Mogwai

*Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will*

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Mogwai are: Dominic Aitchison, Stuart Braithwaite, Martin Bulloch, Barry Burns, John Cummings

Not everyone gets Mogwai, but that's what makes them great. Theirs is a majestic, powerful sound where barely a word is spoken yet it is the antithesis of background music. Album and song titles bemuse, confuse and delight in equal measure and live, they are utterly unstoppable.

For their seventh album *Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will* they have continued in this vein with a brave and instinctive album that is charged with an energy, spirit and intensity few can match. It is the sound of a band comfortable in their own skin, but clawing at the edges of their own capabilities, and drawing out something particularly special in the process.

*Hardcore...* is a natural progression from 2008's mighty *The Hawk Is Howling,* but draws on a more varied sonic palette than its predecessor. It also throws into sharp relief how Mogwai the live beast and Mogwai the studio beast are two different, if complementary animals. The monochrome starkness of their 2010 live movie/album *Burning/Special Moves* acknowledged the weight and scale of the band's breathtaking live shows. *Hardcore*... reminds us of the many moments of subtlety to be savored from their studio work.

Mogwai were birthed in the halcyon days of the mid-90s and helped Glasgow become one of the real bright spots in the musical universe again. They turned heads, hearts and stomachs with their live shows—stark aural assaults on the senses which swung between barely there and a coruscating scree of white noise. They've rolled out a quality half dozen albums and a clutch of EPs in the preceding years to considerable acclaim. Some people even bought the records too.

Over time, some kindred spirits have gone missing in (rock) action, but the original bond that held Mogwai together remains, despite geography, age and responsibility. Certainly, there have been creative and fiscal peaks and plateaus for them, like any creative endeavor, but their single-mindedness has posted them on a positive trajectory no fad, fashion or fool could derail.

They are as at home sharing a bill with the electronic boffinry of Aphex Twin as they are with the doomy swoon of The Cure or the apocalyptic rage of Neurosis. That's probably because they can do all three, often in the same tune.

So let's get one thing out of the way, the album title.

“It was overheard by James Hamilton from Errors,” explain Stuart Braithwaite. “A ned said it to a shopkeeper who wouldn't sell him a carry-out as he was under age. It follows on from our other ned-inspired titles—*Ten Rapid, Mogwai Young Team* and *Come on Die Young—*which I like. I think the juxtaposition of the less serious titles and the brutally serious music is a good one. Loads of the people who hear the record will have a completely different view of what it means. I like that too.”

The band returned to Hamilton's Chem 19 studios for the recording of *Hardcore*... with Paul Savage producing. “We hadn't recorded with Paul since *Mogwai Young Team* (in 1997). Not for any particular reason but I think in the years since, both us and Paul have grown quite a bit and it seemed timely to work with him again. We're massive fans of work he's done with The Twilight Sad and Phantom Band.”

The album also features the band's old friend Luke Sutherland. Luke has contributed to numerous Mogwai recordings in the past, including 2003's *Happy Songs for Happy People*.

“It occurred to us that all the records that Luke had played on were really good so it seemed wise to get him back on board,” says Braithwaite. “We sent him our home demos and he wrote parts for a few. He came in and put all of his parts down in a few days. He's a talented bastard! I'm confident he'll be making a few live appearances too.”

“Making this album wasn't any harder as such but it was certainly different than on previous albums,” confesses Braitwaite. “John and Barry weren't living in Scotland (having moved to New York and Berlin, respectively) while we were writing the album so we shared demos rather than just getting in a room and playing together. I think because of that it definitely has a different feel to our other records.”

“San Pedro” is the furious sequel to “Glasgow Mega-Snake” from 2006's *Mr Beast*, a driving, dueling guitar battle where the band hurtle through to thundering climax. “Letters to the Metro”is yet more quintessential Mogwai, sweetly melodic and oddly sentimental, where plaintive piano pokes and brushed drums set against loping, mournful guitar twangs: A thing of beauty.

Elsewhere, the twitchy, mechanized ghosts of Suicide and Neu! are evoked on songs like “Mexican Grand Prix” and “George Square Thatcher Death Party.” Mogwai have always excelled at the hypnotic but show an even greater range of textures here. “How to Be a Werewolf” is similarly textured, rolling, gliding and building before exploding forth with streaks of molten, stereoscopic guitar.

Closing track “You're Lionel Ritchie” is a brooding monster that not only sends off into the night sated but solidifies the veteran ceiling-dwelling soulster's place in popular cultural history—as a footnote to Mogwai's continued forward progress.

“I saw Lionel Richie at Heathrow but I was still drunk from DJing in Barcelona,” Braithwaite admits. “That is what I said to his face. The rest of the band was incredibly amused.”

There was a time where Mogwai feared Satan. Now the two appear to be on the most genial of terms, they may have even nabbed some of his tunes—he has the best ones after all. Now Mogwai fear nothing. And for that we should be thankful.

—Mark Robertson