

"Orpheus" by Stefan Varga – Perfect synchrony

by Karina Palacios Guevara, Quito (Ecuador)

An album that shows perfect synchrony between poetic and musical phrases, "Orpheus" is a work that fuses jazz, soul and blues, and a tiny trace of pop in precise doses, which summons more than one generation. The work is a collection of original songs and instrumental pieces, an example of the evident creative symbiosis between the experienced composer and guitarist Stefan Varga and the singer-songwriter Naomi Kraft.

A most delightful piece, "Only by the night" opens the album with a sound that evokes the warmth of a fireplace during an intimate dialogue between the enchantment of Varga's music and the profane contained in the lyrics performed by Naomi's contralto. It makes us forget that, for a large part of this year, our entire universe had to be condensed within the four walls of our homes, during the endless-like "Lockdown", as it has been called in North America and elsewhere, and whose musical version in this work takes us from serenity to optimism through shades of sadness and apathy, an emphatic amazement and, finally, the stylization of enthusiasm ... an exact portrait of our emotional rhythms during this experience shared on a global scale. Perhaps, we might have to wait a little longer, to reach its bright end, as anticipated by the album with "Clear night", a true oasis.

"Baby blue" deserves special mention, due to the singer-songwriter's vocal variations which give forcefulness and depth to the intimate verses, in perfect synchrony with the landscape released by the chords that sustain the piece: impeccable parallel for an exquisite and unique finish.

We are already familiar with Varga's splendid trajectory and the powers of seduction of his instrumental works of jazz, swing and other experimental rhythms published in more than seven albums with his quartet Zozo, the duo Eichinger & Varga and the trio Swing Guitars. The classic stamp of his original compositions invites the ear, yet the sinuosities and fusions to which he subtly bets are those that, finally, captivate all the senses and induce fantasy.

The refined and exact style of Naomi's vocal tones is surprising; it somehow resembles, in certain splendid moments, of contemporary women performers of soul, jazz and blues fusions such as Winehouse or Sade, in addition to her own cadence, power and glow. This, not to mention the dissonant details with which she dares sign the end of her funk performances, in former equally admirable works resulting from the Varga - Kraft collaboration, at the beginning of their musical association.

And so on... Each piece hides a surprise: sensuality, consciousness, fiction. Each one invites us to find our most comfortable armchair in our favorite corner, prepare a hot drink and enjoy it thoroughly in "Orpheus", so to calmly experience the second chapter of the planetary drama we are going through, as our second winter in hibernation. With this company, which also invites previous or latter generations, this will not be a confinement, but a moment of recollection, rest and contemplation. Until we can meet and hug each other again.

Stefan Varga - Orpheus (rec/odds - believe music 2021) CD/LP/digital

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