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V's Best of 2014: The Dying Arts (eponymous EP, 2014)

 [January 5, 2015](#)  [Valerie Polichar](#)



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The Unappreciated MiniCast

From the first unresolved, troubled notes of their single and lead track, “Scratch,” Toronto band The Dying Arts build a musical world on their eponymous EP that is both seductive and disturbing. “Scratch” calls to mind Sonic Youth at their finest, as on “Mote” or “Theresa’s Sound World” – but lead singer Mike Portoghesi pulls out a growling, harmonious scream more akin to Stiv Bators (or even Billy Idol on “Rebel Yell”). In addition to these roots in ‘70s punk and ‘80s new wave, The Dying Arts draw from ‘90s garage, but the sound is never dated. With lyrics like “The fire in your heart is out now / But you’ll never know ‘til it’s too late / You’re making up for something,” one senses that these guys are coping with larger things than the pain of adolescence.

If “Scratch” channels Sonic Youth, “Bed Spins” – for which they’ve produced a tight, claustrophobic, stomach-churning band video – recalls Placebo. But you’ll be hard pressed to turn back to “Every You, Every Me” after hearing The Dying Arts’ profoundly resonant vocals and targeted yells of “Violated / The city moans.”

The Dying Arts display their breadth on this EP, which ranges easily from punk to the melodic dark rock of the lovely “Snake in the Grass” and the near-metal tones of “Fame.” There are no weak tracks; the album closes with “Control” and its echoes of Toad the Wet Sprocket. Here, as on the lead track, guitarist Daniel Scuglia has a chance to shine with aching hooks and a nicely composed wall of sound. Credit also needs to go to producer/engineer Jon Drew (Fucked Up, Tokyo Police Club), who keeps the rich sound mix distinct and unmuddled without losing the bottom end. The EP cries out for repeat listens.



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There's a hint of deliberate obscurity around the band itself: their Bandcamp bio describes them as "nice guys that show up on time to gigs" and their Facebook page gives the band's makeup as "Mike, Simon, Joe, Daniel" and their genre as "Haven't decided." In fact, their lineup includes frontman Mike Portoghese, Simon Poole on bass, Joe Torchia on drums and Daniel Scuglia on guitar. And their genre may not be fixed, but there's a consistent sound throughout: melodic guitar, a voice that can stretch from heartfelt and tuneful to an exquisite textural scream, consistent deep bass and rumbling, spangled percussion.

Unappreciated Scholars Review Grade: A+

The Dying Arts is available on [iTunes](#) and [Bandcamp](#).

Follow The Dying Arts on Twitter at

<https://twitter.com/thedyingarts>. Visit the official website at <http://www.thedyingarts.com/>.

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