

## NAO KATAFUCHI – ÉMERGENCE

Who could have said that, one day, Japanese musicians would have felt the urge or, to say it better, the *emergence*, to cite the title of the Japan-based **Nao Katafuchi**, to study non particularly the history of Italian Art (this is already made everyday), but the electro-synth pop pop-italo disco music belonging to a past often considered old-fashioned by us, almost a page of the Italian music history from which to move away. There's nothing more silly in this thought, in fact the glorious **Nadanna Records** has already demonstrated, a year ago, by means of the Greek project **23rd underpass**, to particularly care about this Italian style.

After Greece, the interest comes from Japan, from a musician who, passionate about all that is retro, perfectly mixes, within a rather (synth) pop mixture, complex synth pop patterns, catchy vocal lines, italo disco echoes and guitars on the background, even those part of the musical heritage of the cited genres. **Émergence** will maybe be perceived by someone as an out of date work (for us, used to always glorify the musical evolution and the modernity as the most important thing), but there's also who, simply, wants to pay an homage to what he loves, even if it's six feet under in our country, buried under several layers of reinforced concrete.

We write about his very first album, released three years after his last and only EP, an interesting and never ordinary album made of ten songs, of which the last two are, respectively, an alternative version and a remix of the most immediate and catchy episodes. Songs characterized by a strong and pathemic mood are alternated, very well produced and, as far as the composition is concerned, particularly straight, such as the opener *Silhouette*, a song that clearly talks about a woman to whom the character of the story is yet very linked, something that is part of his past, but that, in the chorus, seem to remember those *glory days*, the glory days of a music that has known its end, but with which he's deeply fallen in love. Also the sounds of the song aren't positive and radiant, otherwise they tell a sort of decline of something that in the past existed and that isn't part of our life anymore.

In the following *Emergence*, there are more straight synthetic analogic-vintage patterns and a more engaging and fast rhythm, as well as, above all in some synthetic passages, the Japanese influence of the artist, almost playful and surreal, and here his voice counterposes to that of an ethereal woman that almost seems to whisper the lyrics. *Dance to the end* is the clearest example of the *italo disco* influence that we've talked about before: it's a classic danceable song in retro and strongly italo situations, spiced by electric guitars elements, which sounds (let's think, for example, at the ending) have a lot in common with the sound of the early '80s.

In some way, the most experimental and different episode is the following song, *Awakening V2*: it's the episode in which, more clearly, an oniric, ambient, repetitive and minimalist dimension is evoked, a sort of dream that sounds like an interlude in the stories of the Musician, a *going outside* from the diegesis to find again the dialogue with the lost loved person. Both of them whisper their words. The remaining songs follow, alternatively, what has been proposed in the first songs: sometimes there are simpler songs, slow and evocative, inspired by the music of the '80s, and other songs in which the synthesizer is more free to draw intriguing patterns and to acquire surely a more important role.

The album is closed by an alternative version of *Silhouette* (almost identical to the original song) and by a particular remix of *Dance to the end* made by **Kevin Komoda**, that slightly embitter the song mood, creating a darker version, also this very retro and inspired by the '80s.

**Marc Schaffer** and **Nader Mounneh** have succeeded, once again, in excellently proposing a very much retro sound, and, in some ways, difficult, at least in Italy, through the music of a never predicted musician, strongly derivative (and it's his goal), Nao Katafuchi, that in *Émergence* demonstrates to have full control of the musical genre and to succeed in creating a variation on this music, even thanks to his never hidden and interesting japanese musical-cultural roots that here and there graciously emerge. A very good album.

Score: 8

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