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Randi Pontoppidan: Rooms. Chant
Records.



Danish singer makes soundart appear from empty space using only her voice.

With assistance from a bunch of buttons the singer Randi Pontoppidan has created a spontaneous and smooth album that emanates with sounds of pacific islands and machine factories.

What kind of music can you create with a voice - your own human voice that is - and then a whole bunch of electronics? The singer Randi Pontoppidan has spent time in her studio in the company of her own voice, which she has looped, filtered and applied echo to, and the result is surprising and beautiful.

The music breaks, repeats and slowly flows until a sense of a beating pulse emerges. It begins to groove. She extends the universe she has created so it becomes an electronic vocal orchestra; an experimenting vocal backing-group she can let her voice hover above.

It requires technique and skill to create the 13 tracks that comprise Randi Pontoppidan soloalbum "Room". Therefore it is no surprise that the soloist, who with her unusual and alternating use of her voice defies the norms of ordinary vocal performances, is educated from the national conservatory in both classical and jazz vocal techniques.

But she lets go of the classical norms while she improvises her way to her own songs, which afterwards - I'm guessing - are given titles inspired by what happened in the moment while Randi Pontoppidan improvised with her voice, microphone and buttons.

American minimalism

A flick of the tongue at the back of your palate can become the sound of a swarm of insects. Fictitious pacific-languages wash up on a beach while the singer experiments and plays with clicking sounds that makes you think of African music.

One room - or one song - is given the title "Dunh". Another one is called "Purr". The English song titles are sound-words derived from vocal improvisations where polyrhythmic beats are created by sampling moaning sounds on top of each other so the result becomes gene manipulated soundclouds that blips and blops in the ear of the listener.

The music on the record "Rooms" is impromptu and appealing, but not just because of the airy softness of the voice.

One starts thinking of the great American minimalist composers such as Steve Reich and Terry Riley, and that is no coincidence.

Besides her duo collaboration with jazz vocalist Sissel Vera Pettersen and projects with the poet Morten Søndergaard, Randi Pontoppidan sings and performs with the internationally respected vocal ensemble "Theatre Of Voices" which, under the

direction of conductor Paul Hillier, also explores minimalistic music and avantgarde pieces by modernistic composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen.

When listening to the tunes on “Rooms” you can clearly hear the inspiration from early minimalistic iconic pieces from the 1960s like “In C” by Terry Riley. The song “Gigongi Three Geishas” resembles music by the composer Per Nørgård from his “chaos period” at the beginning of the 1980s, when he was inspired by the outsider-artist Adolf Wölfi.

In the midst of experiment “Rooms” also fiddles with apparent cliches as the different song titles point to familiar atmospheres, phenomena and sounds.

Drugs in the veins

In that way the listener’s experience is guided. The song “Arctic” begins with the sound of ice cold winds sweeping across ice flakes. “Sub-Zero” begins sinisterly deep.

Randi Pontippidan uses subtle cues that points to reality and the shared world of experience as a way to bootstrap her vocal improvisations in an otherwise eternal space of abstract possibility in which she, with the help from electronics, can create her own, fantastical space.

There is a lot of tenderness to be found on the album “Rooms”, and some of the tracks are pure, floating soundart. Others boulder their way through - like “Industrious - Moving Castle” with its violent, machinelike sounds.

Still others are like drugs in the veins; sedating and scarily pleasant. Like the track “Dreamy”, which delivers the well known feeling of being on the cusp of falling asleep. The sweetness is there, but it doesn't completely capture the stage. That’s a job well done. In clear, spontaneous strokes - with no dubbing - she is improvising her way forward in the moment.