



## THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

**Realism**

[Nonesuch]

After swathing their songs in bristling feedback for 2008's *Distortion*, the Magnetic Fields take the opposite approach on their latest. Leader Stephin Merritt calls *Realism* their "folk album"—but this is variety-show folk with a knowing, occasionally ironic undertone. The instrumentation is mostly acoustic, with guitar, bouzouki, cello, horns and hand percussion. It's fairly straightforward on the opening "You Must Be Out of Your Mind," sighing cello intertwining with the catchy melody while Merritt's trademark wordplay introduces a biting sentiment. Things get folkier on "We Are Having a Hootenanny Now," with group vocals that evoke an earnest early-'60s folk-revival song. Pianist Claudia Gonson sings over chiming accompaniment on "The Doll's Tea Party," Shirley Simms returns with a plaintive lead on the mournful "Always Already Gone," and Merritt lends a deceptively joyous air to "Everything Is One Big Christmas Tree," which features a full-throated German chorus. —ED

## AS SEEN IN:



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