House Of Love:

clearing up the confusion

by Glenn Gamboa

Guy Chadwick is excitedly rattling them off one after another in his sophisticated London accent. The lead singer of House Of Love really wants to make his point.

Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Faith No More and Sonic Youth are the bands that inspired House Of Love to craft their latest release, BABE RAINBOW, into a dense and swirling musical mixture of poetic gloomy lyrics, rich guitar textures and rhythmic advances.

Confused? Well, Chadwick is more than happy to explain.

"I think what they've done with their music is just brilliant," he says. "They've done something interesting to music for me. There is a lot of sensitivity, but there is also that dynamic release."

While it makes perfect sense to him why American grunge and his band's brand of British rainy day pop can be related, that special lead singer power kicks in telling him he is not connecting. "It isn't easy to put us in a specific genre," he quickly adds.

After all, the '90s update of the psychedelic '60s kick that House Of Love provide on songs like "You Don't owe less to the straightforward power chord set than the band's 1988 debut, THE HOUSE OF LOVE, and the simple fuzzbox guitar stomp of their early hits, "Christine" and "Hope."

Chadwick admits that the similarities are less in sound than in feeling. "I think I exorcised all my musical demons on this one," he says, "but those bands have taken the whole group to another sort of level and given us a huge understanding of what we can do and achieve, musically."

The six years and three albums the South London band — Chadwick on guitar and vocals, Chris Groothuizen on bass and vocals, Pete Evans on drums and Simon Mawby on guitar — have spent together also helped.

"There seemed to be such a mystery to making music and records," Chadwick explains. "We're trying to capture something really special each time. I think we're better at doing it now, because we actually know what is good and what is bad. Before, we were kind of hoping for the best."

Hope is something that most people wouldn't associate with BABE RAINBOW. Chadwick tosses out such well-written nuggets of loneliness like "Feel," Me," where *Somebody got a hold of my head/Put it into a can and changed the way that I feel.*

"My approach is much more based on sound," Chadwick says, getting excited again. "I tend to like quieter songs because of my soft voice. The sounds are sort of austere, and words like 'suicide' come easily for me to sing. So that tends to happen.

"I think I have my own singing style. I can't scream, 'I love you, baby,' because I can't make it sound convincing. I think that's why I go for very emotional lyrics."

But Chadwick insists there *is* a silver lining to all of these gloomy clouds. "It was all very cathartic," he explains. "The content, lyrically, describes a troubled year, and every song has some powerful, potent imagery: fire and brimstone stuff. "I don't know why," Chadwick continues, "but before, lyrics were quite hard to do. I didn't think I had anything left to say. But on this one, I feel more comfortable with myself as a lyricist. I seem to have arrived at a way of writing that makes sense to me."

Chadwick finds the rather unorthodox method of stream-of-consciousness lyric writing to work the



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Simon Mawby, Guy Chadwick, Chris Groothuizen (top) and Pete Evans (from left)

first thing that comes to my head and then edit together a final lyric. By doing it that way, there is a lot of ideas and imagery, a lot of describing feelings through metaphors and interesting combination of words. It's like putting a jigsaw together."

This writing process allows Chadwick to draw on a wealth of life experience and book learning to pick out the images that suit the band's music. For example, musical journey through the world with author Henry Miller's words of wisdom as a guide. Chadwick's lyrics and Groothuizen's gentle bass lines combine to tell a chilling tale.

Like their recorded sound, the band's live show has also grown over the years. For those interested in finding out exactly how much they've changed, House Of Love will play Shooters Live with Catherine Wheel this Sunday blitz the audience," Chadwick says. "We would do the most powerful set we could do, but after a while, it seemed a bit too obvious. Now, we've made it as varied as possible. In that hour and 20 minutes, you get a really good cross-section of what the band is like."

Which is?

"We're trying to create a music that doesn't sound like anyone else," Chadwick replies with a laugh.