



Broken ties 撫慰情傷

Breaking up is hard to do for Chris Martin, who delivers an emotional performance on Coldplay's sixth studio album, writes Dorothy So

Dorothy So從Coldplay第六張專輯的傷感歌聲中，聽到分手對樂隊主音Chris Martin的打擊

British pop icons Coldplay released their album just weeks after frontman Chris Martin announced the end of his decade-long marriage to actress Gwyneth Paltrow. It's no coincidence that the nine-track record, *Ghost Stories*, revolves around one man's journey through the different stages of break-up grief.

Sonically, *Ghost Stories* is one of the band's most stripped-back offerings, especially in comparison with its bloated predecessor, 2011's *Mylo Xyloto*. The opener, *Always in My Head*, sets the tone for the album as it flows to soft seraphic synths and Martin's pensive vocals. His message relies heavily on clichés but what Martin lacks as a poet, he makes up for with sincerity, especially when he entreats a former flame to lie about her feelings in *True Love*.

The album's biggest strength is its ability to sound resigned and optimistic at the same time. This conflicted sentiment peaks in *Midnight*, a moody stand-out single featuring a volatile flurry of effects-heavy instruments and distorted vocals. Not all electronic flourishes are effective though, as evidenced by *A Sky Full of Stars*, an overblown dance-track co-produced by Swedish DJ Avicii that feels like a desperate attempt to stay relevant in today's club scene. Fortunately, this is the only interruption in an otherwise meditative record.

Those accustomed to Coldplay's climactic ballads might be underwhelmed by this album. It takes time to mend a broken heart, however, and in this sense, *Ghost Stories* is a fitting narrative of one who has confronted the spectres of a failed relationship and found a way to move on.



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Chris Martin (second from right) and his Coldplay bandmates leave their footprints in the sand

Chris Martin (右二)與Coldplay成員在沙上留下足印



英國流行樂團Coldplay推出全新專輯時，距離主音歌手Chris Martin宣佈結束與荷李活女星Gwyneth Paltrow長達十年的婚姻不過數星期。《Ghost Stories》收錄的九首歌曲，內容均圍繞一名男子感情受傷後的各種心路歷程，應該不是巧合吧。

音樂方面，《Ghost Stories》可說是樂隊最返璞歸真的作品，尤其是與2011年花巧繁複的《Mylo Xyloto》相比。第一首歌曲〈Always in My Head〉以天使般溫柔的合成音樂，襯托Martin哀怨的歌聲，奠定全碟風格。雖然歌詞陳腔濫調，缺乏詩意，但Martin以誠意補足，尤其是在〈True Love〉一曲中，苦苦乞求前度女友撒謊欺騙自己。

專輯賣點是聽來無奈認命，同時又積極樂觀。哀傷的〈Midnight〉以心慌意亂的混合音效，加上扭曲抽離的歌聲，將這種矛盾情感推向巔峰。不過，並非所有電子元素都能有效發揮作用，與瑞典DJ Avicii聯手炮製的〈A Sky Full of Stars〉是一首誇張的跳舞曲，拼命想投入現今夜店的潮流中，卻顯得格格不入。幸好除了這一瑕疵，整張唱片編排流暢，令人沉思內省。

聽慣Coldplay激昂情歌的樂迷，或會覺得這張專輯平淡如水。然而，破碎的心靈需要時間來癒合。在這一方面，《Ghost Stories》倒是恰到好處，整張大碟猶如一個經歷失戀的男子，傾訴感情挫敗及重新出發的故事。