

## Lycia - A Line That Connects (2015)

Written by bluesever

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01. *The Fall Back* 02. *Monday Is Here* 03. *Silver Leaf* 04. *A Trade Out* 05. *Blue* 06. *An Awakening* 07. *The Rain* 08. *Bright Like Stars* 09. *The Light Room* 10. *Illuminate* 11. *A Ghost Ascends* 12. *Hiraeth* 13. *Autumn Moon* 14. *The Only Way Through Is Out* David Galas – electric guitar, acoustic guitar, synthesizer, mixing, lead vocals (7, 13) Mike VanPortfleet – lead vocals, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, synthesizer Tara Vanflower – lead vocals + Michael Irwin – backing vocals (11) Sera Timms – backing vocals (12)

When darkwave legends Lycia returned from the musical wilderness with *Quiet Moments* in 2013, it was widely hailed as a stellar comeback for the band. While I certainly enjoyed the album, I couldn't help but feel that they were just warming up. *Quiet Moments* is unquestionably a good record, a great record even, but it also struck me as the work of an artist attempting to fully regain their footing after some fairly lengthy gaps between releases (seven years between *Empty Space* and the *Fifth Sun* EP, three years between *Fifth Sun* and *QM*).

If *Quiet Moments* was the sound of Lycia just getting their feet wet, then *A Line That Connects* is the sound of Mike VanPortfleet and company diving in headfirst, producing what is arguably the band's finest work since 1996's *Cold*. That's pretty high praise to heap on an album that technically hasn't even been released yet as of this writing, but trust me when I say that this is both an immense and immersive piece of work, the kind of album you listen to in total solitude with a good set of headphones and lose yourself in, your body, mind and soul given over completely to its infinite strata of icy guitar distortion and ethereal synthesizers.

*A Line That Connects* moves through a variety of styles over the course of its fourteen tracks, from the traditional darkwave dirge of "The Fall Back" to the danceable gothic rock of "The Rain" to the quasi-industrial crush of "Illuminate." Lycia's strengths are many, which means there isn't a single dud to be found here no matter what direction they choose to take their songwriting in.

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It's a diverse listen, but there is a thread of cold, all-encompassing gloom that ties the album together, allowing it to form a stunningly cohesive whole.

While Quiet Moments felt largely like a VanPortfleet solo album, A Line That Connects sees increased contributions from longtime cohort/spouse Tara Vanflower, her angelic croon juxtaposing itself beautifully against the dark melancholy of the compositions whether taking on lead vocal duties or working its subtle magic in the background. The album also marks the return of frequent collaborator David Galas, who appeared on many of the band's most revered albums. This sounds and feels like vintage Lycia through and through; one of the rare cases where reassembling a band's "classic lineup" has produced new material on par with their previous works.

It's a joy to see an artist as gifted as VanPortfleet releasing music on the regular again, especially when the results are as excellent as this. A Line That Connects is the very definition of a late career masterpiece, an album that reminds us how Lycia achieved godhead status amongst the darkwave faithful. --- isolationgrind.com

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