

Moon Rituals – Sienná (review by Dave Franklin)

SIENNÁ 月麗 moon rituals



I cover so much contemporary, western music on this site that it is easy to forget that culturally, as well as, geographically, the world is still a very big and diverse place. It is music such as Moon Rituals which makes for the perfect reminder of such a fact. For every chart-seeking pop star with their dance routines and team of writers or indie kids who are still happy to rip-off Arctic Monkeys riffs, there are artists such as Sienná doing something at the opposite and far more fascinating end of the sonic spectrum.

Sienná, a Japanese expatriate who has made Norway her home has forged a career as live electronic artist throughout the last decade and is known for building wonderful sonic landscapes from ambient understatement, classical grace and electronic sounds which seem to meander between past and present, east and west, this world and the next.

Moon Rituals is the sound of her reconnecting with her roots and places Japanese traditional sounds at its centre. And as refreshing as it is to hear someone paying homage to her own musical heritage, her always exploratory approach takes those timeless sounds and pushes them into new, futuristic and slightly avant-garde designs.



The work is at times the sound of an ancient east, at others it sits at the cutting edge of western electronic music. It reflects timeless traditions and also builds an ambient futurism. There are classical grace notes and fuzzy electronic discords, sweeping grandeur and wilfully chaotic multi-layering. There are moments of utmost elegance and others of occasional confusions. It echoes with Steve Reich's strange, left-field minimalism and is reminiscent of Vangelisian sci-fi haze.

Opening track Moonrise signposts this strange journey nicely, starting in stark and brooding classicalism drifting through jazz landscapes before driving home on slick electro-pop beats. Wesak on Mt Kurama is a hazy otherworldly blend complete with drifting, half-heard vocals and Crescent Moon is a gorgeous wave of shimmering textures and ghost choirs.

Moon Rituals seems to be a wonderful metaphor for where Sienná finds herself today and the music she makes here could be seen to be her old life, the sounds, memories and views of the country that she once called home, as seen through the filter of the place that she now resides. A blend of the two countries as rendered into sound and used to paint her own unique sonic pictures. Or it might be that she just makes fantastically original and forward-thinking music. I suspect both are true.

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