

CD Reviews - *The Peak*

Vancouver-based duo Honey and the Money (Leila Harrison and Matt Clarke) hit all the right marks in their debut album, *The Elephant in the Room*. After two years of meticulous writing and recording, the duo has woven together different aspects of pop music to create a beautifully fresh sound. What would a pop album be without songs of love and hardship? The poetic lyrics of "Disconnect" and "Never Lonely" are sincere and honest, and they set the precedent for the rest of the album. "Dust Dancin'" is a beautiful piano melody, tickled with the use of a wah-wah guitar effect to make a unique sound. It is these special, highly refined touches that create such depth in the album. The influences of producer Jared Kuemper (Tegan and Sara, Sheryl Crow) are definitely present and help to intertwine the indie beats with the open-air ballads. Harrison's voice is soothing and seems to come effortlessly, with a soft hint of country. Melted with Clarke's vocals, the duo has established an album that flows eloquently.

—*Ryan W. Woodland*

CD Reviews - *The Province*

Honey and the Money are Leila Harrison and Matt Clarke. She sings sweetly, so must be Honey. Recorded predominantly in Vancouver but tarted up in studios worldwide, *The Elephant* sounds remarkably cohesive. It's a bright pop-rock collection with occasional string arrangements ("Never Lonely," for example) that expand the scope of the duo's songs, but opener "Still Beautiful" reveals a slight Police influence while "All Good Things," which follows, has a setting that suggests the Eurhythmics without the melodrama. Jared Kuemper's production is subtly light but still full and detailed.

—*Tom Harrison*

Elephant Fits Snugly in Backstage Lounge - *The Peak*

It was a brisk yet calm night as the moonlight danced upon the waves of the Granville Island waters. Inside the Backstage Lounge, a soft, warm light caressed the stage as I sat in my chair, relaxed but excited. Leila Harrison and Matt Clarke soon appeared onstage as Honey and the Money to perform songs from their debut album, *The Elephant in the Room*.

My expectations were high — I've already praised the band on their studio cuts [CD reviews, February 4], but the mark of a good act is to bring that excitement to the stage. Through the course of the evening, I was definitely not disappointed. The band exploded with their fresh and unique sound, reached out to the hearts and souls of the audience, and brought them in for a closer listen. The audience was intrigued and became entranced by the music. Their set drew largely from *The Elephant in the Room* and they replicated the songs with the same energy and enthusiasm as on the recording. Most important, though, was the onstage chemistry between the duo. Their confidence was not overpowering, but mature and refined. Emotion resonated through the air from Clarke's guitar and his voice shadowed Harrison's

beautiful tone. The band seemed genuinely happy and comfortable to be performing with each other.

Honey and the Money was true to its songs and did not need eccentric dance moves or superficial gimmicks to convey its lyrics. To add to the excitement, Clarke's use of country riffs added a pleasant element and altered the dimension and depth of the music. His presence was rather posh and his playing worked harmoniously with the rhythm section.

Harrison's heartfelt tone in "Dust Dancin'" stood out as one of the evening's masterpieces. Its powerful lyrics of frailty and mortality were conveyed sincerely. Clarke's vocal range in "Happy in the End" was rather impressive and bridged the album with the live experience. The band was highly successful in making songs suitable for the live and intimate nature of the lounge, which is often difficult to achieve. As much as I loved the unique effects and sounds used on the recording, the live music was just as convincing.

Perhaps their album title speaks it all, as this band brings a greatness to the music scene that is unique and special. The songs seep into our hearts and fill them with warmth. Both Harrison and Clarke are quite capable as individual musicians, but it is when they come together that they are most powerful. Honey and the Money have great potential to grow and I expect great things from their future endeavours.

Their sound is not only fresh, but also highly sustainable and can be enjoyed by lovers of many genres. As I ventured back into the cool night, I caught myself humming some of their songs and became aware of the soothing effect that they had on me. These are portraits of love songs, painted in beautiful tones.

-Ryan W. Woodland