

## Album Review: Goo Goo Dolls – Magnetic

Goo Goo Dolls' new album is imbued with a nu-wave vivacity; [Katrina Northern](#) reviews

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**Label:** Warner Bros.

**Release:** 10/06/2013

Upon first listen I could not quite pinpoint what it was that I felt was missing from this album.

Then it came to me: Angst.

And by third listen I realised that that omission was not as detrimental as I feared.

Magnetic, The Goo Goo Dolls's tenth studio album is an upbeat record, bursting with colour and vivacity. The Warhol-esque album artwork magnetically draws your eye with its strong colour fusion and the iconic quality of the main photo.

The album is the product of the band's new stylistic approach, particularly the decision to involve others in the song-writing process. No longer is it frontman Johnny Rzeznik holed up in his room with a pen, instead various producers and collaborators have been drafted in to aid the creative process. You can, for example, discern the Bon-Jovi-ish influence from producer John Shanks at some moments. The woody acoustic sound is no longer the dominant force, though it is by no means lost. One stylistic difference is that many of the tracks, such as 'Rebel Beat' and 'More of You', are more beat-driven and synthesised in their verses.

The lead single, 'Rebel Beat', exemplifies the new-wave-Goo. Inspired by a walk in downtown New York during which he stumbled upon a block party, Rzeznik felt like the spectator who longs to be involved. The track is ultimately a celebration of living in the moment and making the most of second chances. The album chronicles a stage in the bands' lives where things are changing with age and there is both self-reflection and acceptance.

Despite the collaborative process, Rzeznik's lyrical style most of the time manages to retain some of its individual potency. 'Caught in the Storm' typifies his philosophical style, reflecting on the band's home of

Buffalo and the blue-collar (working class) lifestyle (the 'broken dreams' that 'flow out into the sea', the 'losers and the winners... all just looking for something to believe in'). 'I'm tired, Rzeznik sings, 'of sleeping through my own life / it's time to wake up with arms open wide'. It is a call to each individual to wake up and search for something more in their lives.

The album features the inevitable couple of tracks sung by bassist Robbie Takac. These are moments that many a Goo fan awaits with slight trepidation - not because he lacks talent as a songwriter or bassist but because his voice kind of sounds like someone wearing combat boots is standing on his adam's apple. I will say, however, that 'Happiest of Days' is one of the best Takac has ever written, after a few listens I even warmed to the pinched, rasping tone. The whole musical arrangement of the song is beautiful and the lyrics poignantly offer support to someone 'struggling through the happiest of days'.

The band have been clear during the publicity they've been doing that they wanted Magnetic to be less dark than some of its predecessors (Rzeznik has spoken about his struggles with depression and alcohol, which has now given up). The members seem to be at genuinely happy points in their lives with Takac getting used to having a young family and Rzeznik preparing to get married this summer. 'Come to Me' is fairly blatantly about the latter but it is a song that, despite its sentimentality, grows on me with each listen. 'This is where we start again' Rzeznik croons and this simple lyric will resonate strongly with those who invest in this band and their work. This is not an album that marks a band in the twilight of their twenty-seven year career, but one that heralds new beginnings and second chances.



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