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SIGH IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE

The House of Love draws deeply from its musical heritage to bolster its own brand of brooding pop.

Babe Rainbow, the fourth effort by England's House of Love, is a far rockier affair than its fey predecessors, but the music is still veined with front man Guy Chadwick's soaring melodic melancholia. From the oddly punchy "You Don't Understand" to the wistful "Girl With the Loneliest Eyes," *Babe Rainbow* (named after a painting by English pop artist and *Sgt. Pepper's* sleeve designer, Peter Blake) finds the House of Love entering the mainstream with its postpunk English alternative sensibilities intact.

"This album is a tapestry of influences," says Chadwick in his quiet but firm voice. "It's about bands we grew up with: Echo & the Bunnymen, the Cure, Depeche Mode—British bands."

From its earliest singles for the Creation label, such as the Bansheesesque "Destroy the Heart" and the glittering "Shine On," the House of Love has always sounded like a compendium of English guitar groups—self-appointed guardians of post–Joy Division rock. Even its classy tribute to the 1960s, "The Beatles and the Stones," sounds more like the Bunnymen and the Cure than its titular influences.

"It comes out like that 'cause that's the way we are," shrugs Chadwick. "We *are* English."

The House of Love could never reinvent itself as Pearl Jam. It doesn't *rock*, but instead creates harmonic, churning songs with a certain beefy delicacy. The overriding strength of the music is, however, its aching plangency.

"We like sad songs," mumbles bass player Chris Groothuizen. Chadwick is more expansive: "A lot of my favorite songs are quite melancholy," he quietly enthuses. "A song like 'Nothing Compares 2 U' makes me feel so brilliant. None of us are really into that rock'n'roll thing. Other than drinking lots of beer."

DAVID QUANTICK



The House of Love, *from left*: Pete Evans, Guy Chadwick, Simon Mawby, and Chris Groothuizen.