

Federico Albanese – The Blue Hour (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Nel buio* 2 *Time Has Changed* 3 *Migrants* 4 *Silent Fall* 5 *Shadow Land Part 1* 6 *Céline* 7 *And We Follow The Night* 8 *Shadow Land Part 2* 9 *The Boat And The Cove* 10 *The Blue Hour* 11 *Interlude* 12 *My Piano Night* 13 *Stellify* Federico Albanese - Piano, Electronics, Hammond, Synthesizer, Bass, Field Recording Arthur Hornig - cello Carlota Ibañez de Alcedoa Silvestre - additional cello

I had never heard of Federico Albanese until coming across this album, *The Blue Hour*, and I am very glad I did. Albanese's own site sums up his music as "airy and cinematic, blending classical music, pop and psychedelia". In the past he has performed in pop bands and been involved in film production as a prop man, an experience that heightened an awareness of the powerful relationship between sound and image. This album follows *The Houseboat* and *the Moon* which appeared in 2014.

If it had appeared a couple of decades ago *The Blue Hour* might have been classified under 'New Age', and there are some sonic relationships with the likes of Harold Budd and Daniel Lanois. *Migrants* is a good example, in which the central piano is surrounded by an atmospheric halo, and cyclical harmonies allow a gentle build-up of textures. There is a great deal of detail to be appreciated in these pieces, which often have a deceptively simple premise but have been subtly transformed to create some magical effects. Cello as a melodic counterpoint to the piano is an important element in *Shadow Land Part 1* and *The Blue Hour*, and contrasts of tempo and density are also attractive aspects of the programme: *Silent Fall* being a slower, more Erik Satie-like piece, *Céline* an even more sparing variation, while *And We Follow the Night* trips along with an intriguing piano ostinato in close intervals.

While there is indeed much to enjoy in terms of layers of sound and elegant production, none of these tracks are over-produced to deliver swampy stadium effects. This is all nicely intimate and

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has a sweet one-to-one, at times almost home-made feel, which I mean as a compliment – even Mozart's stuff was home-made. I have no doubt we will be encountering some of these pieces as soundtracks to documentaries or films very soon. Pieces such as The Boat and the Cove have a universal kind of nostalgic atmosphere, and many of these tracks will be a shoe-in for places that would have used Arvo Pärt's Für Alina or Spiegel im Spiegel but needed something a bit more 'modern' sounding. While we're talking 'music for films', the only thing I miss with The Blue Hour is the potential for something a little edgier; something that sails a little less close to sentimentality. This is where Brian Eno wins out in the end, but I can see how Federico Albanese's craft has taken him in a more personal and less enigmatic direction, and is none the worse for that. This is the kind of thing my mother would have liked, and she was very hard to please. ---Dominy Clements, musicweb-international.com

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