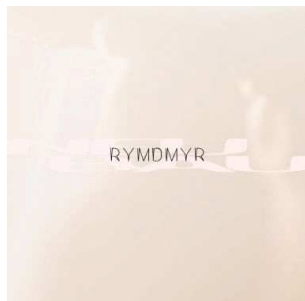


# Neubau - Rymdmyr (Nonine Recordings)

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There's an interesting phenomenon with creative types and the name Neubau. I'm aware of a rather excellent typographic foundry and graphic design company that goes by the name, as well as a very worthwhile German netlabel. This is the third creative that I've come across now with the name, which translates literally into English as 'New Building'. And, in spite of the variety of their activities, they all do have a commonality in their mix of the aesthetic and the strictly structured.

Neubau the recording artist, known during daylight hours as Arno Steinacher, is possibly even more overt than the others in this mix. His bio mentions 'microscopic sonic architectures' and 'exceptionally structured mathematical sound rooms'. As pretentious as that sounds, it's probably as close to an accurate description of his music as you might find. To my ears, what Steinacher achieves is a grand update of the serialist traditions of the mid-20th century. Those ideas came to their climax as Elektronische Musik in Cologne in the 1950s, where purely electronic sounds and sequencing were used to 'play' serialist music which was so complex, yet rigid, as to render it impossible for human instrumentalists to create. While those actual sounds were obviously very primitive and sound dated to our ears now, giving the music a very dry edge, on a lot of the tracks on Rymdmyr, Steinacher seems to have applied similar serialist restrictions, but with infinitely more interesting timbral variety. There is the apparent randomness of notation and tempo at the micro level which make much clearer sense when the listener pulls back and listens on a macro level. But it is the nature of the sounds which are most impressive. The title track (and album highlight) features scraping synth drones shifting over languorous chordal shifts, and the sound of tapping which had me thinking someone was breaking into my room as I lay half asleep listening on headphones one night. Field recordings on tracks like 'Nysnoeyra' are given the same mathematical developments - built, blended, cut short, reverbed out - as the small synthetic plonks on tracks like 'Plast 2 - Fragrance Shed'. Human voices are treated likewise on 'Nyans', fractions of syllables blended and contrasted with more complete assonances.

It's an academic basis for creating music, but the results transcend this restriction. It is only when the music is examined from a distance that these kinds of mathematical patterns might emerge. In the moment, this music succeeds in doing exactly what you might hope - be eminently listenable and evocative on an emotional level. It's not often an artist can traverse those often polar objectives, but Neubau seems to pull it off effortlessly.

Adrian Elmer

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