



Music Review: The Portraits - *Timescape*

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Perversely, the very fact that I have struggled to find the first sentence to this review has, in fact, supplied the first sentence. The reason it has been such a dilemma is that I have been challenged by the music of a folk-pop duo called [The Portraits](#) to try and put their album *Timescape* into words.

The Portraits create music that radiates such a warm glow that words look dull and lifeless in comparison. When the duo of Galway born singer/guitarist Lorraine Reilly and singer/keyboard player Jeremy Millington, from Bristol, met they were both teaching on the Isle of Wight, just off the south coast of England.

Herein lies the key to their eventual creation of The Portraits. Whilst Jeremy taught music, Lorraine taught art. It is this intoxicating blend of sound and imagery that drives their performances. When the publicity material arrived, sent from the warm part of France to the cold bit where I live, it was headlined 'Music For Art's Sake'. Now that would have made a far better opening sentence.

They began to write together and before long took their music out into the world. Turning away from their day jobs they uprooted and moved to Western France. By 2006 they released their first album *Kin* before setting off again, this time in the direction of Africa, the influence of which can still be faintly detected.

At the end of 2008 they released *Timescape*. Their sound has been labeled as 'a warm acoustic pop breeze', and has encouraged comparisons to The Beautiful South among other reviewers. For me at least, any artist that lists Cat Stevens up there at the top of their influences on their [MySpace page](#) deserve to be heard. Having said that there is a lot more to the individual identity of The Portraits.

Timescape is a warm glow of Anglo-Irish folk-pop, harmony, and poetry, which is based upon life experiences. Lyrically they craft intelligent, observational songs, ranging from melancholic to uplifting. They capture the very essence of life, and living to music.

The album opens with the warmth of "Poppy Song" made even richer by the additional colour created by the trumpet of Pete Judge. "Fame" showcases Lorraine's extraordinarily smooth, honeyed vocals to excellent effect. "Autumn" is a beautifully written and performed song of time escaping. Certainly an album highlight.

"Bitter" weaves it's spell through rich acoustic guitar, and smooth harmony whilst addressing the subject of the damage we do to this wonderful planet. "Precious Red" revisits the theme of the passing of time. 'Remember nothing of my fading days, these are not me' sings Jeremy profoundly, delivering a line that will connect with anyone who has experienced someone's passing.

The similarly wise lyrics of the next track take a bitter look at adulthood and the conflict created looking back at the generation you have left behind as you enter the "Real World". "See Through You" has Lorraine on exceptional form in a luscious production that disguises a dark song of violence and abuse.

"Shield", and the retrospective "Virtual" both feature the impressive vocals of Jeremy. The dreamy "Windfall," complete with rich harmony, ends a highly satisfying, thought provoking journey through the eyes of its creators.

Timescape is further enriched by the additional colour of cellos, ethnic flutes, a touch of African percussion, lovely splashes of trumpet, and those smooth harmonies. Superbly crafted song writing, compelling lyrics, and excellent musicianship complete the effect.

The Portraits are busy putting together a series of concerts to promote *Timescape*. They have taken the brave decision to reject the idea of setting a price for the album.

Jeremy explains on their [website](#), "people can take the album for whatever amount they can afford to give. In these difficult financial times people know what they have and we don't want cost to prohibit the free flow of our sounds". This is a concept that is as refreshing as their music.

Please visit their [website](#) to listen to samples from *Timescape*, read the latest news, and see how their work to raise funds for a school in Mandalay is progressing <http://blogcritics.org/archives/2009/03/04/090244.php>