

albumreview

Babyshambles

Shutter's Nation
Parlophone/EMI

MATT HUBERT
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Pete Doherty's biggest problem isn't having to contend with bad press; if anything, the ex-Libertines frontman/paparazzi whipping boy has enough charisma to gloss over his many rehab stints and legal troubles into a new kind of heroin chic—one that's equal parts comedy and intrigue.

The real trouble is that the gritty, off-time swagger of *Shutter's Nation* tunes like "Carry Up On The Morning" and "Side of The Road" might be

mistakenly labelled as merely the piss and moans of a junkie. Few are going to be wise enough to pick out their poignant, layered melodies and the accomplished hooks that lay behind the crackling guitars.

Likewise, the bare-boned clatter of "Baddies Boogie" and "You Talk" won't be given their dues as rambling-yet-competent '60s Brit-pop tinged grooves. It's even more distressing to think that the

consummate cool of a lounge-ready jazz tune like "There She Goes" and the steady, brooding grind of "Delivery" and "French Dog Blues" (both of which conjure up a dreamy blend of Violent Femmes and Exile-era Stones that's worth revisiting a second, third, and tenth time) will be ignored.

Despite the addictions and the very public brawls with paparazzi and girlfriends alike—dear Kate Moss co-writes no less than four songs on the album and fares well—*Shutter's Nation* shows surprising strength.

The final track, "The Lost Art of Murder," features '60s folk legend Bert Jansch on acoustic guitar, and could be the most haunting and forthright thing Doherty has ever put together—but for the *Us* magazine crowd, that kind of thing is trouble.

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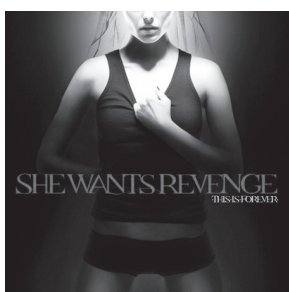
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albumreview

She Wants Revenge

This is Forever
Perfect Kiss/Geffen Records

SUNNY CHAN
Arts & Entertainment Writer

She Wants Revenge is the dark synth-pop duo who brought you "Tear You Apart," that catchy, monotone hit in 2006. Now, they're back with a new album, and they sound more like Depeche Mode than ever.

This Is Forever opens with an introduction track that seems to combine every darkwave song released in the '80s. The rest of the album proceeds to follow this same theme.

They leave no feature of their genre uncovered: drum machines, throbbing bass lines, emotionally dead

vocals, synthesizer riffs, and piano accompaniment in only minor chords all populate the band's work. They're covered to such an extent, in fact, that this album is practically a caricature of darkwave.

Singer Justin Warfield freely owns up to the fact that She Wants Revenge is modelled after Depeche Mode, The Cure, and other such greats of '80s dark synth. But he takes his love of that era a little too far when he embodies not just their musical style, but even their British accents. She Wants Revenge is

from California, but you'd never know it from the straight-out-of-Essex accent Warfield adopts in his songs.

Lyricaly, this album embraces tired pop clichés. They run in the vein of "It's so hard to say goodbye / but it's even worse to live a lie," and don't make too many forays into originality. Despite its title, "She Will Always Be A Broken Girl" stands out as the only song not about breaking up with a girl. Incidentally, it's also the only song where the singing departs from its characteristic monotone and almost takes on feeling.

The songs on *This Is Forever* are all undeniably catchy and all well put-together—too bad the catchiest parts were already created by someone else 20 years ago. She Wants Revenge only makes gross exaggerations of its dark-wave heroes, and this album comes off as a parody, which is unfortunate—it's meant to be a serious homage to bands that already did it way, way better.



albumreview

Sydney

When We Were Safe
Black Box Recordings

ELLIOT GOODINE
Arts & Entertainment Writer

If there's anything that goes against the rules of rock & roll, it's moderation.

Sydney, unfortunately, has made a record filled start-to-finish with generic, controlled punk. *When We Were Safe* is an album that steals from so many of today's mainstreamed punk-rock artists, causing their songs to lack focus and come off blandly. Vocalist Scott Sanderson's vocals sometimes mirror the Used's Bert McCracken, but he then screams out half of the

melody line. In effect, the songs end up being neither melodic nor heavy.

The guitar work of Jay Jensen and Brent Munro is wholly unoriginal; if you've listened to My Chemical Romance, Thrice, and Alexisonfire, you've already heard every single guitar part on *When We Were Safe*.

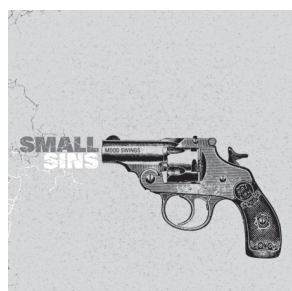
Despite the fact that Sydney borrow from such a large number of popular artists, their unfocused

mix-and-match approach fails to reach the level of quality that their contemporaries have set.

The record was produced by Jesse Smith of Causticize and is very well engineered, but putting so much effort into production seems to be a waste with such lazy songwriting. The lyrics fail to articulate the teenage wasteland of emotions that pop-punk bands usually sing about so well.

If this Ontario quintet plans to go beyond the Warped Tour side stage, they need to replace their vacuous and humourless lyrics—as well as their uninventive instrumentation—with something new and exciting.

This new generation of punk-influenced bands has a challenge: either do something new, or take what you're doing to the greatest possible extreme. On *When We Were Safe*, Sydney does neither.



albumreview

Small Sins

Mood Swings
Boomba Records / Astralwerks

SARAH STEAD
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Mood Swings, the second album from Small Sins, could have just as easily been called *Songs about Guns*: you're pistol-whipped with at least one weapon reference in more than half of the songs on this disc, and the cover displays a gun and bullets.

Violent imagery aside, the album is an upbeat and enjoyable offering of mostly synth-driven dance tracks, complemented with a few softer,

mellow songs like "Prove Me Wrong" and "On the Run." A refreshing blend of guitars, banjos, and tambourines—and in one song, sleigh bells—complements the synthesized melodies and drum-machine beats.

The stand-out song on *Mood Swings* is definitely "Drunk Emails." The electronic backbeat sounds a bit like an eight-bit Nintendo game, and although it's hard to not laugh at lines

like "chock-full of typos I know / Language and grammar die," the rest of the song's lyrics are quite poignant, such as "questions that must be asked, though / I won't have the heart at sunrise." Lyrically, this track is the excellent exception, however, as many of the other tracks are repetitive, often rhyming words with themselves or repeating the same lines over and over.

Small Sins seems to put lyrics as a secondary concern, though, as most of the songs encourage one to bust out sexy dance moves rather than sing along. The album is fun and a great listen, even if it feels particularly reminiscent of the Postal Service, especially on "Airport."

But overall, *Mood Swings* delivers a decent variety of tracks to dance or chill to, although it's unlikely to end up in your regular rotation.

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