

TWICE A MAN – PRESENCE

Twice a Man came back on 6th november 2015 with a new album, published on **Indigo**. The pioneering swedish dark synth-wave act, born in Gothenburg in the early eighties, today donate us an inspired and fresh work entitled **Presence**. The album is mostly dedicated to the paranoia and to the mistrust regarding the topic of the Other and the Diverse, upon the background of the recent, tragic war events, of the fundamentalisms and of the terrorism that cover the planet. It's a sort of going back to the roots, suspended between melancholy, impelling dystopias and tender forays into dark environments, with cosmic drifts made with (retro)futuristic analog synthesizers.

If few live performances are excluded (made from 2013 until today), it's the first time, since 1986, that **Jocke Söderqvist** comes officially back in the line-up along with the historic founders **Dan Söderqvist** and **Karl Gasleben**. These last two, from the ashes of **Cosmic Overdrive** (active since 1978), built the Twice a Man project. The name of the band, for who doesn't know it, derives from the name of an experimental movie – having the same title - directed in 1964 by **Gregory J. Markopoulos**. Since 1981, this swedish band began to dedicate on an original atmospheric and theatrical synth-pop focused on the role of synthesizers, making their first record, **Music for Girls**, in 1982, to which will follow great and unforgettable classic albums such as **From a Northern Shore** (1984), **Slow Swirl** (1985) and **Driftwood** (1988), essential albums for all the lovers of a certain kind of music that reads again the wave paradigm of **New Order** and the synth pop of **Ultravox** (of the **Vienna** era) in a dark-synth key, also going near to a sort of proto-ambient electronic music a la **Brian Eno**. It's a formula that Twice a Man have contributed in creating and spreading and that today seems to be once again under the public eye thanks to young bands such as **Keluar**, **Vólkova**, **Schonwald** and artists such as **Void Vision** and **Qual** (but it would be too tedious to enumerate the bands that had a debt with a certain kind of “post”-dark synth sound).

Differently from several new projects, Twice a Man don't maintain a “minimal” line and don't have fear to embellish their music with a never hidden neo-romantic mood wave-inspired, much more “warm” than “cold”, capable to hit with melodies that stay in the head and with a great care for the production and the sonic result, even in the live performances context, as we have told when they've made their very good performance at **A Warm Wave Concert**, a minifestival that was held on 30th may in Stockholm, during which they have played along with **Keluar**, **Vólkova**, **Alvar** and **Red Mecca**. In this last work, in the beginning there's a triad that contains *A Time Of Terror*, *Here Comes The Rain* and *A World Is Gone*, all of these songs dedicated to the drift of the contemporary world between wars, fundamentalism and lack of utopias, in a world that is upon the oblivion of the collapse. The *intro* of *A Time Of Terror*, sung by **Enas Ekhzaiq**, embodies the spirit of the album: here the musicians also show a certain skill matured in the music they've made for the theater and in the music made for the movie scores, as happened particularly in their late years, when Twice a Man also composed the music for **Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern**, television, radio, as well as for **Kula World**, a videogame made by the swedish studio **Game Design Sweden AB**.

With *Here Comes the Rain* we are thrown in a scenario close to the sounds of an album such as *Slow Swirl*, with a relished return towards those early sounds. Hits like Dan Söderqvist hasn't lost anything of his evocative pathos while he tells us, in *A World is Gone*, of a beautiful planet now dead, killed by greed and by corporations. *Black*, the album's single, is a good song made of darkwave guitars and a singing style that makes the difference, but, in general, doesn't add anything more to what done in the past, while *Lines* and, above all, the *title track*, progressively open to more futurepop dimensions similar to those of **Covenant**, characterized by bursts of adrenaline and synth pop veinings of light.

The last triad of the album, that sees the participation of the swedish artist **Karin My (Carbon based life forms, Coph Nia, Hype, etc)** starts with the very good *Kick the Earthdrum* and continues with *Universal Stream*, that sees Karin sing along with Dan. *High in The Clouds*, in the end, talks us about impelling ecologic disasters, but closes the album also with a glimpse of hope towards the future.

Presence is an album that confirms the skills of Twice a Man, masters of dark synth and pioneers of loads of music that today has gained again a very strong attention through its new "warm wave" incarnations, burning of renewed vitality; refined as well as classic melodies, with a scandinavian touch that doesn't renounce to have a not banal dedication as far as the present is concerned, but above all that doesn't renounce to have a gaze always pointed towards the future.

Score: 8

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