

THE HOUSE OF LOVE, *The House Of Love*, Polygram — Lately, Guy Chadwick has been telling critics that his band is making the greatest music they've ever heard, that its second album is brilliant, and that he expects to sell millions of albums.

At least Chadwick knows how to demand attention.

But, you know, The House of Love could probably be a media magnet without Chadwick's boasting. That's because the British group may actually come close to reaching the lofty expectations that at first seemed ludicrous and pompous.

This is a damn good record, especially in light of the horrendous, homespun disco that is being spewed from the dance clubs of Great Britain. It seems that all it takes these days is a drum machine and a lot of money — which just ticks off guitarists like Chadwick so much. And so, what we have here is a guitar album that doesn't whine or scream, but one that bathes ears in moody and majestic swirls.

"I Don't Know Why I Love You" is one of the most captivating modern rock songs of 1990. Its mix of acoustic and electric guitar is an aromatic blend, and Chadwick's lyrics relay the band's quizzical stance on romance. With "Shine On", The House of Love has a couple of marketable singles that may make you a believer in Chadwick's Best Band In The Universe dream.

Atmosphere is half of the group's effectiveness. The musicians keep busy on every song and choose not to leave any airy "white space" — there is constant tambourine tapping, murky six-string humming or faint feedback to avoid any sound shortage.

There's certainly no shortage of skill here. The House of Love is a lovely 12-cut slice that is designed for fans of the Church, the Cure and U2. The band visits Great America Aug. 3 with Peter Murphy.

— BRENT AINSWORTH