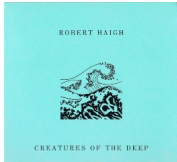


Robert Haigh - Creatures Of The Deep (2017)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 31 March 2019 14:32 -

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1 Portrait With Shadow 2:04 2 Koto Line 6:38 3 Secret Life Of Waves 3:14 4 Birds Of Cadence 2:48 5 Unfinished Minor 2:49 6 From The Mystery 3:33 7 Winter Ships 3:21 8 Sunken Pavilions 7:14 9 I Remember Phaedra 5:10 10 Autumn Fool 2:04 11 European Dusk 2:05 All tracks written and produced by Robert Haigh

A new album of piano driven ambient music from British composer Robert Haigh. Following in the path of his albums for the Japanese Siren label, *Creatures of the Deep* is an underground vantage of a meeting between the musical worlds of Harold Budd and Erik Satie. With a storied musical career that has ranged widely in style — from his industrial-avant-garde works on Nurse With Wound's United Diaries label as SEMA to his legendary ambient drum and bass records as Omni Trio on Moving Shadow — Robert Haigh's work occupies a space between music and mystery. With *Creatures of the Deep*, Haigh is at the peak of his powers. Among noir, minimal, neo-classical landscapes are robust scatterings of bright reflection and a musical expression that is subtle and elusive yet uniquely Haigh's in its voice and masterful execution. The closer we examine, the more is revealed, and the less is defined. ---unseenworlds.bandcamp.com

Robert Haigh's latest piano-based album is his first for US-based label Unseen Worlds. It has a finely crafted pace with such richness and delicate variety that even the most languid and pristine tracks avoid the doldrums of melancholy.

Creatures of the Deep begins with "Portrait with Shadow," a mesmerizing solo piano piece. With little apparent effort it plunges immediately into a sublime atmosphere which affected me long

after its two minute duration. "Secret Life of Waves" and "Sunken Pavilions" have an eerie inevitability and something of the liquidity in the vast landscapes of Yves Tanguy—who was in the merchant navy and the son of a sea captain before becoming an abstract painter.

The whole record is a masterful construction, but here and there the music hits peaks of a soft yet intense ecstasy. "Birds of Cadence" sways back and forth as if notes were held aloft on winged messengers between Earth and Heaven. The track "Autumn Fool" recalls bits of Virginia Astley's classic pastoral record "From Gardens Where We Feel Secure." "I Remember Phaedra" had me straining to hear any echoes of the Tangerine Dream record of a similar name. Perhaps that is why, on first listen, I was absorbed in the dark tones and completely missed that it includes the tune of the traditional English folk song "Scarborough Fair."

After listening to this new work, I plunged more into Robert Haigh's back catalog. His approach to modern classical music has definite echoes of his jungle, drum and bass, dark ambient, and experimental work as—or with—Omni Trio, Sema, and Nurse With Wound. Picture a steam train running on a track parallel to an electric train. Beyond the differences in tempo and softness, there are similar stylistic loops, moods, and rhythms. As such, *Creatures of The Deep* is melodious and tuneful but the reflections and signals from his earlier work keeps it from being dull or mellow.

Haigh has said that composing at the piano imposes a discipline on the process which makes one "an instant minimalist" and that he is interested in exploring "the interface between the tonal and atonal." I know that the aforementioned "Portrait With Shadow" made me an instant fan and by the end of this album I was scurrying for more of his music. Comparisons are not necessary, but this record inhabits a place outside time—a quiet cave where Erik Satie once scratched marks on the stone, or Harold Budd left a footprint in the soil. Perhaps it is a deserted snow-covered train station where no one is checking tickets, or simply any place where a slight deviation in sound can be stunningly beautiful. ---Duncan Edwards, brainwashed.com

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