

SIGNS *of* LIFE IN MUSIC AND CULTURE

# Paste

February 2008

## NADA SURF

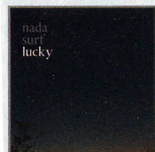
*Lucky*

[BARSUK]★★½

*Band's latest is characteristically elegant but somehow underpowered*

After two stellar albums, *Let Go* and *The Weight Is A Gift*, Nada Surf has long since expunged memories of the showering quarterback in "Popular" and re-established itself as an indie-rock perennial.

With crisp writing and the reassuring vulnerability of Matthew Caws' voice, the band generally manages to be sweet but not cloying, and wistful but not maudlin. Underneath it all is the energy of a



group that, for all its sophistication still has the urge to rock, as on the joyful release of *Weight's* "Blankest Year." While Nada Surf's newest album has elegant production touches ("Beautiful Beat"), clever lyrics ("Weightless," the album's best), and even gets obscure points for name-dropping The Sopwith Camel ("Ice on the Wing"), it fails to equal its predecessors. With the exception of "Weightless," the subtle energy that fueled earlier standouts like "Hi-Speed Soul" or "Always Love" never quite reappears here, and the stacking of one lush mid-tempo song after another starts to blunt the impact of the band's better instincts. There's nothing overtly wrong with anything on *Lucky*, but the temperature of the band's blood seems to have dropped a few degrees. There's a brooding and increasingly sad energy to Caws' delivery on songs like first single "See These Bones," and while the track steadily grows on you, it's a hook shy of unforgettable. While never unpleasant, *Lucky* represents a slowdown from the roll Nada Surf has been on. *Jeff Leven*