

Julia Holter – Summerhall – Saturday 20th February



Photo by Tonje Thilesen

Julia Holter, playing at Summerhall, managed to sell out on Saturday, and after seeing her mesmerising set it was easy to fathom why this was.

Packed out even for the supporting artist, DM Stith, the venue was uncomfortably crowded. Sounding a bit like Mancunian band, MONEY, The Villagers, and at moments, Jeff Buckley, his dulcet vocals lured the audience in. Understandably, the audience ventured to the Dissection Room in one of Edinburgh's trendiest arts venues before the headline act took to the stage.

Summer hall is a good venue for Holter, with its low-lighting ambience and its usual audience, the smell of beer, flat caps and beard oil pungent. The room, a sea of bald heads, beards and blunt fringes, has dimly lit light-bulbs strung along the balcony to create the twee ambience perfect for this artist.

Holter, a poignant Domino artist, got more airplay and more gigs after performing at the BBC 6 Music Festival in Bristol, but she kept the audience waiting.

Gracing the stage with her flowing hair and kimono, adding to the pathos that already filled this room, some girl next to me even went as far to heckle "about time".

The band, consisting of double bass (Devin Hoff), violin and backing vocals (Dina Maccabee), keyboard (Holter) and drums (Corey Fogel), technically flawless, engineered a haunting air. Sinister introduction with elements of discord, the band captured the respect of the audience, obediently remaining

hushed during the performance, applauding in abundance at the end of each track.

Horns Surrounding Me cinematically built leaving the crowd speechless by its end. Her experimental, avant-garde injection into her work makes the likes of Natasha Khan and Feist sound as obscure as The Spice Girls.



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A reflective look of longing stayed with Holter as she sang the majority of her set, which eerily created a discomfort in the crowd, her ghost-like presence affecting them.

Nina Nastasia as well as Marianne Faithfull influences were evident, as the red lighting underlined this intimate gig, Holter's silhouette on the back wall of the stage.

Feel You highlighted the beautiful backing vocals of Dina, this performance left the audience in awe. Playing a couple of tracks from 2011 album, *Tragedy*, Holter's performance of *So Lillies* built and layered with elements of discord until its chaotic conclusion, which reinforces that this musician is going to be with us for some time still.

It's safe to say that all in the Dissection Room were eager for much more from this wonderfully affecting artist. And I don't think they would be too indisposed to her working with this infallible group of musicians either.