

## ECSTASPHERE – CARNIVAL OF KATHARSIS

Although loads of musicians have used, in the past as well as now, music as a useful tool with which to externalize their discomfort and to self-analyze themselves, not all of them have succeeded in creating innovating and original music, and it's rather interesting to see as mainly instrumental music such as the so called *rhythmic industrial* could transmit so deep messages.

We've learned to know **Ecstasphere**, **Ophelia The Suffering's** alias, with her first album – also that released by **Raumklang – Feed your head**, with the following self-released **Klangporträts** EP and with her collaboration with **Phasenmensch**, all works we've talked about when they were released.

If we already had the chance to appreciate the way in which Ophelia, in her first album, has succeeded in operating an interesting recapitulation of the *rhythmic* genre and in pushing forward the genre's boundaries with the following EP showing, without any fear of moving outside the genre's limits, a possible point of intersection between classical music and mechanical distorted rhythms, without forgetting the fundamental evolutionary step released some days ago as **Aphexia**, the really interesting **Breathe** (a deep breathe in a music that needed it), **Carnival of catharsis**, this is the new album's title, on the one hand represents an evolution of what's been already written by the artist in her previous work such as *A cure*, *Liebe freiheit alles* and *Dissociation reversed*, and on the other hand marks a separation from the genre's classic works to arrive at something new: a definitely more complete work if we think at the previous album, less stumbling, more cohesive.

For Ophelia, the rhythm is the tool through which to operate an inner catharsis (and the cycle of gigs **Katharsis**, within which important live acts have been presented, has surely influenced also this album), to understand the origin of her torments and to face her fears, because what terrorize us is what we don't know, conscious that it's not possible to delete the evil side from us, as the good-evil dualism permanently belongs to the human being. Nevertheless, what the artist can do is to dive into the meanders of her soul to consult that terrorizing "I" that we can't never fully know but that can help us to know something more about ourselves. The metaphor chosen for this *concept album* is that of the Carnival: in fact, that's the moment in which identities merge and everything could happen.

Carnival of catharsis could be interpreted as the sequel of her previous album because, if in *Feed your head* the musician was showing herself and her inner dualism without explaining herself/us the origin of this (an inner drama clearly perceivable in a particularly agitated music), here she decides to make a journey that will make her understand the role played by the "I", to which Ophelia gives human form (calling him "Sir"), that "I" that we tend to push in the distant corners of our mind as we're not always capable of controlling his primordial instinct, instinct that pushes us to make what we seem not to want to do (but what we would do).

However, it's not necessary to be experts in the Psychology field to understand the beauty and the completeness of a work that succeeds in perfectly conjugating distorted rhythms, classical music (in particular that of XVII's century) and a neither too much covertly melancholic mood. Carnival of catharsis has strongly been influenced by the songs composed with the Aphexia's monicker, and in fact the use of keyboard, piano and violin melodic patterns are elements already listenable in *Breathe*, even if here they sound enriched and deepened. *The carnival awakes* is an introduction

that floors the listener and that let understand what will be further listened: it's a sinister melody that recalls a party, upon which a short distorted rhythmic passage shows itself. *Passage dangereux* is the first step toward the process of understanding of ourselves, and musically is a song dominated by a groovy, heavy and tarantulated distorted rhythm and by a gloomy melodic motif. *Creeping creatures made of fear* is one of the most interesting episodes of the album, in which the use of classical music as well as that of the tarantulated rhythm is listenable, the whole embellished by the evocative sound of the violin. Here it seems to listen to a heavier interpretation of the work recently made with Aphexia.

*The noose* makes once again use of the violin, increasing the power of the rhythm and introducing the narrative element of Ophelia, who here sings for the first time. The sensation is that of finding ourselves moved into a distant place, and the tarantulated rhythm suits very well within this context. Even if *Broken toy (On her knees)* passes by a bit fast without leaving a particular trail of itself, *Demedicate the puppeteer (Their dawn of bitterending's near)* is one of the most particular episodes, that plays upon a mid tempo rhythm, melodic ideas inspired by classical music and, in general, an *intelligent* electronic approach. The best moments arrive with the fast and fiery *Catharsis*, a song that moves fast and in which the distorted rhythm is heavier and engaging and in which the melodic pattern is free to draw harmonies. There's even space for more ambient and softer moments in *Army of puppets*, a song that recalls Raumklang's releases, slow, ambient and characterized by a metallurgical rhythm soundtrack-like, while *Dolls with empty eyes* twists a rhythm that, however, maintains its slow and heavy temporal coordinates (and using a melodic motif that seems to come from a carillon).

The last three songs are probably the best developed and interesting ones. Once again a carillon opens *The shadow play*, a long and manifold song that begins with a slow rhythm, that, along its development, becomes distorted until its climax, a rhythmic tarantulated explosion upon which melodic ideas gain the chance to breathe creatively. *Illusion of delusion* is a dry and fast classic *rhythmic noise* episode characterized by a rather old school and overbearing development. *Farewell, Sir!* is the final song, a recapitulation of all the Ecstasphere formula's elements, here very well synthesized: the use of violin, melodic motifs, ambient breaks, angel-like voce, tarantulated distorted rhythm.

Carnival of catharsis isn't simply a journey inside ourselves, but above all a huge product of artistic ripeness. Ecstasphere is one of the most interesting and creative acts of the current *rhythmic industrial* landscape and it surely will distinguish itself also in the future for its particular approach. If the goal of each artist is to create music that has its own originality, well, Carnival of catharsis (as previously partially made with Breathe), definitely has caught the point.

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Score: 9, 5

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