

REVIEWS

ATOMS FOR PEACE

Amok

[XL]

When Thom Yorke needed musicians to back him on a 2009 solo tour, the Radiohead frontman laid the foundation for one of the more puzzling supergroups in recent memory. Among those he enlisted was Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea, a perpetually shirtless slap-and-pop funkateer whose people-pleasing main band couldn't differ more from Yorke's. The other members—producer Nigel Godrich (Radiohead, Paul McCartney), drummer Joey Waronker (Beck, R.E.M., Elliott Smith) and percussionist Mauro Refosco—made more sense, but fans were left to wonder what the quintet would come up with. Perhaps not surprisingly, *Amok*, the product of a three-day jam session, shares much in common with *The Eraser*, the Yorke disc that brought the gang together. The sound is antsy, airy electronic art-rock—a blend of brittle drumbeats, rattling percussion, restrained bass, creeping synths and Yorke's yawning vocals. The singer has said he wanted to make a dance record, and if those water-drop noises on “Ingenué” aren't exactly sexy, the song has a cyborg sensuality that suggests rock's ultimate intellectual grump is fixing to get his freak on.



On “Stuck Together Pieces”—perhaps a meta-comment on the band itself—Flea shucks off his lab coat and lays down the disc's slinkiest bass line. “Go back to what you came from / Go back to what you know,” Yorke sings. In time, he and the others will do just that, and when they do, they'll be able to look back with pride. Better than mere curio, *Amok* is a grower with grooves worth revisiting. —Kenneth Partridge

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