



HAPPY APPLE

Back on Top • Sunnyside

Back on top, or just back. Minneapolis' own **Happy Apple's** garage jazz returns with this release of idiosyncratic chops-defying instrumental music. **The Bad Plus** drummer **Dave King** regales with Fender

bass guitarist **Erik Fratzke** and multi-saxist/keyboardist **Michael Lewis** to improvise/ orchestrate 11 trips that continue the sense that it's possible to be inside someone's jazz brain. Arranged yet open-ended, *Back on Top* combines elements of rock (King's peppy "Very Small Rock" and the melancholy "Rise! Marc Anthony") with a touch of Latin (Lewis' "Letse Los Cubanos") and some roamin', freewheeling grunge (Fratzke's "Hence the Turtleneck"). The writing is passable (with a fair amount of arranging), the playing straightforward. If nothing else, Happy Apple should be an encouragement to those who think getting over with instrumental music means you have to do everything everybody else does. ★ *John Ephland*