

title

The Life and Times

Suburban Hymns

DeSoto TH49 (CD only)

Release: August 8, 2005

Bar Code: 6 43859 74902 9

label



music

Allen Epley - vocals / guitar

Eric Abert- bass/ moog

Chris Metcalf - drums

points

- This is The Life and Times' second release, and their first on DeSoto.
- The members are from the bands Shiner, Ring, Cicada and Stella Link.
- Produced by The Life and Times and J. Robbins (Jawbox, Channels) and recorded by Paul Malinowski (Shiner) at Great Western Record Recorders.
- Tours of the U.S. and Japan are perilously imminent.

press

Planetary

Galen Lipin

P: 617-275-7675

E: galen@planetarygroup.com

W: www.planetarygroup.com

contact

DeSoto Records

Kim Coletta

P: 301-589-3909

F: 301-589-1624

E: kim@desotorecords.com

W: www.desotorecords.com

Listening to **The Life and Times'** new album, *Suburban Hymns*, is a little like being in the back seat of a car at night, dozing, looking out the rear window at the stars, drifting from dream to dream, and occasionally realizing that the car is fucking *hauling ass*. There's a certain quivering, vibrating tension belying those fat tires, that gentle suspension and the plush velour interior that tells you there's horsepower at play here, but so smooth and thick you don't even think to go looking for it.

That car, of course, is **The Life and Times**, and driving all night without so much as a piss-break is Allen Epley (voc/ gtr), Eric Abert (bass/moog), and Chris Metcalf (drums).

Long a veteran of the Kansas City music scene, Epley fronted much-loved **Shiner** for years. After Shiner's demise, Epley gathered together Abert from **Ring, Cicada** and Metcalf from **Stella Link** without skipping a beat, became a daddy, recorded and hit the road. On this, their second album (the first with this lineup), the sound settled

into the throaty mix of thick and thin that starts up when you twist *Suburban Hymns* in the ignition—a blend of scratching, ragged bass lines, mellotron chording, fat multi-layered guitars and moog notes, wrapped easily in a fuzzy blanket of pounding drums.

Oh, yeah, and then there's that voice. It's in your ear, breathy, intense and hopeful, and then it's in the middle of that massive guitar line, scratched up and road-worn. Epley's lyrics are a cocktail of love shot through with confusion, determination, urgency, and anger. You sense he sets his thoughts to music, rather than scribbling down lines to sing while the band delivers the goods.

That's because **The Life and Times** plays like an intellectual sex flick—sure, it's got penetration, but only when the story calls for it. The rest of the time there's character development, plot-twists, foreshadowing, and irony. All that attention to detail means *Suburban Hymns* holds together like the good kind of record—where the songs should be played in the right order. It's what results from doing it long enough to know what they're doing, and that's obvious in the way the band flips from major to minor with a twist of the voice and back again with a stroke of the mellotron. It's in the way crunching, powerful layers get added and stripped away effortlessly, almost without notice, because you're listening so hard to Epley's voice. It's in the way that Metcalf downshifts the complex rhythms and pulls off 16th notes on the hi-hat à la **Flock of Seagulls**, the way Abert's bass fireman-carries you from song to song without hurting your back, and the way Epley's guitars seem to be everywhere at once, before jumping out of the way for his lyrics to make you stop dead in your tracks and hit the backwards scan. With ability comes control, and in the right hands, with control comes freedom.

It's obvious that **The Life and Times** loves what they're doing. They know when they've got a good thing, and they know when to leave you with it—like the perfect exit from a party. To wit, most of the songs on *Suburban Hymns* clock in under four minutes, and three of 'em hit the radio-play mark of 3:15. It's a gott-damm rock record, folks. Hell, it's pop.

Yeah, but it's **The Life and Times'** kind of rock record. This is the CD you put on after the first 500 miles, when you're finished rocking out to **Built to Spill** and **Zeppelin**, grooving to **Lauryn Hill** and shouting to *Paul's Boutique*—everyone nods, gets quiet, and leans back.