



SEMISONIC

Feeling Strangely Fine

MCA

On their second release, *Feeling Strangely Fine*, the Minneapolis trio Semisonic manage to sound just like every other "alternative" noise from bands whose names you can't remember: Local H, Tonic or Nada Surf anyone? Lead singer/composer/guitarist Dan Wilson pulls his influences from contemporary alt-rock

luminaries — "Closing Time"'s chorus belongs to Weezer, "Never You Mind" has a Ben Folds Five piano intro and "This Will Be My Year" rips a riff from the Lemonheads' "Into Your Arms." Belching up songs as if they were the painful reminder of an all night drinking binge, Semisonic plow their way through 11 execrable tracks before finally giving up. It's sad to say, but there isn't even a standout track to point a finger at — every song floats in the middle, neither here nor there. A good portion of the blame for the record's blandness can probably be placed on the shoulders of producer Nick Launay. Launay, who has previously worked with such one-hit alternawonders as For Squirrels and Silverchair, seems to have a knack for making everyone sound like someone else (though one has to admit that it does take some modicum of skill to make a prepubescent Australian headbanger sound like Eddie Vedder). Between Wilson's unending songwriting and Launay's lackluster production, *Feeling Strangely Fine* makes a grasp for the medium and, indeed, winds up somewhere in the middle of nothing. — *Nevin Martell*