



Review

## **In Rainbows by Radiohead: A review, a listening trip**

*In Rainbows de Radiohead: una reseña, un viaje de escucha*

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### **Abstract**

*In Rainbows* is the seventh studio album by acclaimed English rock band Radiohead. Released in the year 2007 to positive reviews, it quickly became a fan favorite. One of those fans presents in this review an intimate trip of emotions, connecting each track to a personal experience and her own interpretation of the lyrics, inviting the reader deeper into her essence with each passing line.

**Keywords:** alternative rock, review, track-by-track, music analysis, discography.

### **Resumen**

*In Rainbows* es el séptimo disco de la aclamada banda de rock inglesa Radiohead. Lanzado en el año 2007 recibió

críticas positivas, convirtiéndose rápidamente en un favorito de los fans. Una de ellas, presenta en esta reseña un viaje íntimo de emociones, conectando cada canción a una experiencia personal y ofreciendo su propia interpretación de las letras, invitando al lector cada vez más cerca de su esencia con cada línea que pasa.

**Palabras clave:** rock alternativo, reseña, pista-por-pista, análisis musical, discografía.

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When I was little, I didn't pay attention to what my dad or mom listened to, I just went with the vibe, if Pearl Jam was being played I was just singing gibberish along, if Killswitch Engage was on I would be headbanging my soul out, even if I didn't understand a mere word.

I guess I always had a prejudice against other types of music that my parents didn't like, but as I got older my love for music never faded. Katy Perry was my muse till I got into my angsty teenage years and started listening to depressing music, which included Radiohead. "The Bends" was the first album I listened to intently from them. I didn't like all the songs but overall, I liked it. Some time passed by and "In Rainbows" came on display, and I was there in my shitty room, with purple LED lights, at 2 in the morning looking all groggy and hideous with my dad's headphones plugged to my phone, being half awake but still pushed play.

"In Rainbows" has a very strong central theme: the dynamic between the transient nature of life and our conflicting desire for permanence. Rainbows are beautiful, stunning, ephemeral manifestations. When one appears, we are

captivated, momentarily suspending everything else we're doing, looking at them with childlike wonder, wishing they could last forever. Yet, as the cloudy sky returns, we feel a sense of loss and emptiness.

"In rainbows" explores the temporary nature of things to which we attempt to attach at least a bit of permanence.

First to start, "15 step" is an introduction that throws you off instantly. The rhythmic arrangements blend in such a compelling manner that I find myself trying to filter every sound, voice, and word, but that's really with every song on the album. This song depicts the sensation of being useless and trapped in a cycle of mistakes and disappointment, apparently with no ending.

As the first words of the song say:

'How come I end up where I started?

How come I end up where I belong?'

It makes reference to the fact that no matter what we do, we end up where we first started. This song becomes a frustrating experience where it becomes a realization how useless we can seem to be, feel, and actually be. As I listened to the song it really made me doubt my usefulness. The introspection that occurred in that garbage-lighted room was absolutely enough to scare off a pretentious 30-year-old man who asks you to name five songs from one of the most mainstream bands ever.

Soon enough the ending of the song approached and so it popped up 'Bodysnatchers' which portrays a feeling of your physical consciousness being trapped and not being able to connect to anything. It's an intense song, constantly driving, unrelentingly at the edge of everything, jumping from one peak to another, even aggressive but warm at the same time.

But as the song goes we also relate to the feeling of disconnection, of total alienation to our day-to-day realities, we get used to the same lifestyle of living to the norm, captive and unable to feel anything new, making our way to have meaningless conversations with hundreds of people. In the song, the narrator feels lost.

'You killed sound, removed backbone'

This implies that he's now losing his individuality, he has been stripped away of what makes him, him. He's now normalized.

This is such an anti-conformist song, not solely by the lyrics, but the track is totally different from the ones in the album. 'Bodysnatchers' works on many levels, and the let-it-all-out energy combined with the message of modern frustration, makes it a complete delight.

Moving from such synergic energy of 'Bodysnatchers' to 'Nude' makes it feel as if you are going out of a very loud bar and proceeding to go to bed with crispy sheets, on the cold side of the pillow sinking deeply into the mattress, but its not exactly a pleasant experience but a really intense moment where you feel alone and your body is being massacred by all your past wrongdoings and plain existence.

It's an absolutely beautiful song but with very very depressing lyrics, 'Nude' I interpret it as a dialogue in my head, that voice that is always lying to me, trying to not get me out of my comfort zone.

"Don't get any big ideas  
They're not gonna happen"

I feel them as rejection to try something new, we convince ourselves that there is no need to explore the outside world if we already feel trapped on our own.

This song makes me wanna wail and sob like crazy, not because of the words but just because it's so heavenly.

"Weird fishes/arpeggi" is a beautiful and haunting piece where the narrator stands in depths of great sadness depicting the ocean as his subconsciousness, though a new love appears but it becomes unobtainable. It's a self-sabotage situation where as much as the narrator wants and tries to be with this new apparition, in the bottom of his soul, he knows no matter what happens he will never be a part of it.

"Yeah, everybody leaves (way out)  
If they get the chance (way out)  
And this is my chance (way out)"

It's even as he doesn't want to, as he tries to escape from something that is not even real yet. The fear of commitment haunts him.

As much as people may think "All I Need" is a love song, I believe they couldn't be more incorrect. I listen to it as a creepy and sick depiction of the narrator's fixation on someone, an obsession that is balanced out by the narrator's low self-worth:

"I'm a moth  
Who just wants to share your light"

Even if it was a love song, it would be edgy to even tell someone that THAT song reminds them of someone in a romantic aspect, since they would basically be professing not love but an unhealthy attachment.

Moving on to "Faust Arp" it's almost like a train of thought, where the narrator is maybe stuck in a relationship that he can't get out of. As all the lyrics in the song become repetitive it seems as if it's a cycle without a near end.

"Reckoner" I would say is much more of an instrumental song than any of the other songs on the album where the voice becomes one of the instruments. It's such an appealing addition to the album, in my opinion, the high pitch of Thom Yorke's voice, with the nice soft and warm melodies makes it near perfect.

As well as "House of Cards" still has this radiohead-ism where it's slow and depressing, but oh my god it's about sex, a RADIOHEAD song about sex, but the relationship described it's not exactly a traditional form of a relationship, it is more of an alternative version of it. The repetition of the word "denial" implies that the narrator is running up against some form of conventional guilt concerning that relationship.

Following "House of Cards" there is another song that does not describe affairs or anything like that but the tension between increasing alcoholism or the forging of a relationship.

"Jigsaw Falling into Place" it's a great song, it puts you dancing out in the club, flashing lights all around, shitty speakers with the music all saturated,

techno that could kill a Victorian child, drugs, and poppers, but someone caught your eye:

“You eye each other as you pass  
She looks back, you look back  
Not just once  
Not just twice”

It doesn't become just a casual encounter with someone drunk, it becomes a longing moment when you meet someone for the first time that you instantly have a connection with. It truly feels like a puzzle piece falling into place, no matter where it leads or how badly it ends. But it's over before it even begins, somehow life gets in the way and it all slips away. The loss of it becomes more of a nightmare than a dream and often you do want to wish it away but it feels so right somehow:

“Before you run away from me  
Before you're lost between the notes”

Finally, “Videotape” is a simple piano ballad portraying a dramatic monologue by a dying man recording his last good-byes on soon-to-be-obsolete technology filled with emotion, not so much because the old man is dying, but that he chooses to die separate and alone. As the song progresses all we hear are the mournful piano, bass notes, and a man aware that his last moments are coming to him.

“This is my way of saying goodbye  
Cause I can't do it face-to-face  
So talking to you after it's too late”

He can't bear the idea of saying goodbye to his loved ones so he leaves behind this suicide tape to do so. But having someone to say goodbye to is a big deal when you are feeling this awful. I think that this goes back to the idea of feeling guilty about the act or thoughts of suicide.

I can firmly say that this album is one of my favorite things ever created, not only as a musical construction, but as an artistic spiraling thing, that the deeper you try to go the more you can discover, and it all makes perfect sense,

it all falls into place. For the most part, I would recommend this album to anyone in general, I refuse to be a gatekeeper. I solely wish that people would recognize all the elements to consider within this album, it is absolutely worth listening to.

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