

Byrne's lack of focus shows in bland effort

David Byrne

Uh-Oh

Sire Records

David Byrne's latest release, *Uh-Oh*, is an album that will continue his recent trend of perplexing, confusing and ultimately disappointing his fans. It's not that *Uh-Oh* is a terrible record; it's just that we've come to expect so much more from the former mastermind behind Talking Heads.

While *Uh-Oh* is brighter and poppier (calling to mind the sound of late-'80s Talking Heads) than Byrne's last solo outing, the Latin-Caribbean experiment *Rei Momo*, the new album finds Byrne still clinging to his newly discovered passion for South American beats. For the most part, it just doesn't work.

The majority of the songs on the album are conga and horn-driven (Angel Fernandez's trumpet is probably the best thing I can say about *Uh-Oh*), with Byrne's subtle guitar-playing thrown in for good measure. Un-

JARED LEVY

Album

dernneath the playful salsa pop, are of course, the biting, sarcastic and humorous lyrics one would expect to hear from David Byrne. But where Byrne's songs were once unpredictable, and often haunting with Talking Heads, there are few surprising twists to *Uh-Oh*. Most of the songs seem calculated and (I never thought I would say this about David Byrne) boring.

On one of the better songs of the album, "Now I'm Your Mom," Byrne sings about a man who has decided to part with his penis and begin leading the life of a woman, and "Twistin' in the Wind" deals with the dirty politics of Washington, D.C. Another of the high points of *Uh-Oh* is "Tiny Town," on which Byrne cynically sings in the chorus, "The whole world is a tiny town/Full of tiny ideas."

But these high points seem few and far between, and there seems to be a certain element missing from *Uh-Oh*. Byrne just can't seem to capture the intensity and the feeling of

urgency that he once exhibited with his former band mates on such groundbreaking albums as 1980's *Remain in Light*, and 1988's *Naked*. The music is simply bland in too many spots on *Uh-Oh*, and Byrne seems to be singing almost indifferently throughout most of the album.

The problem with David Byrne is that he seems to have branched himself out in too many directions; from writing musical scores for various movies, to producing other bands, to working with too many different musical influences in his own music (African, Latin, and Caribbean). Byrne seems to have lost his focus in the shuffle, and it is hard to take him seriously anymore as a pop artist.

What has gone wrong with one of the most clever and influential musical artists of the past fifteen years, the man who practically brought about and defined the New Wave movement of the late '70s and early '80s?

Byrne, in "Girls On My Mind," sings: "I'm the star of my own movie/Honey, I'm the leading man/You might ask yourself — who is that guy?" Byrne might be asking himself that right now. Let's hope he figures it out soon. Because it'll be a shame if he doesn't.



David Byrne, thinking 'God, I hope Jared gives me a good review'

My Sister's Machine no ripoff of Seattle sound

My Sister's Machine

Diva

Caroline Records

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Not long ago, when someone mentioned the "Seattle Sound," a menagerie of different guitar-based rock would come to mind. As bands like Nirvana, Alice In Chains and Soundgarden have become more popular, the Seattle Sound has become stereotyped. With their first album, *Diva*, Seattle quartet My Sister's Machine perfectly captures this sound. But instead of sounding as

MIKE LONG

Album

if they have ripped off their peers, My Sister's Machine comes across as a fresh and energetic band, thanks to their quirky lyrics and their attention to driving rhythms.

My Sister's Machine is made up of: Nick Pollock, vocals; Owen Wright, guitar; Chris Ivanovich, bass; and Chris Godhe, drums. The majority of the music on *Diva* was written by Wright and Pollock and most of the lyrics were written by Pollock.

My Sister's Machine sounds as if they sat around studying the music of Alice In Chains and Soundgarden

and then extracted the best elements of these two bands. Their music is a hard-driving combination of guitars and drums, which when paired with Pollock's deep vocals, forms a cacophony from which there is no escape. For those of you who don't feel like reaching for the thesaurus, let's just say that they play kooky hard rock.

The first video off the album is "I'm Sorry," a song that is obviously meant to convey the band's stereotyped sound to unfamiliar listeners. "I'm Sorry" is a good song, but there are some far better ones on this album.

Diva opens with "Hands and Feet," a hard-rocking song, which contains the strange chorus, "I'll come walking through the trees for you." I'm not sure what that means, but it's a cool

song. The bass line from "Hands and Feet" flows immediately into "Pain," another good rocker. The next song is "I Hate You" an angry punkish song which is poignant, truthful and funny all at once. (I'll discuss the lyrics in a moment.)

The last three songs on the album are the highlights. "Sunday" opens with a monster riff and dissolves into a bass driven song with sweeping guitars filling the background. "Monster Box" continues this audio assault, with wa-wa guitar shoved into every conceivable part of the song. The album's finale (and longest song) is "Diva." The title track is a roller coaster ride through tempo changes, guitar solos and strong vocals.

Accenting this great music are even better lyrics. Maybe it's just me, but Nick Pollock seems to have a grip on everything going on in the world. In "Pain," he sings: "Life is a funny thing/If I threaten yours, it makes you want to fight/Love is a beautiful thing/It makes you understand what you're living for."

Pollock demonstrates his knowl-

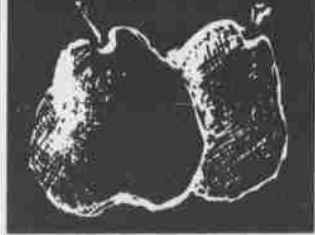
edge of modern love in "I Hate You" with these words; "I hate you/I wish it wasn't so — I fuckin' hate you/I love you/I know what I said but now I love you." That's every relationship I've ever had!

He makes a subtle war demonstration in "Love at High Speed" with "What if all of your weapons shot love?"

To me, the most poignant song is "Monster Box" (don't ask me), which concerns women using sex to manipulate men. Pollock sings: "I know a monster/It's a wicked disease/Man is the victim/It's a pain he can never ease/It isn't beautiful anymore/Sex isn't love this way." This guy definitely gets a thumbs up from me.

Diva by My Sister's Machine is one of the most satisfying debut albums I've ever heard. My only complaint is that at 38 minutes, it's a bit short. I realize that a lot of bands have been slapping filler onto their albums to fit that 77-minute CD, but *Diva* isn't enough of a good thing.

Don't be scared off by the weird name. If you like guitar driven rock with intelligent lyrics, then this album is for you. And if you think it's embarrassing to walk into a store and ask for condoms, try asking for My Sister's Machine.



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