

## JIHAD LIVE @ DARK EBM SOULS 28-02-2015

Many years have passed since **Zillo** magazine talked about dark electro music in order to label the debut album of the German-based **yelworC**, but although the music of the Texas-based musical project **Jihad** of **James Mendez** clearly shares, with this musical definition, several important trademarks, it would be unuseful and limiting to tell once again the story of the genre every time a new album belonging to that category is produced.

In fact, Mendez, even if makes his music always with the musical approach of **Mentallo & The Fixer** (as far as their early works are concerned) in his mind, in this live at the **Dark EBM Souls** festival, held this February in Bratislava, shows an approach that, in some ways, is closer to the pure and simple EBM, moving quite far from the **yelworC**'s, as well as from **Placebo Effect**'s approach.

It's not a new album, as we'll have to wait until 2016, probably when **Electro Aggression Records** will release his second album after 1997's **A prayer in the night**, this one released by **Ras Dva** of **Ric Laciak** (R.I.P), but an album that shows very well how a complex genre such as dark electro could be translated into the live dimension, a genre which trademark (among the others) is the structural complexity of its songs. The musical result is very good, even thanks to the huge work made at the mastering by **Arnte** of the **Pyrroline** project.

Excluding the **Benestrophe**'s cover (a tribute to his major inspirators, **Mentallo & The Fixer**, as well as to who released their works with this monicker, **Laciak**), *Endangered species*, the seven songs that compose this live album perfectly define the trademarks of this particular musical vision, a vision that quite strongly detaches itself from the classic EBM old school formula as well as from the old school electro industrial formula, partially bringing it outside of the larger *electro*-cauldron in which often it's put.

Typically dark and gothic-like atmospheres, "magic" and ritual melodies, philosophical-existential lyrics and references to **Crowley**'s thought and to magic (as we can listen in the opener *People of the land*), distorted vocals, complex rhythmic (but never in an exaggerated way) and melodic breaks that have a very great impact: this is what the listener will find in these songs, and what are, in general, the main typical characteristics of a genre that is quite different from *electronic body music*: the bodily perfection of EBM against the doubt, the self-analysis (*Should i speak or should i sigh, i live to know, i lose my mind*) in *Shades of grey*; the squared 4 / 4 rhythm against the rhythmic suspension that reflect the estrangement of the musician-human being, his being precarious, his thinking about his existence and about his intrinsic weakness, as listenable in *Looking glass* (*The looking glass reveals – to the character of the story – that she is not the first and would not be the last*).

Also *I can't let go* is another example, as well as *Looking glass*, of lyrical-musical suspension, of obscure melodies painted upon a not squared oniric and surreal rhythmic. The lyrics talk about a dialogue – maybe – with the I, lyrics that express the will to declare to himself his physical existence, not his evanescence, even if not always he's conscious of what he does, a condition that every human being share. It represents, through Mendez's words, the valorization of the human beings limits and their imperfection, characteristics that define his music as a music distant from the formal perfection of the electronic body music.

Counterposed, in some ways, to these more cryptic and oniric songs, there are more squared, less evanescent episodes, more linked to the squared EBM 4 / 4 rhythm, more solid, such as the already cited opener *People of the land*, *Hands that hide* and *Visions*, also including among them the already cited cover *Endangered species*.

While waiting to listen to a new work by Jihad, this live at the Dark EBM Souls in Bratislava held this February (we remember it, along with some similar musicians such as **Kifoth**, **Terminal State**, **MC1R** and **Fix8:Sëd8**) highlights the goodness of the music of a project that has its own identity and that, we're sure about this, in 2016 will confirm once again, after several years, its undoubted musical value.

Score: 8, 5

Label: Self-produced

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