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 spittle drenched saw dust bar with a machine shop light bulb slung around his neck bashing out tunes on a diminutive and cantankerous organ. In the background his percussian and accordian player stumble around like cartoon characters in a Romero film. Does it work? Well yes and no. I've been in love with Tom's material for over a decade now - songs that'll get me chuckling like a maniac or wild expansive cinematic panoramas of musical story telling that'll get me blubbering like some damn crybaby (very recommended for novices: *The Asylum Years* double album compilation). To be quite honest though, unless one could actually see him in THAT old murky whiskey joint, rank with cigarette smoke, snapping his weird old head

around like save spastic turtle, the informality of the man on vinyl with the (too large) audience whooping and hollering on the background doesn't really cut the gravy for me at all. A more private and intimate forum is desirable for this brand of esoteric musical appreciation. True, we do have save classics here such as the swing of *Red Shoes* as well as *Big Black Maria* and *Rain Dogs*, but these are personally better appreciated on studio recordings. Furthermore fans will be left wondering why their own favourites are not to be found on *Big Time* at all.

In all a bit of a disappointment, but I've yet to see the actual film from which this soundtrack has been taken. Perhaps this will provide the missing link. I hope so.

STEVE GRIFFITHS

THE HOUSE OF LOVE
The House of Love
 (Creation Records)

There used to be a standard British guys that haven't seen a photon of sunlight in their ecs. (adopts nasal whine) *Oh short lives and boydo they God here they come -more ever whine!*

Its a stupid bigoted stereotype attitude, but unfortunately it fits the pale and wan *The House of Love* quite well. Take a peek at the record cover. No logos or anything, just two extremely serious looking but very attractive young men fix the photographer with a stare that says 'Hey we're serious artists you know!'

Wrong! Its just this sort of pomposity and lack of warmth that makes this debut album a little difficult to get to grips with. Despite moments of haunting melody which, to be honest, are rather sparse, many of the compositions of this unarguably austere work are rather flat, leaving the listener to ask what all the fuss is about. Fuss though, is what they are causing. Phrases like 'perfect pop' 'expect miracles' and 'leaves the listener paralysed' ricochet around the popular music press like an AK47 in the hands of an epileptic. It's one of those instances where the reviewer, wanting to join the clique of his peers, tries desperately to enjoy this set of ten short songs. Sorry lads, but I can't do it. Despite a whole week of constant playing, it just doesn't rub off on me like the big boys say it should. Instead, although the blatant spartan nature inherent in the



The House of Love: just a little bit concerned about the wonky border tape.

minimalist construction is pristine in a calculated sort of way, I denounce this album as a cold fish.

Certainly the swirling and softly abrasive 'Christine' already a veteran of the higher echelons of the independent charts, might lead me to pen the word 'outstanding', but it is really the only exemplary composition that proves true of the litmus test

'-would I play it again?'. Here then the answer is definitely yes, but it is not true of any of the other debateably mundane stocking fillers.

Maybe these are giants in the making but in the meantime its time to drag out the old emperor's clothes cliché and say, not quite yet.

Steve Griffiths

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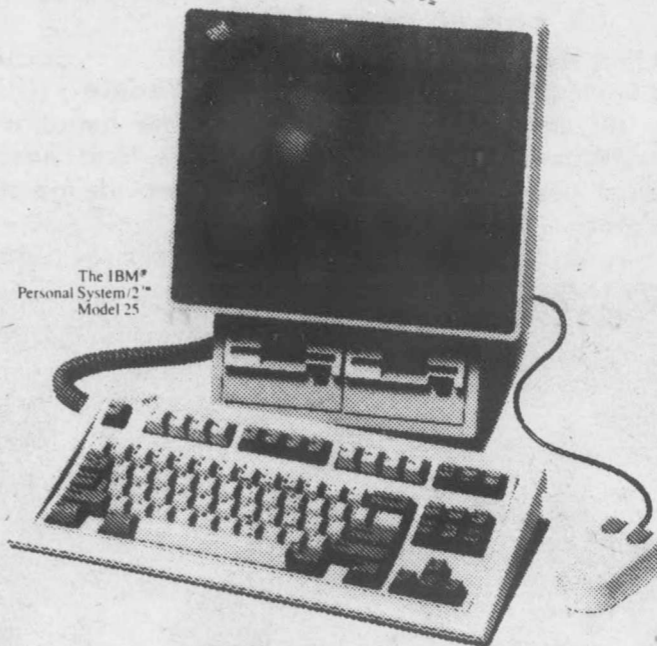
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