

REVIEWS

TEENAGE FANCLUB

**Shadows**

[Merge]

For years, Teenage Fanclub served a key purpose during those long stretches between Big Star reunions—the band's rootsy, easy-breezy power-pop was a well-crafted, intermittently inspired substitute. The Glasgow group's first album in five years arrives mere months after the death of Big Star leader Alex Chilton, so it's fitting (if coincidental) that *Shadows* should be something of a somber listen. The songs reference sunsets, changing seasons and time's forward march. Even the jangliest tunes—the lover's plea "Baby Lee," for example—carry traces of sadness. Those mournful undercurrents are testaments to the songwriting powers of rotating singers Norman Blake, Raymond McGinley, and Gerard Love. The three have remarkably similar styles, and no matter who's at the helm, the songs come wrapped in *Rubber Soul* melodies and rolling, sparkling chords. In a Chilton-less world, these retreads sound like sweet reminders.

-KP

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