

More generic bloodlust

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They're immortal, undead, sexy, mysterious and supernaturally gifted. They're vampires, and they're everywhere.

Vampires dominate entire genres of contemporary literature, film, television and now even music. With the emergence of "Twilight," "True Blood" and now the CW's "Vampire Diaries," it may seem like a fairly new obsession.

It's not, of course. "Interview with the Vampire," "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," "Van Helsing," "Underworld," "Blade," and of course the classic "Nosferatu" all dominated their respectful generations. But every few years when new or recycled vampire tales resurface, there are always bound to be a few really bad cocktail-riders.

The CW's "Vampire Diaries" is one of those substandard bandwagon series complete with classic CW characteristics: a beautiful twenty-something cast playing high school teenagers, a

distinct alternative music style, a soap opera plot line. And no CW series would be complete without those horrible, overused one-liners ("And I love you for that...")

This new drama follows the romance of mortal Elena Gilbert (Nina Dobrev) and vampire

Photo courtesy of Cwvtv.com

Stefan Salvatore (Paul Wesley). As to be expected, Stefan broods with tormenting angst, constantly stewing over the shame of his past. Just as easily foreseen, Elena is a troubled teen looking for her own villainous hero.

As if budding love between a vampire and a human wasn't

complicated enough, Stefan's wicked brother, Damon Salvatore (Ian Somerhalder), shows up to put Elena and Stefan into the respective roles of damsel in distress and nefarious knight in shining armor.

But Somerhalder's character doesn't just inject conflict into the series; he steals the show. Best known for his role as Boone on ABC's "Lost," Somerhalder delivers a sexy, smoldering performance as a carnivorous vampire with a vengeance.

There's a dooming mystery surrounding the Salvatore brothers' past. It seems they were involved in a love triangle with a girl named Catherine, whom Elena looks exactly like. To the show's credit, it didn't reveal all its bloody secrets in the first few episodes.

The relatively uninteresting subplots include a friend of Elena's who thinks she's a witch, a drug problem belonging to Elena's younger brother who is hooking up with Elena's ex-boyfriend's sister and a young aunt who inherits the responsibility of being a legal

guardian to Elena and her little brother after their parents are killed in a car accident. These major side stories are too complex to care about, especially when the acting doesn't particularly stand out.

Clearly, "Vampire Diaries" isn't the best vampire show ever. But with the pilot episode sucking in nearly 5 million viewers "Vampire Diaries" became the CW's most watched series premiere.

In addition to Somerhalder's outstanding performance, "Vampire Diaries" establishes a tone darker and less "PG-13" than "Twilight." The use of side lighting creates large, dark and looming shadows. This harsh lighting, soft focus and alternative music comprise the dark, edgy tone within "Vampire Diaries."

So while I highly doubt "Vampire Diaries" will one day be recalled among the vampire classics, it will keep most "Twilight" fans satisfied in between films. If you're craving a bloody mediocre vampire series, tune in to the CW on Thursday evenings at eight for some fierce fanged fun.

Sea Wolf hit sophomore slump

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Sea Wolf is an indie rock group out of Los Angeles, California that boasts a somewhat folk rock sound infused with Spanish guitar type rifts and somber yet powerful bass drumming. Their 2007 album "Leaves in the River", their first full length release on Dangerbird Records, was an almost haunting sounding collection of stories. In late September 2009, Sea Wolf unleashed "White Water, White Bloom," with an almost completely different approach to their music. Needless to say, their sophomore record is nothing to ride the tide about.

Alex Brown Church's voice sounds like a mixture of Brandon Flowers from The Killers and Win Butler of Arcade Fire. "Leaves in the River" hooked listeners with poetic songs, each telling

a haunting story. "White Water, White Bloom" uses the same linguistics but with disconcerting music accompanying the lyrics. The bland instrumental elements of the album do not match up with Sea Wolf's first album, which is thoroughly disappointing. The cello is still prevalent. A few Spanish guitar rifts can be heard in a couple of the songs. But the dullness of everything else overrides the little idiosyncrasies that make Sea Wolf the band that their fans love.

I have never been so disappointed in an album. The first time I listened to "Leaves" I had a knot in my stomach for weeks. I remember taking a car full of friends

home from a haunted hayride attraction and playing the record. For a full hour, nobody in my car said a word. When I stopped to drop everyone off, my friends claimed they were "drunk off the sounds." Expecting the

same kind of reaction to "White Water, White Bloom," I was ridiculously disheartened by the boring, lackluster music of this highly anticipated, so-called masterpiece.

The first song, "Wicked Blood," made the album sound promising at first, with some cloudy sounding guitar and a sweet beat after the 30 second intro. When the song got into full swing I could not believe my ears. It was purely a pop punk song that did not have the same effect on my ears as their previous record. As I skipped through the album, the music reminded me a lot of the band Carolina Liar. I bought their debut record for ten dollars

and very much wished I had that money back.

"White Water, White Bloom" is not nearly as intoxicating as "Leaves," and it really does nothing for me as a fan. A friend of mine told me he just saw them play live in Denver on their "White Water" tour and that the new songs definitely lacked the mesmerizing talent they made public two years ago. I am truly saddened that Sea Wolf has strayed from their indie roots to mask their abilities with a sound that will "make money." I heard a rumor that a song from "White Water" will be featured in the soundtrack for latest movie from the Twilight saga, New Moon. To me, that information was worse than hearing the band's sophomore release and immediately taking it out of my cd player to pop in something that is actually good. Maybe for their future release's, Sea Wolf remember where they came from.



Photo courtesy of Seawolfmusic.com