

## CHELSEA WOLFE - ABYSS

Chelsea **Wolfe** is an artist often put under scrutiny by critics and fans alike, with a sound enriched by American neo folk and gothic music, as much as by experimental music like industrial and the no wave; she has always polarized a very variegated kind of public, and her works often have a wide popular consensus. At the same time the hidden desire of seeing our heroes falling lives into us, fearing and wanting to be dissatisfied; but the career of Chelsea Wolfe has evolved with highs and lows by the years, between acoustic atmospheres, ethereal moments and scary noisy experiments. Today we talk about her last album, the fifth, called **Abyss**, licensed under the **Sargent House** record just like her 2013 work **Pain is beauty**.

This album has among the many collaborators **Mike Sullivan** of **Russian Circles** fame, an American instrumental post rock band that worked with her on their fourth album **Memorial**. He has some kind influence on some parts of the work, especially on drones and atmospheres, but the sound of Chelsea Wolfe keeps its nature, following an evolution that was always in progress during her career; this is an embracing album, where the listener lives a dreamy trip with rare atmospheres, where the music is wall thought art. In this work she's a kind of dark "*crooner*" that doesn't follow by the rules the topoi of dark music, familiar but at the same time open to experimentation with her sound, with a great maturity and confidence.

*Carrion Flowers* welcomes us with strong distortions added by industrial noises very close to the claustrophobic solutions of the early **Swans**; now her ethereal vocals "*molest*" the chaos underneath, creating a dichotomy peculiar of her music, one of its stronger elements. We find creepy sounds, that dominate a pause then destroyed by aggressive attacks and cutting effects, with an apocalyptic crescendo; a perfect welcome enriched by dark visions and cacophonies, where harmony is preserved at the same time in a game of contrasts.

*Dragged Out* shows us in the opening strident sounds and apocalyptic and oppressive *sludge* sounds, where charming rhythms and buried vocals find their place in a hidden tension where her aptitude at darkness and her sense of epic atmospheres are well preserved; then loud effects explode where the emotion grows wildly, but the voice keeps its control on what would probably be senseless chaos without it. The stakes are high, but Chelsea Wolfe isn't afraid, and she is the winner with a majestic sound that clearly shows her skills

*After The Fall* starts with *ambient* parts, but then it follows a rhythmic electronic sound tagged with piano and a delicate voice, in a semi *trip hop* structure where "*wrong*" melodies keep getting higher, making us think about some *minimal pop* experiments; distortions and drum machine keep the epic elements on the plate, but they change often peace with the calmer sound of the beginning. The songwriting is based on beats and changes of peace, with sonic dialogues where the American artist plays with emotions and control at the same time; the last part, following a *progressive* suit, is marked by cutting digressions and the emphasis of the vocals, but it drowns soon in *ambient* effects that linked it to the start.

*Crazy Love* surprises us with an acoustic sound very close to **Nick Cave** and **Leonard Cohen**, a sound not so alien for our artist and her sound; *folk* elements follow some distressing loops in a game of peace and disquietude, where imperfect chords create an atmospheres close to our hearts, making beauty out of imperfection, thanks to **Chelsea's** vocals, full of charm and spirit. An "easy" episode very functional to the album, that ends with creepy notes full of anxiety.

*Survive* is a *post rock* number where we find a *lo-fi* production with low pitched guitars that contrasts with the high level of the voice of the singer; we have strident and nightly sounds, caustic reverbs, and

oppressive atmospheres, but in the end is the emotive nature of the vocals that dominates the scene . The final session is controlled by a fast drumming and dreamy sounds, where nightmarish visions and celestial pictures live ones with the others; the English *post punk* soul is there, in a new lesson about *dark* music offered by **Chelsea Wolfe**.

This is a work that knows how to experiment without being too difficult (for the listeners of a certain kind of music, of course) and that doesn't fall in the trap of self-indulgence, keeping the main directions of the heart of **Chelsea Wolfe** music; the contrast between oppressive sounds, distortions, piano's parts, acoustic elements, and the voice full of *pathos* is a winning solution, with a stronger maturity in execution and composition than in the past. An album that charms but at the same time scares us, with sound spaces where we drown in the music, without being directly attacked, and where the melody is never too obvious, in a perfect equilibrium; a great work for **Wolfe's** fan and new comers alike, that should be added to any one's discography. Dark landscapes wait for us, but they won't strangle us, they'll show us aspects of our self that maybe we didn't know; we can choose to be guided by this dark flame in the night of the soul.

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