

Puluche Album Review Rubric ©

Artist: Mac DeMarco

Album Title: Salad Days (2014) – Captured Tracks

Criteria

Categories	4 - Exemplary	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1 - Underdeveloped	Rating
<u>Compositions</u>	Every song is quality and has a distinctive appeal of its own. Tracks have a perfect flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.	Many quality songs with some distinctive appeal. Tracks have a good flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.	Some quality songs with distinctive appeal but not sustained. Track flow and continuity have little effect on album's overall appeal.	Few to no quality songs lacking any distinctive appeal. Track flow and continuity have little/poor effect on album's overall appeal.	17.5
<u>Breaking Ground</u>	Has impressive elements of high creativity and is experimentally innovative. Developing own signature sound. Shows extreme growth and/or potential as a substantial and influential artist.	Features elements of creativity and uniqueness. Shows growth and/or potential as a developing and influential artist.	Has very few moments of creativity and uniqueness. Shows a little growth and/or some potential as a developing artist Displays some stagnation or notable regression as an established artist.	Has no creativity and uniqueness. Shows no growth and/or little potential as a developing or established artist.	17.5
<u>Engagement</u>	Music has a transcending quality with numerous songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Many songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.	Music has transcending qualities with some songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Some songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.	Music has some transcending qualities with few songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels, as well as having any addictive or memorable qualities.	Music has minimal transcending qualities and few to no songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels. No positive memorable qualities.	20
<u>Lyrics</u>	Has a strong lyrical voice with multiple thought-provoking messages with clear and/or possible meanings and depth.	Has notable lyrical voice with some thought-provoking messages and/or possible meanings and depth.	Has limited lyrical voice with few-to-no thought-provoking messages, meanings and depth.	Has a weak lyrical voice with no thought-provoking messages or meanings and seriously lacks any depth.	20
<u>Production</u>	Masterful sound quality with noticeable studio techniques employed that demand headphone inquiry. Vision flawlessly executed. Overall packaging and artwork effectively compliments and enhances album enjoyment.	Very good sound quality with some noticeable studio techniques that demand headphone inquiry. Vision is acceptable. Overall packaging and artwork compliments album enjoyment.	Inconsistent sound quality with questionable studio techniques employed. Vision is questionable. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.	Questionable to poor sound quality. Lacks vision. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.	15

<p><u>Comments</u></p>	<p>Indie rock youth Mac DeMarco was always eccentric, if not downright weird. He’s unsheathed his genitals in public, blows spit bubbles in photos, sometimes smooches his bass player - he even once rammed drumsticks up his butt on stage - antics which have earned him a name for drunkenly straddling the line between carefree and careless. Most recently, DeMarco leaked a fake song for a preview of this very album entitled “A Little Bit of Pussy.” With his perpetually unclean T-shirt, don’t-give-a-shit attitude and ragged baseball cap and Vans, DeMarco is the obnoxious millennial that haunts baby boomers’ dreams at night. But this Canadian-born multi-instrumentalist isn’t all shenanigans and bad decisions. Like everyone else he has a serious side too, and although it’s not often seen by the public, his laid-back suburban wisdom becomes exposed through his superb music. There’s a gentle heart hidden in there somewhere, masked behind a cloud of Viceroy cigarette smoke and a layer of grease.</p> <p>Opener “Salad Days” is far from the album’s strongest track, but it lays out the core ingredients that make up the album’s recipe: lazy, looping guitar riffs; a woozy beach groove that lopes along at mid-tempo; DeMarco’s surprisingly soothing voice underlying it all with a cool softness.</p> <p>So, yes, it’s essentially the same mix of stuff that marked DeMarco’s last album as extremely listenable. As a whole, <i>Salad Days</i> is less a step away from <i>2</i> than it is a step forward along the same path — but it’s still progress nonetheless. Whereas the songs on <i>2</i> smacked of tongue-in-cheek humor and self-effacement, <i>Salad Days</i> features a DeMarco that has sobered up, his sense of introspection evidenced by lyrics like “No use looking out, it’s within that brings that lonely feeling.” It seems obvious that DeMarco is working through his own personal problems and wants to shed that jokester caricature. He’s not writing odes for his favorite brand of cigarettes anymore; he’s crooning his anxieties about love and growing old.</p> <p>The album hits a high point early on in “Let Her Go,” a breezy tune inflected with a hint of tropical warmth, where the brightness of his harmonies is most palpable. In it he offers sage advice to an ailing friend, or perhaps to himself: “Tell her that you love her/if you really love her/but when your heart just ain’t sure/let her know.” Lyrical gems like that are scattered throughout <i>Salad Days</i> - DeMarco’s actually has a lot to say about love, as he dedicates three separate songs, “Let My Baby Stay,” “Treat Her Better” and “Let Her Go,” to his girlfriend Kiera McNally.</p> <p>DeMarco’s adept songwriting is by no means the album’s only outstanding feature. His pearly guitar licks are bent and warped like light refracting through water, producing an unearthly feeling of gloom. Nuke a Vampire Weekend album in the microwave for a few seconds and you might achieve a similarly unsettling effect.</p> <p>Not unlike Real Estate’s newly released <i>Atlas</i>, these are indeed songs that evoke images of the beach. But save this album for after the sun sets, when the sand has cooled and the coast is quiet. Mac DeMarco will be there with a cigarette, a grin, and a joke or two to help you feel a little less lonesome.</p>	<p>90</p>
<p><u>Commendations</u></p>	<p>Inspired by a Masonic ritual of meditation, “Chamber of Reflection” is easily one of the best songs on the album. Not only does its languid electronic haze break away from the beach pop mold of some of the other tracks, it acts as a vehicle for DeMarco’s most mature sentiments. Likewise, the synth-heavy “Passing Out Pieces” droops and sags in all the right places.</p>	

	DeMarco's mellow guitar riffs are coincidentally their most emotive in the songs about his girlfriend: "Treat Her Better" and "Let Her Go" both shimmer, comparable only to the slick flairs of "Blue Boy."
<u>Next Steps</u>	<p>In an interview, DeMarco himself admitted to feeling worn out after a year and a half of consecutive touring. <i>Salad Days</i> is somewhat reflective of that. He hasn't stepped fully out of his bounds yet, not because he's content with meandering in one place, but because of the pressure to get the album out quickly.</p> <p>In a recent interview, he's hinted that his next piece might be something a lot different: "I've been playing a lot of keyboards and writing with them, but I didn't want to put out an album like that just yet. Maybe the next one." There's still a lot of creative fervor going on under that greasy mop, so if DeMarco's chain-smoking habit doesn't completely vaporize his voice box he's sure to release another fantastic album.</p>
<u>Reviewer</u>	Kendall Russell IRC: Bill Pulice