

Love Riot

Nothing Is Etched In Stone

By **John Apice** · September 21, 2026 · Americana Highways



Love Riot, *Nothing Is Etched In Stone*. CD photo courtesy of Christopher Myers.

Recently, I reviewed artists back from the dead – the Strawberry Alarm Clock is one. Pleasantly surprised to hear that those guys still have a musical heartbeat & could’ve sustained themselves much longer. Ironically, more original members are in the band today than in the current Jefferson Starship.

So, here’s another. The acclaimed Baltimore alt-folk rock band Love Riot with their first new LP in 26 years. Not as long a wait as the Alarm Clock, but long enough if you’re 30 years old & now you’re almost 60. I’m not from Baltimore, but I’m told they were one of the best from the ‘90s. Judging from what I heard, they were.

The band has lost none of its magic. They have transformed since their last full-length studio LP, *Heaven Can Wait* (1999), with an 11-track self-produced LP, *Nothing Is Etched In Stone*, with 6 new & 5 recorded in 1999 songs (Drops Sept. 25/Independent/42:08). The tunes were mixed by Eric “Rosco” Ambel & Mario Viele in Brooklyn, NY. Two eras of Love Riot are represented. The songs aren’t simplistic run-throughs; they’re well-thought-out thematic pieces. No tedium, no warts & no noise mongers.

The lead-off “Yeah Yeah Yeah” features the sparkling voice of Lisa Mathews (vocals/guitar), who still possesses a colorful ’60s pop-oriented tone & presence. Delightful. A basic well-constructed rocker. A bit more elementary is “I’m Not You,” which has all the necessary quirkier pop hooks à la The Pretenders & Robin Lane & the Chartbusters. Lisa commands with good intonation & phrasing throughout as Willem lays down ominous violin. Someone’s whistling in the background & it’s as catchy as Vivabeat’s “Man From China.” Should have gone on for a few more bars.

Taking a page from Anne Richmond Boston & Swimming Pool Q’s is “It Happens Every Time.” Merging a compelling violin & lead guitar. “One of These Days” is a lovely acoustic ballad with Lisa’s fine, consistent vocals. Good track. “So Much” is more grandiose, with vocal acrobatics like Deaf School’s Bette Bright. Nice jubilant rock tonality switch-off & Euro-style music played tastefully. Pop confection? Yes. Good stuff.

Closer to The Roches is “Howling at the Moon,” with intriguing, varied soundscapes. More serious than earlier songs & the exotica-tinge of “When I See You” isn’t cheeky. It displays some of Lisa’s finest youthful vocals. Absolutely superb. The violin at the end is a masterful finale.

“Better Now” is alright with its countrified slant toward the Grateful Dead’s “Friend of the Devil.” Good anyway...enjoyable. The band should have lasted much longer. Maybe this time...they will.

HIGHLIGHTS

“Yeah Yeah Yeah,” “I’m Not You,” “It Happens Every Time,” “One of These Days,” “So Much,” “Howling at the Moon,” “When I See You” & “Better Now.”

MUSICIANS

Lisa Mathews (vocals/guitar), Mikel Gehl (guitar/bgv), Mark Evanko (bass), Willem Elsevier (violin/mandolin) & Ron Campbell (drums/bgv).

WHERE TO HEAR IT

CD @ Bandcamp & loveriotband.com, and streaming on all online music platforms.

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