

Portico Quartet - Portico Quartet (2012)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Piątek, 18 Kwiecień 2014 16:26 - Zmieniony Niedziela, 27 Kwiecień 2014 20:28

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01 – *Window Seat* 02 – *Ruins* 03 – *Spinner* 04 – *Rubidium* 05 – *Export for Hot Climates*
06 – *Lacker Boo* 07 – *Steepleless* 08 – *4096 Colours* 09 – *City of Glass* 10 – *Trace* Jack
Wyllie (saxophone) Milo Fitzpatrick (contrabass) Duncan Bellamy (drums) Nick Mulvey (Hang)

Portico Quartet remain famous for two things: busking lucratively on London's South Bank and employing the lilting gong of their UFO-like hang drum. But things have changed for this four-piece. The band's wages are no longer thrown into open instrument cases, thanks in part to a profile-raising Mercury nomination in 2008 for their debut *Knee-Deep in the North Sea*. And last year their man on the hang departed: "I've always felt like a fraud at the hang drum," said Nick Mulvey.

It's no biggie, though. This time out, the pretty, steely sound of the hang – taken up by new keysman Kier Vine – is set further back than on 2009's *Isla*, just one sound among many. What this band should be acclaimed for instead is barrelling through time and genres to make bewitching mood music that's on a par with *Jaga Jazzist*. Much like that Norwegian ensemble's last effort, *Portico Quartet* (the album) is a mazy, fluid, ethereal suite of chamber jazz to get properly lost in.

Whereas Portico's previous (second) album *Isla* was in thrall to Steve Reich and his ripple-effect minimalism, it seems Brian Eno, *Four Tet* and the *Brainfeeder* crew are touchstones on songs inspired by train journeys, on-tour blues and the soul-quieting effect of dramatic architecture. Jack Wyllie's sax and Vine's keys weave dark, mournful tapestries around electronic drums and gadget-enabled bleeps and twitches, while the hang presents itself in ghostly samples and squawks and squeaks serve as on-the-road sound effects.

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Everything still sounds familiarly Portico Quartet, only fresh, forward-thinking and a little bit tougher. Their arrangements and wide-open ambience remain sparse, but, on InterRailing-inspired Window Seat, are paired with the sort of drifting synths Oneohtrix Point Never is adored for. Ruins and Steeple – the latter featuring London-based Swedish singer Cornelia – carry the Radiohead gene always present in their improbably tuneful experiments. Ravey nightsongs such as Lacker Boo crackle with the electric, ominous energy of Flying Lotus, while Rubidium and 4096 Colours are bleary-eyed, melancholy and shot through with wintry mid-morning light. As journeys go, this one's endlessly absorbing. ---Chris Parkin, BBC Review

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