

## Yeah Yeah Yeahs - Mosquito (2013)

Written by bluesever

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01 – *Sacrilege* 02 – *Subway* 03 – *Mosquito* 04 – *Under The Earth* 05 – *Slave* 06 – *These Paths* 07 – *Area 52* 08 – *Buried Alive [Ft. Dr. Octagon]* 09 – *Always* 10 – *Despair* 11 – *Wedding Song* Musicians: Karen O – vocals, bass, keyboards, design concept Nick Zinner – guitar, bass, keyboards, vocals; mixing (12, 14, 15) Brian Chase – drums, cymbal, percussion, vocals + Money Mark – keyboards (1) Dr. Octagon – vocals (8) Choir Michael McElroy – choir leader (1, 4)

Since *Fever to Tell*, with each album the Yeah Yeah Yeahs have challenged their audience with their changes, and *Mosquito* is no exception. A 180 from It's Blitz!'s flashy electro sheen, the band's fourth album downplays synths, programmed beats, and other gadgetry in favor of drums, guitars, and a mix of rock and inward-looking ballads that occasionally recalls *Show Your Bones*. Karen O, Nick Zinner, and Brian Chase reunite with longtime producers David Sitek and Nick Launay -- who were honorary members of the band by this point -- and they take the trio in any direction they want to go. Since "Maps," some of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' most exciting songs show their vulnerability, and to a certain extent, this is true of *Mosquito*. O sounds full-throated and full-hearted as she sings "your sun is my sun" on "Despair," the kind of unabashed love song the band has excelled at since that breakthrough power ballad. Likewise, "Wedding Song" -- which O actually sang at her nuptials -- is genuine and intimate enough to strike a near-universal chord. At other times, the band's quieter side just doesn't connect: while "Subway" cleverly loops samples of the train into its percussion, it's a little too successful at capturing an introspective mood; the sparkling, vaguely exotica-tinged "Always" is pretty, but doesn't ring as true as the better love songs here. Meanwhile, *Mosquito*'s loudest songs are more playfully nostalgic than ferocious, which in its own way is in keeping with the album's often reflective tone. "Area 52" and the title track spin tales about aliens and bloodsucking bugs that are much sillier than the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' early days; as impressive as O's wail still is, there's a campiness to these songs that almost feels like the band is having a fond laugh about when they used to do this all the time. Indeed, they sound most engaged on *Mosquito* when they're somewhere between its extremes.

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The lead track, "Sacrilege," showcases their way with a slow-building epic and plays like a more daring kissing cousin of Madonna's "Like a Prayer" as O sings "Fallin' for a guy/Who fell down from the sky" as a gospel choir rises up to meet her -- a risky move, since adding it to rock songs can be transcendent but more often than not just sounds like corny co-opting. Here, it actually works, and the way that the band incorporates dub elements on "Under the Earth" and the excellent "Slave" -- which sounds like Siouxsie and the Banshees recording at Studio One -- and the cameo from Dr. Octagon on "Buried Alive" are nearly as impressive. Something of a grower, Mosquito has perhaps the widest range of sounds and moods the Yeah Yeah Yeahs have ever presented on one set of songs. It might not be as cohesive as their best albums, but the standout songs rival their finest moments. ---Heather Phares, allmusic.com

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