

Phcenix

home

what's new

features

listings

music

movies

television

theater

dance

books

art

food

personals

The Portland Phoenix

December 28, 2000 - January 4, 2001



| [reviews](#) | [clubs by night](#) | [bands in town](#) | [club directory](#) |
| [jazz clubs](#) | [pop concerts](#) | [classical concerts](#) | [jazz concerts](#) | [hot links](#) |

*** Chris Mills

KISS IT GOODBYE

(Sugar Free)

With Wilco and Son Volt as the direct offspring of Uncle Tupelo, Chris Mills might be considered the '80s trio's young nephew. On his second album, Mills isn't shy about wearing this influence on his sleeve, but he complements his raspy Americana drawl and roots-based songwriting with arrangements inspired by the classic-pop genius of Phil Spector and Brian Wilson — a move that brings to mind Wilco's most recent album, 1999's *Summerteeth* üReprise). While remaining faithful to the Chicago alt-country scene he calls home, he also invites local heroes like Kelly Hogan to sing and Brian Deck (Red Red Meat) and long-time friend/mentor Jon Langford (Waco Brothers, Mekons) to produce. Still, *Kiss It Goodbye*ýis clearly a songwriter's album, and Mills has a natural talent for penning lyrics that are as memorable as the melodies. "Napkin in a Wine Glass" is an intensely haunting depiction of domestic violence ("I think I'd let my kids play with guns/Don't want to raise another one like me") set to a dirge-like contortion of minimalist guitar and drums. "All You Ever Do" finds him digging beneath the quaint surface of small-town life to expose its flaws ("You say you hate the weak women and the ignorant men/üut what's a little nigger joke between friends?"). Even when the words aren't his own, as in a cover of Herman Jolly's "Crooked Vein" ("I'm cheap and I'm mean and you're as sweet as sugarcane/I'm gonna stick a straight razor in my crooked vein"), they fit Mills's overall m.o. on *Kiss It Goodbye* — a subtle wink of good humor makes the pain of it all a real pleasure to bear.

— Robin A. Rothman



| [home page](#) | [what's new](#) | [search](#) | [about the phoenix](#) | [feedback](#) |
Copyright © 2000 The Phoenix Media/Communications Group. All rights reserved.