

SERPENTS – STATE OF WAR

The much long waited and very talked about new Germans **Serpents**'s work has finally seen the light, and **Electro Aggression Records** has had the undoubted quality of bringing back the attention upon an historic cult act that in the recent years hasn't been very much talked about, even due to a five years stop that separates *State of War* from the previous album, **Immer voran!**, originally released only in digital format.

The history of the Germans **Claus Kruse** (better known with the **Plastic Noise Experience** monicker) and of **Kazim Sarikaya** is similar to that of other cult acts: they're an historic act which can be inserted in the early '90s *EBM* in conjunction with the early *electro-industrial* sound that, after having gained a broader success and after having produced loads of very good albums during the '90s, has registered, since the early 2000, a slow public decline even due to the interest moved on more *trance* and *techno* derived sounds.

The huge double album released by **Nader Mounneh**'s label shows, therefore, a very well-accepted comeback and a very good record which is a very good milestone for the future of the act. In this work, it's possible to observe (in particular, to listen) to two works very different between them: the first album, the already cited *State of War*, shows the duo in 2015, while the second album contains 2010's record *Immer voran!*, and it's the first time that this one is released on cd, although it includes some interesting *remixes*, in particular made by Plastic Noise Experience (Kruse himself) and some songs registered again in 2015. The difference between the two albums is very much recognizable, and it could surely be said that, if *Immer voran!* is a very good *EBM* album mixed with *electro-industrial* atmospheres, *State of War* is several steps ahead of its predecessor and, taking back their characteristic *trademark* made of minimalist *EBM* structures and *electro* sounds plus an highly distorted vocal with a very particular as much as unusual polished taste for the melodic side of their music, it demonstrates how much it could be possible to express with the apparently more simpler structures and rhythms. It's surely their greatest masterpiece until now.

State of War isn't a dark and philosophic *electro* artwork, but it's a declaration of resistance to a war which began in the far 1989 with **The clock strikes the midnight**, is the pride that sweats from the electronic structures typically German-style. Far from complex lopsided solutions, the sound of Kruse and Sarikaya is apparently basic, *back to the basics*, this inserted into, and that's the main difference with the 2010's album, a very less squared context and less imprisoned in the danceable *beat*. Excluding the very interesting *remixes*, the Germans need only ten songs to show all their value: the album starts with one of the best episodes, *My life, my being*, which very well synthesizes the Serpents formula: the word is *groove*, and it could be said that its beginning is one of the best in *EBM* history, it's not an exaggeration. Now distant from the genre's rules that themselves have created, in these four minutes there's all: well measured vocals, an entangled and synthetic rhythm, a bit of melodic taste and a very clever use of pauses, put in the right place in the right moment. Tensions and distensions here are expressed in the best possible way, it's difficult to do it in a better way, but Serpents succeed in maintaining high the threshold attention for the most of their record.

Resistance shows a different approach to the music, without easily copying what's done in the opening: it starts with a modern danceable *mid tempo* which recalls the electronic sounds, then moving to a faster chorus, highly melodic and very well sustained by a definitely *groovy 4 / 4*

riding. Here the message is quite clear: the tribe (and the indian chief in the cover artwork, the same present in the '89 debut) fights, through the music, for its independence and, translating this discourse to Serpents's music, the duo fights to resist to the dominant taste and to show with pride their sound in the *post-industrial* scene.

State of war which gives is even the album title, is one of the more modern songs, not much for the sounds used, but because, listening to it, it could be clearly listened how that sound, in a specific historic period, played a definitely important role in the process of evolution of the genre: highly distorted *vocals* that in 2000 would have become a standard, *trance* influences and powerful basslines, without sounding mainstream. Here the duo use the propelling thrust to give a major strength to their power, to try to show the listener how heavier their war is, and the martial and dry rhythms in the background get us find ourselves in the battlefield. It's the use of constant melodic variations that reminds us that we're still listening to *EBM*, although the song contains loads of influences and although it could be possible to listen to echoes of ancient tribes that, before them, fought in the same way and were their forerunners.

With *I'm near*, more introspective and minimalist landscapes are explored, far from *danceable* influences, mediated by a certain *electro industrial* taste and by early *EBM*, and the lyrics topic changes according to it: no more hymns to the resistance, but the exploration of interpersonal relations. The melody, minimalist and polished, recalls the East. The following *Violence* is, in spite of the song title, a mechanic ballet quite minimalist and catchy in which the lyrics are provocative, aiming to wake up the mind of the human who sleeps in the System. The inspired and minimalist *Inside* follows the previous song, a *mid tempo* very well rhythmical in which the dark-like melody permeates a song that, even here, is quite introspective, but with the following *My heart will beat again* we listen to something different that break again their schemes.

A slow rhythm, a grim and gothic-like melody, vocal lines more regular and lyrics full of will of revenge and, even here, a polish taste for the use of pauses, very much important in the Serpents formula. These are the main characteristics of the song time, published some months ago on **Soundcloud**, focused the fans on the following release of the album. Then the last three new songs follow, *Undefined*, *unknown desire*, always minimalist but richer of stylistic solutions, characterized by a particular taste for the melody, the *hardcore mid tempo* of *Your master*, that in its sounds and in its development recalls the sound of **Pouppée Fabrikk**, and the more experimental *You hide*, a song in which old synths meet each other and give shape to *old school* melodic structures, more *techno*-derived than *EBM*, a very good conclusion for a work that shows the duo at its best, yet capable, after loads of years, to change and to embody the developments of the genre.

After the new songs, the usual series of *remix* follows, starting from the more properly *electro-industrial* version of *Resistance* made by the Kruse *alter ego*, PNE, a more grim and abstract version in spite of that of the original *title track* made by the label mate **kFactor**, which totally transforms the original song, a faster and intensified version of *Violence* made by **CYBER**, a more *old school electro / synth pop*-driven version of *My heart will beat again* made by **The psychic force**, the modern *electro* of **AD:key** that realize a slower and more gothic-like version of *Your master*, a more bodily version of *Resistance* made by **Pyrroline** and the particular *swedish old school EBM remix* of *My life, my being* made by the label mates **Astma**, who transform the groove of the song in an electronic ballet more linked to the sound of the '80s.

Very much different from their last work, *Immer voran!* put in evidence an *act* more imprisoned into squared schemes, but which don't simplify their music, alternating almost tribal explorations in the *opener Steh auf* to more regular, less characteristic *mid tempo* such as *Komm noch naeher* and the *title track*, moving through the *electro*-like *Glaub an mich* and through the faster and more engaging ridings of *Zeigh dich* and, in particular, of the short and fast *Waehle*. The perfect conclusion of the work is *Das zweite leben*, in which strenghtened rhythms, distorted vocals, *electro*-minimalist sounds and a bit of '80s *synth pop* coexist together in a perfect way. It's one of the most *old school* episodes. The *remixes*, made by PNE, explore the more *electro* dimension of the songs, expanding them, inserting several layers and female vocals and breaking the rigid *EBM* rhythms. There's space for some *remixes* of their classic tunes too, always read through the synthetic and fast *electro old school* formula, enriched by the use of female vocals.

In this double release, the listener reach two conclusions: the first one is that, in five years, Serpents have grown a lot, succeeding in finding, with *State of war*, their ideal formula, after several years of experimentation in the *electro* and *EBM* genre, even thanks to what have been made in their *side projects*, while the secondo ne is that, after several years of music, the german duo demonstrates of being *immer voran*, that is, *always ahead*. Five years have passed, but, as well as *Immer voran!* was ahead in 2010, *State of war* is ahead five years later: a huge manifestation of *resistance*.

Voto: 9

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