

Ulver – A Quick Fix of Melancholy (2003)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 22 September 2011 18:32 - Last Updated Monday, 18 March 2019 20:43

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01. *Little Blue Bird* 02. *Doom Sticks* [play](#) 03. *Vowels* 04. *Eittlane* Musicians:
Kristoffer Rygg – vocals, additional programming Jørn H. Sværen – miscellaneous Tore
Ylwizaker – programming, keyboards Daniel O'Sullivan – guitar, bass, keyboards

Ulver is a band best known for their ability to keep their fans on their toes. You can never be too sure of what you're going to get with each subsequent release. Just look at the first trilogy they released. The first album, *Bergtatt*, is a combination of folk and black metal, while the next album, *Kveldssanger*, is straight up folk, and lastly, *Nattens Madrigal*, is an all-out black metal assault. After that, they pretty much dropped any form of black metal from their music and instead chose to embrace electronica. In doing so, they may have alienated many fans, but also brought in many new ones. By maintaining their ability to craft an amazing song through these changes, even though I didn't dig Ulver's new direction as much, I always respected what the band had to offer. Hot on the heels of their Norwegian Grammy-nominated soundtrack release *Lyckantropen Themes*, they have released the EP *A Quick Fix of Melancholy*. Once again mixing things up quite a bit, Ulver has something original to offer to the masses, and I for one really enjoy it. Using Trixter G's amazing vokill range and the bands ability to create some stunning atmospheric music, *A Quick Fix of Melancholy* is sure to please fans of this band. Leading you through a mix of keys, horns, strings, and sometimes just noise, Ulver is able to evoke so many different emotions with each track. Although Ulver is not a band for everyone, they are truly a band that can create stunning music. If you have an open mind, definitely look into checking out this release. Although it's only a mere four tracks (three new ones and a remix from the *Kveldssanger* album), what's offered is filled with atmospheric splendor and should not be passed up. --- Ryan Plunkett, metalreview.com

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ULVER is a mysterious beast. I am told that their history is rooted in Black Metal, but one certainly wouldn't know it by listening to "A Quick Fix Of Melancholy". Being the relative ULVER neophyte that I am, I have managed to come to this release with a partially clean slate upon which I have heaped no expectations. In reading through the reviews here and elsewhere, it seems that there is a divisive split among the bands' fans between those who love the new direction the band has taken, and those who prefer the older material. Why this might be I refuse to comment on, as I have not yet explored said material, however after hearing "A Quick Fix" I definitely plan on doing so.

A minimalistic recording whose tracks slowly build from simple, disjointed melodies and ideas into atmospheric soundscapes, the feeling on "A Quick Fix" is one of anticipation. The staccato sound of strings breaks the empty calm of the "Little Blue Bird". Percussion is largely absent; the pulsating rhythm of these repeating string flourishes is more than enough to keep time. The song almost sounds as though the listener is sitting at one end of a tunnel, but can hear the echoes of a string quartet off in the distance playing the same repetitions continually. Reverb-laden male vocals slip into the atmosphere and are soon joined by a thumping heartbeat whose rhythm is intertwined with the strings. As the soundscape grows to include buzzing electronics reminiscent of RADIOHEAD's most recent outing, suddenly it all fades away into nothingness as the listener is left alone, waiting for the next track. Yes, Metal fans, I have managed to commit the gravest of possible reviewer sins. I have mentioned RADIOHEAD in a review for a Metal website. As far as I am concerned, the shoe certainly fits, and ULVER wears it well.

The second and third tracks are so closely related that it almost seems as if they were two movements of a single composition. Beginning with a simple electronic melody that gradually morphs into a lullaby as throbbing waves of sound flow through and wash over your senses; a muffled percussion is introduced that transports the listener from the hollow tunnels and caverns of track one to the mind of a child hiding from his nightmares beneath a pillow. Strings are plucked, and the ethereal soundscape is built up into a beautiful orchestration around which electronic drums crash and fill relentlessly. Finally, "Eittlane" (which I have read elsewhere is a remix of a previous song, "Nattleite", with a humorous remix of the song's name included in the current tracklisting) welcomes the return of the electronic drums, and for the first time on this recording actual percussion is used to keep time. Haunting male vocals also reappear, but remain in the background as simply another layer of the dreamy atmosphere.

ULVER is an orchestra without conventional instruments. The brooding passages of "A Quick Fix" are somewhat similar to the music of the Canadian Post-Rock band A SILVER MT. ZION (who themselves are simply a pared-down version of GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR). I read on the ULVER website that they have been doing soundtrack work recently, and it definitely shows with this recording. The music almost seems to tell a story of its own, and of

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course that story will be different for all listeners. Your mileage may vary, but if you are interested in listening to something a little (or a lot, depending on your listening history) different, it can't hurt to give ULVER's "A Quick Fix Of Melancholy" a try. --- Dan Pritchard, metal-observer.com

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