Aimee Hinds, "Entry on: Orpheus by Ash ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1485. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Ash

Orpheus

United Kingdom (1998)

TAGS: Eurydice Orpheus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Orpheus
Title of the Album(s)	Nu-clear Sounds
Studio/Production Company	Infectious Records / Ash, Chris Kimsey, Owen Morris
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Australia, Japan
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1998
First Edition Details	Ash, *Nu-clear Sounds: Orpheus*. Infectious Records / Ash, Chris Kimsey, Owen Morris, 1998, 4:17 min.
Running time	4:17 min
Format	CD, Cassette, Vinyl (MP3 re-release 2014)
Official Website	ash-official.com (accessed: August 2, 2022).
Available Onllne	Spotify (accessed June 30, 2020).
Genre	Narrative song*
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Aimee Hinds, University of Roehampton, hindsa@roehampton.ac.uk

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Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Ash, photographed by Nancy J Price, March 2005 (accessed: June 30, 2020). The file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

Ash (Music Band)

Ash are a three-piece pop-punk band from Northern Ireland. Originally formed by core members guitarist and vocalist Tim Wheeler, bassist Mark Hamilton and drummer Rick McMurray in Downpatrick in County Down in 1992, they were joined by guitarist and vocalist Charlotte Hatherley between 1997 and 2006. They have produced seven studio albums. Wheeler and Hamilton met at school in 1989 and formed an early version of Ash as 'Vietnam'; after disbanding, they recruited McMurray in 1992 to become Ash, named for the first short word they liked in the dictionary.

Their musical style covers indie, rock and pop-punk, and, while not suitable for younger children, often reflects their roots as a young pop-punk band (Wheeler and Hamilton formed Vietnam when they were only twelve). While many of their songs express this youthful exuberance, there are notable exceptions, including many of the tracks on the album *Nu-Clear Sounds* which was written and produced during a period of burnout for the band after touring their first album, *1977*. Wheeler has a wide-range of inspirations for their songs, although not often delving into mythology.

Source:

Liner notes from *Intergalatatic Sonic 7s*

Prepared by Aimee Hinds, University of Roehampton, aimee.hinds89@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

This song was written by Wheeler after he did a screen test for the role of Christian in Baz Luhrmann's 2001 *Moulin Rouge!* (Ryan, 2019), itself based on the myth of Orpheus. The lyrics are narrated by an Orpheus-character and take place after the loss of Eurydice: 'ever since I lost her'; 'hit me without warning, I was left out on my own'. The song ultimately deals with the process of recovery after lost love, underlined by the chorus: 'I need the sunshine in the morning/ heading for the open road/ sunshine in the morning/ lord, you gotta let it flow'.

Analysis

The song describes a more straightforward engagement with the myth than the Baz Luhrmann film. The song deals very little with Eurydice or her potential feelings, focusing on the narrator's feelings as he moves on.

The song recognisably tells part of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, although it is fairly unusual as a reception of Orpheus in that it does not directly reference his musical or creative abilities (although the cover art features an image of a lyre, the instrument associated with Orpheus, the lyrics do not reflect this). Instead, the opening lyrics depict an Orphean character who is, by his own admission, not doing much at all:

That summer, I did nothing

Just sleeping, thinking and hanging around

I left the dark streets of September

As the air was cooling down

The lyrics are fairly upbeat, but the specific mythical references place the song at the juncture of the myth between the (second) loss of Eurydice and Orpheus' own death. The second verse directly references' Eurydice's death:

Ever since I lost her

Seems the more I learn, the less I know

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And everyday I think about her

But if I look back I'm gonna turn to stone

The last line shows a mixing of myths, with idea of turning to stone when looking being associated with the gorgon Medusa and the Perseus myth, although the looking back motif is part of the Orpheus myth and refers to the way that Orpheus loses Eurydice. The third verse begins by mirroring Orpheus' devastation as it is represented by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (Book 10), but also suggests a lack of responsibility taken by Orpheus for his role in the loss of his wife:

Hit me without warning

I was left out on my own

The bad times they were forming

I went through them alone

A new day it is dawning

And I feel my pain is gone

The open world is calling

And I am moving on

The end of the verse illustrates Orpheus coming to terms with and moving past his loss, which is a shift from the best-known ancient versions of the myth – the *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Georgics* Book 4. 453–494 – in both of which Orpheus is unable to recover fully from the loss of Eurydice. This positive outcome for Orpheus highlights the influence of *Moulin Rouge!*, in which Christian has a similar revival after the death of the Eurydice-figure Satine.

Although it is fairly straightforward, the mythical themes may not be obvious for the non-specialist listener. The lyrics can easily read as a song about a break-up, and might be readily understood in these terms by young adult listeners. The positive spin on a traditionally tragic story makes the song well suited to younger listeners,

Eurydice Orpheus

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Love
Further Reading	Interview in NME by Gary Ryan (accessed: March 3, 2021).

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