Always Ascending

Artist: Franz Ferdinand
Non-Airable Tracks: NONE
Label: Domino

After a five year gap filled with inter-band collaborations, everyone's favorite Glaswegian rock band is back, and boy oh boy is their return a welcome one. Paraphrasing Alternative Music Director Andrew Boring – Franz Ferdinand is a band that sounds the same on every album, but that also makes every album sound different. I wholeheartedly agree, and Always Ascending is no different. Similar-sounding to their previous effort, Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action, but in a far more disco-punky way, Always Ascending (like other efforts) is a fun listen with more than meets the eye (or ears, perhaps?).

With Always Ascending, Franz Ferdinand have fully embraced the disco-vibe that sometimes poked its head out on previous efforts. And true to Franz Ferdinand style, most of the songs on the album are punchy - and dare I say groovy - jams with hidden meanings that don't really hit you until you focus in on the lyrics. Please do not get turned off from this album from my use of the words "disco" and "groovy," however; this is not your grandparents' disco, by a long shot. Franz Ferdinand are still Franz Ferdinand, and their signature style - their wonderfully weird, eclectic and expansive style - still makes this album their own. Yes, perhaps its not the same pseudo-Socialist indie rock that was the hallmark of their earlier albums, but Always Ascending is still, honestly, something else that still makes entire sense with the rest of the band's discography. Track 1, the titular "Always Ascending," is space-y, futuristic, and disco-y, may inspire atmospheric thoughts, and reminds me a bit of a darker take on Arcade Fire's "Everything Now" (though far more danceable). The band, as per usual, takes on some light social commentary with tracks 5 and 7, "The Academy Award" and "Huck and Jim." "Academy Award" deals with society's new found infatuation with technology (Black Mirror, anyone?), while "Huck and Jim," with some Americana vibes itself, focuses in on America's issues. Tracks 9 and 10, "Feel The Love Go" and "Slow Don't Kill Me Slow" close out the album strong. "Feel The Love Go" may be the height of the album's fusion of electro-disco vibes, and feels very Tonight on top of that, makes me want to dance, and has a saxophone solo (what else could you want!?); "Slow Don't Kill Me Slow" stands out for anything for being one of the few songs of the album to really showcase the lyrics over the music, and is a sort of sweet, but still weird.

If you couldn't tell from the rest of the review, I thoroughly enjoyed this album. Always Ascending is a nice addition to the Franz Ferdinand discography, and builds on their old work in a way that is still novel and enjoyable to listen to. Even if the last Franz Ferdinand song you heard was "Take Me Out," give this album a listen and spin it on your show for a fun pick-me-up and electro-disco space vibes.

Sounds Like:
Arcade Fire
Muse (a là The 2nd Law)

Recommended Tracks:
Track 1 "Always Ascending": Dance-y, rock disco, a fun space-listen
Track 5 "The Academy Award": Some light social commentary and one of the slower songs on the album, an atmospheric and dark ballad; perfect for the upcoming Oscars!
Track 9 "Feel The Love Go": So danceable! So fun! There's a saxophone solo for pete's sake!!!!! Spin this for a good electro-disco time

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Date Reviewed: 02/19/2018

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