

ERIC MYERS



rock
Lithium Zion
Deaf Wish
Sub Pop

★★★★☆

The title of Deaf Wish's fifth album is at once sardonic, evocative and forthright. It makes a point but doesn't suffocate with its sentiments. Qualities such as these are threaded throughout the Melbourne band's latest record, and its second for influential American label Sub Pop. At its core, *Lithium Zion* is unapologetic in its guitar-driven style, which is propelling even in the quieter moments. As a follow-up to 2015's *Pain*, the album heralds a more produced sound, but without sacrificing the ferocity and dimensionality of its previous recordings, which were comparatively lo-fi. Sitting within a seesaw of distorted noise and rhythmical bursts, the visceral nature of Deaf Wish's songs ultimately cradles introspections on anger, romance and frustration: it carves a space for feelings of defiance and refusal. It could easily fall into trite or over-righteous territory, but Deaf Wish can indulge emotion while avoiding one-dimensional laments. Although all four members share singing duties, it's the voice of Sarah Hardiman that cuts through the most, shifting between skewed melody and frank, near-spoken assertions. Throughout all of the vocals, however, there is a perpetual shift between laconic and earnest: "Ah you dig your way out of dirt / I'm not dirty, I'm not hurt / Buried, I'm not buried." Yet it's the album's restlessness that lingers. The record is a close portrait of experiencing Deaf Wish live, as it conjures its highly physical take on rock music. Although *Lithium Zion* is, admittedly, nothing revolutionary, it's the band's visceral instinct and unique personality that win the day.

Tiarney Miekus