

REVIEWS

THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

*Love at the Bottom of the Sea*

[Merge]

It wouldn't be accurate to say that the Magnetic Fields are retracing their steps, but they are at least putting a new spin on old techniques. After largely shunning synthesizers for the last few albums, *Love at the Bottom of the Sea* is replete with them, creating a strange, candy-colored landscape straight out of a carnival horror show. Frontman and primary songwriter Stephin Merritt continues to maintain a dry sense of humor rarely seen in earnest indie-rock, though some songs stretch the bounds of even his rhyming dictionary. Rife with bizarre love triangles, sardonic pro-abstinence messages and violent revenge fantasies, *Love* packs complete and sometimes complex tales into two-minute songs. Merritt lets the narratives dictate the form, even if that means more than one track ends abruptly. —AF

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