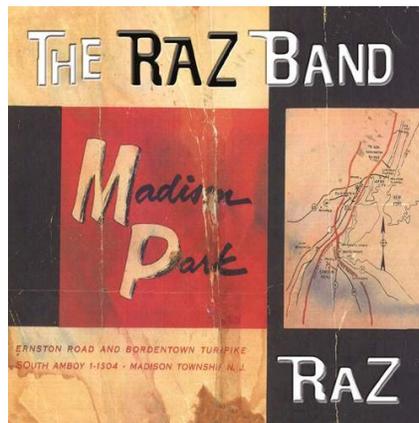# THE RAZ BAND – Madison Park
Gonzo 2015

THE RAZ BAND –
Madison Park

Tasty slab of razzmatazz from a band who know how to let their hair down from coast to coast with a Badfinger in tow.

Three decades on the scene haven't diminished this ensemble's ability to build a robust kind of rock 'n' roll, with vigor and simplicity unburdened by extra exquisiteness but not without an arresting flourish. That's how it goes for the group's first full-length offering whose sixteen tracks – fueled by love, the four-letter word gracing six titles – defy the players' age while somehow reflecting singing guitarist Michael Raz's journey from New Jersey to Los Angeles.

Brass vying for space with six-string riffs and slider caress on "$1.50 For Your Love" and the song's chorus catching the listener's skin, there's no escaping the music's mirth – for the most part. The drive may sag on the George Harrison homage "Time Marches On" – infested with the Fabs quotes – yet the presence of Joey Molland on these cuts grounds them just fine, so the update of his BADFINGER rave "Love Me Do" is a weighty addition to the context where harmonies could reign if they possessed an air of importance. They don't, though, which gives a playful recklessness to the groove shifts in "The Road Of Love" and spiritual levity to "Searching Forever"; the melodies that feel comfortably familiar and made irresistible by Joe Vitale's piano.

On the darker side, "Say Ya Love Me" has a bluesy pull to it, and "You Don't Know A Thing" explores a punk abandon, whereas vaudevillian pastiche "The Paths That We Take" is linked to the vibes-adorned "Barbara Operator" in their adventurous, storytelling nostalgia. Such innocence peaks with a children-assisted finale of "When Dogs Fly South" as the musicians' cast are marching, to an acoustic ring, into a song and making a point of impossibility to notch a hit, but another BEATLES' reference might suggest the record was only a dream: if so, anything can happen, including a charts dent – it's that good.

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