

Pop CD

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## The Lilac Time, The Lilac Time

4 stars (Universal)

**Dave Simpson**  
**Friday June 16, 2006**

**Guardian**

Long before he was writing songs and playing guitar for Robbie Williams, Stephen "Tintin" Duffy formed the Lilac Time and took off to the hills to record this 1987 debut. He was derided for it at the time, but the album, originally released on tiny Birmingham independent Swordfish, restored his reputation. The songs have a wounded power: casually wonderful wordplay drips from every groove ("It was the day before the day before yesterday ..."). The album skips from stark, painfully beautiful confessionals (Black Velvet, Love Becomes a Savage) to scathing social commentary (Rockland) and wild-eyed tales of new adventures (the Simon and Garfunkel-ish Return to Yesterday). Never mind the so-so songs with Williams, this was his moment.

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