

Daigo Hanada - Ouka (2019)

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Sobota, 21 Wrzesień 2019 12:37 -

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1 *Two Birds* 3:04 2 *Ouka* 3:33 3 *En* 3:47 4 *Suiu* 3:45 5 *Rin* 2:58 6 *Follow Me To The Moon* 3:03 7 *Under The Starry Sky* 2:29
Written & recorded by Daigo Hanada
Mastered by Martyn Heyne

A composer that lives in the quiet and timid spectrum of piano-based compositions, Daigo Hanada returns with a new EP. 'Ouka' expands slightly from his 2017 debut 'Ichiru' and in many ways, it feels like a companion piece.

Daigo Hanada opens with warmth and rattles with 'Two Birds'. The piano and acoustic noises that surround it rattle and flutter like tiny wings. Its quietly uplifting tone in contrast to the title track 'Ouka' that follows. Here a weary but beautiful piano riff rolls out with little fanfare. It's in the production where tiny tricks filter through. The rattle shimmers from the previous track are now shimmering piano notes ringing like mallet bells in the distance. There's also a subtle tape warp to the high notes that really gives the track a layer of empathy.

These production tricks set up how the rest of the EP unfolds. 'En' reminds me of 'Eternity of Light and Waves' from Final Fantasy X-2 melodically and that is no bad thing. The mallets of the hammers mixed with the gentle distortion wring the melody for every thought. 'Suiu' delicately plays around mainly with the higher octaves of keys. Its airy twinkles and reverbs are counterbalanced by single low notes which feel like giant footsteps. 'Rin' then combines everything for a more European and traditional classical composition. It has an uplifting tone to it and that's shared with the gentile 'Follow Me to the Moon' and the ambient reverb drenched closer 'Under The Starry Sky'.

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Daigo Hanada is the perfect bridge between melodic piano composition and mood music. There is always a strong melody but Hanada refuses to let it reign like a charging horse. The work is always refined, delicate and even in its uplifting warmth, somewhat mournful yet peaceful. The music amounts to way more than the sum of its parts and 'Ouka' is easily one of the go to quiet places of 2019. ---higherplainmusic.com

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