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The Gin Blossoms will perform in the EMU Ballroom March 3 at 7:30 p.m. Student discounts are offered.

Gin Blossoms release lacks creativity

By Les Zaczek
Freelance Reporter

There is something familiar, something very friendly and something comforting about Gin Blossoms' second album, *Congratulations, I'm Sorry*.

Somehow the loosely rocking melodies, the pretty harmonies and the vocals create a blanket of sound that envelops one like a Sunday afternoon in the park.

Take the first hit, "Follow You Down." It's the perfect kind of pop song that glides along so smoothly, you don't feel the bumps of the road.

The guitars and harmonica propel a nice mid-tempo verse that leads to an ultra-catchy chorus. For those who have not heard the band, their sound lies somewhere between the Replacements and the more polished ballads of the Goo Goo Dolls.

What is lacking here is the element of surprise, challenge and excitement. After listening to half the album, the songs almost blend together into one giant stew of pop hooks.

The polished production takes out the loose and sloppy energy that the Replacements had in their sound and kills any attempt at experimentation.

By the end of the album, there is a feeling that the songs are contrived and too well thought out.

While there is nothing wrong

with the melodic pop sound, the band does not seem to come up with any new ideas. All of the guitar solos, intros and the arrangements of instruments are very clichéd.

The same goes for the lyrics. The tales of love, loss and confusion lack a clever touch that would put a new light on these subjects.

"Day Job," is the kind of archetypal loser rock-star tale. "... I should have been a whole lot further/I'm never going back to college/I just work a day job." There is, of course, the song about being lost and looking to the past.

"My Car," which includes the lyrics, "I'm driving past my old school/I'm looking for my pack of cigarettes/I'm thinking back on things I've done/I can't forget the stupid ones ... what's that sound, what's that song, what's that street I'm driving on."

It's not bad, but it defines no new territory.

There are some high points on the album that rescue it from its general mediocrity.

The chorus of "As Long as It Matters" sounds like a fast version of ELO minus the synthesizers. "Perfectly Still" is

CD REVIEW

Gin Blossoms

Congratulations, I'm Sorry

★★★

another one of those superb pop songs that could easily become an MTV hit.

"Whitewash" has a nice, rocking guitar lead and actually has some clever lyrics: "... wash away my weekend shadow/come on sweet amnesia you're needed here tonight."

Unfortunately, as a whole, *Congratulations, I'm Sorry* is just too contrived and unoriginal to become a great album, which is really too bad, because this band is capable of producing some good material.

This record would work best as a soundtrack to *My So Called Life* or *Beverly Hills 90210* because of its high school sound and polished catchiness.

If you liked the previous Gin Blossoms album or the Goo Goo Dolls' latest release, you'll probably enjoy this one. Otherwise, go ahead and pass on it, because there are more important things to spend 15 bucks on — like food, doing laundry and books for next term.

The Gin Blossoms will perform with dead Hot Workshop and The Refreshments March 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the EMU Ballroom. Tickets are \$15 for University students and \$17 for the general public.

Call 346-4376 for more information.

It might be worth checking them out, since bands like these usually sound much better live.

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