

Poppy Ackroyd – Sketches (2017)

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1 *Resolve* 4:36 2 *Light* 3:12 3 *Feathers* 6:43 4 *Rain* 3:06 5 *Time* 5:52 6 *Birdwoman* 5:39 7 *Strata* 4:33 8 *Glass Sea* 5:12 9 *Croft* 5:15 10 *Trains* 3:53 Composed and Performed by Poppy Ackroyd

Following two albums of inventive compositions for piano and violin released by Denovali Records, Poppy Ackroyd moved to One Little Indian in 2017. Her first recording for the label is *Sketches*, which finds her revisiting pieces from her prior albums in addition to presenting some new material. On 2012's *Escapement* and 2014's *Feathers*, Ackroyd demonstrated a highly visceral, physical approach to working with her instruments, playing them inside and out in percussive as well as melodic manners, and creating unusual and fascinating tones and timbres. On top of all of this, she utilized computers to edit, multi-track, and metamorphosize the sounds, as well as adding field recordings for additional sonic impact. On *Sketches*, she presents her pieces in solo piano form. Field recordings are still present on select pieces; naturally, "Birdwoman," "Glass Sea," and "Rain" feature the sounds of birds, a body of water, and rainfall, respectively. Ackroyd's playing is highly nuanced and delicate, and she's able to gracefully flow from sweet, hopeful melodies to more sad, haunting ones. "Time" is a particular standout, rippling from fear to ecstasy without sounding jarring or conflicted. It all sounds incredibly pretty, of course, but after listening to these pieces in their previous forms, these stripped-down interpretations inevitably feel like a step backwards. Perhaps this is simply a clearing of the palette, with Ackroyd feeling the need to get back to basics before she makes her next sonic breakthrough. It sounds perfectly fine and relaxing, but her earlier albums stand out more. ---Paul Simpson, AllMusic Review

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