

Better than Ezra: College album of 1995

by Joe Ryan
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Better than Ezra's 1995 release, Deluxe has been named the 1995 College Album of the Year and for good reason.

The slower rock sounds of this album can trace their origins to other college music gods like R.E.M. and Smashing Pumpkins, who surely provided the inspiration for this New Orleans trio.

Most of the sounds put forth by this album are slower paced guitar with some faster innuendos to spice up the refrains.

The mesmerizing vocals of lead singer and guitarist Kevin Griffin have a certain uniqueness that is sure to attract. His voice is at time overpowering and then changes fluently to a slow and mellow timbre that allows the music itself to work its magic.

The instrumental accompaniment of this album works well. The subtle changes of pace are well-timed and consistent with the vocals and the vibe which the music is putting out.

Tom Drummond's bass on the album is remnant of the group Primus in that it is overpowering and provides something more than simply the backbone of the music.

The first release spawned of the album was the song "Good". The song is fast paced and sounds like something by Rancid on

depressants. It is also the only song to really make use of the grunge pedal.

This song quickly gained notoriety with its catchy refrain "Ah-huh, it was good living with you."

With its vocal and intellectual references to Beavis and Butthead, it quickly gained frequent airplay on MTV as a "Buzz Clip", but not before college radio stations all over the country had discovered it and made it a regular on the rotation list.

It wasn't until the band's second single, "In the Blood," that we get to see the sensitive side of the band which dominates the rest of the album. The song tells the sad tale of a misunderstood deaf boy who has trouble communicating with others, and thus introverts himself to prevent future humiliation.

The song hasn't been as successful on MTV, making appearances only on Kennedy's Alternative Nation, but it has proven quite popular on the radio.

The album sets its own pace and expresses itself in its own manner. The slower rock sounds can trace their origins to other college music gods like R.E.M. and Smashing Pumpkins.

The video is a true mirror's reflection of the song itself with graphic images such as a boy trying to understand why his

mother is yelling at him, and later finding only more self-anguish when he realizes that his handicap will prevent him from ever becoming a normal child.

This song has quickly become a favorite of all types of radio stations. Even bubbly, top-forty radio stations like Jet 102.3 have given it plenty of airplay.

For the most part, this is a slow and reflective album which can both inspire and rock at once.

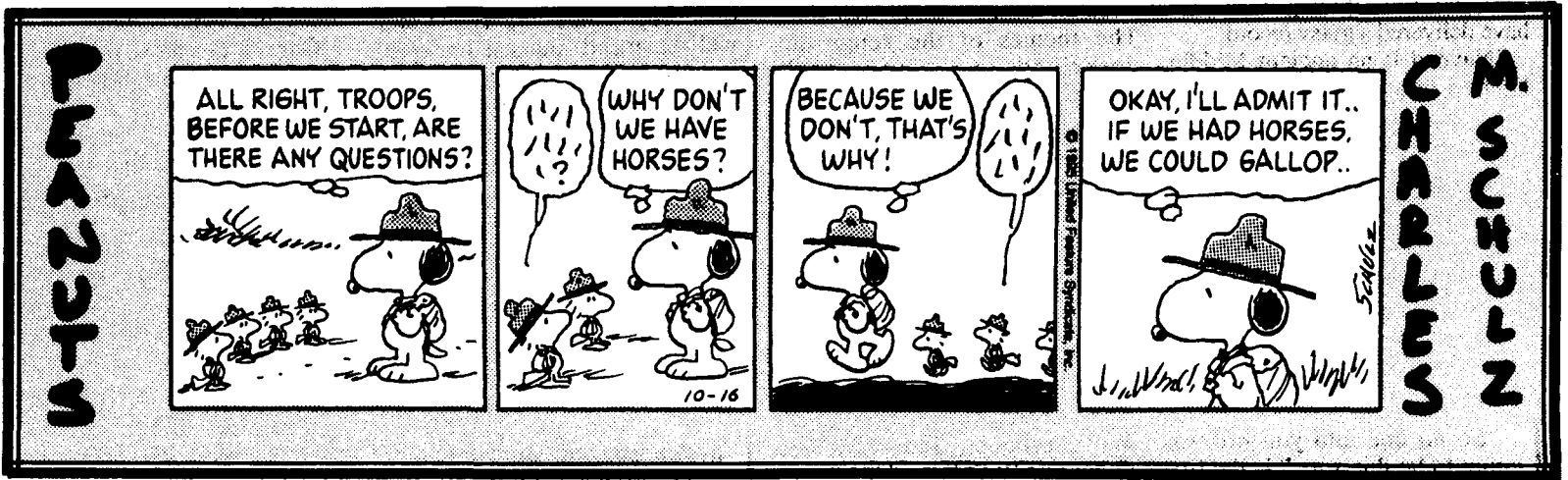
I must caution, however, that this album may not appeal to all listeners.

The album is, for the most part, not a hard-rocking display of grunge pedals and whammy-bars. It is an album that sets its own pace and expresses itself in its own manner.

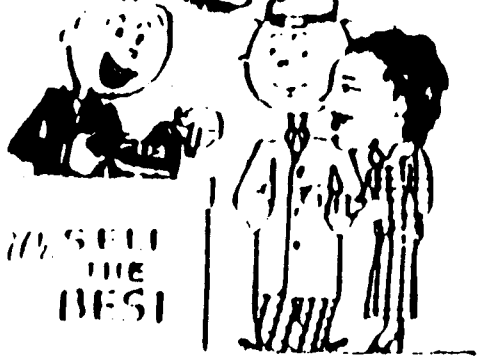
I love the way this group brings together such diverse sounds as violins and mandolins with the traditional guitar.

Even without such extraordinarily beguiling rhythm and sound, I'd still recommend this album simply for its artistic aperture. I definitely recommend you to check it out.

If you go to the Millcreek Mall, you can get it on the guilt-free wall and return it if you don't like it, after copying it of course.



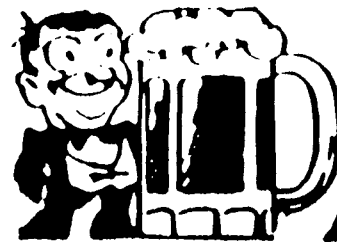
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