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# MAGNET

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## Good News Bears

The second coming of Guided By Voices hits its glorious stride

**T**HE LEGENDARY CHURCH OF BOB: First erected in Robert Pollard's honor some-time circa the mid-'90s, it remains one of rock 'n' roll's most enduring monuments to cult fandom. Among its many crowded pews and fire-hazardous aisles, I have long stood a pious believer—though not, I must confess, an altogether unquestioning one. Heaven knows the inviolably prolific Pollard has issued forth plenty of solo records and side projects, particularly in the past decade, that have cast some shadow of doubt

upon my faith. And when Pollard promised to ring in yesteryear with a brand new Guided By Voices LP by the resurrected "classic" lineup—all members of which were already pushing 40 back when Pollard ousted them for abler musicians in '97—my cautious optimism soon curdled. *Let's Go Eat The Factory* boasted a few true gleamers from Tobin Sprout, Pollard's trustiest of foils and collaborators, but many found the Fading Cap-

tain's own contributions far short of his golden-age pedigree. As ever, there have been scattered gems lining Pollard's recent output (Lifeguards' "What Am I," Boston Spaceships' "Make A Record For Lo-life")—but the first sign of a true second coming was the reunited boys club's third (!) album of 2012, *The Bears For Lunch*. Since then, it's become increasingly clear the band just needed a few months and vinyl

sides to properly reacquaint; this past season alone, Guided By Voices has released an excellent EP, a fine single for every finger on your one hand and—best of all—*English Little League*. In many ways, it's the album the GBV of old could have made had the band members not split ways when they did. Like 1996's gorgeous swansong *Under The Bushes Under The Stars*, it's a relatively hi-fi affair, with much of

the heavy riffing that defined *Mag Earwhig!* the following year. "Island (She Speaks In Rainbows)" is gorgeous C-86 guitar pop from Sprout, as good as the best of his solo *Moonflower Plastic*—but benefitting again from Pollard's backing, their two evergreen voices harmonizing agelessly. "Send To Celeste (And The Cosmic Athletes)" is like a Britpop ballad sieved through Pollard's madcap lyric sheet. "Quiet Game" revisits the rhythmic churn of the classic "Hot Freaks," now replete with filter envelopes and strange Wilsonian harmonies à la the Beach



**Guided By  
Voices**  
*English Little  
League*  
★★★★★★★  
GBV, INC

## REVIEWS

Boys' *Smiley Smile*. "Sir Garlic Breath" stirs delicious friction between the abstract grit of "A Big Fan Of The Pigpen" and the creamy-sweet likes of the earliest "Peep-Hole" demo, while "A Burning Glass" is one of the most disorienting depressants Pollard's ever gotten on tape.

True, the clearest points of reference here are from Guided By Voices' own past, and what's great about *English Little League* very much preaches to the choir. (*Fast Japanese Spin Cycle* enthusiasts, for example, will be thrilled to know that "Reflections In A Mental Whistle" reiterates Pollard's interest in the Far East and piano abuse.) But it's nevertheless clear this crew is ready to welcome some new converts once more. —*Jakob Dorof*