

# Radiohead's latest: dark deconstruction

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THE GAMECOCK

## ALBUM REVIEW

### "Amnesiac"

ARTIST: Radiohead

SINGLE: "Pyramid Song"

OVERALL: A dark deconstruction of rock as we know it

☆☆☆☆ of ☆☆☆☆☆

One of the most-anticipated albums of the year, Radiohead's *Amnesiac* follows closely on the heels of the group's October 2000 release, *Kid A*, stylistically and chronologically. All the tracks on *Amnesiac* were recorded at the same time as *Kid A* but "didn't fit" with the sparse, techno-influenced deconstruction of rock of the earlier release.

It's quite true that *Amnesiac* comes from a different place than *Kid A* — and it's a dark place, indeed.

While America was befuddled by *Kid A*'s lack of guitars, drums and all other things that comprise a rock album, which were replaced by drum machines and synthesizers, Europe had seen this kind of thing before. Sounding more like Air than Aphex Twin, Radiohead's latest is a jazz-influenced trip through the dark corners of the mind.

The opener of the album, "Packt like Sardines in a Crushd Tin Box," is reminiscent of *Kid A* with its drum machine-driven beat; however, the trace of jazz is already apparent in the off-beat rhythms in the background that sound like someone beating on a tin can.

"Pyramid Song" is, ironically, the first U.S. single for the album, ironic because it's quite possibly the most terribly beautiful song about death and suicide in a long time. Thom Yorke croons, over a lazy piano, "I jumped in a river, and what do I see? Black-eyed angels swam with me." Here we get the first hint of how the

drums, not drum machines, make the jazzy feel of *Amnesiac* come alive.

"Pulk/pull Revolving Doors" is an unfortunate trip back to *Kid A* with drum beats and electronically warbled vocals. "You and Whose Army?" provides direct contrast to it, providing light guitar and lovely harmonies under Yorke's eerie voice.

The song that "rocks the most" on *Amnesiac* is "I Might Be Wrong." A rolling guitar riff provides the driving force behind this song of self-blame and doubt.

"Knives Out" gives the most sense of an ensemble rock band. The lyrics ("So knives out, catch the mouse, smush his head, put it in your mouth") seem to be combinations of playground songs and horrifying imagery.

A different interpretation of *Kid A*'s "Morning Bell," "Morning Bell *Amnesiac*" has more intelligible lyrics and is a great improvement on its predecessor.

"Dollars and Cents" starts with a slow, steady mixture of bass, strings, drums and vocals and turns into a cacophony of creepy rock bliss. It's followed by an instrumental guitar solo "Hunting Bears."

As if trying to redefine the term "techno" that was given to *Kid A*, "Like Spinning

Plates" buzzes instead of beats.

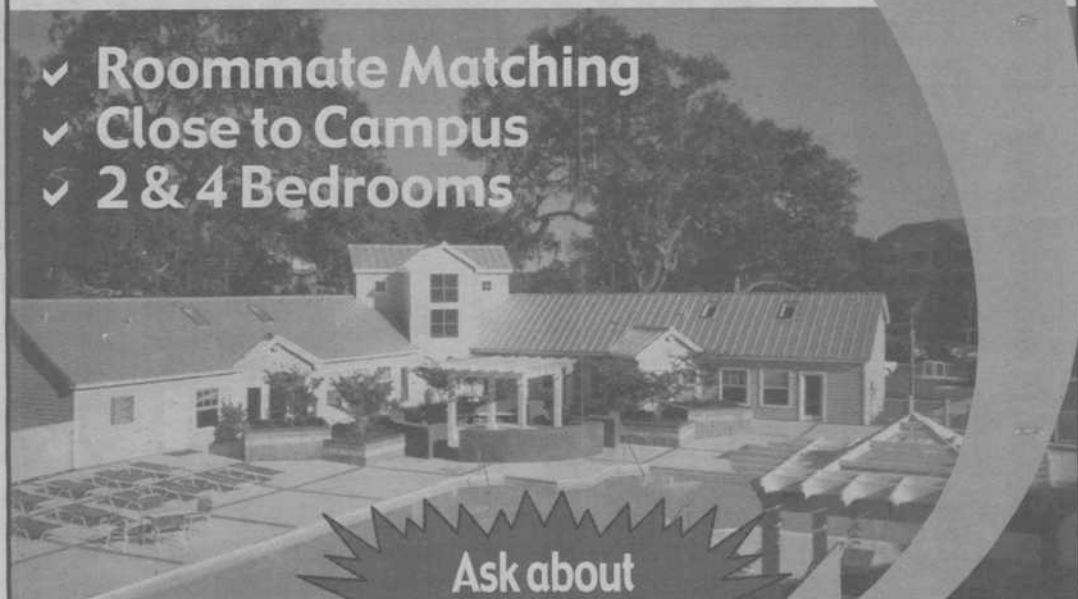
The final piece, "Life in a Glass House," is easily *Amnesiac*'s best song. With help from jazz artist Humphrey Lyttelton, Radiohead has created their own "Eleanor Rigby." The jazz evolution is complete with this track, and so is the listener's long dark road.

On the inside album cover is the inscription, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Vol. II." Radiohead, to the confusion of reporters, claimed their critically acclaimed *OK Computer* was about the fall of the Roman Empire. So is *Amnesiac* really a sister album to *Kid A*, or is it the answer to all the questions provided by *OK Computer*?

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