

Sienná - Japonesque [album review]

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THIS IS THE SONIC MERGE OF EAST AND WEST.

I have never heard anything quite like this. *Japonesque* by Sienná is almost perfectly defined by its title. There is a certain element of Eastern Asian music that carries over into this ultimately Western European style of house music. The pentatonic scales and natural sounding beauty, mixed with occasional sounds of sitar and similar tones so commonplace in Asia; set the melodic and sometimes disjointed frame for the music contained on this album. But, altogether, it is a captivating listening experience. A strange, almost alien listening experience, but again, one that really grabs my attention and makes me want to listen to it over and over. As a blend of house, chill out, electronic, almost trance inducing form of music; there is no denying the overall excellence contained within right out of the gate.



SIENNA - JAPONESQUE - ALBUM COVER

Production/Composition

Japonesque is comprised of an array of relaxing and meditative tones. In some senses, this music would fit perfectly in a New Age collection, but indeed, it seems to be far more than simple, bottom-rung music meant for meditative purposes only. No doubt the styles in which it dabbles is meant for some ability to chill out, but the often complex tones are hard to ignore from a musical standpoint. At points, the music evolves into free flowing electronic jazz. While rhythms themselves commonly remain at a happy 3/4 or 4/4 time signature, they are complex in tone due to the electronic elements underpinning them. From the standpoint of the compositions, the 10 contained here are exemplary of having total control over music from a technical, objective standpoint; but also an ability to control emotion from a subjective one as well. As an artist, Sienná as an individual and her group of musicians has found an ability to create consistently compelling soundtracks that require multiple listens during different states of mind to fully explore and understand.

Instrumentation/Vocals

I am most intrigued by how Sienná manages to showcase a large range of timbres and tones. While most instruments are synthetic, they frequently do not feel all that cold and artificial, but rather have a very natural, warm, and human element to them. Live instrumentation finds its way into the sounds as well to really enhance that human feeling, which is valuable to this style of music which so often gets lost in artificial and industrial sounds. From acoustic guitars to more heavily distorted ones (like those seen on "Byakudan"), there is a little bit for everyone. The best moments to me are definitely those that keep the tempo on the down low, and allow the atmospheric pads to take a hold. Sienná's voice, which trickles into tracks here and there like on the titular track "Japonesque," is excellent. It adds an Asian folk flair to the music, which is strange at first when paired with heavily electronic music like this, but it is satisfying in the end.

Overall Impression

Sienná has developed a very intriguing electronic house album in *Japonesque*. It is an intelligent piece of musical artistry, taking influence from around the world in terms of spirit and musical interest. It's been a while since I've been particularly captivated from the trance inducing psychedelia of house music, but this is certainly an exemplary piece of content well worth listening to many times. It harkens back to times of old with those simple pentatonic scales played so simply, but then returns to the modern age with interesting jazz bass licks, relaxing synth pads and beats, and an overall folk inspired atmosphere. It is truly hard to ignore.

▲ Chris Romans ● 0 Comments

■ Alternative, Ambient, Chill, Electronic

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