



By **Stephanie King**

A dirty guitar jackhammers out a speedy four-second intro, motoring into a super-powered drum roll which bleeds into a distant, heartbroken male vocal.

London-based Male Bonding describe themselves as “tinnitus with hooks”, and their taut, pounding sound on [Year's Not Long](#) both energises and exhausts, walking that delicious tightrope between unadulterated noise and sweet tunefulness.

While their name may suggest [Bloodhound Gang](#) -style machismo and idiocy, it's actually nicked from an early incarnation of [Sonic Youth](#), whose influence is clear in Male Bonding's breakneck drumming, buzzing guitars and echoing, spectral vocals. They wear their [My Bloody Valentine](#) hearts on their sleeves, and it comes as no surprise that [Vivian Girls](#) guest-star on their album, as their music shares the same elegantly grubby aesthetic.

Signed to Sub Pop, the US label responsible for bringing us Nirvana, Soundgarden and Mudhoney, there is a touch of the grungy time warp about this band, while the distressed, shambolic crackling is comparable to that of label-mates [No Age](#). But while Male Bonding may not be revolutionary, Year's

Not Long

suggests that they are rather brilliant.

Turn this on, ram it up, and get ready to be catapulted through a banging, clattering two and half minutes of perfect pop punk. The guitars drill, rattle and rev. The production purrs, blurs and yawns. The playful, exuberant drum fills are spine-tingling.

This forceful, frustrated energy is tempered by John Arthur Webb's hushed vocal placed way down in the mix, lending the track its edgy vulnerability. His searching, plaintive register teases out the touching melancholy of the repeated refrain "*Don't, don't go, Don't want you to go away...*" capturing the raging anger and quiet sadness of a hurtful break-up.

Year's Not Long sounds effortless, spontaneous and immediate, but the delicate balance between bedlam and sensitivity belies the thoughtful songwriting behind the explosive sound. Lots of bands strive for this kind of distressed, tight feel, but few manage it with quite the style and sincerity of this trio. The release date of Male Bonding's forthcoming album, *Nothing Hurts*, is in my diary (May 10th). Stick it in yours, as if this track is anything to go by, it could be a keeper.