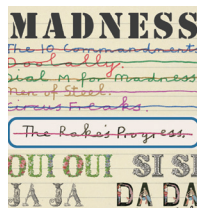


REVIEWS

MADNESS

*Oui Oui, Si Si, Ja Ja, Da Da*

[Cooking Vinyl]

In the late '70s and early '80s, Madness scored a Beatlesque run of U.K. hits, and for good reason: a Beatlesque way with melody. Initially affiliated with the 2 Tone ska movement, the septet put Jamaican bounce behind quintessentially British songs, sidestepping the political sloganeering of their post-punk peers to paint nuanced portraits of everyday London life. Their fourth album since reuniting in 1992 is typically jaunty, and while the band hired some new producers, they stick with classic sounds like mod soul ("My Girl 2"), blue-eyed reggae ("Kitchen Floor"), perky piano-pop ("Leon") and boot-stomping ska ("So Alive"). "Death of a Rude Boy" marks a rare foray into dub, while "Never Knew Your Name," the only real outlier, is string-laden disco. As always, the hooks hide undercurrents of melancholy, but *Oui Oui* is lighter than vintage Madness sets. It'll do more for the collective mood than it will for the group's legacy, and that's fine. The former is more in need of a boost. —Kenneth Partridge

'Typically jaunty, they stick with classic sounds like mod soul, blue-eyed reggae, perky piano-pop and boot-stomping ska.'

