

Take That – The Circus (2008)

Written by bluelover

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01 *The garden* 02 *Greatest day* 03 *Hello* 04 *Said it all* 05 *Julie* 06 *The circus* 07 *How did it come to this* 08 *Up all night* 09 *What is love* 10 *You* 11 *Hold up a light* John Barclay Trumpet Gary Barlow Keyboards, Piano, Vocals Howard Donald Vocals London Studio Orchestra Brass, Ensemble, Strings Wil Malone Brass Arrangement, Brass Conductor, String Arrangements, String Conductor Ben Mark Guitar (Electric) Perry Mason Orchestra Director, Orchestra Leader Mark Nightingale Trombone (Tenor) Jamie Norton Piano Jason Orange Guitar (Acoustic), Vocals Mark Owen Vocals Jeff Rothschild Drums John Shanks Bass, Guitar, Keyboards, Producer Philip Sheppard Cello Owen Slade Tuba Matthew Ward Violin Derek Watkins Trumpet Andy Wood Trombone

A Take That reunion was perhaps as inevitable as the fact that Robbie Williams would decide to opt out of the proceedings. He inexplicably became the biggest star out of the franchise, in no way needing the support group the rest craved after their solo projects imploded. And there is something to be said for brand names: even if it didn't jump-start the phenomenon, the 2006 reunion *Beautiful World* returned Take That to the upper reaches of the charts, and their 2008 follow-up, *The Circus*, builds upon its template, offering more of the same without quite seeming like pandering. Fittingly for a foursome facing 40, dance-pop has been banished in favor of well-manicured maturity, culled chiefly from Coldplay, whose tasteful, chilly surfaces blend easily with Gary Barlow's Elton John and George Michael aspirations. Barlow is also responsible for the gentle Sgt. Pepper's pastiche of the title track, but the one responsible for giving *The Circus* a bit of a beat is Mark Owen, whose contributions, particularly the cheerfully respectful stomp "Up All Night," are a welcome respite from the album's steady, stately march. A little of this Coldplay influence goes a long way -- craftsman that he is, Barlow can mimic this sound as expertly as he mimicked Michael years ago, but these skyscraping sonics aren't particularly suited for his brand of commercialism, so it's fortunate that Owen is here to give this a bit of a pulse, with Howard Donald and Jason Orange acting as the bridge between them both. Without those mitigating factors, *The Circus* would be too coldly calculating -- but this is no longer Barlow's show, it's the work of a group where the sum is greater than the parts, and Take That have wound up with an adult pop album that isn't compelling, but is somewhat comforting. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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