



THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

"...perfect for that sunny car trip..."

THE MANITOBAN 4.5 stars

"...but the Heavy Blinkers' sound continues to grow in rich, surprising ways, even while they're still so young."

THE HALIFAX CHRONICLE HERALD

"If it fails to connect to the modern world, it may be that the modern world doesn't deserve it."

EYE MAGAZINE (TORONTO)

"Cohesive but not repetitive, grandiose without pretension, The Night and I is music no one's made for decades."

THE COAST (HALIFAX)

"...one of the best albums you'll hear all year...makes for a perfect springtime soundtrack, full of equal parts longing and loveliness."

THE SILHOUETTE (HAMILTON)

"The arrangements are inventive and complex and only go to prove that there's life outside the 2 guitars, bass and drums format."

BBC interactive

"The attention to detail is close to flawless and the warmth that resonates from this album is played to a tee."

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

"...this album is just the perfect length - enough to satisfy your appetite, but without overstaying its welcome at all."

indie pages

"It's the gentle melancholia as much as the abundant strings and horns that makes this album special, pushing it a cut above the other California dreamers."

chart magazine

"Their lovely melodies, patient tempos and a masterfully arranged (and restrained) 25-piece orchestra aim high and consistently hit the mark."

Montreal Mirror

"Halifax's Heavy Blinkers make perfect spring music. That the and bumps up the bright tones - piano, horns, steel drum and beautiful harmonies - embodies the season of rejuvenation."

Halifax Daily News

"There is definitely not much bitching to be done when a release succeeds in making you smile this much."

chart magazine

"Sail away on an ocean of instruments to a pleasant land, and marvel at the studio styles the Blinkers have mastered."

THE NEW BRUNSWICK READER

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

BLINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT: HALIFAX'S HEAVY BLINKERS LAUNCH LATEST CD AFTER TWO-YEAR GESTATION

BY STEPHEN COOKE

**THE HALIFAX CHRONICLE
HERALD
APRIL 2004**

AIN'T IT FUNNY how time slips away?

To the Heavy Blinkers, it seems like only yesterday that the Halifax-based kaleidoscopic pop band recorded its latest CD, even though it was two years ago in a studio on St. Margaret's Bay that it laid down the bulk of the tracks for *The Night and I Are Still So Young*.

Before it could become *The Great Lost Heavy Blinkers Album*, the Endearing Records release is finally ready to hit stores, and the band unveils the new tunes on Friday at the Marquee Club, with Tyler Messick and the Museum Pieces.

"Most of the record was done by early June, 2002," explains Blinkers founder Jason MacIsaac from his new home in Timberlea. "But all of the mixing, digital editing, every mouth smack and bit of surface noise, every ambient noise, we had to edit every single track.

"Then you add remote recordings, like steel drums, horns, strings and vocals, and it takes a long time."

Released on Winnipeg-based indie Endearing and distributed by MapleMusic through Universal, the record was held up even further because the initial number of pre-orders exceeded the amount of discs that had been pressed. Talk about being a victim of your own success. But MacIsaac takes it all in stride.

"The main thing is we had fun making it. I remember in August 2003, Andrew (Watt) and I were sitting on my porch with a laptop and an extension cord mixing the album.

"At this point that's my fondest memory of the whole process, probably because most of my other memories are gone. We got so wrapped up in the minutiae of it, so wrapped up in the detail . . . we wanted it to be so dense and ornate, that it wasn't until the end that we realized we'd spent two years making a record."

MacIsaac says the band's previous record, *Better Weather*, was wrapped up in a few sessions, and he hopes whatever comes next proceeds in a similar fashion. "We'll never do a record like that again," he laughs.

The obvious comparison is Mac-Isaac's beloved Beach Boys, who reverted to the rawer, less-produced sound of *Wild Honey* and *Sunflower* after the painstaking work that Brian Wilson put into *Pet Sounds* and the never-released *Smile* LPs.

One idea is a variation on the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* albums, where the Heavy Blinkers collaborate with pals and kindred spirits from Halifax and abroad.

"We're not thinking huge names, but at least F-list celebrities," he says. "Like Sonda Lerche, the Norwegian pop guy. Members of bands that are above us, but will hopefully stoop to our level.

"We like to think of it as a Heavy Blinkers and Family and Friends kind of thing, but that's just a pipe dream. It'd be a scheduling nightmare, everyone would have to record in the country where they live, but it's something we talk about. While the Heavy Blinkers share the love upstairs at the Marquee on Friday, *The Tragedies* brings the noise downstairs in Hell's Kitchen, celebrating the release of its new CD *The Tragedies Are Made of People!* Rounding out the set of soylent rock are Wax Mannequin and the Jon Epworth Band.

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

Blinkers THE stars

BY LEZLIE LOWE

THE coast
(HALIFAX)
APRIL 2004

The music of Halifax pop outfit The Heavy Blinkers gets rubber-stamped as post-Pet Sounds Beach Boys so much, it's enough to make a fan of the band's warm, billowing sounds want to scream. And them too. Still, Jason MacIsaac and Andrew Watt try hard to make the best of music punditry's need to pigeonhole.

"On occasion we get The Doobie Brothers," says vocalist and guitar player MacIsaac, with understandable ambivalence. "And we do get The High Llamas," adds vocalist and pianist Andrew Watt.

Well forget the comparisons. There's no Halifax band that is more its own than five-member strong The Heavy Blinkers. The band's been making orchestral pop in town since 1998 - releasing four full-length albums and piquing the interest of local audio-philosophers and overseas pop aficionados alike. They started with the peppy, anthemic Hooray For Everything, an album that, above all else, sounds like its name. The Heavy Blinkers followed in 2000 and the CBC-recorded Better Weather came along in 2001. And now there's the new album — either one year or two in the making, depending on who you ask, and an inarguable illustration that the band has come a long way from its happy, poppy debut. It's called *The Night and I Are Still So Young* — out in Canada March 30, with a release party set for The Marquee Club April 2. It gets its de facto national release party April 22 with a live one-hour concert on CBC Radio 3.

The Night and I Are Still So Young is a 12-track collage of pop ditties, instrumental serenades, and swelling rock—the kind of music melancholic teens in Whoville might listen to. Or Karen Carpenter on her deathbed. Buck up, now — there are pop ditties on there too. "We wanted the warmth of analog tape and we used it," says MacIsaac of the album. "We wanted punchy drums like The Flaming Lips and the size of Wagnerian strings. But we never sat down and said let's re-record 'Strawberry Fields Forever.'"

Ahh, but it is big. And having 25 collaborators in the mix is no small part of that.

There are five members in The Heavy Blinkers proper — MacIsaac, Watt, drummer Greg Fry, bassist Trevor Forbes and vocalist Ruth Minnikin. Then there's the second string. (Not second-rate talent, but a lineup of regular additional players. "It's almost as if there are two separate bands but they don't play apart from one another," explains MacIsaac.) The B-crew includes Dave Christensen, who plays horns and does some arranging; guitar player and engineer J. Ball; engineer Paul Aucoin, who's also on vibraphone; and Dale Murray on guitar and pedal steel. There are eight additional brass musicians, five more strings, a handful of players on marimba, harp and guitar, and a choir. You can see how it starts to add up.

"The tricky thing for us is always reconciling the number of musicians," says MacIsaac. "Because everyone has to have a home or it just sounds cluttered. It's always been hardest realizing when enough's enough and when it's not enough."

"But our enough might be a bit more than most bands'," says Watt.

The Blinkers' big nature might be getting even bigger in the near future if MacIsaac has his way.

"Much to Andrew's dismay," MacIsaac says, turning a mockingly menacing eye to Watt. "I would like the next record to be a double record."

Watt's eyes hit the ceiling as MacIsaac continues. "Once you establish that everyone is going to say what they always say about a double album — that it's bloated, that it needs to be trimmed, you know they're going to say that whether you give them *Exile on Main Street* or Bruce Springsteen's *The River*—it's kind of liberating."

"We're in the wrong town," MacIsaac says "and by wrong town I don't mean that badly. I'm staying in Halifax for the rest of my life."


Example: A new split-EP in the International Pop Exchange series which The Heavy Blinkers released in November with French band Orwell is already on its third pressing. It's a domestic product, out of Winnipeg-based Endearing Records. But about 80 percent of sales have been in Japan. "If you sell 500 CDs in Canada as an indie band," says Watt, "that's pretty good. To sell out in three weeks or four weeks when it's 1,000 units, it's a big deal."

With the fans comes the fan mail. Or, at least what they think is fan mail. "We once got a picture with a little German kid with our CD in hand in a Santa suit saying Merry Christmas," says Watt. "We get tons of mail we can't decipher."

"Oh yeah," MacIsaac leaps in. "'Greg has beard! Number one hit smash!' That was an actual Japanese one. 'Your drummer Greg! So young have beard! Number one hit smash!'"

The Heavy Blinkers began as a studio project of MacIsaac's, with Watt engineering. These days, those two are the principal songwriters. (Though, MacIsaac says, "we've been trying to wrangle a song from Ruth for five years." She recently put five down on her debut solo EP. Dale Murray is also finishing up a solo project right now.) But the band is as democratic as it gets. That goes for all arranging and all money. "We share equally in no profit," MacIsaac says.



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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

HALIFAX POP ENSEMBLE THE HEAVY BLINKERS RELEASED ITS FOURTH ALBUM THIS WEEK, THE NIGHT AND I ARE STILL SO YOUNG.

A BIG NIGHT FOR HEAVY BLINKERS HALIFAX POP BAND CARVES OWN SOUND ON NEW RELEASE

BY STEPHEN COOKE

I USUALLY DON'T pay much attention to the pop charts since whatever goes on there often seems so nebulous and blinkered, revealing only a small slice of a much broader musical pie.

Plus there's always the worry that the mathematical obsession with a record's ups and downs on the Billboard grid could turn one into a nascent Casey Kasem.

It's hard to imagine anything that could kill a love of song faster than turning it into the musical equivalent of memorizing baseball stats.

But it is interesting to note the widening gap between what happens on the album chart and who winds up in the upper ranges of the singles chart.

For example, as of this writing, you have a plethora of hip-hop collaborations - Usher featuring Lil Jon and Ludacris, Twista featuring Kanye West and Jamie Foxx, Chingy featuring J. Weav and so on - dominating the top of the Hot 100 Singles list. But over on the album chart, you find audio comfort food like Norah Jones, Josh Groban, Sheryl Crow and Harry Connick Jr. taking up valuable real estate alongside more youth-oriented fare like OutKast and Evanescence.

Heck, Jones' new Feels Like Home is sitting at number one in its first week of release, while her Grammy scoring debut Come Away With Me is still within spitting distance at #23. In Kasem style, "Wait, I have a sudden urge to dedicate a song to a little girl in Peoria who wrote in to say her puppy ran away . . ."

But comforting, classic-sounding fare isn't just dominating the mainstream music realm. In recent years, independent music has seen a growing movement of acts embracing more ornate and reflective styles from England's Belle and Sebastian and Arab Strap to Canadians like Destroyer and Rufus Wainwright.

Halifax pop ensemble Heavy Blinkers is way ahead of the curve, releasing its fourth album this week, *The Night and I Are Still So Young* (Endearing). It's also its first full-length CD for Winnipeg-based Endearing Records, which also included the band in its International Pop Conspiracy series of E.P.s last year with three exclusive tracks.

In a marked change from its last effort, the bright and brisk *Better Weather*, the Blinkers opt for more even more delicate shadings and a mood that can best be described as meditative on *The Night and I Are Still So Young*. String and horn arrangements are elaborated upon even further - french horn and flute nestle in with pizzicato violins - while songs like *Filtered Light* and *Unseasonably Sad* are emotional tone poems grappling with the uncertainty that comes with leaving your young adult years behind.

**THE HALIFAX CHRONICLE
HERALD**

FEBRUARY 2004

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

Pet Sounds, The Beach Boys' 1966 orchestral-pop masterpiece, may have earned a permanent place amid the upper reaches of every All-Time Greatest Albums list, but there are few more thankless aesthetic blueprints upon which to base a career. The High Llamas performed to a three-quarters-empty Lee's Palace last month; Eric Matthews is missing in (in-)action; and, lest we forget, Pet Sounds was the domino that set in motion Brian Wilson's psychological collapse almost 40 years ago.

eye magazine
MARCH 2004

In 2001, Halifax's The Heavy Blinkers released their third album, *Better Weather*, a marvel that inverted Pet Sounds' artless worldview -- boundless joy in place of profound melancholy -- at a fraction of the budget. Fewer than 400 Canadians bought it. The British and the Japanese, whose critics shat themselves, were more demonstrative at the cash registers, while legendary Wilson collaborator Van Dyke Parks proclaimed the band "the real deal."

Two years in the making but sounding as though it fell effortlessly from the sky, *The Night and I Are Still So Young* is as wide-eyed and poetic as its name suggests. Among his contemporaries, Blinkers linchpin Jason MacIsaac is second only to the Llamas' Sean O'Hagan in terms of mastery of sweeping baroque arrangements. But where O'Hagan has used Wilson's anti-formula as a jumping-off point for excursions into susurrous electronica and abstract wordplay, MacIsaac dives headlong into the currents of classic pop; "In the Morning" and the title track engage the heart-strings and the memory banks before the analytical mind can pick them apart.

This is music from a time before irony became pop's major currency, yet also before the posture of sincerity was offered as compensation for the rest of pop's shortcomings. If it fails to connect in the modern world, it may be that the modern world doesn't deserve it. -Micheal Whit

The Night and I are still so young might be the best Canadian album you hear this year and for good reason. Nobody in Canada is making music like this. Close to two years ago, the band set up shop in a barn somewhere in rural Nova Scotia and what resulted was 12 tracks of pure orchestral pop splendor. There are obvious parallels that could be drawn to the band's sound but that wouldn't really do justice to the level of sophistication and respect this music deserves. Tracks like "Gentle Strength" and "Silver Crown" are just brimming with layers upon layers of instrumentation, paid for by 25 auxiliary players outside the Blinkers 5-person core. The presence of both male and female vocals only add to the mix and the gentle voices of these contributors blend perfectly with these felt-tipped masterpieces. The attention to detail is close to flawless and the warmth that resonates from this album is played to a tee. The fact that this is the Blinkers' 5th album is only further proof that they are one of this country's most underrated bands and might finally be getting their due because this is one album that cannot be ignored. www.endearing.com. -Cameron Gordon

SPILLED CD
MARCH 2004

You can almost hear the pages being ripped out of the Burt Bacharach songbook as The Heavy Blinkers bounce their way through this collection of pure pop perfection. *Better Weather* hops along like a feather to your eardrums and songs like the super-sweet "Baby Smile" and "Lazy In Love" give off good vibrations, sounding like a combination of The Carpenters and The Beach Boys. The Heavy Blinkers mix up 13 tracks of swirling horn sections, pristine harmonies and singalong syrupy choruses that spell nothing but guilty fun. There's definitely not much bitching to be done when a release succeeds in making you smile this much. Now, who wants gum? Contact: www.brobdingnagian.com. -TM

chart magazine

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL on Disc

BY sean finn

HALIFAX DAILY NEWS

MARCH 2004

Halifax's Heavy Blinkers make perfect spring music. That the band bumps up the bright tones-piano, horns, steel drum and beautiful harmonies - embodies the season of rejuvenation.

The group is set to release its fourth full-length album, *The Night and I are Still So Young* on Winnipeg-based Endearing Records March 30th.

Just back from two highly touted shows in Toronto and Montreal and looking forward to work on a new and possible double album and a European tour this summer; the Blinkers' Jason MacLssac exudes hopefulness and optimism.

"We played one of the best shows of our lives in Toronto a couple days ago," reports MacLssac over tea and samosas at The Daily Grind.

The band has five core members-MacLssac writing, singing and playing piano; keyboardist, vocalist and songwriter Andrew Watt; drummer Greg Fry; bassist Trevor Forbes and singer Ruth Minnikin - and a "revolving door" of musical helpers. "It's a scheduling nightmare. But it's worth it. It keeps things really fresh," MacLssac explains.

The band rolls with scheduling challenges: for example, MacLssac couriered a burnt CD to Minnikin, who was touring solo across Canada, so she could learn the set in time for Toronto and Montreal. By the time all members met in Toronto a day before their Canada Music Week set, they rehearsed once and pulled it off.

The Heavy Blinkers flourish under complex conditions. The band creates florid, lush songs blooming with up to 60 different instrumental and vocal tracks-all without having them bog down in an aural mess.

That marriage of laissez-faire sensibility and discipline-all members have studied piano, though MacLssac says Minnikin is the best by far-infuses the 12 selections on *The Night and I*. The title track comforts you like the first real spring day when you're finally certain winter won't return. It's a well-orchestrated song: Minnikin's heavenly voice, the rise and fall of the horns (arranged by Christensen and involving Anna Plaskett, Joel's sister, on French horn) and the piano tying it all together.

Lyricaly the song is a daydream about being lost in nature, either in an "ocean's undertow" or in a thick forest. "I never write lyrics first. It's a steadfast rule," MacLssac says.

The Blinkers' approach was also well-supported by the locale of the recording, and old refurbished boat shed in Seabright, on the way to Peggy's Cove. When work on the record began two years ago, MacLssac and drummer Fry only played to a "click track," getting down the roots from which the plant would grow.

Later the whole band was in Seabright "living and breathing" the record "Then we'd open the doors to the shed and it would be nothing but a lake, forest animals, sky and stars," MacLssac recalls.

Along with Andrew Watt's *Silver Crown* (with delightful work on pedal steel by Dale Murray) and the title track, *Mother Dear* stands out. MacLssac rewrote the original lyrics as an ode to a fawn he'd watch in Seabright.

Of course, MacLssac's back in the big city now, preparing for a record release show April 2 at the Marquee and then a webcast for cbcradio3.com. He'll have to play to the fawn in his mind.

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

The long-awaited, long-delayed follow-up to the Blinkers's brilliant *Better Weather* (2001!) is 40 minutes of the most romantic melancholia you've ever heard. Cohesive but not repetitive, grandiose without pretension, *The Night and I* is music no one's made for decades. It maintains the '60s Brian Wilson-influence pop sensibilities of the first three albums but drops the sugary love songs for the likes of "Unreasonably Sad." Sorrow should be so sweet.

-Tara Thorne

On their fourth LP, Halifax's Heavy Blinkers ease a sleek, featherweight sound from the same pop realm as Mercury Rev and the Delgados, but with a Brian Wilson-esque '70s gauze in place of Dave Frindmann's contemporary ring and crunch. Their lovely melodies, patient tempos and a masterfully arranged (and restrained) 25-piece orchestra aim high and consistently hit the mark. With a smaller cast and equally powerful tunes, Pas/Cal continue to blow a breath of fresh pop air at Detroit's diesel-rock fumes. The Beach Boys, Belle & Sebastian and the Smiths are implicated in their heavenly vocals, raucous riffs and scrumptious concoctions of keys and strings, perfect chamber pop-eras for smart-ass romantics. Blinkers 8/10, Pas/Cal 8.5/10 (Lorraine Carpenter) The Heavy Blinkers are at le Swimming, Sun., March 7, 10pm, \$8

-Matthew Jacobson

"With so many Brian Wilson worshippers flooding the indie rock scene, there aren't many pop orchestrationalists worth paying attention to, but Nova Scotia's The Heavy Blinkers rise above Pet Sounds mimicry. The Blinkers' fourth album owes much to Wilson, but with its masterful arrangements of harmonies and instrumentation, the homage factor can be overlooked. With nearly 30 musicians contributing, this album is a symphonic masterpiece for sure, but the best thing about The Heavy Blinkers is their subtlety and understanding of the dark side of '60s sunshine pop. It's the gentle melancholia as much as the abundant strings and horns that makes this album special, pushing it a cut above the other California Dreamers."

-ECB

After three stunning albums (one self-released, and two on Brobdignagian Records), this is the band's debut on Endearing Records, and hopefully the one that will earn them more than just massive critical acclaim! Best described as orchestral pop, the Heavy Blinkers combine the baroque pop style of the Left Banke & Beach Boys, with some modern elements of the High Llamas & the Flaming Lips; also adding a tiny bit of country in (as heard in "Silver Crown"). Many of the songs are performed with piano, strings and horns as the main instruments; with little or no emphasis on the guitar. However, this doesn't mean that the [Blinkers] and isn't prone to writing wonderfully catchy pop songs, as you'll hear with "In The Morning", "He Heard His Song" and "Try Telling That To My Baby". At the core, the band is a five-piece, though they can swell up to ten members during live shows, and have included over 25 musicians in the making of this record! One of the band's strongest points, however, is restraint. None of the songs go on too long (a couple even fade out right where they should, while many other bands would keep it going for a minute or two). Even the instrumental, "Veranda Celeste", is concise enough that it's over before you notice. Clocking in at exactly 40 minutes, this album is just the perfect length-enough to satisfy your appetite, but without overstaying its welcome at all.

THE COAST
MARCH 2004

Montreal Mirror

CHART MAGAZINE
MARCH 2004

INDIE PAGES REVIEW
APRIL 2004

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

I've reviewed a handful of Heavy Blinkers albums in the past few years and they all seem to start out the same way. Though the Brian Wilson/Van Dyke Parks influence has never been anything less than turned to ten from their debut Hooray For Everything to this, their fourth full length, if it's starting to get old for me to write entire reviews based around the similarities between to the two, I can only imagine how it feels for the band.

Though this Halifax, Nova Scotia based five-piece don't make their love of Wilson -- or Burt Bacharach, Randy Nilsson and the aforementioned Van Dyke Parks for that matter -- out to be something to be kept a secret, they at least have the sense to make it clear that they're following in the footsteps of the best pop songwriter and producer of all time instead of pussyfooting around it. You know, like pretty much every other indie/mainstream pop-rock/chamber pop group that have been surfacing since Today and Pet Sounds proved the group to be more than just esoteric surfer boys and their second golden era, from '67-'71 (Smile/Smiley Smile to Surf's Up), proved them capable of so much more than they had originally been given credit for.

And there I go again. But this time around I've made a pact with myself. To look at this album, to describe its incredibly catchy and saccharin twelve tracks as, amazingly enough, the new Heavy Blinkers album, not as a faceless Beach Boys homage. It just seems too lazy to merely say "The Night & I Are Still So Young continues in the band's adoption of post-Pet Sounds production techniques" since there is -- and always has been -- so much more to this group than these kind of comparisons let on. Many groups have stolen from the Wilson vaults as much as, if not more in some cases, the Blinkers and have yet to release an album half as enveloping as Better Weather or as effortlessly diverse as their eponymous sophomore release. It gets to the point where I could probably buy a stamp that said "I hope for your sake Brian Wilson never hears this" and make my job a whole lot easier. So lets not confuse the Heavy Blinkers with just another group hopping the most crowded bandwagon this side of the UK, where I'm sure the "Lennon is spinning his grave" stamps are worn to the handle.

So now, with that rather pointless introduction out of the way, lets get to it. Their first record for Endearing (a Canadian label based out of Winnipeg), The Night continues in the path of the group's previous sweet-as-pure-sugar path; and, once again, the result is an album that is mostly irresistible. They waste no time rolling out the large arrangements, either; nearly all tracks are adorned with a beautifully plush production, from orchestral passages to blaring trumpets to, as album highlight "In The Morning" proves, just piano, bass and their full-group harmonies. Ruth Minnikin also returns with an even bigger prominence (her voice had made previous songs like "I Used to Be a Design" and "Weight That Can't Be Carried" as affecting as they were). Her incredible voice is prominent on many of the album's best tracks -- "Mother Dear," "Gentle Strength," "Fall On My Sword" and the album's most impressive achievement, "The Night & I Are Still So Young" -- and, not to take anything away from Jason or Andrew who create some of the record's best harmonies, has the ability to cut through arrangements that are even this dense and intriguing.

Although at times the record might sound similar to the saccharin lounge-pop of Sondre Lerche, who is admittedly a big fan of the Blinkers, the band never offer us anything close to the outright boredom that made Two Way Monologue such a disappointment after the extremely promising Faces Down. And even though several of these songs do across as being a little too campy -- "Unseasonably Sad," "Try Telling That To My Baby" and "Silver Crown" (which starts off like a soft-rock AM hit back in the early '80s, which I mean in the nicest possible way), for example -- they only temporarily derail the record's real strengths. So while Night isn't the completely consistent album the Blinkers have been struggling with since their debut, it is the closest they've come yet, even with the lack of an incredible standout like "I Used to Be a Design" or "Rise and Glide" (though, to be fair, the title track and "Mother Dear" come awful close).

All in all, though it follows much in the vein of their previous records and really isn't much of a departure, Night is far from a superfluous retread. The consistency of its tracks -- by which I mean not the songwriting itself so much as the general feel and aesthetic approach of each song -- is much greater than the all-over-the-map feel of Better Weather (it might be hard to imagine "I Used to Be a Design" and "Far As You Are" on the same record, but there you go), making it much more of a realized song-cycle. The Night just goes to further prove the group as much more than the mere sum of their influences; anybody could just adopt a familiar style and run with it, but it takes a real talent to make the extremely familiar exciting again and, for the forth time in a row, the Heavy Blinkers have pulled it off.

-Scott Reid

cokemachineglow

APRIL 2004

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

Sun-dappled melodies and wispily beautiful harmonies - can it get much better than that?

Yes, yes it can, as they Heavy Blinkers prove on their first offering from their new home at Endearing Records. An East Coast 'super-group' of sorts, Messrs, Forbes, Fry, MacLssac, Watt, and Ms. Minnikin eclipse their prior album, *Better Weather*, with a release that could fit comfortably beside The Beach Boys' touchstone *Pet Sounds*.

Take the above-mentioned melodies and harmonies and surround them with horns, strings, glockenspiel, guiro, and solo piano, and you have the recipe for a summer album that arrives with the first signs of spring. Jason MacLssac is a genius pop songsmith, though I'm certain that the arrangements the band is responsible for elevate the work from the inspired to the sublime.

Much of the material is irrepressibly fun - "Try Telling That to My Baby" is a sing-along you'll know by heart after the first listen - and you'll be "oo-oo-ing" along to a number of the songs. It's an album perfect for that sunny car trip, but I can imagine putting it on as the clouds roil and the rain drizzles down my windows in order to lure myself out of the doldrums a rainy day can provoke. I haven't tested it out in either circumstance yet, but have no doubts whatsoever as to the likely success.

It's only April and already I'm assembling a strong list of contenders for my Top ten of 2004. *The Night and I* are still so young can be added to that list. 4 1/2 stars

Dear Brian Wilson,

Glad to know you're feeling better. What's your secret, have you been working out? Well, whatever you're doing, you look great. Try not to feel too bad. I mean, who hasn't fallen into fits of madness every now and again. We've all had one of those days or decades - the '70s in your case. Hey, you were a tormented genius and paid the full artistic price. It happens. At least it got you it got you out of having to tour with Jesse from Full House in the '80s.

Anyway, why I'm writing - there's this band called The Heavy Blinkers. They're from Halifax. They have beaches there too. I thought this might interest you.

The Heavy Blinkers are a retro orchestral band who play songs that capture the sunny, fuzzy feeling of summertime. They are essentially following in your footsteps, writing songs that have a sweet sadness underneath delightful symphonic pop. I'm telling you, this stuff will make you want to cry and smile at the same time. The vocal harmonizing on songs such as "Silver Crown" are snippets of blissed-out love sonnets. *The Night and I Are Still So Young* takes the bleakness out of everyday and somehow manages to fill a gloomy, heavy heart with a shimmer of hope, all with one beautifully sustained note.

By the way, I hear you're finally releasing SMILE in the fall. Way to go buddy! It only took 37 years. Look forward to hearing it. Keep in touch.

Yours Truly, (4/5)

Kirsten Kosloski

THE MANITOBAN
APRIL 2004

FFWD
(calgary)
MARCH 2004

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THE HEAVY BLINKERS | selected press

Ever since his mid-'90s collaboration with Elvis Costello, Burt Bacharach has developed some mad street cred. But if endorsements from the likes of Air and Zero 7 weren't enough, The Heavy Blinkers have taken Bacharach fetishism through the roof on their fourth album.

**THE SILHOUETTE
(Hamilton)
APRIL 2004**

Bacharach comparisons only scratch the surface, though, as the Blinkers follow a deep tradition of lush, introspective pop that, in a great contradiction, is as optimistic as it is sorrowful. Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys come to mind, as does the sardonic irony of Harry Nilsson and Randy Newman.

So if those comparisons means anything to you, *The Night And I* might be one of the best albums you'll hear all year. But even if they don't, it still makes for a perfect springtime soundtrack, full of equal parts longing and loveliness. --Simon Toyne

This is the 4th album from the band from Halifax, Nova Scotia and is arguably their best. If you're not familiar with them they could best be described as a Beach Boys for the millennium! This could also be called sunshine pop as it is entirely reminiscent of bands like The Yellow Balloon and The Free Design whose trademark was pure pop with gorgeous vocal harmonies. Jason MacLissac's songwriting has never been stronger and this album shows all the benefits of the 2 years it took to produce. The arrangements are inventive and complex and only go to prove that there's life outside the 2 guitars, bass and drums format.

**BBC Interactive
MARCH 2004**

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