SIENNÁ - EMA

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Sienná

EMA
self-released; 2026

By Jamie Funk

SIENNÁ began imagining her seventh album with a sketchbook in mind. Walking through Kyoto's Kibune valley and spending time on the Italian island of Ischia, the composer wanted to draw what she encountered. She wrote songs instead. Born in Kyoto and based in Oslo, SIENNÁ approaches those experiences through electronic production, jazz and classical instrumentation. *EMA*, her first album since 2023's *Wa Kei Sei Jyaku*, suggests that translating a landscape into music can leave plenty of room for a club beat.

The title comes from ema, the wooden plaques on which visitors to Japanese shrines write prayers, wishes and messages of gratitude. That practice gives the album's broad concern with interconnectedness a specific reference: the act of committing a private thought to a physical surface. SIENNÁ's involvement extends across the record's presentation. Alongside writing and production, she handles keyboards, vocals, programming and the cover artwork.

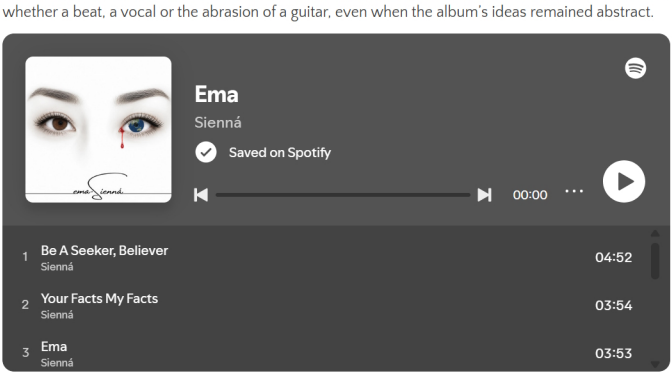
"Be A Seeker, Believer" introduces the beat immediately, though the song takes its time developing. The minimal production suits its melancholy, giving the vocal enough space to establish the mood without making every detail compete for attention. In a subtle way, it reminded me of Björk. That association never became distracting; the song's restraint was enough to keep me interested on its own.

"Your Facts My Facts" moves more decisively toward the dance floor, with a beat that recalls '90s techno. I liked both the rhythm and the samples, particularly after the opener's more subdued approach. The title track loosens that rhythmic emphasis. I enjoyed its airy atmosphere and cinematic scope, qualities that recur across the album without entirely defining it.

"Aenaria" makes the cinematic tendency more explicit through swelling strings. "369 (Miroku)" follows with a darker beat that reminded me a little of the Knife, and I liked the distorted guitars. The change gives the album some welcome friction: its interest in nature and spiritual reflection accommodates harsher sounds, too.

"Finding Inner Sanctuary" returns to the atmospheric side of the record, while "The Majestic" introduces a deep, martial drumbeat that I particularly enjoyed. "A Messenger" was another highlight for me, before "From Here To Where You Are" closes the album in a more experimental mode.

I liked *EMA* most for its willingness to accommodate these different approaches. The spare opening, club rhythms, strings and darker passages give its nine tracks considerable variety. SIENNÁ attempts a lot here, and I enjoyed much of it. The strongest moments gave me something specific to return to, whether a beat, a vocal or the abrasion of a guitar, even when the album's ideas remained abstract.



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