



Mother Mother  
Touch Up  
[Last Gang; 2007]  
Rating: 6.6

[A Blog It From The Ground](#)  
[A Translucent A Family Example](#)

Effortlessness has long been one of the most endearing aspects of indie rock. While many major label giants produce albums forged over several back-breaking months, a lot of indie's greatest opuses, from *Slanted and Enchanted* to *The Moon and Antarctica*, sound like the one-off recordings of a band that just happened to stumble into a studio. Mother Mother's debut is by no means such a watershed effort, but *Touch Up* comes packed with acute, snappy pop songs with no discernible signs of the elbow grease it took to craft them. However, the Vancouver five-piece lives and dies by their lax nature, which, while intriguing initially, lacks consistency over an entire album.

The band's quirky songwriting, combined with its affinity for acoustic-only arrangements, sounds like a throwback to goofy staples such as the Violent Femmes or the Meat Puppets. The vocal carousel of Debra-Jean Creelman and Ryan and Molly Guldemonnd keeps the punk-folk nuanced enough to avoid mere imitation, bending their acoustic pop from the Breeders to Devendra Banhart. Opener "Dirty Town" showcases the vocal triumvirate's singing and charisma at full force as they take turns fantasizing about buying a farm. The bumpkin lyrics and delivery work surprisingly well, thanks mostly to the band's mercilessly schizo shifts from one song section to the next.

At its best, the band doesn't even need to rely on novelty. "Oh Ana" is pretty straightforward acoustic pop, rallying around jittery supernatural lyrics and a lush sound crafted by Tegan and Sara producer Howard Redekopp. The plodding title track, with its lugubrious intro guitar riff and stop-start verse, shows that the band's capable of more than just ironic hick ditties. Even the standout song's lyrics wise up, with all three singers commenting on unhealthy body image ("I need a touch up!") over the album's most dramatic builds.

On the flip side, when Mother Mother overstep their eccentric bounds and get downright kitschy, the results are pretty disastrous. The acoustic arpeggios of "Verbatim" sound like a loose cover of-- get ready-- TLC's "No Scrubs", and Ryan Guldemonnd's crooning about wearing women's underwear smacks of dorky-white-guy-imitating-black-guy comedy. "Love and Truth", while not as egregious, veers uncomfortably close to tackier female artists like Jewel or Sarah McLachlan, relying more on whimsy than artistry. These missteps aside though, the free-spirited *Touch Up* feels refreshing as an album isolated from a lot of today's worn-out trends and aesthetic mimicry. That two of the album's strongest songs ("Touch Up" and "Polynesia") are relatively earnest is probably coincidental, though Mother Mother's laid-back vibe could use some prodding here or there, at least until their songwriting matures.

-[Adam Moerder](#), March 21, 2007