

Lou Reed – Ecstasy (2000)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Paranoia Key of E* 2. *Mystic Child* 3. *Mad* 4. *Ecstasy* 5. *Modern Dance* 6. *Tatters* 7. *Future Farmers of America* 8. *Turning Time Around* 9. *White Prism* 10. *Rock Minuet* 11. *Baton Rouge* 12. *Like a Possum* 13. *Rouge* 14. *Big Sky* Musicians: Lou Reed - vocals, guitar, percussion on "White Prism" Mike Rathke - guitar Fernando Saunders - bass, background vocals Tony "Thunder" Smith - drums, percussion, background vocals Don Alias - percussion on "Ecstasy" Laurie Anderson - electric violin on "White Prism," "Rouge" and "Rock Minuet" Steven Bernstein - trumpet, horn arrangements Doug Wieselman - baritone & tenor saxophone Paul Shapiro - tenor saxophone Jane Scarpantoni - cello

Never let it be said that Lou Reed has lost the ability to surprise his audience; who would have thought that at the age of 58, on his first album of the new millennium, Reed would offer us an 18-minute guitar distortion workout with lyrics about kinky sex, dangerous drugs, and (here's the surprise) imagining what it would be like to be a possum? For the most part, *Ecstasy* finds Reed obsessed with love and sex, though (as you might expect) his take on romance is hardly rosy ("Paranoia Key of E," "Mad," and "Tatters" all document a relationship at the point of collapse, while "Baton Rouge" is an eccentric but moving elegy for a love that didn't last) and Eros is usually messy ("White Prism"), obsessive ("Ecstasy"), or unhealthy and perverse ("Rock Minuet"). Reed genuinely seems to be stretching towards new lyrical and musical ground here, but while some of his experiments work, several pointedly do not, with the epic "Like a Possum" only the album's most spectacular miscalculation. Still, Reed and producer Hal Wilner take some chances with the arrangements that pay off, particularly the subtle horn charts that dot several songs, and Reed's superb rhythm section (Fernando Saunders on bass and Tony "Thunder" Smith on drums) gives these songs a rock-solid foundation for the leader's guitar workouts. As Reed and his band hit fifth gear on the album's rousing closer, "Big Sky," he once again proves that even his uneven works include a few songs you'll certainly want to have in your collection -- as long as they're not about possums. ---Mark Deming, Rovi

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