

Anja Garbarek - Balloon Mood (1996)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Beyond My Control* 5:18 2 *I.C.U.* 5:07 3 *Just One of Those Days* 4:25 4 *Picking up Pieces* 5:15 5 *The Cabinet* 4:37 6 *Something Written* 5:34 7 *Strange Noises* 4:30 8 *The Telescope Man Says* 6:15 9 *She Collects (Stuff Like That)* 4:09 10 *Balloon Mood* 3:24

Anja Garbarek – vocals, keyboards Marius de Vries – keyboard, programming, vocals
Christopher Baron – choir boy Andy Findon - flute Frank Ricotti – marimba Steve "Sputnik"
Sidelnyk - percussion Anthony Pleeth, Bill Hawkes, Boguslav Kostecki, Martin Loveday, Perry
Montague-Mason , Peter Lale, Wilf Gibson – strings Gavyn Wright - conductor [string section
leader]

Anja Garbarek's "Balloon Mood" is the sort of album that shifts one's perceptions to the metaphoric and to the subjective. I sometimes find myself picturing the album as a pile of multicolored sticky sweets lumped into a crystal candy dish, of the sort one might find in the homes of lonely old widows.

The album's cover displays several identical snapshots of a mirthless young blond girl. This image is probably the reason for my further fantasy, imagining Anja's precious voice issuing from the lost soul of a porcelain doll condemned to the hell of an abandoned nightmare factory. The album's vivid blend of industrial music and electronica lies in fragments about the doll like dilapidated but magical machinery--machinery with no one to serve but her.

In this remote and confined soul-space, Anja's songs often have the eerie quality of an Emily Dickinson poem. Other comparisons come to mind as well. The psychedelic, wandering narrative of "Strange Noises" is very close to Ken Nordine's riff-based storytelling and the albums of "word jazz" that he has released over the past four decades. In "Picking up the Pieces," Anja combines her tragic surrealism with a dense, White Zombie style, cyber-metal drone with a chorus in baby-doll voice: "You took away my red lips / And cut them up in pieces /

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So now I can't kiss the moon / So now I can't kiss the moon goodnight / No longer fly, through the clouds / No longer touch, the stars."

All the best idiosyncratic elements of the album are pulled together in "The Cabinet." Here, Anja sings about a cabinet hanging above her bed ("filled with all my secret things"), at which she stares during the night. In the background, crowding her voice, all sorts of tiny sounds are at work, hinting at a parade of ceaseless activity. The song, like the whole album, suggests a worrisome thought--the notion that maybe a tribe of small, careful animals or shadowy mechanisms are forever creeping about at the back of one's unconscious mind. --- A. C. Walter, amazon.com

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