

Locust

Spectral+

TODO DL/LP

Mark Van Hoen first adopted the Locust pseudonym in 1993. Released via the R&S label, the *Skysplit* EP began a run of 1990s Locust releases whose mix of ambient undercurrents and head-nodding beats meant the electronic producer was lazily parcelled up as part of the UK's triphop movement. Time, plus a more sporadic parade of Locust releases since 2000, has afforded a more respectful evaluation of Van Hoen's work. Thus, he is now seen as a crucial (if somewhat underappreciated) contributor to the development of UK electronic music.

Spectral+ is the first Locust album since 2023's *The First Cause*. It opens with "Shape Of Another", a trap-like slab of foreboding, with singer Olive Kimoto and New York based rapper Griff Spex treading the kind of boards Tricky has been stalking of late. "Long Distance Lover" is all vintage synth runs and plangent electric guitar from Slowdive's Neil Halstead, with vocalist and artist Natasha Morrow's whispering tales of loving memories. Halstead and Van Hoen have worked together before; in 2013 they released the brooding *Stars Are Our Home* album as Black Hearted Brother.

Elsewhere on *Spectral+*, Griff Spex returns to take centre stage on the sliding, stomping "Soul Sky", the kind of track that could easily sidle into the mainstream given the right backing. Van Hoen notes that the project came about after he met Kimoto in 2024, when she was running a club called Heaven Or Los Angeles.

Charmed by the Cocteau Twins reference, the pair put together a live show that included a Massive Attack support slot, and sessions for the album followed. It was a fortuitous meeting. *Spectral+* effectively revives that 1990s period when serious dance music collided with the more contemplative side of alt/indie rock.

Simon Coates