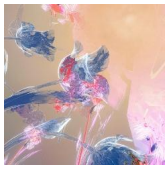
Kelly Moran - Origin (2019)



1.Reflexive Music (Autowave) 02:43 2.Helix II 03:22 3.Halogen (Una Corda) 06:42 4.Love Birds, Night Birds, Devil-Birds 04:26 5.Water Music (Piano Solo) 06:34 6.Helix (Piano Solo) 08:48 7.Night Music 03:03 Recorded and composed by Kelly Moran Mixed and mastered by Gabriel Schuman

Sparkling variations on the piano, of the piano, and by the piano. Songs like "Love Birds …" evoke a swarm of light, fuzzy and calm, deep enough to hide our thoughts in. Enamored by this sound. Favorite track: Love Birds, Night Birds, Devil-Birds. ---Q-Burns Abstract Message, kellymoran.bandcamp.com

Being a pianist in this current climate results in the need to stand out and forge your own sound or identity. Moran utilizes prepared piano as part of her arsenal to create music that has a strong percussive feel on certain tracks. Prepared piano has innovators such as Maurice Delage, Henry Cowell, Hector Villa-Lobos and John Cage to name a few. With Moran she utilizes technology to further work the sounds that she generates from the piano, be it from playing the piano in a conventional way as seen in the performance below or by being more hands on with playing the string with her hands or Ebow and then feeding it through Midi software or sampling keyboards to then further manipulate the sound. The effect of using a prepared piano allows Moran to create alien like timbres and change the perception of what you expect a piano to sound like.

With the EP you can here Moran and her techniques at work. Over the course of the Seven

tracks and thirty five minutes you can pick up the subtle differences in the styles of both her playing and the piano sounds themselves. For demo or home recordings these are clear and vibrant pieces. “Reflexive Music (Autowave)” opens the collection and for a complete novice like myself trying to grasp an understanding from a recording, feels like a fusion of both traditional playing and plucking or lightly hitting of the strings. There is a Gamelan like sound makes this piece feel very percussive. The interesting thing is to compare it to the track “Autowave” that appears on “Ultraviolet” and this version, because of the removed electronics of that piece, gives this particular track a starker feel because of it’s stripped back nature.

While the original “Helix” is a bit of a slow burning track that is propelled alongside Daniel Lopatin’s (Oneohtrix Point Never) synth work, the two versions here “Helix II” and “Helix (Piano Solo)” are two different sorts of beasts.”Helix II” feels the more avant garde of the two with it’s opening passages demonstrating the use of silence between notes to assist in creating a somewhat unhinged feel. Playing wise it feels more conventional probably because there is a split of sound between the traditional sounds you expect from a piano and those of prepared piano. Because of this those that prefer a more traditional sort of piano piece will be drawn to it. “Helix (Piano Solo)” as the name signposts is a minimal -esque solo piano piece with a sort of a topsy turvey feel as Moran slowly builds up her rhythms creating a rather hypnotic piece that has tinges of metallic sound and feelings of suspense. The absence of electronics does change the tone of the piece. With the “Ultraviolet” version the synths add a bit of underlying menace to the piece, but stripped of them there is more an immediacy felt as if Moran is being propelled forward in a trance like state.

Being a non musician I will have take the definition of “Una Corda” to mean that on this version of “Halogen (Una Corda)” that Moran is playing the piano using the soft pedal which resets the position of the hammers to strike two strings rather than the traditional three , which results in a duller sound by definition. This particular version has a more lo-fi recording with the feeling that it was possible recorded on the spur of the moment. Because of this “duller” sound and the recording quality it changes the feel somewhat compared to the album version as it removes the sharpness and replaces it with a slight distant and more emotional feel. “Love Birds, Night Birds, Birds of Paradise and Devil-Birds” seems to not have an antecedent form the album (I am presuming this as I have been streaming the album to compare tracks on the Ep), the vibrant Gamelan sound that I felt on the opener has returned , mixed in with an electrical hum and is a close to the electronics of the album that you will see on this EP. Moran is not the type of composer, from what I have heard, to gently go into a piece. Their is a passion and ferocity of the piece, somewhat like someone compelled to create a piece that is rhythmically dense, with a fast tempo and also rich in tone. There is also a consistency with Moran forever building on the piece before it gently fades away.

“Water Music (Solo Piano)” has a very raw and natural sound with the ambience of the room

seeping in as opposed to the swell of ambience the original piece is nicely bathed in. There is a depth of sound to the track that shows off the more percussive parts, but also the delicate piano playing that supports the more fluid playing. This delicate and at times quiet playing is something that I hadn't previously noticed and it really adds an extra dimension to the track and gives it a somewhat cinematic feel as the percussive parts have a somewhat unhinged feel in their metallic timbre. The Ep's final track "Night Music" again focuses on a depth of sound from the metallic percussive strings and the deep bass keys and the distance between the two of them filling up with sound. There are similarities in this piece to those that are on the EP, but with a darker feel the track sets itself up differently and blurs the line between experimental and noir-ish music nicely. You get the feeling of Moran playing alongside either a dance piece or multimedia work and interpreting the images or the motions of the performers and contributing to their narrative.

"Origin" is an EP that at times strips back the music of Kelly Moran and at other times offers another side of the tracks from her album. I recommend comparing the two works as it will open up more about this release and give you an insight into what they become as well as the workings of her as an artist. It could be on the experimental side for some listeners, but it is something that if you take the time to listen to more and more (as well as the comparison with the "Ultraviolet" album I mentioned before), it will reveal more of itself to the listener.
---driftingalmostfalling.wordpress.com

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