

REVIEWS

REID PALEY AND BLACK FRANCIS

*Paley & Francis*

[Sonic Unyon Records]

"I'll bring down my foot on your daisy chain/I'll have a drink from your jugular vein..." Given Black Francis' reputation as a dark character, those lyrical musings from opening entry "Curse" would seem to affirm his ability to shock the heck out of his listeners. Joining forces with frequent collaborator Reid Paley, the former Frank Black (born Charles Thompson) offers up an off-kilter collection of woozy serenades, barroom blues and rousing revelry. Paley proves a game collaborator—he and Francis wrote these songs in three days and enlisted veteran producer Jon Tiven, ace bassist David Hood and piano legend Spooner Oldham to fill in the stripped-down arrangements. The combination of players often produces oddball results, from the crooning, swooning "The Last Song" and the over-the-top ballad "Ugly Life" to the chaotic sing-along "Happy Shoes" and the ramshackle shuffle of "Praise," a song Lou Reed could be proud to call his own. —LZ

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