

Mogwai – Rave Tapes (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01 – Heard About You Last Night 02 – Simon Ferocious 03 – Remurdered 04 – Hexon Bogon 05 – Repelish 06 – Master Card 07 – Deesh 08 – Blues Hour 09 – No Medicine For Regret 10 – The Lord Is Out Of Control 11 – Bad Magician 3 (Bonus Track) 12 – Die 1 Dislike! (Bonus Track) Mogwai: Stuart Braithwaite – guitar, vocals Dominic Aitchison – bass, guitar Martin Bulloch – drums John Cummings – guitar Barry Burns – guitar, bass, keyboards

I still remember the first time I heard “Stop Coming To My House.” Ever seen that Pale Blue Dot video, based on Carl Sagan’s monologue about the awesome inconsequence of earth? Mogwai’s closer to Happy Songs For Happy People was the perfect match. I recall my surprise after it so happened that Mogwai -a.k.a. that band I had associated completely with everything inoffensive and generic- were the culprits behind the track. Credit where credit’s due, though. And it wasn’t Mogwai’s last surprise. Hardcore Will Never Die, flawed as it may be, was evidence that the band’s engine was still running. There was a bombastic We can still invert our entire fucking aesthetic if we want to vibe on their previous record. It was heartening, it was exciting, it was Mogwai still managing to surprise me.

Best case scenario: Rave Tapes is a hiccup. The synth on Hardcore Will Never Die was a new bet that the band sunk their chips into. Rave Tapes relies even more heavily on this. The entirety of the record is spent dwelling on these synths and the lackluster percussion; seemingly Mogwai is trying to mesmerize listeners, to draw them in and ensnare them with the monotone production, the tepid tempo. The act tires about halfway through Rave Tapes. “Hexon Bogon” is my increasing boredom. “Repelish” is the awkwardly-introduced Led Zeppelin interview. “Mastercard” is my annoyance that apparently Mogwai doesn’t have the self-respect to add a semblance of diversity or change of pace to Rave Tapes. The band has put out filler-albums before (see: The Hawk Is Howling) and this is just as inoffensive and generic. Mogwai sound very much like the band I pre-judged them for being before I had heard them.

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It's easy for me to imagine that Mogwai can redeem themselves in the future. Long ago, they mastered the quiet-loud-quiet dynamic and emboldened it with a fresh vigor, like they had created it in the first place. Mogwai is a band that wasn't afraid to shift from strings to synths because of their songwriting prowess. The band has tapped surprising wells of creativity before, not even a lackluster record like Rave Tapes makes me believe they're somehow incapable of this in the future. Let's all hope that the Mogwai album that makes us forget their inconsequential latest record comes sooner rather than later - not that I need much help forgetting about Rave Tapes. --- sputnikmusic.com

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