

FILTEA

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CALEXICO
Garden Ruin
Quarterstick

86%

Dust, cactus...more dust and cactus. The Arizona desert is inspiring in its barren majesty, but barren majesty can only go so far. Thus it seems Calexico's John Convertino and Joey Burns are looking beyond the saguaro for their greater vision. *Garden Ruin* drops the mariachi merry-men, and instead invites a couple of Germans (among other multi-nationals) to the growingly diverse party. It's not *that* small a world after all (their taste for the desert's cinematic grandeur remains), but Calexico get far enough outside of the Southwestern pigeon-hole to find a few choice goodies. Namely, a more political bent, steel-string guitar, dark lyrics masked behind cheerfully robust rock ("Cruel"), catchy pop ("Letter to Bowie"), and even a lesson in French ("Nom de Plume"). Traveling the U.S. with a bearded bard (Iron & Wine's Sam Beam) and the world over with Wilco should, after all, have a way of opening up perspectives. Calexico make a solid case for expanding one's desert horizons without the usual psychotropics. Of course, their music would be perfect for the occasional wasteland bender too. KENDAH EL-ALI