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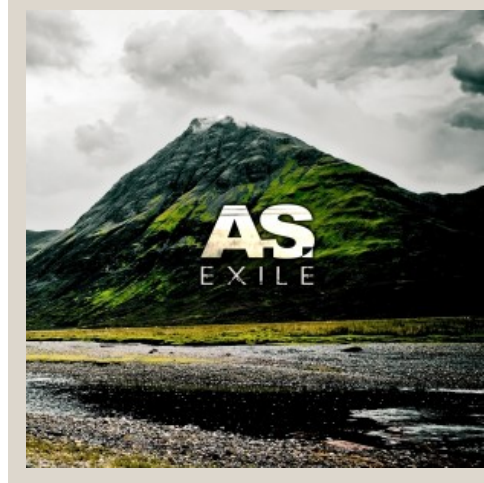
Exile - A.S.

Posted on April 17, 2013 | Jason Noble | Music Reviews

Released: 2013

Listening to the swirling ethereal scenes, delicate piano flurries and soaring vocals of eclectic duo A.S., you'd be forgiven for thinking these guys come from the songwriting school of Radiohead and Sigur Ros. In reality the music on their second album *Exile* comes from a much more unlikely combination of influences. From Melbourne orchestras, Parisian theatres and the dramatic world of film score composition, it becomes clear that A.S. is no ordinary collaboration.

Nick McRoberts and Idriss Halfaoui first came together to form A.S. in 2006, and having spent four years crafting and refining their sound, released debut album *Intimate Circles* in 2010. Three years have passed since then, and has seen the duo take quite a battering in that time. McRoberts has suffered a divorce and Halfaoui has battled his own serious health problems in that time, but all this has helped



fuel their creative muscles, culminating in their astonishing new record *Exile*.

Crafted over four months banished in a Parisian loft, the album title could not be more apt, and as such the feeling of coming out of exile is rife across the record. The title track and *Fast* sound like the offspring of a particularly epic Muse and Radiohead get-together, most notably in the elevating vocal lines. The opening track *Do What You Want* is probably the most commercial tune on the album, emulating the sounds of Oasis and Manic Street Preachers.

Invisible Kiss is the stand-out tune: rich in colour and of a breathtaking expanse, it could be their very own *Comfortably Numb*. Unlike most albums, *Exile* opens up over the ten tracks, with their best material very much revealing themselves at the latter end of the disc.

For fans of the album format where songs have a chance to breathe, and ideas to be properly sustained, there is much to delight in here. There is little in the way of catchy hooks, memorable guitar solos or upbeat pop sing-alongs and this is most definitely a good thing here. For fans of epic sounds, progressive musicianship and a sound akin to the aforementioned Muse or Radiohead, this record is a real gem waiting to be explored over multiple listens. After hearing this you'll be glad they've come out of exile.

★★★★

a.s., exile

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