

Music: Disc Reviews

Record Review

Johnny Marr

Boomslang

BY [KEVIN C. MADIGAN](#)

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Johnny Marr is well-equipped to handle the rigors of a solo project. Founder and guitarist of the vastly influential Smiths, he went on to become a sideman for the likes of Chrissie Hynde, The The's Matt Johnson, Bryan Ferry and the notorious Gallagher brothers. Quite an accomplishment, handling all those egos.

When the time came for Marr to get up-front and personal, he recruited for his Healers the well-proven Zak Starkey and the equally impressive Alonsa Bevan (late of Kula Shaker) on drums and bass, respectively. No longer willing to be upstaged, Marr is firmly in control here, writing and producing the entire album.

Boomslang is more about sound than substance. There's plenty of double-tracking and layering. Marr is not the strongest of singers, and he doesn't pretend to be; much of the vocal work is somewhat buried, and many of the lyrics are indecipherable. The first three tracks all sound similar, with a churning intensity that seems aimless. Things start to get interesting on the fourth track, "Need It," which opens with a beguiling harmonica intro, then pounds along furiously before coming to a crashing finish. The best and longest track, "You Are the Magic," will inevitably be remixed and released as a dance single. The instrumental "Headline" is short but endearing.

It will be good to see what this band can do live, given the chance. The shows are said to be extremely loud. In the meantime, the swirling, agitated *Boomslang* will suffice.