

REVIEWS

JOHNNY MARR

*The Messenger*

[Sire]

Since leaving the Smiths in 1987, guitarist Johnny Marr has made a career of playing nice with others. He's guested with such heavies as Talking Heads and Pet Shop Boys and even served stints with relative whippersnappers Modest Mouse and the Cribs. Through it all, he's seemingly made a conscious effort to avoid his signature sound—that rolling, bittersweet jangle that defined not only the Smiths, but also indie rock as we know it. On his solo debut, Marr comes closer than ever to revisiting the music of his early 20s. It's not all clean, chiming guitars—synths occasionally seep through the strumming, harking back to *Electronic*, Marr's side project with New Order's Bernard Sumner—but *The Messenger* mostly delivers vigorously melodic, lyrically vague rockers. Were ex-Smiths foil Morrissey present, he'd lend some profundity (and personality) to the proceedings, but instead, we're left with "Generate! Generate!"—Marr's best attempt to express whatever has reawakened his inner rock 'n' roller. —Kenneth Patridge

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