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**Maxtone Four | Hey Hey Do It Anyway (Brickhouse Acoustics)**   
 Written by Paul Little  
 Thursday, 15 November 2007



*More than anything else, Maxtone Four want to rock your ass and make you feel good.*

*Hey Hey Do It Anyway*, the sophomore LP from St. Louis power-poppers Maxtone Four, opens with a wink and a nod in the form of a wry attack on the cliché that is the egotistical rock star. "Just Say I Know" is a song which at the very least aims to take the archetype down a peg, if not burn it in effigy. "It's been done before/ And it's been done better," admonishes Maxtone singer and principal songwriter Brian McClelland, "There's no new original rock star/ I don't want to waste your time." The tune is as humble as it is sardonic, a fun but strictly by-the-numbers melodic pop exercise, which seems to suggest that McClelland is perfectly aware that one false move could land him squarely in the sights of his own criticism. Having playfully dispatched this strawman, Maxtone Four proceed to crank out an economic burst of unpretentious rock and roll that lasts about 30 minutes, neither overstaying their welcome nor leaving listeners feeling cheated out of a more substantive experience.

Like many of their contemporaries, such as British Columbia's similarly under-the-radar Jets Overhead and the comparatively gargantuan Fountains of Wayne, Maxtone Four gleefully raid the closets of past masters like Big Star, Matthew Sweet and even the polished jangle of early Warners-era R.E.M. for ideas and inspiration. *Hey Hey's* songs are uniformly energetic and loaded down with handclaps, harmonies and hooks galore, an occasional punkish riff rearing its head every now and then. Dressed-down synths and keys sometimes flavor the set, but the music largely stresses economy over invention. More than anything else, Maxtone Four want to rock your ass and make you feel good.

Interestingly, repeated listenings reveal a compelling dichotomy at work on *Hey Hey*, as the album's occasionally dark lyrics often contrast rather starkly with the buoyant melodies of its songs. "Kickstand" presents a rumination on loneliness and dashed hopes, while "I Fucking Hate This Place" is a gloomy rave-up inspired by McClelland's job as a 911 dispatcher. Not every song is spoiled milk and wilted flowers, thankfully, with numbers like "Bob"—a tribute to eccentric St. Louis scenester Beatle Bob—and the charmingly simple "Short Pants" providing much-needed levity.

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Maxtone Four doesn't set out to reinvent the wheel with *Hey Hey Do It Anyway*, but the music contained within doesn't ever hint that the band would be remotely interested in doing so. They are, by their own admission, aware that it's all been done—and indeed it's been done better—so they are content to explore a well-trod path in well-executed fashion, which is something that should be enough to content most any power-pop enthusiast. **B** | [Paul Little](#)

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