

Lycia - Quiet Moments (2013)

Written by bluesever
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1 *Quiet Moments* 8:16 2 *The Visitor* 4:32 3 *Antarctica* 8:14 4 *Greenland* 8:27 5 *Grand Rapids* 5:51 6 *The Pier* 3:34 7 *Spring Trees* 4:35 8 *The Wind Sings* 4:32 9 *Dead Leaves Fall* 5:18 10 *Dead Star, Cold Star* 5:33 11 *The Soil Is Dead* 5:01 Mike VanPortfleet – vocals, synthesizer, guitar, drum machine Tara Vanflower - additional vocals on 'Spring Trees' and 'The Soil Is Dead'

For over two decades, Arizona's Lycia have been pioneers of “darkwave,” a reverb-drenched, gothic take on dream pop. *Quiet Moments*, their first release for Handmade Birds, is a somber, but beautiful collection that offers an intriguing meditation on mystery and loss.

For over two decades, Arizona's Lycia have been pioneers of “darkwave,” a reverb-drenched, gothic take on dream pop. This is the Cocteau Twins, if they looked so far inward that they began to focus on the darker, downer-ridden side. Along with lovesliescrushing, who freed shoegaze from pop conventions, they became one of the noteworthy and boundary-pushing acts on the goth music label Projekt. *Quiet Moments*, their first release for Handmade Birds (run by Rich Loren of Pyramids, Sailors With Wax Wings, and White Moth), is consistent with their past efforts, while remaining an intriguing headphone journey.

At this point, Lycia are basically Mike VanPortfleet, the multi-instrumentalist has always been the band's creative center, though longtime member Tara Vanflower contributes vocals to “The Soil Is Dead” and *Spring Trees*. They sound like a band that takes their time. It's not just in the pace of the music, but in all of the layers. Somber synths permeate the record, often drawling and creating a fog that covers everything. The percussion is mechanical, and its repetitiveness lends to the drone. Guitars sound like disembodied rock solos, severed from boogie and strangled out into something darkly beautiful. There are faint memories of sweet leads from radio jams, but they become mutated and placed into a context wholly unlike anything that

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would resemble rock. In particular, the guitars bring to mind the lush metal of October Rust-era Type O Negative, albeit spaced out and even more blissful. Peter Steele was an early champion of Lycia, stating in an interview from 1995 that their album *A Day in the Stark Corner* had a great effect on him: "If I put it on in the morning when I get up...I'm useless for the rest of the day. It's just devastating, as beautiful as it is devastating." Lycia opened for Type O Negative on some of the dates in support of Rust. He picked up on their sound for one of the band's biggest albums, and Lycia are returning the favor in their own way on *Moments*.

If they could, Lycia would probably name all of their albums *Cold*, the title of their record from 1996. It's an apt word for their sound, which, like the Rockies in *December*, can be as unforgiving as it is serene. "Antarctica" and "Greenland", whose names and placements next to each other on *Moments* could hardly be considered a coincidence, represent *Moments* at its most frost-bitten. ---Andy O'Connor, pitchfork.com

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