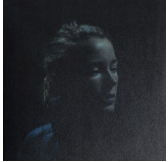


Lucy Railton - Paradise 94 (2018)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

Saturday, 08 May 2021 10:10 - Last Updated Saturday, 08 May 2021 10:18

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1. *Pinnevik* 05:05 2. *To The End* 04:20 3. *The Critical Rush* 05:36 4. *Gaslighter* 03:37
5. *For J.R.* 03:08 6. *Fortified Up* 1 1:38 Lucy Railton - cello Beatrice Dillon - drums Gard Nilssen - cymbals, glass samples Nicolas Becker - organ

Though *Paradise 94* is London-based cellist Lucy Railton's first solo release, she's already established herself as a formidable presence in the city's experimental scene. She's appeared on records from ECM affiliate Kit Downes, played on Mica Levi's Oscar-nominated score for *Jackie* and reinterpreted the work of the unsung Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi. In the live setting, she's as comfortable interpreting Schubert as she is summoning harsh soundscapes with Russell Haswell or improvising alongside Beatrice Dillon. As the cofounder of London Contemporary Music Festival, she presented events that did away with the avant-garde's highbrow/lowbrow split, giving Stephen O'Malley and James Ferraro equal footing with old-guard figures like Pauline Oliveros and Morton Subotnick. Simply put, Railton has the panache and broad-mindedness to transcend the vacuum-like worlds of academic music and contemporary composition.

The question, then, is whether *Paradise 94* is a convincing synthesis of Railton's Royal Academy Of Music training and her divergent interests in hair-raising modern composition, corroded noise and techno. There are echoes here of her time spent jamming alongside Haswell in a working shipyard—the album has frequent samples of breaking glass, and violent processing of bow on cello. But she's equally interested in exploring more refined ideas. The tracks that work best find a perfect balance. "Pinnevik" begins with waves of harsh feedback before a denouement of soft, funereal organ tones. On "Critical Rush," a truly jaw-dropping track, an orchestra seems to tune up over a belching motor before taking a rickety journey to what sounds like a dreamy intro to a Timedance record.

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At key moments, Paradise 94 is explicitly referential. "For J.R."s string fragments pass by before we're confronted with some noise and reversed spoken-word samples. The track's moody conclusion comes from Bach himself, with Railton quoting the Baroque master on organ. Same goes for the last track, "Fortified Up," a nearly 12-minute piece that takes up the entire B-side. Not unlike a piece I heard Tim Hecker play recently, it's the sound of dread, like ascending to the drop on a rollercoaster and never quite reaching it. It's also an old idea, an auditory illusion called the Shepard-Risset glissando, a staple of Hans Zimmer scores.

Railton's whip-smart sound design and classical chops lend an initial shock and awe effect to Paradise 94, a remarkably polished debut. Once that wears off, though, some of the album's key elements seem like old ideas in shiny packaging. Still, the LP has a lot going for it. Paradise 94 shows some of the far-flung sonic zones Railton traverses as a player, curator and fan. It's a warning shot from an artist we're likely to hear much more of. ---ra.co

Prolific cellist and composer Lucy Railton releases her long awaited solo debut for Modern Love; an intense and multi-layered opus that reminds us of everything from Alvin Lucier, Beatrice Dillon and Nate Young, to Valerio Tricoli and Popol Vuh.

A prolific performer who has appeared on countless recordings and collaborations with many important figures in contemporary music over the last few years, Paradise 94 is, remarkably, Railton's solo debut - featuring archival, location and studio recordings which serve as a time capsule of all the myriad disciplines and influences that have brought her to this point in time. It both plays up to and shatters expectations of her music, which harnesses a duality of energies - acoustic/electronic, real/imagined, iconic/iconoclastic, pissed-off/romantic; out of place and androgynous - resulting in a visceral emotional insight and rare narrative grasp.

Variegated, asymmetric, and located somewhere between her usual fields of exploration, Paradise 94 gives free reign to aspects of her creativity that have previously been subsumed into collaborative processes and interpretations of other composers' work. Here, she's free to probe, sculpt and layer her sounds through a much broader range of techniques and strategies, placing particular focus on non-linear structural arrangements and exploring the way her cello becomes perceptibly synthetic through collaging, rather than FX. At every turn Paradise 94 is bewilderingly unique.

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The A-side unfolds an oneiric, inception-like sequence traversing temporalities, timbres and tones from what sounds like a spectral ensemble playing on a traffic island in Pinnevik, to bursts of rabbit-in-headlights trance arps emerging from meticulously dissected musique concrète in The Critical Rush, and a collision of masked vocals, string eruptions and a deeply moving, light-headed Bach rendition in For J.R.

On the other hand, Fortified Up on side B tests out a far rawer approach, sampling herself playing the same glissandi over and again, which she layers into a sort of perpetual, sickly motion, the Shepard Tone riffing on the listener's psychoacoustic perceptions before calving off into a cathartic dissonant folk coda in its final throes.

In the most classic sense, you can only properly begin to f*ck with something from the inside once you truly know it. Railton's dedicated years of service have more than equipped her with the nous and skill to do just that, gifting us with what will no doubt be looked back on as a raw, exposed and important solo debut in years to come. ---boomkat.com

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