THE MODERN ALTERNATIVE



THE HOUSE OF LOVE - Developing The Dichotomy

by Mark Hendrickson

With a name like The House Of Love, you'd think these four Brits would be into some hippie love trip. Think again. "We've tried to get into the 'love' vibe," says singer Guy Chadwick, "but that's not really The House Of Love. We try to look into the dark side, the underside of life."

Yet these alternative favorites have a very jangly, upbeat sound. "We're into the dichotomy of living," explains drummer Peter Evans. "There are days when you're happy and everything else in your life is going foul. Then there are times when everything is going along smooth when you should be under a lot of stress. Those differences fascinate me, and you can reflect that in your music by having a happy sound with dark lyrics or vice versa."

For several years The House Of Love has been on the cutting edge of English alternative rock, experimenting with unique sounds, instruments and rhythms while exploring lyrical impressions that both typify and verify the daily existence of four young men from the North of England. But being on the cutting edge of alternative is like being on the cutting edge of virtual reality — how do you be idiosyncratic in a field of music that's idiosyncratic by its nature?

"Yeah, what the hell *is* alternative music anyway?" asks Chadwick. "Usually it means any band that doesn't fit in anywhere else and that's not what we're trying to be with this new record. We want to fit in, to be accepted and have many, many people listen to our music. But we're not going to sell out and become Tony Bennett or something. So it's weird, trying to maintain 'alternative' credibility — *whatever* that means — and trying to work within a framework — pop songs — that people can relate to."

The new album, **Babe Rainbow** (Fontana/Mercury), is unlike anything The House Of Love has ever done (which means it's less atmospheric and dense and more light and sunny) and it's the perfect record for our troubled times. "The world's in a recession now," says Chadwick, "so doing droopy music doesn't turn people on anymore, although there's always going to be a fan base that digs death rock or whatever. But even bands like The Cure are making livelier records. It's what people want, to be entertained."

As with most alternative music, it's hard to describe how a band sounds unless you actually listen to them. But you can say The House Of Love takes a little from REM, a little from the Sex Pistols and a lot from The Cure and Depeche Mode. What they *give* is something new and refreshing; alternative music for the masses. "But I'm sure most people won't get what we're into," says Chadwick. "There are a lot of really great bands that get pigeonholed into this category and someone who would like them otherwise, never gets a chance to listen to them. So we'll keep playing for the college kids and wait for the rest of you all to catch up."