on a shelf 02 – Pocket knife 03 – Broken wing 04 – Sun burns Musicians: Matt Skiba – guitar, vocals Dan Andriano – bass guitar, vocals, guitar Derek Grant – drums, backing vocals + Bill Stevenson - additional backing vocals

The Broken Wing EP was dually released with Alkaline Trio's newest album, My Shame Is True. This EP is all about Dan Andriano though, and it makes sense why. Where My Shame Is True boasted some of his dullest writing to date, Broken Wing contrasts that in every sense of the word.

"Balanced On A Shelf" is track number one, as well as the first Alkaline Trio song to give me chills in a long time. I can't fathom why this wasn't included on [the retail release of] My Shame Is True; it could have easily swapped spots with "Young Lovers" or "Midnight Blue." The guitar is haunting, delicately tinged with effects, but unlike This Addiction or Crimson, these bells and whistles aren't gratuitous, and they serve to enhance the song. There is also some fabulous harmonizing and vocal work on Matt's end that we haven't really heard in a while. It brings to mind some of the dueling croons from the Goddamnit days.

"Pocket Knife" is Matt's only song on the EP, but it's already made the list for some of my favorite Skiba lyrics: "She came after me with a pocket knife, stuck here in a dream, nightmare of my life." This is classic Matt - a sick metaphor for a love gone wrong, and he didn't dumb anything down solely for the sake of being morbid. You can once again relate to his pain without feeling like you paid for a cheap knockoff.

"Broken Wing" is a fantastic third song. It sounds like something that might have been left on

Dan's studio floor, but then was rescued and rebooted for the Trio. Musically, it comes off as an unpolished Agony & Irony cut, but still gives off an old-school Alkaline Trio vibe at the same time. There is also a hint of Tuesday within the lyrics, which makes sense. All of the best aspects of Dan are present on this track: catchy pop-punk, held up by strong vocals and a backbone of lyrical mastery.

The final track, "Sun Burns," is definitely the sleeper of the EP - but in this case, that's like comparing gold to diamonds. Had it been touched with some different production, it could fit onto Maybe I'll Catch Fire. A stretch, I know, but it really has that younger Dan/Trio-style structure to it, where it's less of verse-chorus-verse, and more about telling a story.

At the risk of overstating myself, this EP epitomizes what Alkaline Trio are about. Thoughtful, heartfelt songs, shaded with love, angst, confusion and hopefulness. Broken Wing represents the mature, natural evolution the band have been working toward, without sacrificing creativity or sounding too contrived. In every aspect, this EP is probably some of their best work ever. It proves that they can progress and evolve without losing their ability to produce catchy, unique and identifiable punk rock. --- porksoda, punknews.org

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