

Patti Smith – Banga (2012)

Written by bluesever

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01 – Amerigo 02 – April Fool 03 – Fuji-san 04 – This Is The Girl 05 – Banga 06 – Maria
07 – Mosaic 08 – Tarkovsky (The Second Stop Is Jupiter) 09 – Nine 10 – Seneca 11 –
Constantine's Dream 12 – After The Gold Rush 13 – Just Kids (bonus track) Personnel:
Patti Smith – vocals, producer Lenny Kaye – guitars, backing vocals (12), producer Tony
Shanahan – bass, keyboards, backing vocals (12), producer Jay Dee Daugherty – drums,
percussion, mandocello (7), backing vocals (12), producer + Tom Verlaine – guitar (2, 9)
Jack Petruzzelli – guitar (1, 3—5, 7) hammond organ (9) Jackson Smith – guitar (2, 4, 6, 8,
12) Jesse Smith – piano (8, 12) Johnny Depp – guitar, drums (5) Louie Appel – drums
(1, 6) Rob Morsberger – piano (6) Maxim Moston – violin (1, 6) Entcho Todorov –
violin (1, 6) Hiroko Taguchi – viola (1, 6) Dave Eggar – cello (1, 6) Luca Lanzi - guitar
(11) Riccardo Dellochio - steel guitar (11) Sauro Lanzi - accordion (11) Massimilano
Gregorio - bass (11) Fabrizio Morganti - percussion (11) Andreas Petermann - violin (11)
Tadhg Brady - vocals (12) Clea Payer - vocals (12) Fynn Payer - vocals (12) Kobyn
Payer - vocals (12)

Patti Smith's very existence as a major, major-label artist flies in the face of music biz logic. The queen of the fierce poet-androgynes hasn't had a hit single since Because the Night, her 1978 power-ballad co-write with Bruce Springsteen. Its parent album, Easter, is the only Smith set to reach the UK top 20 (both Easter and its 79 follow-up Wave cracked the US top 20).

The 65-year-old took eight years off in the 80s to raise her children, and has made just seven albums in the 24 years since her comeback. Yet here she is, still in tandem with her first guitarist Lenny Kaye, still getting the big prestige-artist push from her label, and still making tough-but-dreamy, sensual-but-uncompromising primary colour rock that behaves as if the last 30 years of musical innovation never happened. Weirdest of all, Patti Smith still sounds vital, relevant and quite, quite brilliant.

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Banga takes its name from Mikhail Bulgakov – Banga was the name the Russian novelist gave to Pontius Pilate’s dog in *The Master and Margarita* – and its inspirations from a forever-quaking planet Earth. There is a beautiful girl-group ballad tribute to Amy Winehouse (*This Is the Girl*), and a glowering slice of country-ish rock apparently written as a birthday gift to Johnny Depp (*Nine*). Elsewhere, we find a gorgeous ode to the Italian explorer who lent his name to America (*Amerigo*), beside songs inspired by Japanese earthquakes (*Fuji-San*) and a classic sci-fi movie (*Tarkovsky (The Second Stop Is Jupiter)*).

But while Smith’s sphere of lyrical interest is as wide as the world and as deep as heavyweight literature, her music remains resolute and defiant: the poetic form of rock hatched in the 1960s by Dylan, The Doors and The Stones is what Patti loves and what she’s good at. And just to punch the point home, she closes *Banga* with an appropriately haunting and reverent version of Neil Young’s classic *After the Gold Rush*, the post-apocalyptic calm after the storms and anxieties of the previous 11 songs.

You know that old joke about how every Bowie album gets reviewed as “his best album since *Scary Monsters*” but never actually is? Well, it’s time for the iconic female equivalent of the same yarn. *Banga* is the best Patti Smith album since *Horses*. No one else makes rock records as rich, poetic and sexy as this. Not even Polly Harvey. --- Garry Mulholland, BBC Review

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