

# Coldplay get galactic with airy album 'Music of the Spheres'

NEW YORK, Oct. 13, (AP) — The last time Coldplay put out an album, it was like a warm embrace of Earth. This time, the British foursome has gone bigger — cosmically bigger.

"We're looking upwards and outwards and trying to find answers, and I think maybe trying to find some perspective," says drummer Will Champion.

"Music of the Spheres" is a spacy 12-track collection with waves of synth and airy melodies. The track "Infinity Sign" sounds like it was created inside a starburst and "Biutyful" is a hit of ecstasy in musical form. This is an album that should be playing as astronauts gather on a slowly spinning space station for a galactic rave.

"It is a bit grander in its sound," says lead singer Chris Martin. "The songs come first, but the picture frame of the title of 'Music of the Spheres' sort of easily said which songs might fit within it. But you're always at the mercy of what what songs decide to show up."

Guitarist Jonny Buckland uses a fishing analogy: "The concept kind of builds the net, do you know what I mean? And then the net catches the type of fish that it wants to."

The seeds to the new album were sown years ago, when the British band was finishing up their tour for "A Head Full of Dreams." The pandemic scrambled their plans, leading to their last album, "Everyday Life," a dense and complex work with words spoken or sung in Arabic, Spanish, Zulu and Igbo. It was as introspective about humanity as the new one is lofty.

"'Everyday Life' was about making the big questions personal. And this one is about making the personal things into the big questions," says Champion. "You know, 'What are we all doing here and what's the purpose of our band and why are we all here?'"

This time, the band teamed up with super-producer Max Martin, who they credit with a less-is-more approach. He helped the songs breathe for a band known for rich orchestrations.

"We historically as a band tend to fill space," says Champion. "We paint with lots of layers, big thick strings and synths. And one of the reasons that I think we all felt such a relief with working with Max is that he is very conscious of not filling too many gaps."

## Impressive

Adds bassist Guy Berryman: "You're not going to make a song sound bigger and more impressive by adding another layer of sound and then another layer of sound. It's like when you mix too many colors together, you always end up with brown."

Five of the album's 12 songs use emojis as titles and it has what every successful album needs these days — namely, a collaboration with BTS (the tune "My Universe," which has already topped the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart). There's also the breakup song "Let Somebody Go" — with Selena Gomez — that is forgiving and loving.

Martin kept it a family affair, with writing credit on the Gomez song from daughter Apple Martin, who also supplies the intro to "Higher Power." Son Moses Martin is credited with chorus vocals on "Humankind."

"Apple gave me this amazing chord that I'd never thought of. So she's on there," Martin says. And he may be biased but he considers Moses a very talented singer: "So I often ask him to just come and make choruses sound better."

The album ends with the 10-minute-plus "Coloratura," a multi-suite voyage into the cosmos that's a kind of flex from the band and repre-

sents a departure.

"That was towards the end of the recording of this album, and I think Max Martin had given us a lot of confidence. We knew that we had some more poppy songs so there was sort of a feeling of, 'Well, this last song, which is currently 6 minutes, what would happen if we just let it really be what it wanted to be?'" he says.

"It's not going to reach everybody and it's not for everybody, but some people might really enjoy the sort of movie-ness of it, including us, because we've never allowed ourselves to do that. We've always felt like we should wrap this up."

Coldplay aren't the only artists to tap into the heavens in recent years, with Nick Jonas releasing "Spaceman," Beck's "Hyperspace" and Masked Wolf's "Astronaut in the Ocean." Dua Lipa's video for "Levitate" is a space party in an Art Deco elevator.

For Coldplay, using space offers them a chance to talk about ending manmade demarcations. From space, they note, the Earth is just water, mountains and trees.

"We want to try and get rid of as many of those divisions and those barriers between people as possible because we see that we're just this little ball floating in a huge, huge universe and we need to look after each other and the planet itself," says Champion.

Martin notes that for all the spaciness, it's still a Coldplay collection — optimistic and hopeful. Talking about planets is a canvas to be talking about being human.

"It's really another record about life as a human person, but given this freedom that comes when you pretend it's about other creatures in other places," he says.

MUSIC

## Variety



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Matt Damon as Jean de Carrouges, (left), and Adam Driver as Jacques Le Gris in a scene from 'The Last Duel.' (AP)

## Film

Alan Horn, longtime film executive, to retire from Disney

# Medieval, #MeToo clash in 'Last Duel'

By Jake Coyle

On its mud-and-blood surface, "The Last Duel" seems like a familiar slog.

The film, directed by Ridley Scott, begins with all the expected medieval trappings: gory battlefields, imposing stone castles, the clop of horses. The skies are gray, the terrain muddy and, considering this film is by the director of "Robin Hood," "Gladiator" and other brawny, masculine historical epics, you think you know exactly what's in store.

But "The Last Duel" may be one of the only films where the director, himself, is kind of a MacGuffin. The movie, written by Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Nicole Holofcener, is not the tale of manly valor that it first appears. "The Last Duel" is more like a medieval tale deconstructed, piece by piece, until its heavily armored male characters and the genre's mythologized nobility are unmasked.

The film, framed like "Rashomon," is told in three chapters repeated from different perspectives. The first, which belongs to Jean de Carrouges (Damon), might have once been the sole version of "The Last Duel." In 14th century France, de Carrouges is a loyal and valiant soldier for King Charles VI (a childish ruler played by Alex Lawther) who weds a nobleman's daughter, Marguerite (Jodie Comer). He finds his agreed-upon dowry, including a handsome parcel of Normandy, has been taken instead as a debt collection by the Count Pierre d'Alençon (Affleck). He in turn awards the land to de Carrouges' friend and fellow warrior Jacques Le Gris (Adam Driver), infuriating de Carrouges. This starts a rift between de Carrouges and Le Gris, as well as with the count, who strongly favors Le Gris. De Carrouges sees himself as a good and brave man, unfairly treated by his superiors. When he returns from a trip, his wife informs him that she was raped by Le Gris while he was away. De Carrouges vows to bring him to justice.

There are hints in even this straightforward first section of something not quite lining up. Firstly, there are those haircuts. Damon sports a mullet and a half-formed beard that seems hardly fashionable in any century, while Affleck has trim blond locks that would be better suited to a boy band. That they look a little foolish may be intentional.

The second section replays the same time period only as according to Le Gris, and "The Last Duel" grows more interesting. Here, we see de Carrouges as an impetuous soldier, an aggrieved complainer and, well, no fun. He fusses and fumes about honor while Le Gris and the count (Affleck in campy splendor) roll their eyes and spend late nights drinking and bedding women. To Le Gris, his act with Marguerite is bold and rough but driven by love, and perhaps mutual longing — though certainly not consensual.

## Adapted

Damon and Affleck, who last together scripted their breakout, "Good Will Hunting," have said they wrote the first two sections, and handed over the third, of Marguerite's account, to Holofcener, the filmmaker of "Enough Said" and "Lovely and Amazing." The film, adapted from Eric Jager's 2004 non-fiction book about the true history, has naturally been building to this definitive account.

But it's not just the conclusion to a he-said-she-said drama. The third section is a wholly different perspective on the Middle Ages, as typically seen in film. Comer takes control of the film as it captures Marguerite's experience being wed in a business transaction, the pressure to birth an heir (something that can only happen, she's told, if she also finds pleasure in sex with her husband) and her savvy stewardship of the castle while de Carrouges is away.

Here, "The Last Duel" seems not at all so long ago, at all. Many of the dueling perspectives of the film — slyly self-aware — reverberate with today's #MeToo struggles. It's tempting to think "The Last Duel" should have just been Marguerite's account, but so much of the film's pleasure is seeing Damon, Affleck and Driver — each playing a type, a sort of guy — gradually dismantle and even lampoon their own charms.

"The Last Duel," a 20th Century Studios release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for strong violence including sexual assault, sexual content, some graphic nudity, and language. Running time: 152 minutes. Three stars out of four.

## Also:

NEW YORK: Alan Horn, the film executive who helped

turn Walt Disney Studios into the most powerful movie studio in Hollywood and whose 50-year career has touched films from "When Harry Met Sally..." to "The Dark Knight," is retiring.

Disney announced Monday that Horn, 78, chief creative officer of Disney Studios Content, will step down at the end of the year after a nine-year run that coincided with one of the most lucrative stretches of any studio. Horn, who was previously co-chairman, oversaw blockbusters that amassed billions in box office from the studio's divisions, including Lucasfilm, Marvel Studios, Pixar, Disney animation and, after Disney's acquisition of Fox, 20th Century Studios.

"Alan has had a profound impact on the entertainment industry and audiences worldwide," said Bob Iger, Disney executive chairman, in a statement. "We have been very fortunate to have Alan at the helm of our studio for nearly a decade, presiding over an unprecedented period of growth and exceptional storytelling, while solidifying his reputation as one of the industry's true icons. Like so many, I will be forever grateful for his strong support, wise counsel and enduring friendship."

Horn's departure, while expected, adds to the leadership changeover that has followed Bob Chapek's replacement of Iger as chief executive. Iger is to leave Dec. 31. The reorganization is occurring while Disney's film operations, like those of all studios, have reshuffled during the pandemic. Several of Disney's biggest releases have been steered to its streaming platform, Disney+, but the studio recently said it is returning to theatrical releases for all if its remaining films this year.

Horn, a widely respected executive known for his calm, cool-headed stewardship of big-budget properties, previously had a long tenure at Warner Bros. that included overseeing the "Harry Potter" films. After taking over Disney's film division in 2012, the studio released 20 films that surpassed \$1 billion in box office.

"It's never easy to say goodbye to a place you love, which is why I've done it slowly, but with Alan Bergman leading the way, I'm confident the incredible Studios team will keep putting magic out there for years to come," Horn said in a statement.

Bergman earlier this year succeeded Horn as chairman after serving with him as co-chairman. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021

NEW YORK: All good things must come to an end and Matt Amodio's historic run on "Jeopardy!" did just that on Monday's show, leaving the Yale doctoral student with 38 wins and more than \$1.5 million in prize money. Amodio failed to answer the Final Jeopardy! clue correctly and came third on Monday's show, his streak cut short by new champion Jonathan Fisher, an actor origi-

nally from Coral Gables, Florida. Amodio finished No. 2 on the all-time consecutive wins list behind only Ken Jennings with 74 wins. He won a total of \$1,518,601, which puts him third on the all-time non-tournament cash winnings list behind James Holzhauer (\$2,462,216) and Jennings (\$2,520,700).



Amodio



Horn

"I know going into every bar trivia game that I play that I'm going to come in with a little intimidation factor. But also, I just like the badge that it represents. As somebody who prioritizes knowledge and knowing things, this is really a good one to have following me everywhere," Amodio, a fifth-year computer science

Ph.D student at Yale University, said in a statement.

He became known for starting all of his questions with "What's..." instead of using suitable alternatives such as "Who is..." an unorthodox approach that made some longtime viewers groan.

But it was within the quiz show's rules and, as Amodio

explained, helped him limit any "unnecessary moving parts" that might undermine his effectiveness.

What became known as the "Amodio Rodeo" proved a welcome distraction for the quiz show and its producer Sony Pictures Television, which saw its effort to replace its late and beloved host Alex Trebek founder. (AP)