

SHAD SHADOWS – MINOR BLUES

Our Webzine's readers, and not only them, will probably recognize **Alessandra Gismondi** and **Luca Bandini**, a duo already known as **Schonwald** (reviewed by us not so long ago); now they return with a side project dedicated to dark electronic music with an ethereal, we could say cosmic, and fascinating twist. We are talking about **Shad Shadows**, a project that, after the digital EP **Spectrum** (released last March), now returns with the full length **Minor Blues**, the work that we are going to analyze.

Of course this is not a copy of the main act (it wouldn't have any sense), instead it's the exploration of some new sounds starting from the same artistic and musical sensibility, but using new ways, where synth and drum machine create musical landscapes full of pathos and charming atmosphere. This time, on the vocal side there's the male component on the frontline, founding his place between sounds that are linked to the dark side of minimal electronic music, but, at the same time, never falling on the path of grim desperation or total pessimism, a sound that recalls the most charged-up songs (if we can say so) made by **Absolute Body Control** and the 80's minimal scene; we have even some more dance-oriented songs, but they are ritualistic in spirit evoking the spectral side of the music, always with taste. So, we have the skills and the sense of measure of the main project, but this time free from the post punk element and linked to the love for the synth (with many connections with the so called synthwave, that recently has gathered a big following) and the electronic soundscapes.

We start with *Lisbon decadence* and its electronic timbres soon followed by synthetic rhythms and growing effects, establishing a soundscape where we find the charming voice of the singer full of reverbs; we have, this way, a lysergic dancefloor full of "sound-fumes", but, at the same time, some more concentrated moments are not banned, recalling the more electronic side of **Primal Scream**.

Then we have *Black suite* with its short length, built by rhythmic patterns and synth layers, opening up soon to cosmic sounds and a dreamy, distant singing, which is the crowning moment of a soundscape where the songwriting is based on the adding as well as on the subtracting of sounds; when more "ritualistic" elements are added, the final section of this short pastiche is realized, a song that finds its sense in its concise but conscious structure.

Gimme pain starts with a movie score-like sequence, soon achieving new musical vortexes; the four-on-the-floor rhythm gives them a structure just as much as the crawling voice, and, even in this episode, ethereal and cosmic sections find their place between distant and melancholic melodies, never forgetting estranging electronic effects. Anyway, the songwriting is minimal but never fleshless, playing with the adding effect of growing sounds and the startling pauses with evocative moments.

Dreaming over gives us from the start science fiction atmospheres based on the four-on-the-floor drum machine and estranging and ghostly synths with a taste for the grandiose, very close to some post witch house elements, but without the trip hop moments usually linked to this genre; it

has the cosmic effect common to the album, with its charming movement, giving us another episode where the study of the soundscape is very important, but, at the same time, any démodé conceptualism is avoided.

Big dipper fishes from the minimal electronic music, soon exploring rhythmic structures and misty bass lines; as always, the song is built up by the adding of sounds, recalling the already mentioned Absolute Body Control. Then, the epic and magisterial sounds evoke that typical element of the project, finding their place between the composition with taste and at the right moment, enriching its narrative course.

Cosmic is, starting from the title, a perfect sum of the album: a strong but slow rhythm moves between loops and familiar synthetic elements as well as vocals full of reverbs, which give us epic and melancholic soundscapes. Maybe this time melody is more prominent, with a more synth pop oriented sound, but anything is, as always, emerged in a dreamy and misty atmosphere; we could say there is something very Britannic in this songwriting, but the identity of the project is well defined in the last sounds and in their chores, just as much as the clanging effects.

A really interesting work with a common theme between songs, but that gives them, at the same time, an identity and a single raison d'etre; Here there's not the extreme experimentalism of other projects, but, at the same time there isn't the plastic electronic pop of others, founding an equilibrium where laziness is avoided, just as much as any too strong and martial element, which would be alien to the ethereal, dreamy, celestial atmospheres here conjured. A sound that finds its place among the minutes of a solitary listening experience, and, at the same time, in a adeptly themed night where people aggregates in the name of a slow and crawling dance; so, the album is warmly advised both for the Schonwald's fans and the beginners, that will find here a nice treat.

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Score: 8

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