




CHVRCHES; Every Open Eye

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Joe Mitchell

CHVRCHES *Every Open Eye* Glassnote

CHVRCHES have come a long way in just four years. After forming in 2011, the band's career was jump-started in March 2013 at Austin's South by Southwest where they won the first annual [Grulke Prize](#) for best Developing Non-U.S. Act. Six months later, they released their virtually flawless debut [The Bones of What You Believe](#). At that point it was "3-2-1 Blast Off!" and the band has been in orbit ever since, riding the well-deserved popularity of tracks such as "The Mother We Share", "We Sink", "Lies", "Under the Tide", and the ever so sublime "Recover". In fact, there's nary a down moment in *Bones*. It was one of 2013's best 50 albums and a top 5 among debut releases. The rampant popularity of *Bones* certainly wasn't hurt by the fact that **CHVRCHES** had opened four European concerts for the mother of all techno-pop bands, Depeche Mode, and made notable appearances on late night shows *Jimmy Fallon* in the U.S. and *Jules Holland* in the U.K. earlier in the summer.

The band's rise seemed meteoric. Indeed, for **CHVRCHES** as a band, it was an incredibly fast ascent. However, for the individuals in the band, it was the result of many years of hard work and craft-honing. Bassist/Vocalist/Synth Player/Guitarist [Iain Cook](#) spent years developing his skills as a musician and songwriter with [Aerogramme](#) and still plays with Glasgow bands [The Unwinding Hours](#) and Les Tingles. He also has an extensive list of [credits on IMDB](#) as a movie and television composer. Synth Player/Vocalist/Sampler [Martin "Dok" Doherty](#) played in [Julia Thirteen](#)  for awhile and spent almost four years in [The Twilight Sad](#) , a band that is set to [play arenas and other large venues in the United States](#) this coming Spring opening for The Cure. Vocalist/Synth Player/Sampler Lauren Mayberry was in jangly post-punk band [Boyfriend/Girlfriend](#)  and played drums and sang with the phenomenal [Blue Sky Archives](#). In addition to her work with CHVRCHES she's also works as an editor, writer, podcaster, promoter, and all around bad-ass with [TYCI](#) ("Tuck Your Cunt In"), a collective that champions women artists and musicians through their zine, blog, events, and other ventures. So yeah, the members of CHVRCHES have paid their dues and then some, and are presently productive little monsters who make we mere mortals look like nothing but torpid little slugs.

So, considering how bloody busy the members of **CHVRCHES** are and just how spectacular their debut LP was, one could be forgiven for expecting **CHVRCHES** to be stricken by a case of the dreaded "sophomore slump", and, of course, the band could well be forgiven for succumbing to it. "Leave a Trace", the first single released prior to the album, left me a bit cold, to put it mildly, when it first came out. It seemed a formulaic downturn from the melodramatic tone of *Bones*, a lowest common denominator reach for chart positioning. The fact that the video for the track made Mayberry out to be just another cute girl sex object, which she sure as hell isn't, didn't help matters either. It looked as though the band wanted a lot of Youtube views to go along with being top of the charts. The subsequent release of "Clearest Blue", a shoe-gazing dance single that comes off like an optimistic version of New Order's classic, "Blue Monday," [speaking of New Order, the cover for *Every Open Eye* is quite reminiscent of that for [Power Corruption and Lies](#)] was a vast improvement over "Leave...", but my expectations remained tentative at best.

How can a band equal or exceed a debut album with nary a down moment? Well, **CHVRCHES** has a very simple answer for that conundrum— release an album of eleven songs that are not only as good as those on *Bones*, but even stronger – yes, even “Leave a Trace”. Quite simply, *Every Open Eye* is a clear picture of a band that is coming into its own and can not only see, but can feel, their brilliant future.

The Wagnerian blast of “Never Ending Circles” that opens the album signals a band that is more confident than ever and that the wallowing moodiness of *Bones* is being replaced by a resolution to leave the pain behind. The pain is still very much there, but it is quickly being shed, as Mayberry, on the verge of screaming, sings:

*Heres to taking what you came for
And here's to running off the pain
And here's to another no man
If you want another
Say you need another*

In this new context, “Leave a Trace” now makes sense.

*I know I need to feel released
Take care to tell it just how as it was
Take care to tell on me for the cause
I know I need to feel released
Take care to bury all that you can
Take care to leave a trace of a man.*

Like “Never Ending Circles”, it’s saying, “No more ruminating. No more saying ‘please stay’. No more ‘Never Ending Circles’.” It’s saying goodbye once and for all so the narrator can get on with life.

“Keep You on My Side” doesn’t really want to keep the love interest “on my side.” It merely states that the love interest isn’t being lied to:

*We bide our time, stay afloat
Keepin’ the dying light exposed
I never asked to know, never lied
So I could keep you on my side*

“Make Them Gold” may well be **CHVRCHES** most upbeat song yet.

*We are made of our longest days
We are falling but not alone
We will take the best parts of ourselves
And make them gold*

*We are made of our smallest thoughts
We are breathing and letting go*

| We will take the best parts of ourselves
And make them gold.

The album keeps up the topnotch quality from there with “Clearest Blue” (is it me, or does the break on “Clearest Blue” sound just like the main riff in Depeche Mode’s “Just Can’t Get Enough?”); another great vocal turn by Martin Doherty on “High Enough to Carry You Over” which, like *Bones*’ “Under the Tide”, is one of the standout tracks here; the muscular, uptempo, and radio-ready “Empty Threat”; the slower “Down Side of Me”; an angry “Playing Dead”; the positive disco boom/chick beat and beautiful kiss off of “Bury It”; before coming to a soft landing with “Afterglow” which comes off more as a closing prayer than song.

Indeed, after listening to *Every Open Eye*, you’ll likely be feeling the afterglow. I expect it to be on many top ten lists at year’s end [it’s in my top five], and to one day be considered a classic, remaining so as long as humans keep dancing on this spinning ball.