

## Rock & pop reviews

### Band of Horses

Cease to Begin

★★★★★

(Sub Pop) £10.99



It seems odd to say about a record so dependent on overdriven guitars, but Band of Horses' second album is an obviously rural record. Its sense of place comes not just from Ben Bridwell's lyrics, which reference stray dogs, wheelbarrows and fields of dogwood, but the music's connection with a deep wellspring of American tradition. Cease to Begin was recorded in Asheville, South Carolina, as un-rock'n'roll a town as you like, and the result is an album that's unmistakably southern, though it's the south of early REM, a mystifying, elliptical place, rather than the south of Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers. At a push, it's country-rock that never remotely sounds like country (even when Band of Horses settle into a boogie, on Islands On the Coast, the

soaring, sparkling guitars prevent it becoming a cliché). And it leaves one pondering why more bands don't move to the countryside, if it produces such delicious melancholy. **Michael Hann**