# Sienná – EMA

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There is a particular kind of record that arrives not so much to be reviewed as to be survived, in the best sense. *EMA*, the seventh full-length from Kyoto-born, Oslo-dwelling Sienná, is one such object: nine pieces of music that treat the listener's attention as something to be gently confiscated and returned, subtly altered, an hour later.

The title is the first clue. An *ema* is the small wooden plaque that visitors to Japanese shrines inscribe with a wish and hang for the gods to read. Sienná takes the idea and inverts it. These songs are the messages received rather than the wishes sent. She has said the ideas "fell down from the sky" as she walked alone through the forests of Kibune valley and the island of Ischia, and for once a press-release flourish turns out to be an accurate description of the music. It sounds like weather, not composition: slow fronts of synthesiser, pressure drops, sudden clearings.

Opener "Be A Seeker, Believer" is the lead single and the record's thesis. Where lesser electronic artists would reach for the euphoric drop, Sienná builds something closer to a held breath. Hope is offered here, but without a hard sell, which is rather the point. It is a song for a world she has described as beautiful but sad, and it has the decency to be both.

From there, *EMA* unfolds with the confidence of an artist who abandoned the rulebook some years ago and has not missed it. "Your Fact, My Fact" is a cool, circling meditation on the slipperiness of consensus, which feels uncomfortably timely. The title track is a hushed centrepiece, spacious enough that you can hear the room decide to stay quiet. "Aenaria", named for Ischia's ancient Roman moniker, is volcanic in mood if not in volume, its warmth pooling under the surface like thermal springs. "369 (Miroku)" nods to the Buddhist future saviour with a slowly accreting pulse that is unmistakably, and pleasingly, odd.

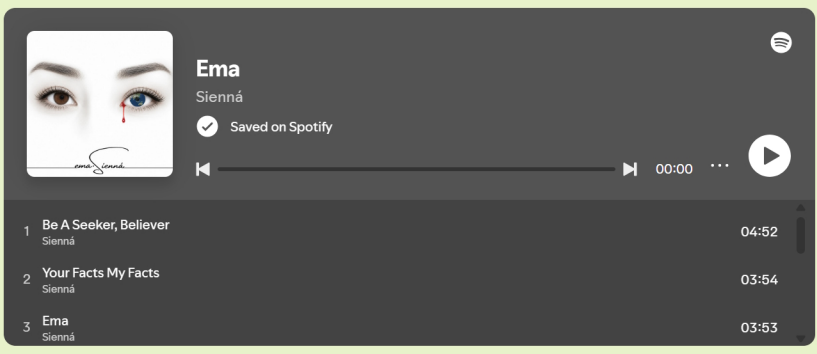
The influences are audible but never leaned upon. Ryuichi Sakamoto's patient, painterly touch hangs over the quieter passages, Massive Attack's nocturnal dread occasionally darkens the corners, and there is a Brian Eno-ish faith in the idea that ambience can be an argument rather than wallpaper. But Sienná has spent years sharing stages with the likes of Nils Petter Molvær and the late Mick Karn, and that schooling in jazz's elasticity shows. Notes bend and linger, and nothing is quantised into submission. The wabi-sabi she cites is real here: the beauty lies in imperfection, impermanence, and the slight asymmetry that makes a thing feel alive.

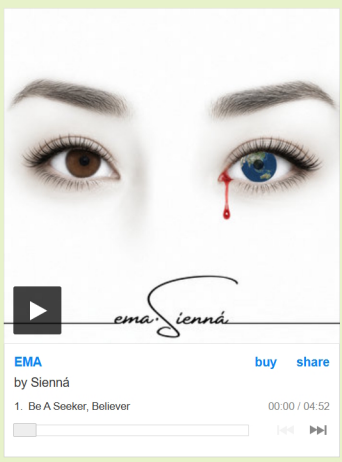
The back half is the more rewarding stretch. "Finding Inner Sanctuary" delivers precisely what it promises, and "The Majestic" earns its grand title through restraint rather than bombast. "A Messenger" is the album's most cinematic moment, a slow-motion tracking shot in sound. Closer "From Here to Where You Are" wisely refuses a big finish. It simply opens a door and lets the silence in, which, after all that, feels like the only correct ending.

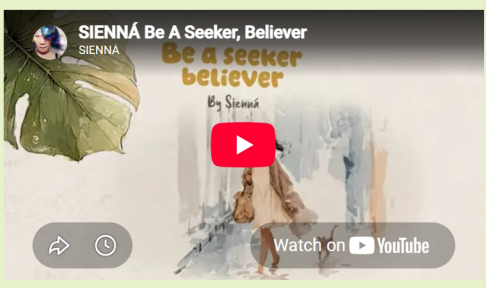
In an era when so much music is engineered to survive a thirty-second skip, *EMA* demands the whole walk through the forest, and rewards it.

*A wish, then, for Sienná: that this reaches the audience it deserves. The gods, one suspects, have already read it.*

https://www.sienna-web.com/




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