

Portico Quartet

Portico Quartet

Mercury nominated East Londoners release their third, self-titled, album.

Real World Records. Release date: 30 January 2012

Portico Quartet still sound like nothing you ever heard before. The Mercury nominated East London based outfit's unique music has expanded to embrace new sonic territories. Drawing on the inspiration of electronica, ambient, classical and dance music as they take their strange, beautiful, cinematic, future music to exciting new vistas where the inspiration of Burial, Mount Kimbie and Flying Lotus rubs shoulders with the textures of Arve Henriksen and Bon Iver and echoes of Steve Reich and Max Richter. But all underpinned by a shared joy in collective music making as the band push their inimitable music into the future.

It's a change that was brewing for some time. As anyone who saw Portico Quartet live throughout 2010 knew, the band had added a heady brew of live samples and loops to their arsenal, exploring a harder-edged sound that brought a more contemporary edge to their previously wholly acoustic music. It was a metamorphosis that was accelerated when the band's original hang player, Nick Mulvey, left to explore his own musical muse earlier this year and the remaining members drummer **Duncan Bellamy**, bassist **Milo Fitzpatrick** and saxophonist **Jack Wyllie** started exploring the possibilities of sampling the hang and triggering it's sounds from electronic pads, opening up a whole new way of utilising the instrument's unique sound. It accelerated further when they invited keyboard player, and now hang player, **Keir Vine** (an old friend of Milo's from Goldsmith's University) to come on board. Keir who brings his own unconventional keyboard methods and love of synth music to the band has also developed his own take on the hang style pioneered by Mulvey and his erstwhile band mates. But it is Keir's keyboard playing (a sound Portico Quartet had always wanted to use) that has been instrumental in allowing the band to explore a new sonic world, as has drummer Duncan Bellamy's shift to playing a hybrid electronic/acoustic drum set-up and his and his band mates organic use of live sampling and loops alongside their more traditional instruments.

Produced by the band themselves and brilliantly engineered by **Greg Freeman** at the Fish Market studios and Real World, Portico Quartet's eponymous third album is the sound of a band that refuses to stand still. But there are no shortcuts here, the music is played live, not pre-recorded, and the hard won collective empathy that is at the heart of their sound remains their primary touchstone. Full of mystery and drama Portico Quartet still take the listener on an unparalleled journey but where their previous album *Isla* was the sound of a band looking inwards, Portico Quartet find the band looking defiantly into the future.

Portico Quartet: About the music.

Portico Quartet opens with **Window Seat**, a cinematic tune that conjures the idea of a train journey, the bands favoured way to tour Europe, watching the world race by as the speeding images allow your thoughts to unravel. It's the perfect album opener, introducing the band's new sound and running seamlessly to **Ruins**, an upbeat head nodder that features the hang both live and sampled. Jack throws in some wailing saxophone choruses to release the tension. **Spinner** comes in hard and heavy, featuring a disorientating time signature it is the first tune the band wrote that mixes, Isla's melodic style with the new electronic pounding drum rhythms and driving bass. The swirling keyboard section especially sums of the title. **Rubidium** was born from Portico Quartet's desire to revisit some of the ideas explored on 'Line' on the previous album, Isla. A rhapsodic, introspective piece that transports the listener to many places, Keir comes into his own here, with a hypnotic hang pattern and Jack electronically manipulates his saxophone to create an eerie new timbre. The track features a 'free' drum solo by Duncan as well as orchestral sheets of strings from Milo's double bass. **Export to Hot Climates**, an enigmatic piano piece performed by Wyllie acts as a still moment at the heart of the album before we meet **Lacker Boo**. A dark, tense, hypnotic motif with a laid back, dance bass-drum drive. One of the first pieces the band wrote after Mulvey left the band, Lacker Boo, features the hang in sampled form with the band changing the pitch from glockenspiel to steel-drum bass-barrel tones and features some brooding, paranoid field recordings with high strings and vocal chords from Duncan to show the light at the end of the tunnel. **4096 Colours** was inspired by a stop off at Cologne train station. The band had half an hour to spare on an interchange and decided to drop into the monstrous Cologne Cathedral. Inside, the gigantic vault of pillars and monuments gives way to Gerhard Richter's explosive stained glass window ('4096 Colours'). With the multi-coloured light spilling onto the floor and the huge, but hushed murmur of voices and foot-shuffle escalating up into the cavernous space results in an effect quite mesmerising for when you are in transit. Grand and euphoric. **City of Glass** is a dance tune at heart. Mixing acoustic and electric drums, with driving bass patterns creates a busy texture for the ethereal, effected saxophone solo to float over. This piece also offers a sense of release at the end of the tune and for the end of the album.

Uniquely for Portico Quartet, the album also features a vocal collaboration, with the East London based Swedish singer, **Cornelia**, someone the band met through their friend Jamie Woon. Cornelia had been working with the likes of Kwes who remixed Citegaze from the band's first album, Knee-Deep In The North Sea, and the band were drawn to her unique voice and songs. Cornelia who opened for the band at a recent London show has also collaborated on Jack and Duncan's Circle Traps project with producer Will Ward and the track **Steepless** which started as a more conventional song, was created live in the studio by the band and Cornelia as singer and band created a powerful new dialogue together that provides one of the albums many stand out moments.