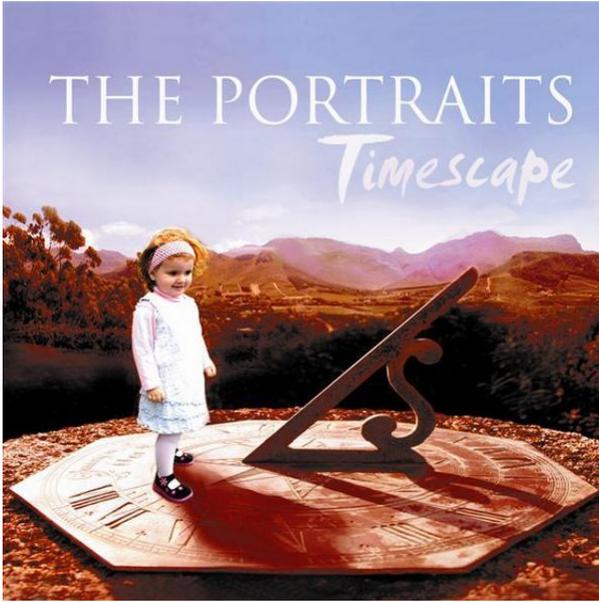


# ALBUM: "TIMESCAPE" - THE PORTRAITS

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[The Portraits - Timescape - Sensory Pulse Records - September 29 2008](#)

On the cover of *Timescape*, a tiny redheaded toddler stands on a giant sundial as a vast landscape stretches behind her. This marriage of time and nature is the defining theme of Anglo-Irish folk group The Portraits' second and latest record, a blissfully varied collection of songs brimming with subtle emotions and an array of eclectic instruments.

The best thing about *Timescape* is that it doesn't evoke an immediate reaction. My first listen was a nonchalantly unimpressed wade through the 40 minutes that make up the record, and it made very little impact – but on each listen since I've been able to uncover something subtle that I love in each pithy little song. Perhaps saying so isn't really professional in the sense that album reviews are supposed to be – after all, aren't we supposed to remain somewhat objective?

But this is exactly the point of *Timescape*. It allows us to throw away our inhibitions and freefall into an unexplored world, forging a very real personal connection with Jeremy and Lorraine Millington, the brains behind The Portraits who also have a deeply personal connection themselves, as creative collaborators for more than a decade and, more recently, husband and wife.

The intro and verse of the opening track 'Poppy Song' are not particularly striking, but the delicate warmth of The Portraits comes flooding in as soon as the bright chorus hits. Lorraine's breezy vocals, reminiscent of early Andrea Corr, are beautifully underscored with the simple accompaniment as she paints an evergreen picture: "tell me eternal green / under your endless sky / how you are so serene / knowing all the truth you hide?"

This melding point of nature and time is explored further in the nine tracks following, awash in both cynicism and hope. From the facelessness of celebrity in the darker flavour of 'Fame' to the finiteness of life explored through earthen metaphor in 'Precious Red', Jeremy and Lorraine offer a fresh outlook on both the bright and dark sides of life using mental scenery created both through words and music.

The employment of instruments such as cellos, ethnic flutes and trumpets, as well as the usual piano and guitar, makes *Timescape* an experience that really fits its name. It seems to borrow from world music, with African-inspired bongos providing the beat for many of the songs. In both a musical and lyrical sense, *Timescape* shows intelligence and diversity – focusing on all aspects of life to which anyone can relate, it also focuses on different facets of musical composition and innovation.

'Real World' illustrates this perfectly – beginning with a harmonised refrain, it proceeds to lurch into an upbeat ditty about the transition from childhood into adulthood whilst a jangling percussion ensemble rattles cheerily over an effervescent harmony. Though the subject matter is far from cheery, The Portraits make it gorgeously listenable – and make me think that maybe "progressing into the real world" won't be so bad.

There are some questionable decisions sometimes, such as the very mechanical-sounding drum fade at the start of 'Poppy Song' which detracts from the lithe feeling of the rest of the song, and the production of the songs could do with more polishing as it feels a little rough around the edges at times. But sometimes it's this rawness that makes it feel the most personal, like an honest poem scribbled hastily on a piece of paper.

If this record doesn't strike you straight away, don't give up hope - I'm not saying that it's perfect, but it is overflowing with so much promise and passion. Put it on your iPod and take a walk down to a lake or river on a warm day, and sit there soaking in the world around you and the radiance of this music. I promise you it will be worth the effort.

## TRACK LISTING:

01. Poppy Song
02. Fame
03. Autumn
04. Bitter
05. Precious Red
06. Real World
07. See Through You
08. Shield
09. Virtual
10. Windfall