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Portishead's Dummy (33 1/3)



Synopsis

An album which distilled a genre from the musical, cultural, and social ether, Portishead's *Dummy* was such a complete artistic achievement that its ubiquitous successes threatened to exhaust its own potential. RJ Wheaton offers an impressionistic investigation of *Dummy* that imitates the cumulative structure of the album itself, piecing together interviews, impressions of time and place, cultural criticism, and a thorough exploration of the music itself. The approach focuses as much on the reception and response that *Dummy* engendered as it does on the original production of the album. How is that so many people have, collectively, made a quintessential headphone album into a nightclub album? How have they made the product of a niche local scene into an international success? This is the story of how an innovative, experimental album became the iconic sound for the better part of a decade; and an aesthetic template for the experience of music in the digital age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A growing Alexandria of rock criticism - Los Angeles Times, 2008 Ideal for the rock geek who thinks liner notes just aren't enough - Rolling Stone One of the coolest publishing imprints on the planet - Bookslut"

RJ Wheaton's writing on music, film, and literature has been published in *The Oxford American*, DaCapo's Best Music Writing series, and at [PopMatters.com](#), where he is Senior Producer. He

currently lives in Toronto.

I've read quite a few of the 33-1/3 series, and I think this is one of the best entries. It gives a great insight into the making of the album and also positions its creation within the greater musical trends of the time. My one disappointment is that the book presupposes the instance of a single "Bristol Scene" that existed around the time of this album; but the city is also important as home of two other scenes -- that of iconic indie label Sarah Records, and the more experimental sounds of the loose collective of musicians that included Flying Saucer Attack, The Third Eye Foundation, Crescent, Amp, Movietone, and others.

Not only that, but twice as long as some! It can be a bit starry-eyed and ponderous from time to time, but the greatest praise I can give it is this: I found Dummy to be my least-favourite Portishead record (so sue me, I just love the other two more). This made me reconsider and see Dummy with new eyes. I'd recommend it if it's your first entry in the series, but it may also set the bar too high - especially when crap like the Fear of Music book found their way into the series.

Wheaton dissects the work of Portishead with the critical eye of a micro-surgeon. No detail, musical nuance is missed and it makes going back to the music so much more enjoyable. Be prepared to have a tablet or laptop handy to follow the many musical references he mentions along the way (it would be great if this were easier from within the Kindle version itself).

If you love portishead.....GET.THIS.NOW,ITS small and I carry it in my bag. Such great information. I will def buy more of these 331/3 books!Love,

this is one of the longest and best of the 33 1/3 book series - highly recommended to any Portishead fan

Bought one of these books for each of my family members and one for myself. Thus far all positive reviews.

Muy interesante

I'm a huge fan of the 33 1/3 series. True, some are hits, some are misses. RJ Wheaton's exegesis

on Portishead's Dummy is absolutely in the former camp. Wheaton artfully weaves background on the album's composition and production with biographical information, all the while making a point to put the album into context - of the times, of its peers, of its genre, of its influences and impact. The best entries in the 33 1/3 series do two things. First, they make you want to listen to nothing but the album under review for at least a week. Second, they elicit a new appreciation for the album, regardless of how well you know it, or how long you've been a fan. Wheaton's take on Dummy accomplishes both.

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