

# alive

May 1, 2003

**ARAB STRAP  
MONDAY AT THE HUG & PINT  
MATADOR**



**Of related interest:**

Last call, Mogwai, Charles Bukowski

Arab Strap's Aidan Moffat may come off as a miserable sod, but the singer has created some of the most honest reflections on coital relations for the band's latest. Moffat depicts human frailty with aching poignancy by examining the moments before and after last call (the Hug & Pint being a favorite pub), when artificial intimacies are formed in the throes of insobriety only to be lost when the hangovers dissipate.

This theme of getting fucked and getting fucked is best depicted on "Meanwhile, at the Bar, a Drunkard Muses," on which he sings, "There are no set rules to follow just a big black gaping hollow, that we fall into and hope that it means love... So come on darling break my heart... 'cause we can't waste what we can't even start." Moffat's paramour may be no more than a stranger in the night, but such sordid affairs are so wrought with emotional weight they brutally reveal that "love" isn't all wine and roses (in Moffat's case, it's more like beer and thorns).

With Malcolm Middleton's spiked orchestrations underpinning Moffat's muttered aphorisms with a fluctuating mix of strings, acoustic guitars and electronic sounds either morosely sweet or off-puttingly perky, *Hug & Pint* goes so far down the gravel road that desperation becomes as beautiful as it is ugly. —STEPHEN SLAYBAUGH