

Massive Attack - Heligoland (2010)

Written by bluelover

Tuesday, 18 May 2010 14:02 - Last Updated Friday, 21 April 2017 08:30

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01. *Pray For Rain* feat. *Tunde Adebimpe*
02. *Babel* feat. *Martina Topley-Bird*
03. *Splitting The Atom* feat. *Horace Andy*
04. *Girl I Love You* feat. *Horace Andy*
05. *Psyche* feat. *Martina Topley-Bird*
06. *Flat Of The Blade* feat. *Guy Garvey*
07. *Paradise Circus* feat. *Hope Sandoval*
08. *Rush Minute*
09. *Saturday Comes Slow* feat. *Damon Albarn*
10. *Atlas Air*

Bass – Billy Fuller Bass, Guitar, Programmed By – Neil Davidge Bass, Keyboards – Damon Albarn Brass – Andy Grappy, Chris Storr, Harry Brown, Noel Langley Drums – Damon Reece, Jerry Fuchs Guitar – Adrian Utley, Dave Sitek* Guitar, Programmed By – Dan Brown, Stew Jackson Keyboards – John Baggott, Neil Davidge Keyboards, Programmed By – Dan Austin, Robert Del Naja Keyboards, Programmed By – Euan Dickinson Keyboards, Programmed By – Tim Goldsworthy Mixed By – Mark 'Spike' Stent (tracks: 1, 3 to 6, 8 to 10) Performer [On Stage] – Angelo Bruschini, Damon Reece, David Lawrence, Deborah Miller, John Baggott, Julian Brown, Winston Blissett

Startling as this may be to thirtysomethings who grew up in prescribed awe of Massive Attack, but a whole new generation has arisen in the 12 years since their last pivotal album, *Mezzanine*, a generation to whom the Bristol duo are at best peripheral. So while an army of griping fans and sniping critics will argue that *Heligoland* doesn't match their early triumphs, or break as much new ground, there will be younger listeners who hear it as something entirely new and recognise it for the gloomily, beguiling beauty it is.

Well, perhaps not entirely new. There are echoes throughout – of Radiohead, Portishead, even

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the crunching drums and soaring strings of Timbaland – which might make you think Massive Attack have finally become derivative, until you remember that they actually invented these strange, spooked sounds 20 years ago, only to see them plundered since. They've added new sonic flourishes – fidgety TV on the Radio guitars, some skittering Warp Records beats – but the emperors are mostly wearing their old clothes, though more stylishly than in years.

Another minor point: Heligoland could well be Massive Attack's most consistent album. There are no songs as dazzlingly, blindingly perfect as Unfinished Sympathy, or Teardrop (although the gorgeous, satiny melancholy of Paradise Circus comes desperately close), but nor are there as many lesser tracks hiding in their shadows. The folksy, flimsy Psyche is forgettable, but every other song works its way stealthily and irrevocably under your skin, with that trademark combination of understatement and sonic richness.

Just listen to the gothic magnificence of the opening Pray For Rain, with its death-rattle percussion, mournful organ and mesmeric Tunde Adebimpe vocal, or the creeping, narcotic groove of the closing Atlas Air. In between there are songs as sleepily, dreamily rambling as Splitting the Atom (a return to the ghostly vocal interplay and dubby terrain of Rising Son) or as pared down and single-minded as Rush Minute, with its relentlessly lapping waves of bubbling bass and rippling guitars.

Massive Attack spent their first 12 years as breathtaking pioneers, while 99.9% of their rivals might manage ten minutes of such inspiration. They may never be as original again, but as long as they make albums as rich, textured and seductive as Heligoland they will remain one of our most fascinating, extraordinary bands. ---Jaime Gill, BBC Review

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