

# ETERNAL BLISS

Silent Whale Becomes A° Dream • MONO • Yndi Halda • Leech • Explosions In The Sky • Mooncake • Oh Hiroshima • madebygrey

A photograph showing the silhouettes of two guitarists playing their instruments against a bright, glowing sun. The sun is positioned in the center of the frame, creating a strong backlight effect. The guitarist in the foreground is on the right, and the one in the background is on the left. The overall mood is serene and atmospheric.

## POST-ROCK

A journey through past and present instrumental music

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# Inspirations

This issue of Eternal Bliss Magazine results from a pilgrimage into the depths of post-rock music. With a broad range of influences and loose structural rules, it is difficult to lift the veil on the genre. Nevertheless, one thing is clear. Post-Rock is all about music. The musical journey, driven by expression and emotion, has been the target since the genre emerged in the early nineties. Since then, post-rock has crystallized into an enchanting gem within the rock genre. Multifaceted and colourful, the term represents myriad efforts to breathe new life into the old rock sound.

These efforts will be illustrated through the genre's history and individual artists and bands. However, since a song is worth 1000 words, curious readers are cordially invited to immerse themselves in this inspirational world of sounds through the tailor-made playlists, which can be found at the end of the magazine.

*Michael Bokatius*



# Post-Rock History

## Introduction

After decades of popular rock music, bands more frequently rebelled against the old rock sound in the early nineties. Inspired by the sonic adventurism of The Velvet Underground and the Beatles in the late 1960s, groundbreaking artists arose to change rock music forever. Slowdive's *Just For A Day* (1991) and Cocteau Twins' *Heaven or Las Vegas* (1990) pioneered shoegaze and dream pop. Noise-rock gained popularity due to My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* (1991) and Sonic Youth's *Goo* (1990). Furthermore, Nirvana's legendary record *Nevermind* (1991) and Pearl Jam's *Ten* (1991) fueled the grunge movement's success. However, although these bands experimented in various ways, they mainly focused on old structures of popular rock music, such as the verse-chorus form and the prominent usage of vocals. The biggest changes affected content, not the structure itself.

At that time, the term "post-rock" was already sparsely floating around. For example, writer Christopher Porterfield wrote in a *Time* cover story that the Beatles were "leading an evolution in which the best of current post-rock sounds are becoming something that pop music has never been before: an art form". However, its modern meaning was established by British journalist and music critic Simon Reynolds. He used the term in the March 1994 issue of *Mojo* magazine, reviewing Bark Psychosis' album *Hex*. He further elaborated the concept in the May 1994 issue of *The Wire*, stating artists like Seefeel and Disco Inferno were "using rock instrumentation for non-rock purposes, using guitars as facilitators of timbre and textures rather than riffs and power chords". Since then, post-rock has been used to describe bands of a broad spectrum of styles and characteristics.

## Characteristics

Within the indie, underground, Britpop and New Wave movement of the 80s and early 90s, post-rock emerged as a counter-reaction against mainstream rock music. More than other bands, some were united by the perception that rock & roll had lost its capacity for actual rebellion and would never break away from tired formulas. For example, Neil Halstead and Rachel Goswell, members of the shoegaze band Slowdive, stated in their March 2017 interview with *The Guardian*: "It [britpop] was very laddy... [shoegaze] wasn't necessarily about

rock posturing. It wasn't foot-on-the-monitor stuff; it wasn't macho stuff." This mentality was shared by many post-rock acts of the time. Thus, they subverted many elements affiliated with the old tradition. It was music for the sake of music instead of popularity. To direct the attention more towards their music, several bands employed film projectors, playing along with their performances, shifting the attention towards post-modern ideals in literature and art.

The division of the term "post-rock" is a clue for a better understanding of its meaning. The "rock" part resembles the predominantly classic rock instrumentation with guitar, bass and drums. Whereas the "post" part serves as an umbrella term and unites diverse musical sources and influences, like ambient, electronica, dub, and jazz, as well as experimental guitar sounds. An essential predecessor of post-rock is the progressive rock movement of the 1960s, where psychedelic bands took a new approach to old ideas and the fusion of different styles. Another influence is the otherworldly sound of space-rock, especially its reverb-heavy guitars and synthesizers. Early post-rock groups were also often strongly influenced by the "Dusseldorfian" krautrock artists of the 1970s like Neu!, Kraftwerk, and Can, particularly borrowing elements of the characteristic krautrock rhythm called "motorik" and the usage of electronic hardware like samplers and synthesizers.<sup>[1]</sup> Particularly the use of electronic elements is an essential part of post-rock today.

The expressive power and endless possibilities of soundscapes created with orchestral or chamber instruments considerably impact post-rock. Bands such as Godspeed You! Black Emperor or World's Ends Girlfriend incorporate chamber and baroque music into their work. The concept of music that sounds like a movie soundtrack is also often used. An example would be *Set Fire To Flames*. Although most bands only use separate parts or sections of the orchestral arsenal, like the piano, strings or brass, some, for instance, MONO, desire the full power of more extensive orchestral arrangements. Drawing inspiration from classical minimalism pioneers like Philip Glass, Brian Eno, and Steve Reich, many post-rock compositions contain a broad range of dynamics and repetition of musical motifs and subtle changes.<sup>[1]</sup> These characteristics often result in long songs above ten or even twenty minutes, containing extended build-ups in timbre, dynamics and texture.<sup>[2]</sup>



Photos: Sigur Rós; Darius; Russian Circles; 65daysofstatic

Since post-rock is very diverse, it features a broad spectrum of sounds. Nevertheless, bands share some characteristics. For example, bands use tremolo picking combined with distortion, delay and reverb effects, and layering of guitar tracks to create a “wall of noise”. This rich soundscape can be aggressive and razor-sharp or warm and fuzzy. Generally, picking guitar strings is more common than playing power chords since developing a more open texture is more accessible that way. Drums often play a marching-type rhythm and go full-blast at the peak of crescendos. The overall sound of drums is usually softer in tone and more open. As mentioned before, samples, synthesizers and a wide range of classical instruments are essential to the sound.

Although most post-rock music is not using vocals, there are not entirely absent. When included, the use is typically non-traditional, in the form of sampled speeches or excerpts from movies. For instance, the band Listener features poetry slam-like speeches in their music. Furthermore, vocals are used as purely instrumental stylistic tools, many times soft or droning and typically infrequent or present in irregular intervals. The Icelandic band Sigur Rós is known for their unique fabricated language called “Hopelandic”, which they describe as “a form of gibberish vocals that fits the music and acts as another instrument”.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Early Stages

Described as “arguably the first post-rock group” by the New Musical Express, British group Public Image Ltd were pioneers of the genre.<sup>[4]</sup> In 1978 their bassist Jah Wobble declared:<sup>[5]</sup>

**“rock is obsolete”.**

In the following year, they released their record *Metal Box*, which included aspects of dub and Krautrock. This Heat’s second album, *Deceit* (1981), is also considered a cornerstone of the post-rock, inspiring acts like Slint, Swans and Stereolab.

Post-rock’s more prominent musical foundation crystallised in 1991, with the release of two very different records. On the one hand, Talk Talk’s *Laughing Stock* abandoned art-rock, synth-pop and new wave, favouring the mixture of jazz and ambient. On the other hand, Slint’s *Spiderland* left post-hardcore, combining extreme volume shifts with venturesome structures and poetry. *Spiderland* was later rated “flawless” by legendary producer Steve Albini.<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, inspired by Talk Talk, ambient experiments of Bark Psychosis resulted in their

album *Hex*, released in 1994. Those three albums would influence many future post-rock bands and are considered landmarks of the genre.

Inspired by their predecessors, bands like Cul de Sac, Tortoise, Labradford, Bowery Electric and Stars of the Lid initiated an American post-rock movement in the early nineties. In 1996 the second Tortoise LP *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* made the band a post-rock icon and solidified the usage of the term post-rock into a recognisable trend. Produced by drummer John McEntire, this album combined free jazz, noise rock, electronic minimalism, dub and Krautrock.<sup>[7]</sup> As a result, it became known as the most accessible post-rock album of the era.

After 1994, many bands began to record music inspired by the “Tortoise-sound”.<sup>[8]</sup> Post-rock evolved from a term to describe English bands, like Stereolab, Laika, Seefeel, Bark Psychosis, Moonshake or Disco Inferno, to represent various instrumental bands worldwide.

## Golden Era

In the late 1990s, the term post-rock was frequently used, and many pioneer bands had found their sound. However, with the appearance of new bands and more profound influences from other genres, post-rock became more diversified than ever. Dirty Three, Rachel’s, Godspeed You! Black Emperor!, Sigur Rós, Mogwai, June of ‘44, Trans Am, Labradford and Flying Saucer Attack are only a selection of the new wave.

In Chicago producers, John McEntire of Tortoise and Jim O’Rourke of Brise-Glace and Gastr del Sol produced for a group of post-rock artists. In Montreal, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Silver Mt. Zion, Do Make Say Think and Set Fire to Flames gained popularity. They recorded on Constellation Records and Alien 8, which grew into notable post-rock labels. As a result, Montreal evolved into one of the best post-rock, experimental and avant-garde music scenes.<sup>[7]</sup>

With the turn of the millennium, major post-rock landmarks peaked. Sigur Rós, with the release of *Ágætis byrjun* (1999) and *Takk...* (2005), became one of the most well-known post-rock bands of the 2000s. Godspeed You! Black Emperor released *Lift Your Skinny Fists Like Antennas to Heaven* in 2000. This record is one of the essential albums in post-rock history. Set Fire To Flames *Sings Reign Bebuilder* (2001) and The Appleseed Cast’s record *Mare Vitalis* (2000) are also considered landmarks. Furthermore, Mogwai’s legendary album *Happy Songs for Happy People* was released in 2003.

At the end of the decade, many critics used post-rock to classify a diverse group of artists. However, ironically, with the turn of the millennium, the term had started to fall out of favour. Previously coined as a term for experimental and innovative music, post-rock

had acquired a reputation for predictable and invariable ideas, mainly because the adventurous fusions of genres and sounds stagnated. As a result, many critics believed that the genre had lost the ability to develop original ideas.

The topic became increasingly controversial, and many critics and bands condemned the use of the term. For instance, Mogwai and Cul de Sac refused the label. Nevertheless, more bands than ever arose and solidified post-rock as a genre.



Alex Henry Foster at the Rockefest pour la santé mentale, in August 2015

## Mainstream

In the 2000s, the term’s meaning had changed. The original idea of experimentation and pushing new boundaries had less importance than using and interpreting the established formula. As a result, many artists refined their sound, and music increased in detail and beauty.

With great devotion, bands such as Explosions in the Sky, 65daysofstatic, This Will Destroy You, Yndi Halda, Jakop and MONO reinterpreted existing ideas. The number of post-rock releases grew into such an immense amount that it would go beyond the scope of this magazine, to name them all. Nevertheless, at this point, a few artists should be named who have influenced the genre in recent years.

In 2015 the Australian band We Lost the Sea released *Departure Songs*. The album showcases everything the genre offers: light and heavy sounds, soft, beautiful melodies and huge crescendos. *Departure Songs* has reached critical acclaim worldwide and is a perfect introduction to the world of post-rock.

Canadian musician and frontman of alternative rock band, Your Favorite Enemies, Alex Henry Foster, released an impressive live performance of his album *Standing Under Bright Lights* (2021). The blend of poetry and shoegaze soundscapes gained Foster outstanding reviews worldwide. The Montreal International Jazz Festival performance is a fresh breeze in the world of post-rock.

After a 30-year journey, thousands of stars shine in the post-rock sky. Of course, some shine brighter than others, and some remain as stellar remnants, but similar to stars in the actual night sky, the emitted light of these stars has a beautiful, timeless attraction.

## Future

Nowadays, one can differentiate between two streams of post-rock. Firstly, bands that produce the classic sound of the new millennium, perfecting the beloved post-rock sound of the last decades. Although these bands are not as post-rock as the term implied initially, many listeners love and enjoy the beautiful, more traditional post-rock sound. Secondly, a group of innovators pushes old boundaries by experimenting and blending post-rock with different genres and ideas. By blending post-rock with metal, acts such as Cult of Luna, Russian Circles, Deftones, Palms and Isis have diversified and grown the post-metal scene. Blackgaze is another derivative form of post-rock, represented by bands such as Lantlôs, Agalloch and Deafheaven.

What is to come? Maybe a shift towards the electronic roots or some unthought blend with new emerging genres. Most importantly, the term “post-rock” does not mean that rock music is dead or that everything after rock music is post-rock. It just was a term to group various artists together, later resulting in a genre that, as rock itself, has borders that the genre can overcome.

# Thirty Years of Post-Rock

The last three decades of post-rock have been an exciting and captivating journey through the rock genre. This timeline shows a selection of notable albums.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1991: Slint – <i>Spiderland</i><br>Talk Talk – <i>Laughing Stock</i>  | 2003: Mogwai – <i>Happy Songs for Happy People</i><br>Explosions In The Sky – <i>The Earth Is Not a Cold Dead Place</i><br>Clann Zú – <i>Rua</i><br>Broken Social Scene – <i>You Forgot It In People</i>                  | 2013: Silent Whale Becomes A° Dream – <i>Canopy</i><br>Caspian – <i>Hymn for the Greatest Generation</i><br>madebygrey – <i>I Have Written a Wicked Book, and Feel Spotless as the Lamb</i><br>Maybeshewill – <i>Not for Want of Trying + 4</i><br>Sea Power – <i>From the Sea to the Land Beyond</i> |
| 1993: Seefeel – <i>Pure, Impure</i>   | 2004: Efterklang – <i>Tripper</i><br>65daysofstatic – <i>The Fall of Math</i>   | 2014: Nordic Giants – <i>Build Seas, Dismantle Suns</i>   |
| 1994: Bark Psychosis – <i>Hex</i><br>Bark Psychosis – <i>Independency</i><br>Tortoise – <i>Tortoise</i><br>Rodan – <i>Rusty</i>   | 2005: Sigur Rós – <i>Takk...</i><br>The Samuel Jackson Five – <i>Easily Misunderstood</i><br>Saxon Shore – <i>The Exquisite Death of Saxon Shore</i><br>The Evpatoria Report – <i>Golevka</i><br>Daturah – <i>Daturah</i> | 2015: April Rain – <i>Leave Me No Light</i><br>Oh Hiroshima – <i>In Silence We Yearn</i><br>We Lost The Sea – <i>Departure Songs</i>  |
| 1995: Cul De Sac – <i>I don't Want To Go To Bed</i><br>Labradford – <i>A Stable Reference</i><br>Bowery Electric – <i>Bowery Electric</i><br>Dirty Three – <i>Dirty Three</i><br>Flying Saucer Attack – <i>Chorus</i> | 2006: Jakob – <i>Solace</i><br>This Will Destroy You – <i>Young Mountain</i><br>Laura – <i>Radio Swan Is Down</i>   | 2016: Sleep Dealer – <i>Shadows of the Past</i><br>JAMBINAI – <i>A Hermitage</i><br>If These Trees Could Talk – <i>The Bones of a Dying World</i><br>Lost in Kiev – <i>Nuit Noire</i>   |
| 1996: Cul De Sac – <i>China Gate</i><br>Tortoise – <i>Millions Now Living Will Never Die</i><br>Disco Inferno – <i>Technicolour</i><br>JUNE OF 44 – <i>Tropics and Meridians</i>                                      | 2007: Explosions In The Sky – <i>All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone</i><br>Yndi Halda – <i>Enjoy Eternal Bliss</i>   | 2017: sleepmakeswaves – <i>Made of Breath Only</i>  |
| 1997: Godspeed You! Black Emperor – <i>F#A# infinity</i><br>Mogwai – <i>Young Team</i><br>Cabrodford – <i>Mi Media Narnija</i><br>Trans Am – <i>Surrender To The Night</i>  | 2008: ef – <i>I Am Responsible</i><br>Mooncake – <i>Lagrange Points</i>   | 2018: There's A Light – <i>A long Lost Silence</i><br>Darius - <i>Clôture</i>   |
| 1998: Tortoise – <i>TNT</i><br>Leech – <i>Soundtrack To An Individual Emotion Picture Mindmovie</i>   | 2009: MONO – <i>Hymn to the Immortal Wind</i><br>Do Make Say Think – <i>Other Truths</i><br>Jeniferever – <i>Spring Tides</i>   | 2019: Her Name Is Calla – <i>Animal Choir</i>   |
| 1999: Do Make Say Think - <i>Do Make Say Think</i><br>Rachel's – <i>Selenography</i><br>Sigur Rós – <i>Ágætis byrjun</i><br>Mogwai – <i>Come on die Young</i>   | 2010: Her Name is Calla – <i>The Quiet Lamb</i><br>Unknown Connection Failure – <i>Arms to Work Legs to Run</i><br>Listener – <i>Wooden Heart</i>   | 2020: pg.lost – <i>Oscillate</i>  |
| 2000: Godspeed You! Black Emperor – <i>Lift Your Skinny Fists Like Antennas to Heaven</i><br>Pele – <i>The Nudes</i><br>The Appleseed Cast – <i>Mare Vitalis</i>  | 2011: God Is An Astronaut – <i>All is Violent, All is Bright</i>  | 2021: Alex Henry Forter – <i>Standing Under Bright Lights</i>   |
| 2001: Set Fire To Flames – <i>Sings Reign Bebuilder</i><br>Swans – <i>Soundtracks For The Blind</i>   | 2012: Leech – <i>If We Get There One Day, Would You Please Open The Gates?</i><br>Wang Wen – <i>0.7</i><br>MONO – <i>For My Parents</i>   |   |
| 2002: Murder By Death – <i>Like the Exorcist, but More Breakdancing</i><br>MONO – <i>One Step More and You Die</i><br>Gregor Samsa – <i>Gregor Samsa</i>  |   |   |



Mogwai at the Primavera Sound, in May 2011

## Vocabulary

### Crescendocore

An umbrella term for a wide variety of musical genres. The genres' connecting factor is the combination of significant dynamic changes and long tension/release characteristics.

### Shoegaze

Emerged from rock in the 80s, Shoegaze features loud reverberated and distorted guitars and dreamy, distant vocals. The performers staring at the pedalboard, which looked like gazing at their shoes, coined the term.

### Tremolo Picking

Also known as alternate picking, tremolo picking is a guitar-playing technique where downward and upward strokes are alternated very fast.



# MONO

## Hymn to the Immortal Wind

MONO is an instrumental rock band formed in Tokyo, Japan, in 1999. The group consists of lead guitarist Takaakira “Taka” Goto, rhythm guitarist Hideki “Yoda” Suematsu, bassist Tamaki Kunishi and drummer Dahm Majuri Cipolla. Until 2017 Yasunori Takada was the drummer of the group. In addition to their primary instruments, the members play glockenspiel and piano.

Since 2001 the band has released eleven studio albums. The band’s long-time friend Steve Albini worked on many of them. Albini is a legendary recording engineer, producer, and advocate of analogue tape recording. Hence, the band always plays live in the studio, capturing their raw emotion and style. Albini was also involved in early post-rock recordings of Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Slint and Don Caballero. Temporary Residence Limited and Pelagic Records have released

MONOs work. *Hymn to the Immortal Wind* (2009) is just one example of MONOs great album releases in the past decades. Critics and fans especially value MONOs live performances. Shows are intense, emotional, and versatile in dynamics and playing and unleash the sheer power of post-rock. As one of Japan’s most internationally successful bands, their annual world tour consists of over 140 shows in dozens of countries.

MONO has perfected the quiet-loud-dynamic formula and enhanced it within their instrumental rock setting. Inspired by the early work of Mogwai, My Bloody Valentine, and Sonic Youth, elements of experimental rock and shoegaze are adapted. Thus, the guitar sound of Taka and Yoda features heavy usage of reverb, delay, fuzz and distortion effects. Alongside the guitars, strings are an essential element of their musical palette.

The string arrangements expand the sound, inspired by romantic classical music and minimalism, notably Ludwig van Beethoven and Ennio Morricone.

MONOs music is not in a rush to go somewhere. It lives from slow, repetitive atmospheric build-ups. The length is a catalyst for the impact of the overall contrast of their music. Dark and bright, joyous and sorrow, sometimes all at once, contrast is the heart of MONOs sound. The dual guitar playing of Taka and Yoda touchingly reflects this duality of emotions.

Quiet sections consist of sublime and beautiful melodies which always find their way into the listener’s heart. Usually, the initial melody inflames into an ever-growing, lush, vibrant repetitive motif. Loud sections burst wave after wave of noise, fuzz and screaming feedback, creating a powerful, raw and intense wall of sound. Everything flares up into an indistinguishable construct of physical power and emotional outburst. Especially when orchestral strings join the guitars, the soundscape opens up into a grandeur of unparalleled stirring beauty.

MONO are post-rock titans, guarding the sacred formula and crescendocore with regular releases. As a result, the listening experience is like a journey to the top of the mountains. Endlessly soaring, beautiful fields and cascades unfold. At the heights of the mountains, one can grasp the pure natural force of winds and weather, the expanse of the landscape and the literal peak of our world. Not by chance did British New Musical Express once state, “this is music for the Gods”.

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### Favourites

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**Album:** For My Parents

**Track:** Nostalgia

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# Yndi Halda

## Enjoy Eternal Bliss

Photo: Aubrey Simpson

Originating from Kent, England, Yndi Halda is a post-rock group with a folk touch. “Yndi Halda” is Old Norse for “Enjoy Eternal Bliss”. The group features James Vella (vocals and guitars), Jack Lambert (guitars), Daniel Neal (violin), Oliver Newton (drums, vocals), Simon Hampshire (bass, vocals), as well as Philip Self (keyboards, vocals). Their debut EP, *Enjoy Eternal Bliss*, was self-released in 2006 and re-released with an additional track in 2007 after the band signed a contract with the European label Big Scary Monsters and US imprint Burnt Toast Vinyl. They released *Under Summer* nine years later, an album more focused on their folk side, songwriting and vocals than its mostly instrumental predecessor.

Yndi Halda’s music combines beautiful melodies with huge crescendos into long compositions, which each tell a powerful and bittersweet story. Daniel’s violin elevates the band’s classical instrumentation with sweet and heart-breaking themes. Using the classic post-rock formula of slow and quiet beginnings that evolve into immense crescendos driven by strumming guitars, Yndi Halda, compared to other traditional post-rock groups, constructs a more warm, upbeat, and melancholic soundscape.

The four-track EP *Enjoy Eternal Bliss* brings the listener an hour of literal bliss and joyousness combined with sentimentality. Listening feels like riding an emotional rollercoaster into the sunset.

“Dash and Blast” starts with intimate swells, which then evolve into the first theme of the song. It feels like a child taking its first steps, accompanied by dragging drums and led by violin and guitars. Supported by all instruments, it then accelerates into the first crescendo outbreak. The second half begins slow, with a more joyous and defined melody seemingly taking the same path as the first. Only to then be interrupted by a beautiful bridge with a clarinet and a calming drumbeat. Finally, one can hear the voices of the band belting in a lovely warm heart-breaking mass.

With repeatedly stacked violin layers, “We Flood Empty Lakes” has a slow and stable beginning. It then emerges into a much sweeter and more dramatic theme than its predecessor. However, the structure remains the same.

In “A Song For Starlit Beaches”, Yndi Halda includes their folk inspirations by featuring Banjo and Piano in an ever-growing melancholic violin melody that climaxes alive, only to return to calm violin again. The end is set in motion by soft vocals, which slowly fade out escorted by the violin.

With “Illuminate My Heart, My Darling!” the band finishes strong. The record’s final track almost seems violent compared to his prior tracks. The mixture of light melodies, heavier riffs, fast tempo changes, and tremolo-picking evokes raw emotion. Everything feels alive and like it is about to blossom. By listening carefully, one might recognize the clarinet again, maybe to tell that the story is about to end. After an epic final crescendo, the song ends, and the bittersweet daydream of an album ends.

Although *Enjoy Eternal Bliss* might be inspired by the early mainstays of post-rock, Yndi Halda put a beautiful spin on the old formula. Overall, the record is the perfect framework to capture moments and let the fire of this album ignite these moments. So if you give this excellent album some time and emotions, it will reward you with some beautiful memories.

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### — Favourites —

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**Album:** Enjoy Eternal Bliss

**Track:** Dash and Blast

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# Leech

## If We Get There One Day, Would You Please Open The Gates?

Founded in Oftringen, Swiss, in 1995, Leech is an experimental instrumental-rock band. The group includes the guitarists Marcel and Urs Meyer, drummer Serge Olar, Tobias Schläfli on piano and synthesizer, and Dave Hofmann on bass. After releasing albums in the late nineties, the band went on a six-year hiatus. However, they have released more albums and some EPs since. Especially noteworthy are *If We Get There One Day, Would You Please Open The Gates?* (2012) and *For Better Or For Worse* (2018).

An essential part of the instrumental groups sound is electronic. Synth-driven motives and arpeggios often share characteristics of krautrock and various genres of

electronic music. Yet, each song follows a unique structure, generating an engaging journey through different soundscapes.

Leech has fewer crescendocore and more space-rock attributes compared to other post-rock bands. Especially the soundscapes, created with synthesizers and ambient guitars, sound fantastic and space-rock influenced. In contrast to floating atmospheres, the band often puts heavy stoner-guitar riffs. The rich guitar sound adapts elements from progressive rock and occasionally post-metal. But their music never sounds too extreme. Instead, it is always more atmospheric and ambient. Their mixture of open ambient atmospheres and heav-

ier stomping rhythm sections forms epic soundscapes filled with optimism. Songs emit an infinite and majestic drive.

The timeless and otherworldly aura places Leech somewhere between space- and post-rock, whereby one does not exclude the other. Leech's unique sound shares similarities with bands like Red Sparowes and Mogwai. Overall, the group is a master of generating musical emotion through songwriting. Songs are always rhythmic, bombastic, and strangely casual. They suggest that whatever is happening at this very moment is important—the perfect soundtrack for determination.

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### Favourites

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**Album:** For Better Or For Worse

**Track:** Arrete

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Photo: Silvio Zeder



# Oh Hiroshima

## In Silence We Yearn

Hailing from Kristinehamn, Sweden, Oh Hiroshima was founded in 2007 by guitarist Leif Eliasson and guitarist and vocalist Jakob Hemström. Early experiments of the two high school friends resulted in the release of two EPs. *Empty Places Full of Memories* in 2009 and *Tomorrow* in 2010. They later were joined by bassist Simon Axelsson and drummer Oskar Nilsson. Together they released their debut album *Resistance Is Futile*, in 2011 and their second album, *In Silence We Yearn*, in 2015. They got signed by the Austrian record label Napalm Records three years later.

The band is in constant change. In 2018 Eliasson and later in 2021, Axelsson left the group. Thus, their sound and musical ideas transformed over time. The core idea of Oh Hiroshima is experimenting and incorporating influences from different genres. *In Silence We Yearn* has more pop and indie influences, combining catchy riffs, vocals and melodic hooks. *Oscillation* (2019) and *Myriad* (2022) have an increasingly metal and epic atmosphere, similar to Swedish bands like pg.lost or Cult of Luna.

Despite their constantly evolving musical palette, the instrumentation and the signature usage of vocals remain. Hemström's vocals are unique since they do not consume all the space and allow the instrumental ideas to shine through, creating an excellent feeling of space. Furthermore, the distinctive expression of the cello often surpasses the vocals. Overdrive, reverb and delay effect pedals create beautiful, dreamy and airy textures, which get pretty gritty and dirty in heavy sections. Adding more organic sounds to their palette, the fourth album, *Myriad*, features trumpets and trombones.

### — Favourites —

**Album:** *In Silence We Yearn*

**Track:** *Holding Rivers*

Their album *In Silence We Yearn* has been a favourite of many fans.

The opening track, “Ellipse”, hooks the listener right in. Tremolo picking and constant chord strumming joined by Jakob’s vocals form a captivating opening. After the drums kick in, the lyrics sink into an immense soundscape filled with optimism and vitality.

With a more determined sound, “Mirage” begins with a beating drum rhythm and grants itself more time to develop. But in the end, it is less convincing than its predecessor.

Crashing with gritty waves of noise and heavy riffs, “Ruach” is the refreshing antipole of the sweet sound of previous tracks. Structurally more repetitive and less focused on crescendos, it emits a destructive dominant force, comparable with pieces of *Russian Circles*.

“Holding Rivers” is one of the most brilliant stars on the record. Every transition feels like sun rays breaking through clouds after a thunderstorm. Then, halfway through, it stands still for a moment, reflecting and gathering power to proceed confidently till the end. Meanwhile, the lyrics “Chances in a row” reflect the optimistic character of the song.

After the exciting crescendo of the previous track, “Aria” starts much calmer with a heartfelt and raw tone. The overall sound is natural and folkish, similar to groups like Yndi Halda or Her Name Is Calla. The song swells into its apex with stamping walls of sound and powerful cello lines.

“Drones” starts with a melancholic guitar riff and becomes increasingly heavier. It ends with a slowly decaying wall of noise. It is like a retrospective to the previous tracks combining sweet and gorgeous sounds with hefty and gritty headbang-worthy riffs.

The overall feeling of *In Silence We Yearn* is optimistic and empowering. Heavy sections provide the needed contrast to highlight the beauty of “Ellipse” and “Holding Rivers”, making them essential post-rock tracks. Hemström’s vocals make the band stand out from other groups. And although they are mostly following the old formula, it is hard to deny the overall beauty of the record.



## **About Eternal Bliss Magazine**

Everything about rock music. Eternal Bliss Magazine is published annually focusing on a different genre, giving readers an insight into music history and specific bands. The magazine is named after the album *Enjoy Eternal Bliss* by English post-rock band Yndi Halda.

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