

Clem Leek - Lifenotes (2011)



1 *Page One* 2:05 2 *Past The Pasture And Beyond The Hill* 2:11 3 *Breaking Down* 3:04 4 *My Little Boat* 2:00 5 *Trying Too Hard* 2:35 6 *Apt. #4116* 2:28 7 *You're So Very Far Away* 2:59 8 *The Middle Part* 1:12 9 *November 11th* 1:30 10 *The Diary I Never Kept* 2:34 11 *Hopscotch* 1:19 12 *Circular Motion* 0:46 13 *Origami Soldiers* 3:39 14 *Walter* 3:42 15 *Rain Song* 2:31 16 *Closing (The End)* 0:51 Performer, Recorded By, Mixed By – Clem Leek Violin – Christoph Berg (1, 2, 16)

Lifenotes is a nice mixture of complex atmospheres and stripped back pieces. It has a long track list (sixteen), but they are all short tracks, easily digested.

Clem Leek is a composer who has quietly been working away for some time now. He is very often described as neo-classical, which is a pretty loose term for modern music that is based on traditional classical constructs. Although it certainly draws influence from that genre, I would say it is a bit more soundscape oriented. Ambient washes of drones and electronica popping and fizzing while simple melodic motifs are used, often repetitively to add colour and definition to the pieces. Based in Bath, UK, I first came across Clem at a small gig in an underground venue in said town, and was pretty impressed. Not what I was expecting given the venue, it being more suited to a grimey punk band or something, but the atmospheric and emotive music of his performance was engaging and interesting, if merely for its juxtaposition of content and context.

Since then, Clem has released several works, all steadily developing his style as a composer. This latest offering is another step on his journey. Lifenotes is a nice mixture of complex atmospheres and stripped back pieces. It has a long track list (sixteen), but they are all short tracks, easily digested. Centred on the piano, but also using many other real instruments such as violin and guitar, the album is very much played rather than produced for the main part.

The recording is pretty low tech it has to be said. I once read an article which argued that the recording process was as much a part of the finished product as the performance it captures, and the buzzing and clicking captured during that process is just important to the music as anything else, and should be celebrated as such. Well, you can certainly hear the recording process in all its glory on this album, which could be considered a celebration of the art, or could be seen as unnecessary hiss depending on where you stand on the argument. Either way, it's a minor gripe, if that's even what it is. ---Gustave Savy, igloomag.com

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