

## Julia Kent - Character (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Ebb* 2:52 2 *Transportation* 4:39 3 *Flicker* 3:40 4 *Tourbillon* 3:16 5 *Fall* 4:30 6  
*Kingdom* 4:53 7 *Only Child* 4:24 8 *Intent* 4:21 9 *Salute* 4:28 10 *Nina And Oscar* 3:44  
Julia Kent — cello, electronics, compositions

Character is New York-based cellist and arranger Julia Kent's third solo album, and first for The Leaf Label. Her richly layered cello and environmental recordings coalesce into a gorgeous, cinematic whole – an instrumental oasis in a cluttered musical world. Accurately described as “elegant and intense” and “deeply personal”, her work possesses an emotional resonance that sets it apart from many of her peers, Vancouver-born Kent first rose to prominence in the mid '90s in the original line-up of all cello trio Rasputina. Since then she has worked with numerous groups and musicians, both as a cellist and arranger. Her previous solo albums, *Delay* (2007) and *Green and Grey* (2011) were released by Important Records ---boomkat.com

Character is cellist and composer Julia Kent's third solo album. Like its predecessors, 2007's *Delay* and 2011's *Green and Grey*, she places her cello in concert with an array of digital loops and field recordings. But aside from her unmistakable tone and playing style, *Character* has little in common with its siblings. For starters, for the first time she recorded alone in her home studio. The music on those earlier recordings reflected the outer world in various ways: the field recordings on *Delay* were those of airports; on *Green and Grey* the sounds of the natural world. Here, incorporated sounds reflect the solitary nature of the creative process: a single match lighting, the scratch of a pen writing on paper, a detuned autoharp; even the sound of wineglasses seems more like accidental movement in a cupboard than a celebratory clink. The theme on this album muses on the cycles of life and how little control the individual possesses. (Her use of loops offers concrete examples: if a "mistake" is made, new, previously

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unconsidered possibilities emerge.) Opener "Ebb" is an invitation to step back from motion, toward stillness. It is seemingly mournful, but that's misleading. The acceptance and willingness of slowing create a foundation for the album to go deeper. It's true that the intro to "Transportation," with its frenetic plucked strings, and the seemingly forceful pulse of the cello in "Tourbillon" offer seeming outward motion, but they are actually reflections of the tensions that occur as the reality of an individual's inner world meets her perceived ones. In the brooding "Kingdom," tape manipulation, an echoing backdrop, and dark, even paranoid ambient sounds create dark sonorities that meet one another simultaneously from the interior of the instrument. The sheer loneliness of "Intent," with its juxtaposition of the autoharp, drum loops, and deep droning cello, is a haunting poetic on the many timbral voices that self-reflection speaks with. "Only Child" and closer "Nina and Oscar" feel deliberately unfinished, as if their resonance would reveal more in time. Character may not carry the blissed-out expressions Kent's earlier records did. But it is here that she speaks most poignantly of loneliness, fear, desire, life's richness, and more -- by creating a listening experience of nearly cavernous depth and poetic beauty. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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