

Hot Fuss by The Killers

Britain has had its fair share of iconic bands over the years: The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, The Smiths, Radiohead, The Cure. But in the past few years its all been fairly quiet on the icon front in Blighty. Instead, groups from across the pond such as the White Stripes and the Strokes have found huge success, while the only bands making the charts from our shores were dirge merchants like Stereophonics, Travis and the quite frankly ridiculous Darkness. However in the past twelve months there's been a sudden upsurge in homegrown talent, popular with music critics, purists and mainstream listeners. Bands like the Libertines, Franz Ferdinand and Snow Patrol have proved once again that it's cool to be British, blowing their American rivals out of the water. The Killers would fit perfectly into this newly carved post-punk style indie niche but for one damning fact: they're from LA. But, this hasn't hampered their progress up the charts one bit. Instead of basking in their American-ness, the Killers sound like, according to one music mag, 'an indie band from Yorkshire'. Like fellow self-confessed Anglophiles and Joy Division-alikes Interpol, the Killers cite Brit bands as their main influences including on the list aforementioned icons the Smiths and the Beatles as well as, surprisingly, Oasis. 'Hot Fuss' is the band's debut, and includes their two hits to date 'Somebody Told Me' and 'Mr. Brightside'. Both are startlingly strong tracks, the former a disco-tinged nod to the New Wave of the early 80s, while the latter is a chugging ode to lost love. But unfortunately, not all the songs on 'Hot Fuss' live up to the huge promise of these two anthemic hits. Album opener 'Jenny Was A Friend Of Mine' is one of the songs which does however, a haunting tune with a murderous narrative. Lead singer Brandon Flowers' (no relation to Mike) voice adds an overwhelming emotional atmosphere while a throbbing bassline brings a catchy hook to the proceedings. After the next track, 'Mr. Brightside', the album's pace moves down several gears with the musical non-event 'Smile Like You Mean It', a swampy mix of guitar and synth with nothing to offer but some robotic backing vocals. 'Somebody Told Me' ups the tempo before 'All These Things That I've Done' introduces a rather fabulous gospel choir and some of the worst lyrics in recent memory - "I've got soul but I'm not a soldier" Flowers declares at one point. Hmm. right mate. Even so, 'All These Things' is one of the CD's highlights, as is the following song 'Andy You're A Star'. Discordant, monotone (but in a good way) and set in a minor key, 'Andy You're A Star' marks the last stroke of genius on 'Hot Fuss' before the rest of the album deteriorates into average indie-by-numbers. That's not to say the rest is awful, or even that bad, but compared with the pure pop perfection of 'Mr. Brightside' or 'Jenny Was A Friend of Mine' they simply don't even come close. 'On Top' offers some bizarre synth that wouldn't sound out of place on a cheesy mid-90s Eurobeat hit while the Cure-influenced 'Everything Will Be Alright' is just irritating thanks to the decision to have Flowers sing the whole song using an off-putting distortion effect. 'Glamorous Indie Rock & Roll' has not only an awful title but also a stop-start rhythm which soon becomes annoying, while Flowers' wailing, which sounded so good on 'Jenny' is enough to make your ears bleed. The Killers appear to be the music media's new darlings at the moment, their popularity proved after playing a packed out set in the New Bands Tent at this year's Glastonbury, but 'Hot Fuss' is not really worthy of the hype surrounding it, at least not the whole album anyway. It pales in comparison with other debuts released this year such as Franz Ferdinand's eponymous long player, which goes to prove that in light of the UK music scene's rebirth of 'Cool Britannia', us Brits just do it better. All in all the Killers have produced a brilliant half an album - let's just hope they can come up with more of this for the follow-up, rather than the middle-of-the-road indie-by-numbers which almost kills the atmosphere of this debut.

About the Author

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