

LightGarden - TRAVELLING LIGHT (LightGarden LG. 01)



"What music is this?" will be the question on many lips on hearing this magical and unusual disc. It's not an easy question to answer, for it could come from anywhere and yet comes from everywhere - folk music and culture (both acid- and of Celtic and English traditions), interlaced with world sounds and found sounds in a compelling and unique combination; both of our time and of antiquity immemorial.

LightGarden is an eclectic new duo comprising David Moss and Masha Kaestner: those of a certain persuasion will fondly recall David as a guiding force behind fab Whitby-based trio Banoffi, who called it a day a few years back, and he's now re-emerged from the art world to make sweet music once again.

David's ultra-distinctive soft and melodious voice and stirring instrumental technique (bouzouki, fiddle, mandolin etc) form the primary signature of LightGarden's intriguing textures, underpinned and enchantingly enhanced by Masha's keyboard work, drones and florid embellishments (harmonium, piano, church organ) and occasional voice (gently earthy, with shades of Björk or even Nico but not as deeply sinister).

Musical reference points might include wyrd-folk (Third Ear Band, Forest, Incredible String Band), maverick indie-folk (Sharron Kraus, Pamela Wyn Shannon), early Velvet Underground, even some art-goth, and a healthy dash of Eastern European exotica. Experienced live, LightGarden are both hypnotic and uplifting: they create an intimate, almost confessional ambience and a constantly intriguing spatial tapestry of musical delights; and, while no CD can ever replicate that direct intensity, Travelling Light's ten tracks give a pretty fair idea of the duo's repertoire and world-view, while also affording them the opportunity to experiment with some creative multitracking and layering of sonic textures.

The bulk of LightGarden's music is self-composed: firstly, the album showcases several of the duo's song-collaborations, which, while depicting or expounding stages on their spiritual journey and embracing philosophical explorations, dwell at the doors of our perception, remaining wholly accessible within that serene, peaceful, floaty Banoffi mode. There are a number of instrumental pieces too, which resonate with serendipity and when at their most episodic exude life itself in all its manifold glories while

embodying elemental echoes of medieval, Balkan, eastern and ambient musics and glistening with experimental timbres and insights. Masha also gives us a personal, almost incantatory rendition of a Finnish folksong. But the oddest track on the CD is its closing eight-minute sound-collage, on which Masha intones deeply meaningful verses from a 14th century Persian (Rumi) text to a backdrop of the dawn chorus (the latter feature, bewilderingly, either irritates or calms depending on your mood at the time).

Finally - and importantly - I must mention that a key element within the uniqueness of the LightGarden sound is that of overtone singing, an ancient (Mongolian) vocal technique that produces an unearthly, weird and totally wonderful sound, a harmonic drone that (a) once heard can't be forgotten and (b) you'll either love or hate... it contours perfectly with the sound of David and Masha's instruments and voices, and its glacial, piercing intensity is both enervating and curiously soothing.

I do hope I've managed to convey something of the special quality of LightGarden's music: enough to encourage you to investigate with an open mind their brave, subtly sensual and inspiring music that determinedly inhabits its own unique space.

www.lightgarden.info

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