

Black Tape for a Blue Girl: Remnants of a Deeper Purity (Special Reissue)
An Annotated Music Review

Dr. Thanatos of Ann Arbor

Before the Autumnal Equinox (09.19.06 C.E.)

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Comments

I find the dark beauty of this seminal work somewhat unbearable but pleasurable nonetheless. Black Tape for a Blue Girl has now reached its twenty-year anniversary. I ordered “The Rope” when it was released in 1986, and I’ve religiously collected each subsequent BTFABG album including “Remnants of a Deeper Purity” which was released at the half-way point, ten years ago. During this time, lovers have come and gone. And as I exposed each one to this and the other melancholy music present in the early Projekt recordings, an interesting thing occurred: My losses became paired with Oscar’s deep voice, Vicki’s somber violin, and Sam’s romantic lyrics.

While such feelings of nostalgia bring me pain, they also give me comfort. (A touch of masochism is likely one of the defining characteristics for The Gothic Path.) And I am thankful Projekt has reissued this classic album with detailed notes and bonus tracks as it represents a transition between what my friends and I call the “Old Black Tape” and the “New Black Tape”. BTFABG has always been somewhat of a Projekt “house band” (in the same way that This Mortal Coil was for 4AD) as it often includes members of other groups signed to the label. And such a rotating cast of characters produces a unique sound with each album. But the early works seem to contain a more consistent darkness than the later ones which are more diverse. (For example, “Scavenger bride” is more avant-garde and “Halo Star” is more tribal.) And “Remnants” represents an end to the old phase which many fans (but not I) lament.

The first CD in the two-disc set is the original 1996 recording, and it vacillates between long periods of dark ambient and brief moments of gothic poetry. The strings of Vicki and Mera provide ground for the vocals of Oscar and Lucian to soar above with lyrics that run a spectrum of emotions. Interestingly, the album appears to work through these feelings as if they are a part of a learning process—wisdom gained through years of pain.

“Redefine Pure Faith”	jadedness
“Fin de Siecle”	regret
“With My Sorrows”	redemption
“For You Will Burn ...”	bitterness
“Wings Tattered, Fallen”	nostalgia
“Fitful”	reflection
“Remnants of a ...”	hope
“Again, To Drift”	remembrance
“I Have No More Answers”	realism

The use of such histrionics is classic Black Tape done to perfection one last time before the change in their sound. BTFABG are occasionally criticized for doing the same thing again and again. That may have been true in their first decade, and it probably explains why this album represents the end of an era for them as it **was** time to move on to something new. I, however, never grow tired of their gothic drama because it is done so well. There’s a fine line between the sentimental and the saccharine, and BTFABG live in the grey area near that line. Highlights of first disc include the anger of “For You Will Burn” and the beauty of “Remnants”.

The second CD in the set is a collection of tracks from obscure singles and compilations. The first three tracks are modified versions of “With My Sorrows”. The first version “En la Mar Ay Una Torre” (“There is a Tower at the Sea”) is based on traditional Sephardic (the Judeo-Spanish culture located in Greece/Macedonia) words

and music and features Oscar and Lucian beautifully singing the ancient language a cappella. The other two versions are extended dark ambient pieces. "Part 2" features Oscar translating part of "En la Mar Ay Una Torre" into English and "Part 3" starts with Oscar doing some brief chants (which were used later in the track "The Apotheosis" on the album "As One Aflame Laid Bare by Desire") and ends with Sam doing some Enoesque drones. The fourth track on the bonus disc is a shortened version of "I Have No More Answers" and then there are the first published live recordings of BTFABG. These three tracks were recorded at the 1996 version of ProjektFest in Chicago and show Black Tape's ability to duplicate the high emotional content (and Oscar's theatrics) of their music live. That was a wonderful festival and in many ways these live gems are the highlight of the CD. The album closes with a slowed-down, multi-layered remix of what is arguably their most popular track "Across a Thousand Blades", and there's a hidden track at the very end. The quiet ambience of this untitled piece is a bit of a respite from the other evocative pieces and provides a closure to this highly recommended package.

Summary: Excellent transition between the first and last ten years of this eclectic goth projekt

Reference: (Early) Dead Can Dance, Faith and Disease, Love is Colder than Death, Lycia, Peter Murphy

ThanatoScore: 09/10

Details

Artist: Black Tape for a Blue Girl
Work: Remnants of a Deeper Purity
Format: MP3/Double Compact Disc
Label: Projekt
Catalog: Projekt186
Date: 08.22.06

Members: Oscar Herrera (vocals, guitar, tambourine)
Lucian Casselman (vocals)
Vicki Richards (violin)
Mera Roberts (cello)
Sam Rosenthal (electronics, harmonium)

Production: Sam (music)
Sam, Oscar, Lucian (vocal arrangements)
Vicki, Mera (orchestral melodies, orchestral arrangements)
Sam, Jason Rau

Art: Lisa Feuer (photo of Sam)
Susan Jennings (photo of Lucian)
Elizabeth Russell (photo of Vicki)
Sam (photos of Oscar, Mera)
Sam (graphic design)

Inspiration: Veronika
Susan
Mera
Laura M.
Rena
Robin

Data:	Track	Time	Title
Disc 1	01	05.19	Redefine Pure Faith
	02	05.53	Fin de Siecle
	03	07.04	With My Sorrows
	04	26.20	For You Will Burn Your Wings Upon the Sun
	05	06.25	Wings Tattered, Fallen
	06	04.56	Fitful
	07	04.37	Remnants of a Deeper Purity
	08	06.00	Again, To Drift (For Veronika)
	09	10.34	I Have No More Answers
		77.08	
Disc 2	01	01.00	En la Mar Ay Una Torre
	02	13.07	With My Sorrows (Part 2)
	03	06.25	With My Sorrows (Part 3)
	04	03.40	I Have No More Answers (Radio Edit)
	05	04.32	Redefine Pure Faith (Live)
	06	02.29	Through Sky Blue Rooms (Live)
	07	03.57	Remnants of a Deeper Purity (Live)
	08	03.56	Across a Thousand Blades ('96)
	09	02.05	[Hidden] [Untitled]
		41.12	

Notes

Entire work was recorded and mixed at The Lush Garden in Chicago from January 1995 to April 1996.

Disc 1, Track 2 was inspired by Anais Nin's (1903-1977 C.E.) first diary (pp. 339-344). A reference for this book and that for an audio version recorded by Anais herself is provided below. The title means "end of the century".

Nin, A. (1978-1985). *The early diary of Anais Nin*. New York : Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Nin, A. (1968). *The diary of Anais Nin. Vol. 1* [Sound recording]. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Spoken Arts.

Disc 1, Track 3 was written by Sam (music, words) and Oscar (melody, arrangement), and it is inspired by traditional pieces. One lyrical interpretation (in Sephardic and in English) of this traditional piece closes this review.

Disc 1, Track 4 appears to reference the Greek story of Icarus. This fable is usually interpreted as meaning "the arrogant get what they deserve" or "don't fly too high or you will come crashing down" and a desire to teach such a lesson seems to underlie the anger and bitterness of this track.

Disc 1, Track 6 was written by Sam and "emax".

En la Mar Ay Una Torre [In Sephardic]

En la mar ay una torre
 En la tore ay una ventana
 Ayi aposa la palomba

Dame la mano palomba
Quero subir al tu nido
Maldicha que durmesh sola
Vengo a dormir contigo

Si la mar se faze leche
Los barquitos de canela
Yo me mancharia entera
Para salvar mi pandera

Si la mar se faze leche
Yo me ago un vendedor
Para vender las mis dolores
Con palavricas d'amor

There is a Tower at the Sea [In English]

There is a tower at the sea
And a window in the tower
Where the dove [a girl] perches

Give me your hand, dove
I want to reach your nest
Pity, you are sleeping alone
Let me sleep with you

If the sea turns into milk
With boats of cinnamon
I'd surely stain myself
Just to save my flag

If the sea turns into milk
I'll become a salesman
For me to sell my pains
With beautiful words of love