

INDIE SCENE

MICHAEL MAZZARELLA

SODA POP GRAMOPHONE

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After establishing himself both with rock band the Rooks and as a solo act, Michael Mazzarella continues to fly below the mainstream's radar. Happily, *Soda Pop Gramophone* may improve his chances of reaching a wider audience—specifically, anyone with a hankering for cheery Beatlesque pop, heavenly harmonies and a semi-psychedelic perspective. The package includes a book illustrated by Peter Thomas Blake, a precocious 11-year-old diagnosed with a developmental disability but possessing a

genuine gift for self-expression. Blake also provides the narrative between songs (a second disc offers the music only) and his child's sense of whimsy suggests an air of idyllic innocence that pervades the album as a whole. In some respects, *Soda Pop Gramophone* takes its cue from *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake*, the legendary rock fairy tale that became the Small Faces' swan song—although the series of vignettes that form

the storyline holds together only loosely. Ultimately, it's Mazzarella's musical overview that provides the focus, with songs like "Wake Me," "Didn't Every Day?" "My Mind Your Mind" and "Flowers, Towers and Waves" all contributing to the winning retro pastiche. A most imaginative initiative, *Soda Pop Gramophone* never goes flat.

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