

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS – BORN IN THE ECHOES

I don't know what to do, i'm going to lose my mind. This sentence, constantly repeated in *EML ritual*, perfectly summarizes the mental state of the electronic danceable music listener of 2015, a generation which isn't *Jilted* anymore, but that lives an historic moment in which the *post-big beat* has been considered a part of *EDM*, the notion that represents the generic and quite easy-listening electronic danceable music. There is someone that, talking about **Chemical Brothers**, has always said that their music has been, since **Exit planed dust** was released, a democratic music that represents all and, then, a camera which portraits the evolution of the *dance* tendencies.

It's a generation which is profoundly bored, that doesn't live anymore the mass *rave parties* dimension and that doesn't breathe the smell of the asphalt of *Block rockin' beats*, that doesn't live in the dark and dirty rooms of *Poison*, but that compose squared music conceived for polite ears born into a clean bed, and this domestic dimension can clearly be perceived by the listener who absorbs the songwriting environment in which it is produced.

Although being partially untied from the *trend* and, in some ways, loyal to the ex-Madchester *trademark*, **Born in the echoes** is a quite manneristic record, which shows a partial change if we think to what has been done before by the duo, but even a new step that doesn't add or remove anything. Being an album that, although the featurings, is created with always more precise *softwares* available to all, the sensation of profound artificiality of the album is evident. It's strongly demonstrated by the *opener* *Sometimes i feel so deserted*: it's a song which seems to not being able to take off, always in the "i wound but i can't" mood, between short lysergic sparkles and sweet development covered by a strong plastic layer. Consequently, the *beat* misses all its energy and charge and become a museum object enclosed in a case.

The following *Go* is the more *radio-friendly* song, easily insertable in the commercial *dancefloor* as well as in the supermarket electronic music, is a song for all, in which **Q-tip**, singer of the well known **A tribe called quest**, isn't enough to raise its level (as he is chained into a strong blanket of chains), a very different role if we think of that had on a great Chemical Brothers hit, *Galvanize*, this one considered a hymn still today (there will be a reason for this). Anyway, the elements for a perfect successful song are all present there: *vocals* expertly dosed, cool video that winks to the *indie* scene thanks to very *trendy* location, extremely catchy sounds and *groove* capable of drag the newsagent as well as the cashier who will be listening to it when making the receipt.

Under neon lights is another catchy song, *trendy*-squared, but with a completely out of charge battery, supported by the persuasive vocals of **Annie Clark** and by guitar-like sounds sweet and *radio-friendly* too, and the same could be said for the following *EML ritual*, an out of charge and visibly tired song, which features the withered vocals of **Ali Love**, which sounds good, but not sufficient to elevate the song, when the song explodes in a more profound sound, but not less artificial. *I'll see you there*, this one featuring **Bill Bissett**, is one of the highlights of the album, even if it cites maybe too strongly one of the best episodes of the history of the duo, *Let forever be*, it sounds like a kind of instrumental remake, a nice but not exceptional ending, which only adds a simple as well as effective *indie rock*-derived artificial guitar *riff*.

Just bang and *Reflexion* go back to squared danceable forms and a bit anonymous, in particular the second one, following the more minimalist sound freed from any sort of *underground* smell. The first episode makes use of analogic sounds too, but this doesn't give a particular value to a danceable without a clear identity. *Reflexion* is, as said before, a song that starts with a *minimal beat*, and that then absorbs lysergic sounds and desires that recall some *spacey* songs coming from

the unfortunate **We are the night**. The rhythms slow down in the following *Taste of honey*, characterized by a slow rhythm, that recalls the sounds of the bee movements, and that ends with an interesting, but artificial and forced, solo for stunned bees.

With the *title track*, the music goes back to groovier and rhythmic beats, in one of the more danceable episodes, characterized by a *retrò* taste far from the *EDM* landscapes and more closer to the afroamerican sound: even here, *beats* are soft and sweet. *Radiate* is the classic Chemical Brothers ballad, in which the leading role is done by the featuring with **Colin Stetson**, well known for being one of the leading characters of the *indie* scene, that donate a clearly *english* vocal performance, in the background of which a piano melody that marries perfectly with a violin melody twirls, until the duo pays a small homage to **Kraftwerk** at the end of the song. The *Song to the siren*'s siren is now slowed down, destructured, and it has become artificial, outline element that tells the death of the *beat*. The final *Wide open* is a danceable *pop catchy* sung by **Beck**, a song that has a large radio success capability, but also this one lacks of energy, and sounds out of charge.

The *bonus tracks* of the deluxe edition are *Let us build a city*, a good *mid tempo* that calls back the huge city outskirts without expressing their energy and their decay, a song that tries by all means to show itself, but that is, after all, very suitable for a commercial spot. *Wo ha* is another danceable without a great soul, manieristic, that cites in particular *funk music*, destructuring it and giving to the listener an easier interpretation. The last two songs are the *extended versions* of *Go* and *Reflexion*, but they don't add anything to what said before.

Concluding the review, with *Born in the echoes*, the Chemical Brothers have made a step backward if we think about what we have listened in the very good *kraut*-influenced **Further**, but, at the same time, losing in quality. It's a work that completely lacks of a musical statute and of the impulsive strenght of the subcultures that gave fuel to the english duo, a work which portraits the crisis of the mass electronic music, and that shows the need to charge. It's an album far from the psychedelic originality and from the street-approach of **Dig your own hole** as well as distant from the estate of *Exit planet dust*, but, at the same time, an album which lacks of desire to dare, as, in the contrary happened in **Push the button**. It's a stylistic exercise made with great skills, but nothing more. Album which has a wide commercial appeal, but that, in their discography, has not a leading role. If it's true that the Chemicals, as declared by someone, compose music putting together sounds that sounds good together and that simply make people dance, if you're searching for their early poetry, turn right at the next cross: here you won't find it.

Label: Virgin EMI records

Score: 6, 5

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