

Mogwai

Rave Tapes is the eighth studio album by Mogwai and their second on Rock Action, the label they set up almost 18 years ago to issue their debut 7in single, Tuner/Lower. In between, the Scottish quintet have established themselves on the international stage through a prolific recorded output and a commitment to touring that few of their peers can match.

Clocking in at just under 50 minutes, the 10-track album is a lustrous collection mined from the same quarry as its predecessors, wreathed in painterly textures underpinned by increasingly electronic beats. The haunted strains of Deesh channel the slow-burning ecstasy of their 2006 song Auto Rock (a key presence in the denouement of Michael Mann's film of Miami Vice that year) while the guitars on which Mogwai built their reputation remain, if for the most part less overtly belligerent this time round, as evidenced by the somnambulant opener Heard About You Last Night and the sonic scowl of Hexon Bogon. With Rave Tapes, Mogwai's mastery of sound and space is firmly at its apex.

Created in summer 2013 in the band's Castle Of Doom studio in Glasgow, the record marks the latest phase in the group's increasingly substantial canon – since the dawn of this decade, Mogwai have released four full-length records, one live album, two EPs and three singles. Factor in a pancontinental live schedule in support of one of those albums, Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will, plus myriad festival appearances and you get a sense of how much of themselves the members of Mogwai invest in their work.

In the past year alone the band have broadened their reach with the soundtrack to the acclaimed Canal+ supernatural drama series Les Revenants (retitled The Returned when broadcast on Channel 4 in summer 2013, averaging 1.8m viewers a week across its eight episodes). As the show reached its climax on UK TV screens in July, Mogwai returned to the most conspicuous predecessor to Les Revenants in their catalogue, the 2007 soundtrack to Douglas Gordon and Philippe Pareno's film Zidane: A 21st-century Portrait, in sell-out performances in Manchester, Glasgow and London's Barbican, the band playing live while the film was projected above them.

Mogwai are Dominic Aitchison (bass), Stuart Braithwaite (guitar, vocals), Martin Bulloch (drums), Barry Burns (keyboard, computer, guitar) and John Cummings (guitar, computer). They formed in Glasgow in 1995 as a quartet, with Burns yet to come into the fold. After a succession of well-received releases and having developed a reputation for their fearsome live shows, Mogwai signed to Glasgow independent Chemikal Underground, with whom they released their debut long-player Mogwai Young Team (1997) and its follow-up, Come On Die Young (1999), recorded in upstate New York with Dave Fridmann (Mercury Rev, Flaming Lips) and the first Mogwai album to feature Burns.

At the turn of the millennium Mogwai left Chemikal Underground to sign with PIAS, in large part for its European network, and in 2001 released *Rock Action*, reaching No23 in the UK album chart. Again produced by Fridmann, the record found the group introducing more electronic tones to their palette, a broadening of scope furthered on *Happy Songs For Happy People* (2003), the album that saw the band making substantial progress in the US.

Aside from Government Commissions, 2005's compilation of BBC radio sessions, almost three years would pass before Mogwai's fifth studio full-length, *Mr Beast* (2006), saw the light of day. Co-produced by the band and Tony Doogan (the sole producer of *Happy Songs*), *Mr Beast* was described by the band's then manager Alan McGee as "probably the best art rock album I've been involved with since [My Bloody Valentine's] *Loveless*". A year later, Mogwai released their soundtrack to *Zidane: A 21st-century Portrait*, and a further 12 months on came the release of the band's first album away from PIAS and their first entirely self-produced long-player, *The Hawk Is Howling* (2008).

The band's appetite for greater control was not, however, limited to the studio. Having used *Rock Action* largely as a platform for releases by such artists as *Envy*, *Errors* and *Part Chimp*, in 2010 Mogwai made the decision to issue their own records on the label as well, beginning with *Special Moves*, the audio counterpart to the live film *Burning*, both of which featured Mogwai performing in Brooklyn on their 2008-09 US tour. That same year, Mogwai and *Matador* ended their long relationship and the band signed to *Sub Pop* ahead of the 2011 release of *Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will*, an expansive, confident set which entered the UK album chart at No25 and spawned three singles. (The recording sessions also yielded the four-track EP *Earth Division*, the band's 10th such release.) A year later the album *A Wrenched Virile Lore*, featuring remixes of songs from *Hardcore...* by an eclectic array of artists including Justin Broadrick, Tim Hecker and Xander Harris, was released, providing listeners with an entirely new set of perspectives from which to view Mogwai's increasingly adroit creations.

Having barely had time to draw breath, the ever-restless band members kicked off 2013 with the release of the *Les Revenants* EP and parent album to keep fans occupied while writing sessions for *Rave Tapes* took place in Glasgow and Berlin, where Burns moved some years ago with his wife Rachel, an artist. Displaying a work ethic to shame bands of all ages and stripes, Mogwai entered their *Castle Of Doom* studio in the wake of summer's live *Zidane* shows and began making the victorious, beatific tracks that comprise *Rave Tapes*. The release of the album will signal the beginning of a frantic year of live activity, including the group's maiden foray into Africa. Fasten your seatbelts.

NOTES

Rave Tapes will be released on CD, LP and DL on January 20, 2014, on Rock Action (UK and Europe) and Sub Pop (North America).

Rave Tapes was recorded at Mogwai's Castle Of Doom studio in Glasgow, Scotland, with Paul Savage, who also worked with the band on Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will.

Rave Tapes tracklisting – Heard About You Last Night/ Simon Ferocious/ Remurdered/ Hexon Bogon/ Repelish/ Master Card/ Deesh/ Blues Hour/ No Medicine For Regret/ The Lord Is Out Of Control.

(Sean Guthrie)