Ólafur Arnalds – Some Kind Of Peace (2020)

1 Loom 3:46 2 Woven Song 3:10 3 Spiral 3:21 4 Still / Sound 4:13 5 Back To The Sky 3:23 6 Zero 4:26 7 New Grass 4:02 8 The Bottom Line 4:02 9 We Contain Multitudes 3:18 10 Undone 5:03 Arranged By – Ólafur Arnalds Beats – Josh Wilkinson Cello – Unnur Jónsdóttir Electronics – Ólafur Arnalds Featuring – Bonobo (track 1) Piano – Ólafur Arnalds Viola – Karl Pestka Violin – Björk Óskarsdóttir, Sigrún Harðardóttir Vocals – Herlinda Augustine Fernandez (track 2) Vocals – JFDR (track 5) Vocals – Sandrayati Fay (tracks 6, 10) Vocals - Josin (track 8) Speech – Lhasa (track 10)

Amid a global pandemic that has put the world to a halt, Islandic composer Olafur Arnalds arrives with some kind of peace, his most ravishing work to date. Arnalds has always been a thoughtful artist who has worked with fertile concepts that have broadened his reach. That was most evident on his previous record re:member, where not only did he broaden his own reach but his ambitions' scale as well with the invention of the stratus piano. As a result, he was able to upend the sound of his characteristically benign, peaceful aural galleries with a simple, childlike innocence where the music was both blissfully soothing and consistently interesting. But with some kind of peace he is broadening his approach again and it has inspired him to arrive with another great record. Inspired by his friend's comment that we cannot control what life brings, only our reactions to it. It seems he has focused on the introspective elements in his own style and resultantly his songs are mostly soaked in inward-looking emotions. Obviously, the issue of not having everything under control, letting that notion go, and being at peace with is the underlying theme throughout this record.

On some kind of peace, Arnalds makes his most sophisticated record yet and it is heartbreakingly brilliant: a collection of exquisitely assembled compositions that appear delicate from a distance before revealing a close-quarters core strength. Listening to an Olafur Arnalds record is also a distinctly cinematic experience. His tracks have a way of enveloping the listener, invoking images of desolate valleys, snow-capped mountains, rolling hills. This penchant for the cinematic is no accident as it was film music that has inspired him in the first

place to take this road where he would fuse different strands of ambient, classical, and film music into his own kind of expression. Indeed, fans of film scores, minimalism, avant-garde composition, ambient electronic music, and trip-hop should all find much to sink their teeth into his music. Arnalds certainly isn't the first to integrate those forms, yet his method of assembling them into a unified system is impressive enough. Although he uses several musical styles on this album as he oscillates between them, his rather broad stylistic overview does not prevent a cohesion in the compositional style.

Stylistically, this record doesn't differ wildly from his previous work, but where it really excels is in its sublime consistency and the range of emotions it engenders. While doing so he revisits prized aesthetics from his past while maintaining a fresh vitality. Still, this album sounds more like the work of a pianist with string orchestra than one guy with a laptop and a piano. The compositions unfurl slowly, starting as sketches before layers of instrumentation blanket one another in beautiful and unpredictable ways. Most striking about some kind of peace is the lyrical quality of its music, the way Arnalds conveys such complex emotion on the backs of such minimal composition.

All of the ten tracks on some kind of peace are stylish, contemplative, and poignant. The opening track "Loom" is a collaboration with renowned British trip-hop producer Bonobo, which sets the scene appropriately with this downbeat track with swaths of ambient layers of keyboards combined with the melodic voices. It's a blissful and multidimensional track of soulful energy replete with the effortless sophistication that Arnalds exudes in every album. Each new piece from there on organizes itself slowly, like an origami crane folding on its own.

The piano on "Woven song" offers gentle and rippling arpeggios and an undistinguished vocal provides the yearning melodies. This vocal is a sample of a chant from a healing ritual from the Amazon. The song gradually reveals itself as harmonies and tonalities shift without resorting to an overbearing textural mess. Compositions such as "Spiral" and "Still Sound" sound deceptively simple. Their flow may sound simple but the intricacies are carefully interwoven and are skillfully executed. There are subtle swells in the background and subdued cadences, and orchestrated melodies seem to rise to the surface through a hypnotic matrix of processed strings, keyboards, and piano. The leisurely pace of the music can lull one into a dream-like state, but the shimmering beauty of the layered, symphonic delights commands attention so one easily gets taken on a musical excursion into the peaceful inner spaces of rich ambient and neo-classical soundscapes.

Elegance has always been a trademark quality in Arnalds' music. His own playing is nuanced and delicate and is often able to flow from more sad, haunting melodies to hopeful and sweet

ones as on "We Contain Multitudes," its title a reference to writer Walt Whitman's phrase which was also used by Bob Dylan in his song "I Contain Multitudes" from 2020's Rough and Rowdy Ways (Columbia Records). This elegance is culminating in the ending "Undone," which features spoken passages by the late singer Lhasa de Sela, who ruminates between birth and death and that the sensation of being born is the same as the process of dying.

some kind of peace is captivating from start to finish. It is a gentle and moving album that creates its own world where the music elevates to its creator's spiritual and artistic universe. With the delicate, tumultuous, and unpredictable year almost behind and with no end of the troubles ahead, this record after all is about finding the light in the dark, the determination to embrace the good things in life whilst dealing with unexpected and challenging difficulties. ---Nenad Georgievski, allaboutjazz.com

Album "Some Kind of Peace" zrodził się z tej oto mantry: „Nie możemy kontrolować niczego, co się nam przydarza. Jedyne, co możemy zrobić, to kontrolować jak reagujemy na to, co przynosi nam życie”. Album jest o tym, co tak naprawdę oznacza bycie żywym, o odwadze do odsłonięcia swojej wrażliwości i znaczeniu rytuałów. To najbardziej osobisty ze wszystkich dotychczasowych albumów Olafura Arnaldsa. ---empik.com

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