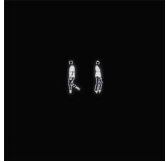


Max Richter □ – Infra (2010)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 10 January 2018 15:15 -

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1 *Infra 1* 4:05 2 *Journey 1* 2:10 3 *Infra 2* 4:27 4 *Infra 3* 3:02 5 *Journey 2* 2:13 6 *Infra 4* 2:46 7 *Journey 3* 2:51 8 *Journey 4* 4:40 9 *Journey 5* 1:13 10 *Infra 5* 5:17 11 *Infra 6* 2:53 12 *Infra 7* 1:45 13 *Infra 8* 3:22 Cello – Chris Worsey, Ian Burdge Mixed By – Max Richter Piano, Electronics – Max Richter Viola – Nick Barr Violin – Louisa Fuller, Natalia Bonner

Once upon a time, rock'n'roll was for the kids. Parents recoiled at its immoral noise, clutching Perry Como records to their chests as their children rolled their eyes. For years the generations were separated: teenagers craved guitars, elders praised violins, youthful tastes discarded as newfound responsibilities demanded they behave like adults.

But slowly the boundaries came down: prog rock embraced the theories of formal musical training, contemporary classical music like Steve Reich's was embraced by the rock avant-garde, musicians started to namecheck the likes of Henryk Gorecki and Arvo Pärt. Now, it seems, you've got every chance of finding what used to be termed classical music on your favourite indie label. 4AD have Jóhann Jóhannsson, Bella Union have Dustin O'Halloran, Erased Tapes have Ólafur Arnalds, and Fat Cat's 130771 imprint has Max Richter. These days, of course, it's considered experimental music, but that's probably only within the realms of pop.

Of them all, Richter deserves the tag experimental more than most. A classically trained performer with a fondness for electronica, his fifth album is based upon 25 minutes of music commissioned by London's Royal Ballet in 2008 and inspired by T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. Opener *infra 1* begins with radio static before slowly developing into what might pass for the introduction to a Sigur Rós song, and this in turn slides into *journey 1*, a piece of minimalist piano moonlight still haunted by static. *infra 4* and *journey 4*, meanwhile, seem him employ the same ethic with strings instead of piano, and for *infra*'s 32-minute duration, Richter plays with

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echoing tones of ambiguous genesis and further found sounds over a platform of tremulous chamber music and placid piano sonata movements.

That it's a companion piece makes perfect sense, and in truth it could work as a soundtrack to something like Duncan Jones' recent film Moon or a documentary about a courageous battle against terminal illness. Like Arnalds and Jóhannsson, Richter is capable of eliciting profound emotions from the barest of foundations, and it's perhaps this that makes their music of such interest to alternative music fans: it offers civilised respite from a mainstream whose colours have become too saturated and whose constructions are over familiar. Your parents might recoil at its alien textures, and your kids might still roll their eyes, but all that really suggests is that classical is the new rock'n'roll. ---Wyndham Wallace, BBC Review

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