



[Spoon](#)

*Transference*

[Merge](#)

By [Al Kaufman](#)

Driven by the horn-fueled single, "The Underdog," Spoon went from twitchy indie kids to mainstream successes with 2007's *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga*. *Transference* does not offer anything as remotely radio-friendly as "The Underdog," but it more than makes up for it with its deliciously friction-filled songs.

The Austin band has been making great music since *Telephono* in 1996. *Transference* is their seventh CD. What the boys in Spoon have done in those 15 years is grow in confidence and musicality without giving up who they are. In short, they have not sold out. One could say they tried when they signed with Elektra for their second CD, but that experience left such a bitter taste in their mouths that they have remained on the Merge label ever since, making one great album after another.

Britt Daniels, the creative force behind the band, has made his career out of creating edgy characters that feel alone, isolated, and misunderstood. Yet he does so without sounding maudlin. His characters seethe with anger, but never boil over. As their pain and intensity spew from his lips, one can feel the spit covering the microphone. What can be said about a love song that includes lines such as "I got nothing to lose but darkness and sadness"? So romantic, Britt. Any girl would feel special. And yet, any probably would.

The songs are often complemented by pounding, staccato beats. There is a quiet intensity to Jim Eno's crisp drumming, which only adds to the overall disquieting feeling. But then they throw in the quiet piano ballad, "Goodnight Laura," which demonstrates the type of beautiful intensity that Chris Martin and Coldplay always strive, but fail, to achieve.

But Daniels is always about the melody. A few of the cuts on *Transference*, namely "Is Love Forever" and "The Mystery Zone," recall the angry young man mentalities of younger Joe Jackson and Elvis Costello. The first single of the album, "Written in Reverse," and "I Saw the Light," seem both influenced by *White Album*-era Beatles. They are as melodic as they are psychedelic, although the extended jam that closes "I Saw the Light" is unnecessary. And the gloomy "Out Go the Lights" is just outright gorgeous.

This is not a sit back and relax type of CD. This is Britt Daniels in all his hyperkinetic pain and agony. "No one gets what I'm doing, everyone else seems to look through it," he complains on the CD's closer, "Nobody Gets Me But You," a song that musically pays homage to an '80s glam sound. He's probably right. Why does he choose to move from post-punk, to industrial, to glam, all in one track, often with discordant jump cuts? But ours is not to question his decisions, ours is simply to enjoy the outcomes, in all their pain and glory.

*Spoon plays the [Tabernacle](#) with [Deerhunter](#) and [Strange Boys](#) on March 20.*