


If I have to choose sides in the Zombie apocalypse, I'm throwing in with these guys. The revitalized 60s icons hit a recent creative peak with their 2004 album *As Far As I Can See*. Although 2011's *Breathe Out, Breathe In* didn't quite scale the same heights, it was still great fun and kept the band on the road with fresh material for its fiftieth (!) anniversary. This set captures an intimate show from that milestone year at Metropolis Studios in London. It must be said that **Colin Blunstone's** voice has aged impossibly well. At 67, his tenor remains rich and assured, with more confidence than heard on classic pop singles including "Tell Her No." On the opening number, absent Zombie **Chris White's** desperate "I Love You," Blunstone hits his keening high notes with passion and ease. Soon after, principal songwriter Rod Argent rips into the keyboard solo with wicked intensity. Before digging deeply into the Zombies catalog, the band visits related covers including a spirited version of Motown hit "What Becomes of the Broken Hearted." Blunstone had recorded the song with the **Eurhythmics' Dave Stewart** in 1980. The group also ignites **Denny Laine's** "Say You Don't Mind," a highlight from Blunstone's 1971 gem *One Year*. The raucous, jazz-inflected "Any Other Way" and minor-key swinger "I Do Believe" are included from *Breathe Out, Breathe In*. The pair stand up well against the popular favorites. They do make me wish the band had included one of its exceptional originals like the elegant "Memphis" or rowdy rocker "Time to Move" from *As Far As I Can See*, although the band does play a beautiful version of **Russ Ballard's** winsome "I Don't Believe in Miracles." The song was featured on both that criminally overlooked album and Blunstone's sophomore solo effort *Ennismore*. Acknowledged masterpiece *Odyssey and Oracle* is well-represented by a suite of six of its best-loved songs. The jaunty "Care of Cell 44" swings with the energy of a band well below half the average age of the veterans on stage, incorporating the bounce of original contemporaries including the Kinks ("Dead End Street"), Beatles ("Penny Lane") and the Move ("Blackberry Way") and the crafty vocal blend of the Beach Boys. Argent's lead vocal during "I Want Her, She Wants Me" isn't as exceptional as his deft piano work, but he attacks both with gusto. The band is anchored by longtime member **Jim Rodford (Kinks, Argent)** on bass, who carries the third part in vocal harmonies with Blunstone and Argent during songs like *Odyssey and Oracle's* stately "A Rose for Emily." He also shares a story about the very first Zombies rehearsal, which relied heavily upon his equipment. Rodford's son **Steve** has provided the band's drumbeat for many years, and shines on groove-heavy highlights like "Time of the Season." Relative newcomer **Tom Toomey** is an understated and reliable presence on guitar who distinguishes himself while cutting loose with a hot acoustic solo on "Any Other Day" and stinging electric fretwork during "Say You Don't Mind." Before closing the set, Argent humbly thanks the attentive crowd and announces both the pop smash "She's Not There" and the band's first-recorded track, joking with Blunstone that they must have recorded it to wax cylinder. That song, the **Gershwins'** "Summertime," is as smooth and comforting as a sunset breeze following a blistering day. The Zombies are a living treasure, and remain more vital today than anyone had a right to expect. If they have indeed found the secret to agelessness as they appear to have done, may they reach their hundredth anniversary in such style as this.

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