

By **Stephanie King**

It's that tinselly time of the year when charities beg you to dig deep in aid of a good cause to give you that warm fuzzy feeling. Naturally, there are no sleigh bells or children's choirs on Portishead's [Chase the Tear](#) (as in a rip, not a sob), but this vaguely demonic song should still put a dark spring in your step.

Released on 9th December to mark Human Rights Day and with all proceeds going to Amnesty International, *Chase the Tear* marks a welcome return for fans gasping for more [Portishead](#) following the release of 2008's dark and stormy

[Third](#)

. While the jazz alcoholism of

[Glory Box](#)

and the booming orchestral arrangements of

[All Mine](#)

are now relics of the past, here the violent, militant squalls of

[Machine Gun](#)

make way for a darting, alert, but weirdly dreamy new track.

Chase the Tear

is like a post-amphetamine comedown version of Donna Summer's

[I Feel Love](#)

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Song of the Week: Chase the Tear, Portishead

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Its stabbing, lightning-fast electronic beat propels you through the song like a Duracell bunny on a treadmill, constantly moving forwards without actually going anywhere. This frenetic, nervy, but arguably joyful momentum is tempered by Beth Gibbons' slower, huskier, plaintive vocal which is notable more for its careful restraint than any lush outpourings of emotion. Even when the song crescendos, there is never any suggestion that Beth's voice will dominate. Just like the disciplined electro-blips, minimal tinny percussive drums and chiming guitar chords that provide the song's scaffold, Beth's voice acts more like another instrument, creating rich, enfolding vowels and sparse yet sensual sighs. The result is something vaguely unnerving, but still clean and crisp and even a bit gorgeous.



Opening with a siren scream that bleeds into the song, you're effectively dragged into the insistent up-and-down beats, underpinned by a deeper, heavier single keyboard punch. Guitars are used economically, with strums lengthening into alarm-like peals that recall the song's opening, and small drawling sequences that slowly and deliberately move between the nervy electronica. The muffled drum crashes at 3:58 are to die for, their hushed imitation of static interference ushering in the last quarter of the song; a series of warped guitar twangs that play spaghetti western yawls against that jumping-bean beat. Repeated listening reveals the removal of Beth's voice and the concentration on synthy beats to be meditative and mesmerising. *Chase the Tear*

is strictly controlled mania with not a bleep or chime or wail out of place. It's not the most immediately thrilling Portishead song, but

Chase the Tear

tremors with a bubbling tension that never quite releases itself, inspiring repeated listens.

You can buy *Chase the Tear* for the bargain price of £0.99 [here](#) and support Amnesty International.

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