

### **GRAND ARCHIVES**

The Grand Archives CD – Sub Pop

Now that he's shaken the dust off his previous outfit Band of Horses, it's becoming easier to spot the influence of Mat Brooke. Compared to their wonderful debut *Everything All the Time*, something seems to be missing from *Cease to Begin*. The songs don't float along as effortlessly. The dreaminess is toned down. The musical landscapes aren't quite as vivid. Even the heavy reverb, previously cranked up to 11, is noticeably less present. A few moments into Grand Archives' debut full-length, the mystery is solved. Mat Brooke packed up the missing pieces and took them with him. Like many Sub Pop releases these days, *Grand Archives* is sprinkled with its share of twang ("George Kaminski," "A Setting Sun") and there's even a rogue instrumental ("Breezy No Breezy"). But even on those songs, Brooke's penchant for pop shine through. And that's how *The Grand Archives* works best: as a warm, radiant pop record. The gorgeous "Sleepdriving," with its hazy, multi-vocal harmonies, is certainly a high point, as is "Swan Matches," as Brooke and former Carissa's Weird band mate Jenn Ghetto (who lends her vocals here) reminisce about the old days ("I remember how fast we ran / We flew over fences / We dodged all the moving cars / And the dry Arizona faces"). It's not really fair to hold them up against each other, but this is the record that *Cease to Begin* should have been. Not that's anyone's comparing. (Andy Hurst)  
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