

# Latest Album Defines Sebadoh's Sound Group's Inaugural Disc 'Blisters' Listeners' Ears

Sebadoh will embark on a tour in support of its new CD 'The Sebadoh,' which will be released Tuesday.

By Ashley Atkinson  
Staff Writer

The title of Sebadoh's new album, *The Sebadoh*, has no hidden meaning, claims its press release. Instead, it's the definite article: the definitive Sebadoh. That might be true, as the album brings Sebadoh to a new plane of cohesion while still retaining the fractured artistic vision that distinguishes the band from its contemporaries.

Sebadoh's first incarnation came in 1986 as guitarist/vocalist Lou Barlow and drummer Eric Gaffney. After Barlow was evicted from the other band he played in, Dinosaur Jr., Sebadoh regrouped and added the talents of bassist/vocalist Jason Loewenstein.

At first, the band leapt to various musical extremities as all three members of the band wrote and sang their own songs. Over the years, however, Sebadoh has become increasingly focused and less conflicting in its musical impulses.

With the accompaniment of new drummer Russ Pollard, that trend continues on *The Sebadoh*, the band's seventh album.

Although *The Sebadoh* finds less dis-



Sebadoh utilizes the singer/songwriter talents of both guitarist Lou Barlow, center, and bassist Jason Loewenstein, right. Drummer Russ Pollard rounds out the band's lineup.

parity between the members' respective songwriting, there is still a marked difference between Barlow's and Loewenstein's work.

Loewenstein's strained, harsh wailing and yelling meets head-on with Barlow's low, soothing voice in a battle for vocal dominance of the album.

Barlow contributed six of the album's 15 songs, of which "Weird" most exemplifies his clean, structured, melodic style. Barlow also penned the slow ballad "Love Is Stronger" and the '70s-esque folk-pop of "Tree."

His songs are mostly abstract ruminations on life and relationships, although he does take a stab at social justice with "Colorblind."

Barlow is responsible for the album's first single, "Flame," a heavily rhythmic anthem more slickly produced than any other track on the album. Although the tune is repetitive, it's also insanely catchy and will surely do well on modern rock radio.

Loewenstein's songs clash against Barlow's melodies with a dose of heavy-handed guitar and a looser structure.

Unlike Barlow, almost all of Loewenstein's eight tracks feature noisy, discordant instrumentation, wavering in the Sonic Youthian jangle of "It's All You" and the raucous, heavy, almost-punk of "So Long."

*The Sebadoh* is an album of mostly mid-tempo rockers that, although more

polished, still reflect shades of Sebadoh's lo-fi early days when the band recorded its songs at home on a four-track.

Although perhaps more cohesive than earlier Sebadoh albums, *The Sebadoh* is by no means the hallmark by which cohesion should be measured.

In fact, if you put Barlow's songs and Loewenstein's songs on two separate albums, they could easily be mistaken for two entirely different bands. Barlow's tracks are more listener-friendly, but the polarity between the two makes for a slightly unsettling but still strangely satisfying album.

The Divisions Editors can be reached at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

By Kathleen Hancock  
Staff Writer

Unrequited love sucks. I used to think that the only thing worse than unrequited love was its pitiful debasement around everyone's favorite holiday, Valentine's Day. I was wrong.

There is something that can make the combination of chocolate-soaked depression and Valentine's Day even worse; that something is ... *smile's ok*, The Hope Blister's inaugural album.

Released by Carboro's Mammoth Records, ... *smile's ok* is a creation of Ivo Watts-Russell, founder of the independent record label 4AD. Mammoth Records has managed to put forth many talented artists over the last 10 years - Squirrel Nut Zippers, Juliana Hatfield and Joe Henry to name a few - but The Hope Blister does not live up to this precedent.

Consisting of eight covers, ... *smile's ok* includes the selections Heidi Berry's "Only Human," David Sylvian's "Let The Happiness In" and "Is Jesus Your Pal?" by the Icelandic band Slow Blow. With vocals provided by Louise Rutkowski, ... *smile's ok* manages to take plaintive wailing and minimalist instrumental accompaniment to a whole new level of annoyance.

As I listened to the first track, "Dagger," I was, at first, taken with the breathy, delicate sound of Rutkowski's voice. I hung on her every word, waiting for that moment where she would let it all out and release her obvious vocal power into my speakers.

That moment never came. After this realization in the first song, I came to an even more painful conclusion: I would have to listen to this for seven more songs.

... *smile's ok* is every man's, as well as many women's, nightmare - over an hour of solid whining set to shallow, hollow music.

After recording the basic tracks in only 12 days - go figure - Watts-Russell brought in producer/engineer John Fryer to mix and hone the album.

What a mistake. Fryer's influence can be heard throughout the album. Apparently the man is quite fond of one particular effect that a synthesizer can produce: echo, echo, echo.

So, with Fryer doing his best to make Rutkowski's girlishly grating vocals sound mechanical and repetitive, instruments that can barely be heard and the general feeling of pretentiousness that this album seems to exude, ... *smile's ok* did not do much to lift my spirits over Valentine's Day. That's okay; I'll take Russell Stover's creations over Ivo Watts-Russell's any day.

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## Jam Band Leaves Cradle Crowd Wanting 'moe'

By David Povill  
Staff Writer

moe brought its own lights, its own decorations and its own style of music Thursday for one of the best concerts the Cat's Cradle has ever seen.

With its unique brand of loopy choruses, playful riffs and the best 20-plus-minute jams (behind the Grateful Dead and Phish, of course), moe kept a capacity crowd hopping around like spastic trout until the wee hours of the morning.

moe is a quartet, with lead singer/bassist Rob Derhak at the head. Certainly not outshined, however, are equally talented Chuck Garvey on guitar and vocals, Al Schnier on guitar and vocals and Vinnie Amico on the drums.

All the members are amazing musicians, and all are given the chance to prove that through jams which last anywhere from three to 30 minutes. Garvey and Schnier took turns playing both rhythm and lead guitar - each with their own style - each giving amazing performances. Derhak slaps his bass with a prowess reminiscent of the great Les Claypool of Primus. And Amico holds the whole thing together on the drums.

The group has a large cult following, similar to that of its close buddy band, Phish. Many of the fans who flock to see Phish now also flock to see moe, some

even believing that moe has surpassed its mentors.

But, the band doesn't offer the grandeur and full experience that a Phish concert can offer.

What it does provide is a highly energetic, ass-kicking romp, a feast for the eyes as much as for the ears.

moe brought its own lighting and decorations, and it definitely paid off. The lights were amazing and the decorations a little trippy (hanging metal plates with images of cacti and other objects painted in Day-Glo paint).

As for the highlights of the show, the band created two memorable moments.

For the first one, Derhak broke into an absolutely incredible bass solo, slapping and popping and eventually just smacking and pounding his guitar for upwards of three minutes, sending the

ill-rhythmed dancing fans into a fevered frenzy.

But Derhak's greatest feat of the night came at the beginning of the second set.

Before the set break, the band informed the crowd that it could drop off announcements in a basket at the front of the room, to be read aloud by the band.

Derhak was about to read an announcement when he started laughing and informed the crowd that he couldn't read it out loud. After much goading, he announced, "Marcy wants Rob to smack her ass like he smacks his bass." Of course, Marcy was called to the stage and all her wishes were happily granted.

With great lighting, incredible music, and hilarity and hijinx, moe offered the perfect Thursday night alternative to

drinking beers and vomiting up and down Fraternity Court.

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