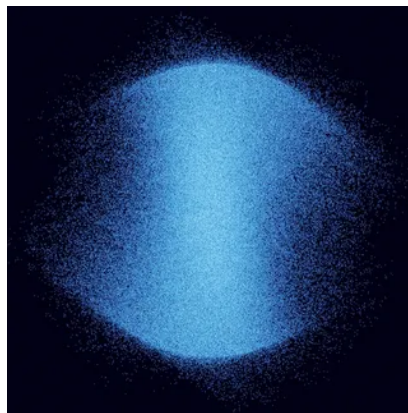


TRACKS

“Great Mass of Color”

Deafheaven

2021



By Mehan Jayasuriya

GENRE: Metal

LABEL: Sargent House

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After a decade spent as one of metal’s biggest crossover successes, the band changes course on this soaring new single.

On “Great Mass of Color,” Deafheaven invert the formula. Now, they’re no longer a black metal band with pretty parts, but a guitar pop band with metal parts. You might have seen this coming if you listened to 2018’s *Ordinary Corrupt Human Love*, which closed with two dark pop songs. Still, it’s shocking to hear the band turn their carefully crafted

aesthetic inside out just because they can.

The opening here is pure Smiths: bright blooms of guitar recede in a wash of jangly tones as vocalist George Clarke steps into the frame, not growling or screaming but *singing*. His rich, sonorous voice harkens back to Depeche Mode's Dave Gahan and Bauhaus' Peter Murphy. When the glittering, interlocking guitar lines come in, you're reminded this is still a Deafheaven song, even as Clarke sings lyrics that sound surprisingly candid ("Do I need this affection?/Do you need this confusion?"). After five minutes of buildup, the song reaches its crescendo: As the guitars open up, Clarke finally lets loose a scream and the melodies tilt skyward, sending the whole track soaring. It's easy to forget how much of a lightning rod Deafheaven were when they first appeared—scandalized by their lack of orthodoxy, black-metal fans accused them of being mere genre tourists. After a decade spent as one of metal's biggest crossover successes, you'd expect them to play it safe, but Deafheaven remain as willing as ever to pull the rug out from underneath us.