

## VERUCA SALT

Eight Arms To Hold You (Minty Fresh/Outpost)

Rating: \*\*

By Jim DeRogatis

Seemingly overnight back in 1994, Veruca Salt rocketed from playing its first trepidatious gigs at Chicago's Lounge Ax to storming the modern-rock charts with "American Thighs," and no one was more surprised than Veruca Salt. Louise Post (a graduate of Barnard) and Nina Gordon (ditto of Tufts) were razor-sharp and extremely driven, but their music held more promise than precision, and much of the fun in songs such as "Seether" and "25" was the sound of young musicians surprising themselves with their newfound ability to rock out--something you can't really plan or over-intellectualize.

Now, Veruca Salt is back with a second album produced by Bob Rock (of Motley Crue and Metallica Fame), and Post and Gordon are talking a lot in interviews about how determined they were to make "a big rock record" (as if ol' Bob does any other type). The result comes complete with overwrought Pat Benatar (or is that No Doubt?)-type power ballads ("Benjamin" and "Loneliness Is Worse"), a reverb-drenched arena-rock sound and plenty of slick and newly-strengthened harmonies. Plus, there's lots of inside jokes, including the album title (the alternate name for *Help!*--in other words, Veruca Salt wants to be as big as the Beatles) and the "Gosh, it's come true!" rock-star fantasy, "With David Bowie."

Carefully crafted to fit the demands of modern-rock radio, lip-gloss rockers such as "Volcano Girls" and "Don't Make Me Prove It" continue the self-references: The former comes complete with a lyrical nod to "Seether" a la the Beatles' "Glass Onion," but it lacks the earlier song's giddy sense of self-discovery, not to mention the killer hooks. In fact, Veruca Salt only recaptures the old magic when Post lets her guard down toward the end of the album and rages unchecked on the one-two punch of "Stoneface" and "Venus Man Trap." These tunes were inspired by Post's romantic split with Loud Lucy frontman Christian Lane who dumped her to keep company with Alanis Morissette. And who can blame him? *Eight Arms to Hold You* is only marginally better than the contrived schlock that Alanis delivers, but Canada's gal wonder is almost certainly a lot more fun at the movies.