

ANGIE APARO

The American (Arista)

It's hard to shake the feeling that you've heard Angie Aparo somewhere before.

The Atlanta-based singer has obviously studied his collection of old albums by folk-flavored singer-songwriters carefully. His debut album is packed with songs that combine the voice of Cat Stevens with the murky lyrics of Michael Penn and the oh-so-deep thoughts of every earnest dude who ever picked up an acoustic guitar.

Mr. Aparo obviously is trying to make some kind of point — the packaging, the lyrics and the title all scream concept album. Yet, what he is trying to say is not entirely clear. His lyrics are so cryptic and self-consciously arty that figuring out what they're all about is hard.

That having been said, some of the music is quite good. His voice, if somewhat familiar, is strong and pleasing. Mr. Aparo and his backing musicians also have a keen appreciation for lush production and musical detail.

When Mr. Aparo steps off his lyrical high-horse, he is capable of turning around a nifty little song. The best piece on the album, "Cry," is a neat little confession of pain, in which he begs some former friend or lover for some sign that she shares the pain he feels. — Sean Scully

"New Hear This"

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