

Owl City - The Midsummer Station (2012)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Dreams And Disasters* (3:45) 2. *Shooting Star* (4:07) 3. *Gold* (3:56) 4. *Dementia* (feat. Mark Hoppus) (3:31) 5. *I'm Coming After You* (3:30) 6. *Speed Of Love* (3:28) 7. *Good Time* (feat. Carly Rae Jepsen) (3:26) 8. *Embers* (3:45) 9. *Silhouette* (4:12) 10. *Metropolis* (3:39) 11. *Take It All Away* (3:31) 12. *Bombshell Blonde* (bonus track)

Personnel: Adam Young - vocals, drum programming, keyboards, celeste, syntheizers, guitar, bass, piano, sampler, drums, percussion, glockenspiel, bells, accordion, loops + Mark Hoppus - additional vocals on track 4 Carly Rae Jepsen - additional vocals on track 7 The Minneapolis Youth Choir - additional vocals on track 7 Keith Kenniff - bowed double bass, synthesizer, drums on track 9 Dustin Sauder - electric and acoustic guitars on track 3 Chris Charimachael - violin, viola, cello on tracks 8 & 10 Matthew Thiessen - background vocals on tracks 5 & 7 Josh Crosby - additional drums, keyboards, programming, background vocals on track 3 Mikkel S. Eriksen - guitar, bass, keyboards on track 2 Tor Erik Hermansen - additional keyboards, programming on track 2 Koolhaas - additional keyboards, programming on track 11

Adam Young's sugary emo electronica pop as Owl City has been a highly polarizing entity since he broke through in a huge way with runaway single "Fireflies" in 2009. Critics and naysayers dismissed the project as a watered-down Postal Service ripoff way too late in the game, but millions and millions of fans dismissed the critics and made the song an international chart-topper. While "Fireflies" was a really rare accidental Top 40 hit recorded by Young in his basement, *The Midsummer Station* is the most transparent bid for mainstream airplay imaginable, with each of its 11 tracks so tailored for pop radio, teen movie soundtracks, and soft drink commercials it's laughable. That's no dig on the quality of the album, just a statement of fact. Owl City has never shied away from big-sounding pop with emo underpinnings, and *The Midsummer Station* goes as big as possible. Young brings in production assistance from hitmakers Stargate for the Euro-house rave touches of "Shooting Star" and co-writes several songs with Katy Perry writer/engineer Emily Wright. Electronic four-on-the-floor beats are huge, production is loud and garish, and the hooks announce themselves with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. It's by-the-numbers big-budget pop, but the problem is how recycled the majority of *The Midsummer Station* feels and how poor of a fit the whole thing is on Young. "I'm Coming After You" is built on a riff/beat combination that sounds strikingly similar to nightlife

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anthem "Give Me Everything" by Pitbull (another of Emily Wright's clients) and "Gold" just sounds like any given big-beat song on commercial radio circa 2011. Much of the album falls into this anonymous territory, mostly to its detriment but with a few exceptions. Obvious single "Good Time" finds Young duetting with Justin Bieber-approved tween pop star Carly Rae Jepsen on a huge summery production about hanging out, partying, and nothing in particular. It's a great example of a dumb, fun pop song done right, and along with the slightly more sophisticated "Metropolis" and the rocked-out moments of "Dementia" (the latter aided by blink-182's Mark Hoppus), it's one of the album's few redeeming tracks. There are still glimmers of the sonic personality that drew so many to Owl City in the first place, as on the tenderly heartbroken piano ballad "Silhouette," but much of the album is absent any personality at all, sounding like Young singing karaoke of vaguely familiar Top 40-styled tunes in his precious doe-eyed quaver. Even absent is the guilty satisfaction that so often comes with this kind of calculated heavily processed radio fare. With just a few exceptions, The Midsummer Station's would-be mainstream anthems of youth, love, and longing come off generic, hollow, and barely enjoyable. --- Fred Thomas, allmusic.com

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