

Coldplay – Viva La Vida Or Death And All His Friends (2008)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Life In Technicolor*
02. *Cemeteries Of London*
03. *Lost!*
04. *42*
05. *Lovers In Japan/Reign Of Love*
06. *Yes*
07. *Viva La Vida*
08. *Violet Hill*
09. *Strawberry Swing*
10. *Death And All His Friends*
11. *Lost (Acoustic Version)*
12. *Lovers In Japan (Acoustic Version)*

Paradoxically everything that fuels cynicism about the stadium-proof nature of Coldplay is also what makes them undeniably great. Yes, if you find huge choruses that contain wordless exhortations, ponderous one note bass lines and vaporous lyrics that convey nameless heartache to be the very tools of Satan, then Viva La Vida has much to wind you up. If, however, you're one of their millions of fans then it's an unqualified triumph. The rest of us (and EMI, for whom, allegedly, their very future depends on this selling by the shedload) can also rest easy. For, by bringing Brian Eno onboard as sonic nurse, Coldplay have managed to effortlessly make a record that's accomplished and yet pulls off the same trick that U2 managed when they employed the bald one - massaging their sound into something different enough to keep the formula (and make no mistake it IS a formula) fresh.

Two years in gestation, with a break in the middle to do a bit of cultural tourism (and touring) in South America, Viva La Vida wrong foots you by starting with Life In Technicolour; an instrumental that reeks of Eno's ambience while also utilising something that sounds

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suspiciously like a zither. The world music tropes are limited however. Cemeteries Of London may have an off-kilter rhythmic undertow and Lost! seems to sport bongos in its mix, yet it's the plaintive voice with its vague sense of regret, the lifts from minor key piano forays into vast, pumping rock and also a strident optimism that people are going to come here for. The band deliver all this in spades: 42 and Death And All His Friends most notably.

Elsewhere it's that patent (and potent) mix of upbeat and fatalistic that reminds you why the band hit the bullseye every time. Only on Strawberry Swing does Chris' chirpiness start to grate.

It all sounds so easy, yet when you imagine the pressure on all concerned to deliver the goods, it's little short of miraculous. Again, cynics may argue that it's Eno's fourth world fairy dust that sugar coats songs that really don't live up to Martin's promise of a very different sound. The string/brass mutations that bolster a track like Viva La Vida may not be a million miles from his mates, The Arcade Fire, but I bet they'd donate several limbs to conjure tunes so sweetly melancholy. Any way you look at it, this is a massive album. Get used to it, you'll be hearing it a LOT over the next two years. ---Chris Jones, BBC Review

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