

SLOAN: One Chord To Another

(The Enclave)

Rating: ****

By Ken Micallef

Dropping from sight after Geffen cut their contract in the early '90s, Nova Scotian pop savants Sloan return--and the smell of vengeance is sweet. Sloan are, like many bands comprising young men, enamored of the Beach Boys, the Beatles and the Stooges, but through some trick of hard work and musical alchemy the quartet has gone beyond boring imitation to bowled-over inspiration. Sure, references from *Revolver* to *Pet Sounds* abound on *One Chord To Another*, but Sloan are clever enough to make every "Day Tripper"-ish riff and "Caroline No" harmony serve the Sloan aesthetic.

A lo-fi, annoying recording, the album's 12 songs nonetheless cut a wide path of stylistic interpretation. What surprises about Sloan is how they meld their slavery to the '60s into a personal, identifiable sound. "Nothing Left To Make Me Stay" stumbles like some Detroit garage band, the song transfigured by vocals worthy of a Carl Wilson outtake. "Autobiography" is a bit precious, smacking of *White Album*, country-acoustic effects, but halfway through the track, harmony vocals, organ and a simple guitar ostinato give the song added weight. "Junior Panthers" recalls a meeting between Todd Rundgren and Charlie Rich, with choral vocals tempered by a melancholic melody and sassy guitar. "Everything You've Done Wrong" apes "Good Day Sunshine" with skipping drums and bright horns--the perfect tribute to the mod, mad farce of the '60s.

Some may think Sloan skate close to parody, but that's off the mark. Sloan turn classic sounds into personal soundtracks.