

Mylo Xyloto, by Coldplay

reviewed by [Louis R. Carlozo](#) in the [January 25, 2012](#) issue

In Review



Mylo Xyloto

by Coldplay
Capitol

Two of the most popular bands from across the pond in recent years—Mumford & Sons and Coldplay—have unmistakable spiritual currents flowing through their

music. Yet Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin, who was raised in a Christian home, has tended not to get too specific when addressing his faith. In 2008, he told Ireland's *Independent*: "I'm always trying to work out what 'He' or 'She' is. I don't know if it's Allah or Jesus or Mohammed or Zeus. But I'd go for Zeus."

Now comes Coldplay with an album that displays a cafeteria approach in its scope and ambition. *Mylo Xyloto* strives to be melodic and grandiose, thoughtful and commercial, a big seller but not a sellout. It's the artistic equivalent of trying to serve Zeus and mammon, and it doesn't come without risks. There's a lot of digital recording wizardry, anthems fit for fist-pumping in a full arena and, in spots, mawkish indulgence.

One track, "Princess of China," is about as overblown and synthetic as they come. Though Martin has worked with Jay-Z and Kanye West, he's not very funky here—the brick wall of synths and drum machines sounds like so much Euromall Muzak. Rihanna's guest vocal only cranks the disco-cheese meter up a notch, and you can't help wondering why Martin didn't save this duet for the outtake pile. Maybe inviting Rihanna to the party was supposed to broaden the band's appeal.

But on the rest of *Mylo*, the glitches are overpowered by gusto. When the rhythms grind and groove with healthy doses of melody, Coldplay sounds very much like U2 at the top of its game. "Don't Let It Break Your Heart" propels its pre-chorus through an unlikely loop of cymbal hits, giving the song a cardiac urgency. And "Major Minus" undulates between acoustic postblues and drum-loop fueled rave-ups. Martin delivers the us-against-the-world ditty with Lennonesque nonsense: "Hear those crocodiles ticking 'round the world."

The album's most sublime song is "U.F.O." Not even 140 seconds long, the song is mostly just Martin accompanied by acoustic guitar and piano, and even when the strings kick in the song maintains its intimacy. "Lord, I don't know which way I am going / Which way river gonna flow," sings Martin. "It just seems that upstream, I keep rowing / Still got such a long way to go." It's not a lyric that one imagines crooning to a dusty Greek deity, but rather to a Lord—who might inspire this bandleader to take that next step in faith.