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Album Reviews

## The House Of Love – She Paints Words In Red

(Cherry Red) UK release date: 1 April 2013



by [Elliah Heifetz](#) | 31 March 2013

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There's something truly pleasing about The House Of Love's new album, *She Paints Words In Red*. It's hard to say exactly what it is – singer/songwriter Guy Chadwick's low, fuzzy voice, stuck somewhere between the lead singer of the **Toxic Airborne Event** and **Leonard Cohen**? The group's warm, woody guitar strums? The songs themselves, with their easy, catchy choruses?

Or maybe what makes *She Paints Words In Red* so damn lovely isn't any of these things individually; rather, it's that somehow, all thrown together, the components of The House Of Love's new album make a sound that is marvellously comfortable.

Of course, 'comfortable' is rarely a good thing when it comes to new pop music. Strum-heavy, watered-down pop-rockers like **Dave Matthews** and **Jack Johnson** make music so comfortable it's impossible not to fall asleep to it. But crafting a comfortable sound, warmly baked with diatonic chords and acoustic instruments, can also be incredibly disarming: consider **Real Estate**'s *Days*, or **Arcade Fire**'s tragic *The Suburbs*.











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In this light, She Paints Words In Red, The House Of Love’s first album since 2005’s Days Run Away (which was in turn the ‘80s indie rockers’ first album since their split in 1993), is disarmingly kind; cunningly pleasant. Although it is certainly too long, and not all of the songs take off, the sound the band achieves on this record and on key individual tracks is one to be reckoned with.

Hemingway, the album’s second track (and one of its best), is a good indicator of the album as a whole. Chadwick’s simple, mumbled melody sits on a sunny groove, building into a sing-a-long chorus extracted from some one-hit-wonder ‘70s bubblegum rock group. His lyrics are perhaps worn, but simple and digestible, and make the hook inescapable. The images of death, murmured so casually over a buoyant arrangement, hide within the lighthearted sound.

PKR, another stand out number, blends the kind of atmospheric, otherworldly soundscapes **Brian Eno** immersed **Coldplay** into with a seductive, **Depeche Mode**-like melody, and physically satisfying distorted guitars. It’ll do you a one-two-three punch, really, when The House Of Love eases you in with dreamy escapism, entrances you with sex, and knocks you out with brute force. They do much the same in the folksy, **War On Drugs**-esque Lost In The Blues, and with the sinisterly chilled-out **Clash** guitars and appropriately candid lyrics of Money Man. And the clear and surging vibe that kicks off album opener Baby Got Back On Its Feet, wrought with ‘80s stadium rock guitars and early ‘00s indie rock instrumentation, is truly exciting.

Unsurprisingly, not all songs on the record fare as well – after all, simplicity and comfort can straddle the fine line between a fresh idea and a cliché. The tube-y, ‘80s acid guitars and tribal shuffle of Low Black Clouds, coupled with a melody that sounds like some Druid incantation, feel tired and inauthentic. Sunshine Out Of The Rain is a charming tune, but Holy River follows it with a similarly laid-back sound and gets lost in the haze. And the lyrics to album closer Eye Dream are unconvincingly psychedelic.

Despite all of this, however, it’s difficult to imagine not returning to She Paints Words In Red. Because The House Of Love grew up when the sounds that make us feel comfortable today were first being made, they bring together a keen eye for contemporary folk rock with expertly gratifying pop tropes. It makes for a palliative record, to put on loop after an hour of Top 40.

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