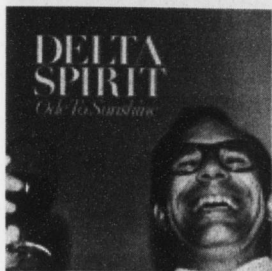


MUSIC SHORTS

DELTA SPIRIT



ODE TO SUNSHINE
ROCK

★★★★☆

For all the prancing and preening as if they were today's Rolling Stones, bad-boy British outfit Oasis has never taken its outsized pop-rock down to the Bayou for the all-

out roots treatment their forebears did on classics such as *Beggar's Banquet*.

And after listening to Delta Spirit's debut LP, *Ode To Sunshine*, it becomes apparent that Gallagher & Co. would be wise to give it a try themselves.

Wielding impressive hooks and an unstoppable personality, Delta Spirit surrounds them in a lo-fi Americana package.

The title track, for instance, transforms ragtime piano into an irresistible hook and uses it to create a heartfelt anthem about not dwelling on one's problems.

And though that theme might be played out, the song, like most everything else on *Ode To Sunshine*, feels fresh and vigorous.

"People C'mon" transforms a funeral dirge into a dance party

with an all-consuming gospel chorus, and "Strange Vine" uses a fiery version of Brill Building pop to give sting to such zingers as "I can't afford the truth/We're two idiots in the same canoe."

Despite several home runs, the album falters in its attempts at acoustic balladry. Album opener "Tomorrow Goes Away" is too literal an attempt to recreate "Eleanor Rigby" and "Bleeding Belts" ruins what could have been a touching folk song with an annoyingly shrill horn section.

All in all, it's a solid effort that's so successful in developing its formula, that it seems unlikely that even the most die-hard Gallagherite would wish Oasis had done it instead.

-Jordan Lawrence

There must have been music. Probably of the bass-heavy, beat-thumping variety.

Probably it didn't include string arrangements.

But if Ra Ra Riot gets its way, that is soon to change.

Adding cello and violin to bouncy bass lines, overly caffeinated vocals and frantic guitar work, the band has created a pop record that is accessible, danceable and, unfortunately, largely uninteresting.

The novelty of the strings wears off as they begin make their way more prominently into the mix on tracks like "Winter '05" where their presence only works to slow the pace.

Party foul, indeed. But when the pace is proper, though, *The Rhumb Line* can be loads of fun, if a little underwhelming.

It is the type of record best served by a cursory listen. Closer examination merits no breakthroughs.

There really isn't anything groundbreaking here. It's solid pop music and not much more.

And maybe that was the goal. Maybe the band just wants to, you know, party and have a good time and things like that.

But, as the strings continue to swell, one has a hard time thinking that there is nothing more substantive and inventive boiling just under that party-starting exterior.

-Jamie Williams

PHYSICS OF MEANING



CHAMBER POP

★★★★☆

The Physics of Meaning might take itself just a bit too seriously. The melodramatic string swells, chimes and overwrought lyrics ache with the existential angst that has become all too trite with modern indie-rock.

With a pedigree that includes stints with and collaborations alongside the likes of St. Vincent, John Vanderslice and the Polyphonic Spree, Physics frontman Daniel Hart has certainly earned his chops in the indie community.

On his band's sophomore effort *Snake Charmer and Destiny at the Stroke of Midnight*, the scope might have taken on a grandiose scale, but the record suffers from too many ideas.

But what's worse is that a lot of these ideas aren't even interesting. The band rehashes many cliché themes, such as wishing wells, your favorite songs, human existence, love, etc.

It's not that this is a poor record per se, just an uninteresting one. Everything about this release is inoffensive (aside from its pomposity).

There simply aren't enough ideas here that Hart hasn't already been doing with his other bands.

In the future it might be better if Physics of Meaning lay off the orchestral strings and focus on the heart strings instead.

-Ben Pittard

THE COAST
EXPATRIATE
POPCOCK

★★★★☆

The Coast really are a two-faced band.

One side of the coin is a sort of keyboard-driven dance machine ready to start the party.

On the other side, though, is a much more bland outfit that takes

dusty cliches from the classic rock lexicon and beats them to death, coming up with disastrously bland results.

And it's frustrating. The record begins with a couple of keyboard driven bouncers that seem ready for Top-40 radio. And I mean that in as complimentary a tone as the statement can be received.

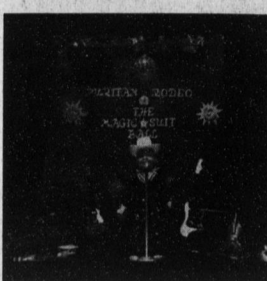
Around the half way mark of *Expatriate*, though, gears are shifted and the band downturns into the basic guitar, drums and keys arrangements that have been staples in rock 'n' roll since its inception.

The problem here is, of course, that trying to do something that has been done hundreds of times before leaves little room for error.

And the reality is that The Coast aren't nearly innovative enough to stand out from the crowd.

-Jamie Williams

PURITAN RODEO



COUNTRY

★★★★☆

It's really hard to imagine a more botched country album than Puritan Rodeo's *The Magic Suit Ball*.

First of all, the music is appallingly bland. Playing the most predictable brand of banjo-and-fiddle-filled alt-country, Puritan Rodeo has made an album that's the worst kind of catchy.

Sure, the overly comfortable and familiar rhythms are likely to get the toes tapping, but at the end of the song, the listener is likely to feel as if he just woke up from a poorly chosen one-night stand, thinking, "Did I actually enjoy that?"

And as he wipes the sleep from his eyes, the answer is usually "no."

Adding to the problem is the fact that Puritan Rodeo has no control over its emotional range.

For the first half of the album, the group wraps cookie-cutter country tears in arrangements and vocals that make them seem like inspirational jams.

Where many bands use this technique to create irony, Puritan Rodeo just seems ecstatic that it was actually able to fool a label into releasing this sloppy bunch of cliched country techniques.

Near the end, Puritan Rodeo comes close to creating genuine sentiment, but at that point, most people have probably given up on the record and simply stopped listening.

-Jordan Lawrence

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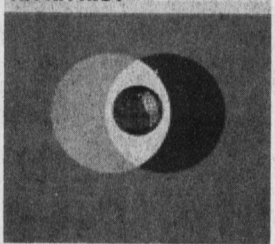
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POP

★★★★☆

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-Jamie Williams

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