

## Mp3 Andrew - Happily Ever After



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power pop, folk rock, baroque pop, psychedelic, americana 5 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, POP: Beatles-pop Show all album songs: happily ever after Songs Details: POP MATTERS SAYS: ". . . because albums are too long, and EPs are too few -- these songs live here, happily ever after, with you!" So says Andrew Sandoval, who goes by Andrew in a quirky show of bravado, on the back sleeve of his five-song EP entitled -- you guessed it -- Happily Ever After. Andrew may just be yanking our chain as a full-length, Happy to Be Here is due out any time now, but his statement offers a couple choice nuggets of truth. But let's start with the terrible lie enshrined in those 19 words. Albums, I'm afraid, are getting shorter and shorter nowadays ... well, at least the good ones are. The best two albums released so far this year, the Exploding Hearts' Buzzcocks-meets-power-pop Guitar Romantic and Deerhoof's pop-rock-noise masterpiece Apple O', clock in at 29 and 31 minutes, respectively, just about twice as long as Happily Ever After. Even the "definitive" reissue of T. Rex's Electric Warrior clocks in at 58 minutes, excluding, of course, the 20-minute interview with Marc Bolan tacked onto the end. Maybe whatever Andrew drops the needle on these days is bloated to disfiguring proportions, but album lengths on average seem to be coasting down, down, down. Andrew is right about scarcity of EPs, a truly under-appreciated art form. What's more, there's a scarcity of great EPs, but Andrew delivers the goods here in crafting five delicious slices of pop pie. While not among the best extended plays of all time, Happily Ever After admirably attempts to scale that mountain by showing off Andrew's considerable talent at creating and distilling the catchiest hooks and melodies into 15 minutes of power pop bliss. The two landmark EP's from which all others are judged came within a few short years of each other in the late '70s early '80s. The Nerves' self-titled EP and R.E.M.'s pre-Murmur debut, Chronic Town, are the pinnacles of EP greatness. The Nerves provided the essential power pop sound over four cursedly short songs. "Hanging on the

Telephone", "When You Find Out", "Give Me Some Time", and "Working Too Hard" define their genre, and it's hard to ask for more from 10 minutes of music. Meanwhile R.E.M. went one step further and out-and-out created their own sound entirely thanks to songs like "Gardening at Night" and "Carnival of Sorts (Box Cars)". While Andrew doesn't do anything revolutionary on this EP, he does follow the blueprint for success. The singer/songwriter writes classic power pop tunes in the vein of a myriad of the genre's luminaries, including Big Star ("Make It up to You"), the Nerves ("The Stay at Home Scene"), and the Byrds ("I'm Gonna Say Goodbye"). Sandoval enlists the help of some contemporary power pop stalwarts, including Velvet Crush drummer Rick Menck and Wondermints bassist David Nolte. To his immense credit, Andrew makes a song about -- ohhh baby, get ready for this -- a harpsichord with magical powers the centerpiece of his EP. Amidst four songs about lost love and broken hearts comes this masterpiece about the simple joy of playing the "Magic Harpsichord", featuring the electric harpsichord playing of one Mr. Andrew Sandoval. "Don't try and tell me that you don't think it's real / I know how I feel / I know it's real when I play it / Harpsichord / Now we two are one / The music's just begun / Starting with this simple song / From the magic one / The Magic Harpsichord" Andrew sings over lovely "bum bum ba ba dum dum dum dum" harmony vocals. The song is a perfect song for spring ... and it's about a damn magic harpsichord! I can't stress that enough. And if that weren't enough, Andrew packs in all sorts of fun little goodies throughout the five tracks. "The Stay at Home Scene" uses backwards guitar sounds and a clean, driving jittery riff to induce a sugary pop rush, while the pedal steel on "I'm Gonna Say Goodbye" turns alt-country on its head with a melody Ryan Adams will never be able to create no matter how many songs he writes in his lifetime. Ultimately, Andrew does get two out of his three assertions from the back sleeve correct. The EP's five songs do indeed live happily ever with the listener, even more so if they live in the car stereo on a gorgeous spring day. It's a shrewd move -- anyone who gives Happily Ever After will be forced to give his new full-length a chance. Highly recommended.

- Tim Alves

The Big Takeover Andrew Sandoval is the kind of guy I can relate to. Not only does his name keep popping up as the liner note writer for some of my favorite reissues (like The Action Rolled Gold CD that came out on Reaction last year), but he's a fixture of the West Coast Power Pop scene who seems hell bent on bringing back the golden age of California pop with sheer enthusiasm. Add Ric Menck (Velvet Crush) on drums, and this EP is rounding 3rd and heading for home already. Luckily in this case having all the, right influences doesn't prevent our hero from creating a perfectly lovely EP (a

companion piece to his Happy To Be Here album on Bus Stop). His style is perfect AM pop with a dash of Graham Gouldman-style '60s Brit influence. This blend creates a timeless and charming collection of well-written songs with interesting arrangements and captivating vocals that bear some resemblance to Ric Menck's pre-Velvet Crush work as The Springfields and Choo Choo Train. Me want more. -Corin Ashley Goldmine

Happy To Be Here and Happily Ever After Andrew Sandoval - known simply as Andrew where his recording career is concerned - comes by his influences naturally. A pop archivist who's considered an authority figure on The Beatles, The Beach Boys and the mainstays of the British Invasion, he weaves that acumen into his music, creating some of the most authentic-sounding Brit-pop sounds this side of the new century. Like Richard X Heyman, another rocker whose albums unashamedly reflect his fascination with all things Anglo, Andrew might easily be mistaken for any of the artists he emulates. The evidence is obvious on his two latest recordings, the new album Happy To Be Here and an EP Happily Ever After, released nearly simultaneously with the unusual cooperation of two different labels. Each reflects Andrew's influences right down to the most minute details, from the shimmering "aaaaahs" that well up in the background vocals to the delicate use of harpsichords, cellos and strings to pepper his arrangements. Of the two efforts, the album, Happy To Be Here, is slightly more effusive, vibrant set that's a worthy enough successor to his engaging debut, A Beautiful Story. Listening becomes a game of name-that-influence, with The Beach Boys, The Zombies, and The Bee Gees among the more obvious answers. Drop the proverbial needle anywhere on the disc, and you will find a song that wells up, emitting infectious stylings that would make Brian Wilson blush. "I Wish You Would," "Allyn White," "He Can Fly," "Now" and "Friend Of Mine" bring the spirit of the '60s full circle, a credit to Andrew's sonic sophistication and pure pop panache. With only five tracks, Happily Ever After offers a bit more focus and allows the opportunity for the individual songs to break out of the mix. While Andrew's influences still dominate the proceedings - "Till I Met You" brings to mind The Kinks' "Set Me Free," while the recurring riff in "The Stay At Home Scene" recalls Flaming Groovies' "Shake Some Action" - it's the melodies that come fully to the fore. Not that Andrew downplays his musical arrangements. For instance, "Magic Harpsichord" is as ornate and pristine as a Left Banke ballad, although he writes songs independent of the retro references. Still, part of Andrew's charm draws from that nostalgic feeling, that longing for a time when pop was vibrant, fresh and consistently listener-friendly. With these two new releases, Andrew recaptures that feeling with a happy stroll down memory lane. -Lee Zimmerman

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