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Radian Chimeric Review

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BBC Review

Their first album for five years is something of a minor triumph.

David Sheppard 2009-11-05

Austrian electronic post-rockers Radian haven't made a record since 2004's John McEntire-produced *Juxtaposition* – an obliquely minimalist, dub bass heavy record which brought a style, substantively minted by the Chicagoan producer's own combo, *Tortoise*, a decade before, full circle. Five years on, the Vienna-based trio of bassist John Norman, drummer/vibes player Martin Brandlmayr and synth/guitarist Stefan Németh have regrouped, now seemingly intent on distilling post-rock to an esoteric essence.

No avant-rock grandees were involved in the making of Chimeric (other than the trio themselves). Recorded and mixed not in Chicago but at the Austrian capital's Hugosound studio, its forbidding overture may make some wish that an expurgating presence had been on hand, however. Opener *Git Cut Noise* certainly takes no prisoners – its inchoate clang and scrape sounds like *Scott Walker's* *Tilt* being mangled by *Autechre* and makes perfect onomatopoeic sense of its title. It proves to be a deceptive hors d'oeuvre, however, as this is about as dissonant as the album gets.

While the subsequent five, lengthy essays embrace passages of discord, they just as regularly delight in warm, dulcet vibraphone chimes, discreet piano notes, slivers of yielding guitar and the kind of attenuated meta-funk rhythms that *Can* fans, at the very least, could cut a rug to. None of these variations on the pointillist, mosaic soundscaping model, ever actually 'goes' anywhere but nonetheless, the sculpted lucidity of each sonic component invites headphone immersion. Once ensnared you can't help but delight in the highly processed, meticulously arranged detail.

Typically, the pretty much self-explanatory *Feedbackmikro /City Lights* is a brooding, ten-minute odyssey that oscillates between eerie keyboard throb, opaque electronic sliver, flecks of percussion, doleful daubs of vibes and skewed, vertiginous guitar chords. It variously recalls *Kieran Hebden's* *Fridge*, *Talk Talk* in one of their more abstruse moments, Australian post-jazz improvisers *The Necks* and the celestial electric guitar symphonies of *Glenn Branca*. No mean praise.

This may not be the kind of record to win new converts to the often desiccated province that is latter-day post-rock, but within its acetic, self-ascribed parameters, Chimeric is something of a minor triumph.

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