


Scott Walker

The Drift 4AD

★★★★★ or maybe ★★★★★

 Scott Walker's career path – from '60s boy-band crooner to austere experimentalist – remains one of the oddest trajectories in pop. This LP not only con-

tinues Walker's 40-year drift from pop-world, but sees him all but sever any links with pop music as we know it. The neurotic, dissonant, keening string orchestrations bring to mind Ligeti; Walker – singing at the highest end of his baritone register – sounds like he's stumbled in from a Benjamin Britten opera. There are bleak, cryptic lyrics about Elvis's dead brother, about Mussolini, about Serbia, about passenger jets slamming into skyscrapers, about Donald Duck, about men punching donkeys. If you thought his last album 'Tilt' was odd, just get a load of this.

You could see it as a soundtrack in search of a film (listening to it on your Walkman will turn your commute into a terrifying experience) and even the album's superficially trad rock *leitmotifs* – a pounding, Bauhaus-style drum gallop and a Morricone-style guitar riff – seem more cinematic than rock 'n' roll. As such it calls into question any star rating system. It's sufficiently silly and unlistenable to have you screaming that the emperor is wearing no clothes, but it's also one of the most compelling, exhausting and harrowingly beautiful records you'll ever hear. Not something that, say, Tom Jones will be emulating in a hurry. *John Lewis*

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