



Craig Armstrong

# A Magic Moment

Glasgow-born musician celebrates 20th anniversary of album release

**C**RAIG ARMSTRONG'S name might not be familiar to you, but you have almost certainly heard his work.

The multi-award-winning Glasgow-born musician and composer has written music for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta and the Barbican – but his biggest credits are film scores.

*Love Actually*. Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*. A trio of Baz Luhrmann films – *Romeo + Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge!* and *The Great Gatsby*. Peter Mullan's directorial debut short film *The Close*, and some of his feature length films, too. The 2004 Ray Charles biopic, *Ray* – he won a Grammy for that one, on top of his Bafta, Golden Globe and Ivor Novello awards.

But among Craig's earliest collaborators were trip-hop electronica greats Massive Attack.

Craig co-wrote a track on their second album, *Protection*, and shortly afterwards signed to the band's own label, Melankolic, where he released a pair of solo

albums informed as much by the electronic, ambient and rock sounds of the time as his classical education.

The second, *As If To Nothing*, turns 20 this year – an anniversary Craig is celebrating with a remastered, reissued work, released for the first time on limited edition vinyl via London label Hydrogen Dukebox.

"I was focused on combining electronic music with full orchestra," says Craig, looking back on 2002. "I was signed to Melankolic, so a song-based structure seemed the right way to go."

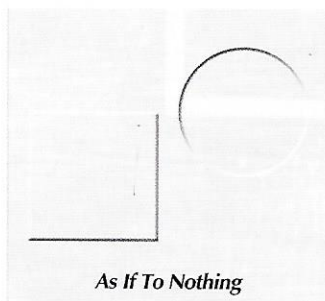
Combining lush string arrangements, atmospheric electronics and some of the best-known voices in popular music, *As If To Nothing* retains a contemporary feel two decades after the fact.

Opening track *Ruthless Gravity* offers a glimpse of Craig the soundtracker, channelling intrigue in ominous strings.

Evan Dando lends guest vocals to the atmospheric *Wake Up In New York*,

soul singer David McAlmont tackles *Snow* and Mogwai put *Miracle* through warped electronic paces.

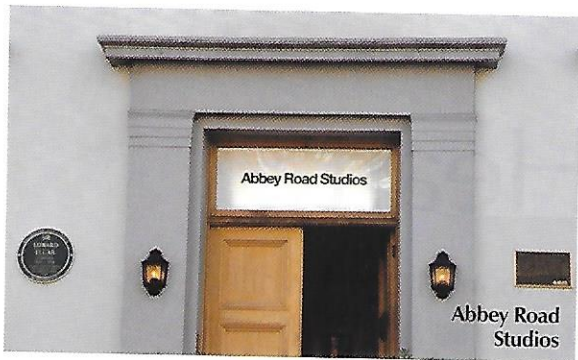
Craig also slips in a luscious cover of U2's *Stay (Faraway, So Close!)* – with vocals by Bono himself.



As If To Nothing



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Recording the album coincided with what Craig describes as “a special time in music”, when artists had more freedom to experiment.

“It was still possible to go to major recording studios and work with fantastic engineers – like Andy Bradfield, Mark ‘Spike’ Stent (Olympic Studios), Geoff Foster (Air Studios) – and fantastic orchestral musicians,” he says. “I don’t know if this would be financially possible now.”

Which is not to say that corners have been cut with the reissue. The album was remastered at Abbey Road Studios and cut to vinyl at half speed, a lengthy process but one which creates a superior quality sound.

There is stark new artwork by Christopher Thomson which is 3D embossed and debossed on the vinyl.

“These three works are one statement”

A special Dinked Archive Edition – produced by a collective of independent record shops and limited to 500 copies worldwide – comes with a bonus 10” of a rediscovered track from the original recording sessions.

Looking back on the release and its place within his wider body of work, it’s clear Craig doesn’t see the more contemporary sound as an anomaly.

He says, “I see my debut *The Space Between Us*, *As If To Nothing* and *It’s Nearly Tomorrow* – released in 2014, featuring Paul Buchanan and Suede’s Brett Anderson – as a trio of albums which were based on the same aesthetic of songwriting, electronics and orchestral music,” he says.

“These three works are as one statement from that period for me.”

Unsurprisingly, though, after a pause to look back, Craig is hard at work on his next projects – a piece for cello and orchestra with Alison Lawrence of the Scottish Ensemble and a movie score, for Anand Tucker’s thriller *The Critic*, starring Ian McKellen and Gemma Arterton.

The reissued *As If To Nothing* is out on December 9 on Hydrogen Dukebox. 🎧

## On Our Radar



### The Deadline Shakes

The Glasgow-based art-rock power-pop quartet – and childhood friends – drop their second album some seven years after their debut. *Documentaries*, out on November 25, is well worth the wait, soundtracking “ageing, babies, the internet, death, covert dance training, stirrers and chancers”.

### Terra Kin

Signed to Island Records, this 23-year-old Glaswegian blends moody electronics with vocals straight out of the Jazz Age on debut EP *Too Far Gone*.

### Andrew Wasyluk

The acclaimed Scottish composer and his eight-piece ensemble cap off a UK tour in support of second album *Hearing The Water Before Seeing The Falls* with a show at Glasgow’s CCA on December 16. The follow-up to last year’s SAY Award longlisted debut, Andrew’s second album is a melodic response to – and was written in correspondence with – the American landscape photographer Thomas Joshua Cooper.

### Lost Map’s Christmas HUMBUG!

On the eve of the indie label’s 10th anniversary, join Johnny “Pictish Trail” Lynch, labelmates and friends for their annual bicoastal festive weekender, in Glasgow at The Old Hairdresser’s, December 16, and Edinburgh’s Summerhall, December 17.

### Gun

The Glasgow hard rockers cap off an autumn touring *The Calton Songs* – their recent album of acoustic fan favourites – with a triumphant hometown show at Glasgow’s Barrowlands on December 10. You can

also catch them in Galashiels at Mac Arts, December 7, and at Aberdeen’s Lemon Tree, December 11.

