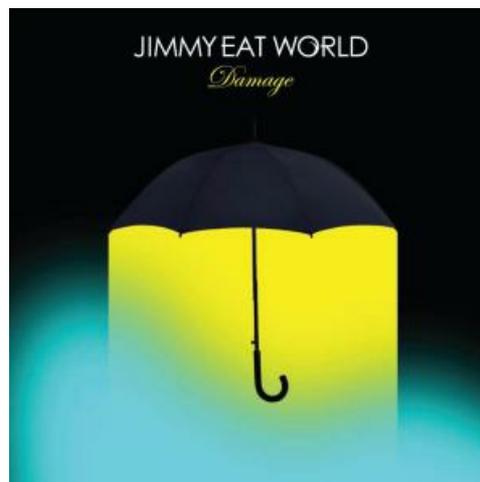


Album Review: Jimmy Eat World – Damage

Jimmy Eat World's 'Damage' speaks of emotional turmoil in a new, stripped down tone; [Katrina Northern](#) reviews

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The eighth studio album by lovable punk troupe Jimmy Eat World, entitled *Damage*, is one of their most stripped back offerings (they tried to avoid any computer editing), but if anything this enhances the trademark raw, emotive power of their sound.

The album begins (the first riff in 'Appreciation') and ends ('You Were Good') with songs in which frontman and lyricist Jim Adkins's vocals and guitar are muffled as if channelled through an old buzzing radio. This is a band going back to basics, rediscovering the power of simplicity in a musical scene where over-production is in vogue. 'Appreciation' stirringly closes with the line 'strange we come to find ourselves / not knowing we're lost', which is an epiphany a lot of bands could do with.

Those looking for the aggressive, cutting riffs of old may be disappointed. Nearly every song is driven by an acoustic guitar, but this does not detract from the more dynamic rock moments. Lead single 'I Will Steal You Back' is trademark Jimmy with its catchy, if unsubtle, heartache-y chorus. It feels like a lapse into the world of teen angst and jealous high school hormones. This sense of nostalgia is present from the off in 'Appreciation' ('There's something I feel that I haven't felt / since I was a kid / hey, you made my heart just break').

The song-writing theme for the album, Adkins has said, was a love that had been complicated and skewed by emotional injury; each song needed to tell a story. Adkins thus restores sacred status to the lyrics as the core of each song, the cathartic starting point, around which the music fits.

The title track encapsulates both the theme and sound of the whole of *Damage*. The chorus perfectly

elucidates the damage and breakdown in communication that often accompanies the failing of a relationship ('are we only damaging the little we have left? / Both of us swimming in the same polluted mess / Are we too damaged now to possibly connect?').

There is both melody and melancholia strewn, cohesively, throughout the album. The band used only one amp for 'Damage', offering a more restrained output than the frantic distortion on earlier albums like *Bleed American*. That sense of urgency that pervaded earlier hits such as 'Sweetness', 'Pain', and even 'The Middle' is toned down and more composed. Yet Adkins still has that pained, emotive quiver in his voice and loves to flick into that anguished higher register of his in tracks like 'Please Say No'.

'You Were Good' is a surprising and reflective piece to close the album. Both it and the penultimate track, 'ByeByeLove', combine to supply a sense of closure. The latter seems to endlessly build and repeat with a similar reaching style to old tracks '23' and 'My Sundown', before finally reaching a wrenching crescendo, perhaps the final severance point. 'You Were Good' then picks up the pieces, delegates the pain to memory - the old radio sound almost works symbolically here - and comes to terms with the break up (Yeah it's sad / but baby here we are / it was good, it was good, it was good).

So it was good. Damage is good. Melancholy, but good. And I have a feeling it will quietly endure as one of Jimmy's most beautiful and composed albums yet.



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