

Jacco Gardner – Somnium (2018)

Written by bluelover (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 *Rising* 4:09 2 *Volva* 1:53 3 *Lagrangian Point* 4:04 4 *Past Navigator* 2:15 5 *Levania* 2:45 6 *Eclipse* 4:32 7 *Utopos* 1:43 8 *Rain* 7:10 9 *Privolva* 6:07 10 *Pale Blue Dot* 2:05 11 *Descent* 3:48 12 *Somnium* 2:16 All baroque pop multi instruments - Jacco Gardner
Percussion – Nicola Mauskovic Producer, Art Direction – Jacco Gardner

Somnium is a nod to the novel of the same name, written in 1608 by Johannes Kepler and is regarded as the first ever science fiction novel. “This book fascinates me because it was basically Kepler travelling in his mind to a non-existent world while describing it, and his journey, with amazing detail. Many of his imagined sensations are actually really what happens when one travels into space, which happened almost four hundred years later. You could call it a vision of the future through his dreams, and I find this aspect very mysterious and powerful.”

This form of mind travel is what Jacco has set out to create in a sonic, almost alchemic, capacity. Hence the reason for his vocals to be left out of this spiritual journey. “I deliberately removed my voice from the experience, as it made it more difficult for me to achieve the intended state of mind. I think it makes the journey more interesting, more deep, and more intimate. I didn’t feel the need to show my face while one drifts away into thought. Somnium is a visionary experience. The album is more than just a trip, it is about contact with a deeper - hidden - reality.”

If the concepts behind this record sound otherworldly and intricately woven then Jacco has also succeeded in making a record that does the same. Analogue synths hum and glide pristinely, bass lines dance buoyantly, dense atmospheres build and form and thoughtfully crafted melodies come and go, floating around as though in space. There are nods to early pioneers of such dreamlike ambience and cosmic exploration - Bo Hansson, Vangelis, Cluster, Tangerine Dream, Eno and Oldfield (the album was mastered by Simon Heyworth whose production

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credits include the latter three, including Tubular Bells) - but it also exists as a futuristic pursuit, one that is chasing something ahead as well as exploring the past. This is because to Jacco both are equally valid. "The past has always felt very much alive to me and so full of mystery that I have to conclude that the present and the future are probably no different."

Now living in Lisbon and immersed in literature, cinema, philosophy and with new winding streets to wander, Gardner's ideal listening scenario is to take the album for a walk yourselves, consume it complete and without interruption. "Somnium could be seen as a tribute to the album, a dying format in today's fast-paced society. It can often be difficult to enjoy a meaningful uninterrupted moment. This album is where true mystery and wonder is waiting to be discovered." ---jaccogardner.bandcamp.com

Jacco Gardner wasn't born of this time. The Dutch-bred, Lisbon-based psychedelic composer twirled out of the gate with 2013's Cabinet of Curiosities, which sounded like a long-lost Zombies record buried on some distant shore. But on Gardner's third album, Somnium, he's thrown out traditional song structure—and his own vocals entirely, for that matter—to create an instrumental exploration that's fitting to help you focus at work or float off into space on your next intergalactic voyage. You won't be singing along here, but Somnium's spiderweb melodies and rich textures will burrow deep into your psyche. The album was inspired by the 1608 Johannes Kepler novel, considered one of the first works of science fiction. That influence comes through—this is the sound of space we imagined before we got there. The most easily graspable of Somnium's 12 tracks build on a single, repetitive but transforming melody while Gardner's arrangements of churning, clip-clopping percussion, scuzzy electric guitars and twinkling, alien keys dance below. At its best, the record will have you spinning along, no matter if you're in an office chair or on an evening stroll. Take "Privolva," a bouncing, quivering, sixminute mirage of a tune that sounds like what the Star Wars cantina band could've evolved into on hour four of an acid trip. It's immediately followed by "Pale Blue Dot," a warbling, Enoesque ambient journey that really just serves as a bridge to the rest of the album. As an experiment, Somnium succeeds. You can almost hear Gardner whispering: Ladies and gentlemen, we are floating in space. ---Justin Jacobs, relix.com

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