

TOSCA – „No Hassle“
IK7240 CD
VÖ: 17.04.2009

Slow down. Relax. Take a deep breath. Steal back an hour from your busy life. This really is worth your full attention. Tosca, the Viennese masters of deluxe soundscapes and sensual rhythms, are back with their most magical and mesmerising album yet. It's called No Hassle.

Multi-instrumentalists Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber have been friends since their Vienna schooldays, when they founded their first experimental band, Dehli 9. Richard later became half of the globally acclaimed DJ-producer duo Kruder and Dorfmeister, while Rupert composed piano music, soundart installations and acoustic networks. But the duo rediscovered their musical chemistry again with their Tosca debut, the 1994 12" Chocolate Elvis. A string of highly praised albums and remix collections followed.

No Hassle is Tosca's fifth studio album, and their most beautiful musical statement so far. A luxurious tapestry of analogue and digital sounds, submerged samples and live instruments, it evolves and expands into an hour-long ambient symphony. The title reflects not only the duo's laidback approach to making music but their whole philosophy of life. "It's our personal reaction to everything," says Richard. "To all things that are pressuring you from outside, or internally, from every angle. It's sort of the ideal position to achieve, and it's the same idea behind the music: to achieve an hour where you feel hassle free."

No Hassle is all about contemplation and concentration. While recent Tosca releases like J.A.C. (2005) and the remix collection Souvenirs (2006) were a move towards classic song structures and club-friendly grooves, their latest is a much more introspective journey into inner space. It was conceived as a single seamless sea of sound, deeply layered with liquid rhythms and tidal melodies. Warm and enveloping, each leisurely track flows gently into the next, a musical ocean moving in slow motion. This is an album to plunge deeply into and get lost inside.

"We wanted to make the ultimate one hour of music where you don't feel like you have to skip to the next track," explains Rupert. "This is what we've been working on all these years. An album to invest one hour of your attention and concentration, almost like an audio massage."

In a bold break with Tosca tradition, No Hassle is an almost entirely instrumental album featuring no main vocal tracks. It does contain a few sampled voices among its fluid ambient soundscapes, but nothing that fits a conventional song structure. As the duo explain, this was a deliberate stripping down process. Less is more. "This time we decided not to have any lead vocals," Richard explains, "but just to take some fragments of sounds that we liked. It's a very back-to-basics, instrumental approach. The more we listened to normal vocal recordings, the more we didn't like them. This reduced vocal idea seems to last longer for us."

"There are some vocals on the album, but more as an instrument, not a song thing," says Rupert. "We just wanted to have voices which are not disturbing you, more like a collage than a story. More like a landscape of vocal sounds."

The overall sound of No Hassle draws on classic Tosca ingredients: dub and funk, blues and krautrock, acoustic and electronic, strings and samples, mellow grooves and elegant piano melodies. As usual, the album is a product of collective chemistry, with Richard and Rupert improvising together in their Vienna studio, discovering sounds and layering ideas in a purely intuitive manner. "We love this merging of different things, without a concept, just because it feels right," Richard says.

On this album, Richard and Rupert have taken their music to more intense, meditative depths than ever before. From the dreamlike ambi-rock of Elektra Bregenz to the lush avant-jazz tapestry of No Hassle itself, this is an engrossing musical journey which calms the mind and floods the senses.

The album's stark musical landscape may seem alien and exotic in places, but there are a few familiar signposts along the way. The parched guitar twangs on the melting sci-fi symphony My First and the heat-haze desert blues Joe Si Ha contain ghostly traces of broken blues guitars. The perfumed magic carpet ride Elitsa and the spooky cinematic ripples of Rosa recall psychedelic music at it's most cosmic. And the beatific female voice drifting through Birthday has all the hypnotic power of the sun rising over the ocean.

No Hassle has also brought new energy and focus to Tosca's live performances. Richard and Rupert premiered the album at the Ars Electronica festival in Linz last September, at the Linzer Dom cathedral, accompanied by flickering candles and dazzling video graphics. Captured on the bonus live CD that accompanies the studio album, this stunning performance laid the blueprint for future shows - immersive, absorbing, sound-and-vision spectacles in prestigious venues around the world.

"We are happy to go away from festivals and parties to these dedicated locations," Richard explains. "This opens up so many possibilities for us, because in every country you find so many ancient buildings, especially churches. You can use the church as an additional player somehow, it has such a special atmosphere. This feels 10 times deeper than any club situation we used to do. I think this is the right way for us now."

Slow down. Relax. Take a break from the pressures of life. The most soothing and sublime album of 2009 has arrived. No contest. No kidding. No Hassle.

by Stephen Dalton

Track listing:

- 1 my first
- 2 elitsa
- 3 springer
- 4 birthday
- 5 oysters in may
- 6 joe si ha
- 7 elektra bregenz
- 8 fondue
- 9 rosa
- 10 raymondo
- 11 mrs.bongo
- 12 no hassle

<http://www.g-stoned.com/artists/tosca>

<http://www.myspace.com/tosca7>

<http://www.tosca-nohassle.com>

