

# Latest Built to Spill album shouldn't be kept a secret

The band manages to stay true to indie rock despite its growing popularity

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Oregon Daily Emerald

The title of the new Built to Spill album may be "Keep it Like a Secret," but after hearing it, you will want to do anything but.

For those of you who haven't heard the hottest thing out of Boise, Idaho, since the baked potato, the band's second major label offering and fourth release overall is an excellent place to start.

Built to Spill is the brainchild of singer/songwriter/guitarist extraordinaire Doug Martsch, who, during the '90s, has gone from indie-guru to quite possibly the next big thing. Besides fronting Built to Spill, he has worked with Calvin Johnson, the founder of the Olympia, Wash., label "K Records," and the regionally popular Halo Benders.

Martsch has had a habit of changing the rhythm section on every Built to Spill album so far. However, on "Keep it Like a Secret," he has apparently broken that habit. Brett Nelson and Scott Plouf will back him up from now on, on bass and drums respectively. And this appears to be a good thing.

This new combo is doubtlessly one of the reasons why "Secret" is such a powerful release. The ten songs are perfect pop gems, lush and atmospheric, with hooks galore and enough catchy melodies to fill your head for a long time.

While "Perfect From Now

## Keep it Like a Secret

Built to Spill

TYPE: Indie rock

PLAYING: March 13 at the Crystal Ballroom in Portland

RATING:

★★★★★

On," the band's acclaimed debut from Warner Brothers, took a little time to absorb. "Keep it Like a Secret" has shorter, less dense and more direct tunes that offer lyrics that simultaneously challenge and invite the listener to learn and sing along.

Plouf and Nelson lay a solid foundation for Martsch's epic wall of guitar. Built To Spill has created a reputation for not following a traditional verse-chorus-verse pattern, and "Keep it Like a Secret" is in that vein, with lots of rhythm change-ups and shuffling beats.

It is Martsch's guitar more than his dreamy, earnest, little-boy voice that is still the core of the great Built To Spill sound. As I listened to "Keep it Like a Secret" for the first time, one question kept going through my head: how can Built to Spill really only have one guitarist?

Martsch has always been slightly out of fashion in the indie-rock world, preferring to play extravagant guitar solos when it was considered uncool to do so. On "Secret," you can hear the different flavors of Martsch's style scattered throughout the album. It soars, swoops, screams, cries, whines, whispers and, in short, does just about everything except re-

cite the "Star Spangled Banner."

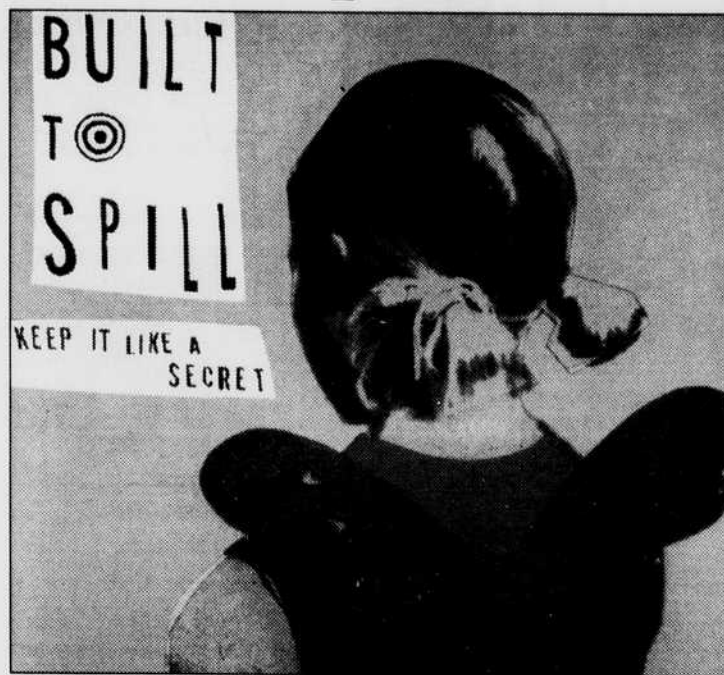
Songs such as the sublime "Else" and "Carry the Zero" display the flighty, ecstatic side of Martsch's playing, while "You Were Right" and "The Plan" exemplify his ability to get down and rock.

Lyrical, the album peaks on the track "You Were Right." This is the culmination of a lifetime spent listening to FM radio, a bittersweet anthem that lyrically samples other rock anthems from the '70s and '80s, paying homage to dusty rockers such as Kansas, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones.

When Martsch recorded "Perfect From Now On," longtime fans wondered if he would be able to make the jump from indie darling to the big time while still retaining musical validity. In other words, fans wondered if he had sold out.

Not Martsch. This is a man who moved from Seattle, just when things were really heating up, to Boise. This is a man whose music cannot go out of style because it has never been in style and has never tried to be. "Keep it Like a Secret" stays true to pure, blissed-out indie rock form and, in doing so, breathes new life into a genre in desperate need of just that.

The ironic thing about "Keep it Like a Secret" is that it may well be the album that will ensure Built to Spill's future as bona fide rock stars. Doug, if this is a problem, then take this advice: Quit recording albums full of perfect music. Because if you don't, then Built to Spill will be a secret no more.



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