

New Modest Mouse CD neglects former sound

Modest Mouse's latest release, 'Good News,' is well done but lacks the intensity of past albums

Helen Schumacher
Pulse reporter

I owe a lot to Modest Mouse. It was after a friend forced me to listen to "Lonesome Crowded West" in high school that I stopped listening to what was on the radio and actively started to search for more fulfilling sources of music. I bought the album the next day and listened to it obsessively for the next six months.

I've had several friendships begin with a conversation about the band's music, which had an ironic way of helping people who felt unable to connect to modern society connect with each other.

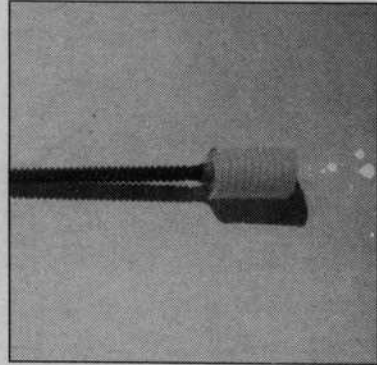
In short, no other band played as integral a role in my late teens as Modest Mouse did. That's why I approached the April 6 release of "Good News For People Who Love Bad News" with great trepidation. After waiting four

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years to follow-up their last full-length release of new material and losing founding member and drummer Jeremiah Green, I doubted the new album would be able to live up to the high

standard my sentimentality had placed on the band's work.

Thankfully, the long-delayed "Good News For People Who Love Bad News" is an excellent album, but at the same time it abandons much of the band's signature sound and fails to reach the same intensity of previous albums.



Courtesy

Modest Mouse's "Good News For People Who Love Bad News" came out April 6. The Issaquah, Wash., band's first full-length release in four years is excellent, featuring radio-friendly tunes such as "Float On" and "Ocean Breathes Salty."

Instead of sounding like a Modest Mouse album, the new release sounds like a zydeco-inspired collection of songs written for singer/guitarist Isaac Brock's solo project Ugly Casanova. Brock's concern seems to have shifted from exorcising his demons to refining his craft.

The album is in the same vein as

their last major release, 2000's "The Moon & Antarctica." Like that album, this one has shorter songs and more layers than their earliest work. The first single from the record, "Float On," bounces along like the catchy "Tiny Cities Made of Ashes" but without the cynicism. Instead of conjuring up apocalyptic visions of gray dust, Brock sings "We'll all float on OK, don't worry ... good news is on the way."

Other stand-out tracks include "The World At Large," "Ocean Breathes Salty" and "The View." All are delivered almost flawlessly and will certainly receive significant air time on college radio stations. The end of "Ocean Breathes Salty" showcases the work of new drummer Benjamin Wiekell (of Beaverton's The Helio Sequence), and proves he can fill Green's shoes.

Missing from the new album is the winding and pounding interplay between Brock's guitar and Eric Judy's bass that carried earlier songs like "Doin' The Cockroach" and exploded in "Tundra/Desert."

It could be argued the new sound is due to Brock's progress as a songwriter. But for a band whose music has consistently lamented the open space progress destroys, is this a good thing?

"Good News For People Who Love Bad News" was released Tuesday and is available at record stores everywhere.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailyemerald.com.

PULSE BRIEF

Maude Kerns Art Center now accepting applications

The Maude Kerns Art Center is currently accepting applications for its first Gallery Guide Program, a volunteer opportunity for art lovers interested in learning the ins and outs of working at an art museum.

The art center will choose between 15 and 20 volunteers to begin training May 26. Participants will meet with artists, learn museum pedagogy (the processes museums use to teach and discuss art during tours), attend

lectures on museum education issues and practice giving guides and answering questions about art.

In late June, volunteers will begin monitoring galleries and giving tours at the Maude Kerns Art Center while continuing training. They also will be responsible for advertising and doing community outreach for shows at the art center.

Anyone can apply and there are no requirements aside from a passion for art.

"It will be a great experience for anyone interested in the arts, particularly in our museum because we give an opportunity to meet with artists,"

museum operations manager Jessica Foote said.

Program participants also will have the chance to collaborate with guides at the University of Oregon Museum of Art, which reopens in the fall. Foote said Maude Kerns guides will attend tours at the University museum, and vice versa.

Those interested should download the application off the art center's Web site, <http://www.mkartcenter.org>, or contact Foote at 345-1571. Applications are due May 18, and those accepted must commit to at least six months of work.

—Natasha Chilingirian

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2004 Ruhl Lecture
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