

The Alarms – Real Tough Love (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01. The Axe 02. Make it Better 03. Break it Easy 04. The Only One 05. The One You Can't Replace 06. May My Heart be Cast into Stone 07. Avalon 08. Famous Kids 09. Happy Birthday 10. Real Tough Love Robert Gay (vocals, guitar), Anthony Jorissen (keyboards, BGV), Stephen Puckett (drums, percussion on 3,4,6,8,10), Brett Resnick (pedal steel on 5), Zach Robinson (drums, percussion on 1,2,5,7,9), Brady Surface (bass, BGV).

The Alarms' new full-length doesn't hew to power-pop principles throughout its 10-song run — the Nashville group takes a few excursions into gratifying but innocuous pop. But *Real Tough Love* contains some fine examples of post-'80s power pop, and lead singer and guitarist Robert Gay even pulls off a uncannily good *Zombies* pastiche titled "Avalon." From Nashville, Gay played in a ska-punk band before forming The Alarms, and he acquits himself admirably on *Real Tough*'s "Famous Kids," which explores the garage-rock side of power pop. Meanwhile, the band covers Denny Randell and Sandy Linzer's "May My Heart Be Cast Into Stone," a 1966 hit for the American female vocal group The Toys. "May My Heart" features guitars that chime and harmonize, and the band recasts a great, half-forgotten song. The Alarms really dig into their formalism — they may even mean it. ---Edd Hurt, nashvillescene.com

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