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about 420 words

**Album Review: The Pains of Being Pure at Heart – *Belong* (Slumberland)**  
by Rebekah Henson

This may sound a little contradictory, but **The Pains of Being Pure at Heart** make me happy. Tender indie emo kids though they may be, they make the kind of music that gives me the urge to get up and dance around the room even while angsting over the emotions of life and love. The fact that I can hardly hear the wistful lyrics behind the wall of distorted guitar effects probably helps.

Frontman **Kip Berman** recently told Stereogum in an interview that working with producers **Flood** and **Alan Moulder** (who have worked with **Nirvana**, **Smashing Pumpkins**, and **PJ Harvey**) helped to make their sophomore release sound like “a better version of ourselves.” And that's exactly how this album feels. *Belong* has all the nu-gaze twee charm that made their first self-titled album so likeable, but the sound is fuller, lush, more realized and even more upbeat

than their previous full-length release. *Belong* has a rockier edge while still maintaining the heart of what makes their sound uniquely them.

The album opens with the title track, a vibrant and honest examination of a love that fights to work but just can't win. "Change your mind / And stop the time / That comes between us / That bends beneath us..." "And you're the same / So slightly strange / Among the fakes you knew the pains..." Each track starts to blend into the next after a while, but a few songs that stand out from the pack include "Even In Dreams," "My Terrible Friend," and "Girl of 1,000 Dreams." "Even In Dreams" begins like a nostalgic 80s ballad that would feel at home in **John Cusack's** boom box from *Say Anything*, before the song explodes with guitars into the chorus of "Even in dreams / I would not betray you..." Out of all the songs on the album's tracklist, "My Terrible Friend" most makes me want to bop around the room like a teenager in love: "Everyone is pretty and fun / Everyone is lovely and young / Everyone is gentle and gone / But everyone's just everyone / And you're the one who's breaking me." It feels like every hopeful high school crush I've ever had. "Girl of 1,000 Dreams" just rocks out, anthem-style.

Even with their powerhouse production team, The Pains of Being Pure at Heart stay true to themselves and the celebration of nostalgic teenage complexities that permeates their sound. You can catch The Pains of Being Pure at Heart at The First Unitarian Church this Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>.