

VITAL WEEKLY # 406 - week 3 / Holland / January 2004

Novel 23 aka Roman Belousov is well known to his hardcore fans around the world. He comes from Moscow, Russia, makes music as Novel 23 and runs his small but very nice label Shaped Harmonics. Before this Bip-Hop album released in 2003 (are these numbers a coincidence?), Novel 23 has 2 albums and many tracks on many compilations and Eps released by Neo Ouija, Couchblip!, Obtain Freedom, Bip Hop (Generation 3), Pause_2, Awkward Silence and others... Obviously, many people have noticed the remarkable quality of Novel 23's music and are interested to release and hear it. Novel 23's music has a form of a song with a specific electro aureole. Depeche Mode are one of N_23's bigger influences. Also, Roman is obsessed with melodies. With this obsession he goes as far as artists like Sachiko M and Pita go into experimental music.

What about Architectural Effects? Is it good? Yep, it is. The sound is more firm this time, epic and lyric at the same time. This album is like a fairytale book with short novels, Novel 23 is not aiming to be experimental at all, he's just telling stories without words. Probably there aren't any stand-out songs on this album, all tracks are well balanced and are a part of the whole (like Bola's albums), but this whole release is a stand-out album. Maybe it's a bit of surprise (a good one), but it's not a coincidence that this album is released by Bip Hop. Most of the releases in their catalogue are much more experimental. And now - Novel 23 album on Bip Hop - an artist who makes simple tunes and an album that could have been easily released by labels like Merck, Neo Ouija or Warp. But Bip Hop have already shown they have a sharp ear for exceptionally good music. Great music deserves great labels. Oh... and it's bleep23. How nice. (BR)

http://www.staalplaat.com/vital_archive/406.txt

THE WIRE # 237 / UK / October / 2003

Dedicated to Friedrich Schelling's dictum that "Architecture is a frozen music", Moscow producer roman Belousov has collected together a sequence of ten pieces, recorded between 2000-02, that reflect some of that statement's sharpest, most opulent variants. With titles like "Pinnacles", "Viaduct" and "Gothic Vimperg", it's plain that Belousov's compositions are not intended to reflect the monolithic structures customarily associated with modern electronica. However, the languidly complex interplay between digital audio technologies and old Soviet-built synthesizers revealed here is entirely in keeping with this approach. Along with compatriots EU, SCSI-9 and Alexandroid, novel 23 is offering fresh perspectives on the electrification of sound.

Ken Hollings

CYCLIC DEFROST # 6 / Australia / December 2003

Novel 23 is one of the best Russian exports to date in the electronic music scene. He has appeared on just about every solid IDM compilation in the past 4 years on labels ranging from Neo Ouija, Merck, Toytronic, Benbecula, Pause_2, Surgery and Couchblip!.

This is his first full length CD release with three previous full lengths only being available on Casette, Vinyl and CD-R. The first track on this release hits you with a dark, menacing overdriven bassline and percussive lofi harshness. Not all what I would usually expect from Novel 23. Not to disappoint, seconds later the trademark Novel 23 melody fades up reversing the mood of the piece to a pleasant uplifting feel. Novel 23 composes all his music with vintage Russian synthesizers which adds an

undeniable analogue warmth to his music. That warmth is most commonly coupled with natural uncomplicated synth-pop beats. There are ten tracks on this album and each track is a concept piece that reflects an element of architecture, construction or styles. This release is melodic retro electronica, don't expect any complicated beat programming or DSP manipulation. Its all about the mix and production and not about being technical and modern – just blissful and inspiring listening music reminiscent of classic releases such as Bochum Welt's 'Feelings on a screen'. Highlights on the album include Viaduc and Rotonda - beautiful electro rhythms and enchanting refrains. Novel 23 is a master of melodies and this release is simply blissful melodic electronica.

Melinda Taylor

<http://www.cyclicdefrost.com/review.php?review=386&q=>

TESSELATE # 7 / UK / September 2003

Coming shortly after his amazing split section on Sound silent, Novel 23 brings us a whole new album, on bip hop!!

"Portal to cittadelta" is full of heavy fuzz laden waves of cloud distortion kick off this track, as electronic screams jump aboard the relentless bass line and hang the hell on.

A smooth melody pops around in the distance attacking your ears in turn whilst the hissing drumbeat lets off ambient clouds which fill the air and your brain cavity. Just remember its only a dream. It is? So whats all this dust on my landspeeder then? You tell me dude you tell me. Amazing track

Its time for "curvature". Pulses of friendly audio pipe up from the marzipan surface of the planet you find yourself warped into, and as you walk, the sugary ground spits out chilled space melodies for all the chocolate robots to dance to. Rivers of titanium mushroom water wash over your caramalised feet and droplets of sugared rocket fuel combine to create a smooth beat friendly cola cube soundtrack. Novel sure does have a way of creating musical worlds that your ears interpret into eye fuelled visions. Excellent once again.

"Viaduc" has an enchanting harpsichord style introduction, calls out down the corridors of the abandoned mining convoy it is then joined by a thudding beatline and whirlygig sub melody which gels it all together. Blocks of unused oxygen float aimlessly around the vast cargo hold lightly bashing into each other expelling click fuzz beatlicks, which have nowhere else to go but up. Beautiful.

"Lucarne" echoes synthetic audio waves from wall to wall as slow walking metallic skeletons plod across the golden meshlike framework, planting deep bassy tones in their wake. Short but se weet at 1m 23 sec. "Porticus of grotta" Drink the liquid in the glass, its a passport into another world of rattling clicks and electro basslines, but wait, its more than just that. Jump aboard Turricans back as the 360degree gun shells rattle and ricochet off enemies exoskeletons, and the pure sunshine grasslined melody merges with your eye sockets and takes you into the land of circling phaser fire. Self propelled grenades fly alongside whistling through the air, but the journey is almost complete as you near the enemy stronghold and barrage them senseless with luminscent sinewaves and crystalised flashbangs. Audio speed running at its best. Recommended.

"Medieval ruins" gives off an air of invincibility as it calmly rattles clicks and blips away at a slow pace, with an underlying staticly fuelled power build up. Sit down and lean back, as the glass filled power pills rain down from above and the deep fuzball melody whirls and fizzes around in the clean air, creating a sundown melody that is hard to resist. Whizztastic.

"Rotonda" leaks broody sci fi tones from the very moment it begins. Heavy synth hits run along walls, carving ruts for the clickclack beat and sparkly tones to slide down. Goeman on the snes has to be what this music was made for, the drumbeats and gas filled enchanting overtones give of an eastern feel which drags you in and wallows your imagination in a secret blue putty. Listen to this.

Novel 23 is shit good, he produces music that opens up previously unused areas of your brain, and lets in hundreds of characters and stories for you to compute. Do not miss this amazing album.

Also included on this cd is a cool video.

Three words to describe Novel 23 : Powerstory warpzone killergreatness.

"architectural effects" is unmissable.

Sam

http://www.tessellate.me.uk/reviews/novel23_arch_review.htm

THE MILK FACTORY / UK / SEPTEMBER 2003

If Architecture Effects is not Roman Belousov's first album, it is his first to benefit of a proper release. Born in a small town near Moscow, Belousov grew up listening to disco and break dance, but he developed an interest for electronic music after hearing Depeche Mode in the mid eighties. It is through his encounter with the work of Cosmic Baby, Orbital, Aphex Twin and Autechre thought that he progressively started to make music, though, and this new album gives the opportunity to experience the work of this young talent from Russia.

Working with vintage Russian analogue synthesisers, partly because he couldn't afford modern ones, he started recording, eventually releasing his first album, Biogenes Resources, on Russian label ArT-Tek back in 1997, followed two years later by Melodies Of Childhood For Advanced Imagination, released through Alabama, USA-based Pichcadet Records. Belousov has also published a number of EPs, and his music has been featured on countless compilations. Naming the likes of Arovane, Gimmik, Plod and Phonem as his main influences, it is no surprise to see Belousov focusing on the melodic aspect of his music. Carving evocative melodies within dreamy sound structures, he seems to work on a recurring theme all the way through. Yet, each track has a pretty unique feel as it grows and develops over time.

Some might regret the slight uniformity of sound, but it actually acts in favour of these compositions, as the man builds the mood over the length of this album. With subtle touches, Belousov applies fascinating textures, a process made easier with the use of analogue synths, as to gently outline the characteristics of each track. His earlier work sometimes appeared patchy and lacked of focal point, but this is fortunately not the case here. Clocking at just over forty-five minutes, Architecture Effects manages to retain the atmospheric substance of these compositions all the way through. Pinnacles, Porticus Of Grotta and Medieval Ruins in particular are strikingly organic, with the later making interesting use of abrasive noises. Elsewhere, on the more subdued Lucarne or Gothic Vimperg, Belousov appears to contemplate his work and pause, but only to recharge his batteries.

With this album, Roman Belousov shows a much more mature approach to his work than with his previous releases and is set to establish the Novel 23 imprint alongside that of Arovane and Gimmik. At times close to the sonic realm of Plaid, Architecture Effects establishes interesting bridges between the British duo and the emotional basis of bands such as Isan or Múm.

http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/novel23_effects.htm

IGLOOMAG / USA / December 2003

Jericho Maxim, Contributing Editor

Novel 23 is Roman Belousov, and he beams his version of electronic music into the ether straight from Moscow, Russia. Novel 23 has crafted a soundtrack where one can finally dance about architecture.

Architectural Effects is a wonderment of melody, an embarrassment of richness in today's IDM scene. An album like this will be criminally under-exposed, and that is quite a shame. Antecedents to Novel 23's sound would include the normal laundry list, Depeche Mode, Gary Numan, the inevitable Kraftwerk, etc. But Novel 23 does not have the retro-sound of the time of those artists, he sounds precisely out of time, because these songs have nothing to date them with. Classic melodies and tasty beats will always stand the test of time.

"Lucarne," falling in the middle of the album, is a short piece, with a sad trumpet-synth sounding against a shimmering backdrop of echoing keyboards, like a velvet curtain blowing in the wind. The piece would seem too short, at under ninety seconds, until one realizes that less really is more, and that repeating the track only makes it more and more emotional.

Things shift gears a little with "Porticus of Grotta" (video included). Gorgeous keyboards amid clattering beats abound. There are no highlights on the album, for each track is an exercise in melodic and emotional development. In execution, Novel 23 hits the high water mark for contemporary electronic music.

<http://igloomag.com/doc.php?task=view&id=598&category=reviews>

BBCi / UK / November 2003

Novel 23 joins the ranks of musicians/groups with the magical number 23 in their name - Project 23 and 23 Skidoo, being the first couple which spring to mind (rather spookily, AllMusicGuide lists 23 groups with 23 in their names).

"Portal to Cittadella" begins with an attractive chainsaw sound (think Add N To X) and a classic noisegate snare rhythm. This is clearly an analogue universe from the get go, full of busy, hummable melodies. The first impression - and one that lasts - is that, good lord, this is old school to the point of apparently having rebounded here via a warp in the spacetime continuum. I imagine Ryker informing Jean-Luc of this intrusion with his trademark serious/pensive stare; but wait a minute, given the extent of the warp, shouldn't it perhaps be Vila Restal quizzically fixing Roj Blake with his best worried look? (For those of you lucky enough to not recognise the names, try typing 'Blake's 7' into your favourite search engine.)

Whatever, this is simultaneously clunky and graceful music which could have been recorded in 1984, 1990 or 1995. It might be an early Gary Numan 'b' side (all monophonic melodies stabbed out with one finger), it could be someone who's listened to too much Kraftwerk circa The Man Machine for their own good or it could be an outtake from a Kingsuk Biswas production (many tracks have that mournful, lonesome key to them). You'll find no contemporary rhythms here - no breakbeats, syncopated garage or 4/4 tech-house- to jolt you into the clever, chaotic and horrid present. There aren't really any sounds to nail Novel 23 into the Now either - no glitches, no liminal hums, no background static.

"Pinnacles" is full to the brim - spilling over in fact - of slightly out of tune melodies produced by oscillators as if the music were recorded in a too warm room. "Rotonda" has sweeping synths which might signal the appearance of the Terran Federation intent on recapturing escaping rebels...

Architectural Effects has a gorgeous cover - all Malevich muted colour palette and Lissitzky angles - hats off to the designer Guillaume Amen. It's a perplexing enterprise; on the one hand there's the apparent architectural concept to the album - tracks are titled "Viaduc", "Porticus of Grotta", "Gothic Vimperg", "Medieval Ruins", "Rotonda", etc and there's a quote on the sleeve credited to Friedrich Schelling; 'Architecture is a frozen music'.

On the other hand are the naïve, outspoken melodies and the analogue soundworld. What does the marriage of these two elements produce? I'm not sure, but if you're a fan of any of the artists mentioned in this review or/and are a fan of the 80's revival, you might want to investigate this cd.

Reviewer: Colin Buttimer

http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/experimental/reviews/novel_architect.shtml

SKUG / Austria / January 2004

Es will ein Konzeptalbum sein, das mit jedem der zehn Titel einen architektonischen Bauteil reflektiert. Musikalisch ist es im Grunde nicht viel mehr, als ein paar verträumte Soundstrukturen aus alten russischen Synthesizern. Die barocken Melodiebögen hallen mit Respektabstand am Kitsch vorbei, einschlägige Beatgerüste verleihen Form. Innerhalb seiner recht eng gesteckten Parameter bietet »Architectural Effects« eigentlich wenig Abwechslung und macht diese Tatsache zu seiner großen Stärke. Die einzelnen Tracks scheinen mit der Zeit ineinander zu fließen, ergeben ein größeres Ganzes - vielleicht wirklich eine Art Bauwerk, dessen Wirkung auch erst vom Zusammenspiel der Gesamtheit seiner Teile ausgeht. Philippe Petit, der mit seinem BipHop-Label auch nach der 23. Veröffentlichung erstaunlich wenige Ausfälle zu verzeichnen hat, setzt diesmal auf relativ leicht konsumierbare Kost. Ich hoffe, wir können uns auf »elektronische Musik für Tagträumer« einigen - zumal das Wort »Hintergrundmusik« so einen schalen Beigeschmack hat.

skug - online | Tobias Bolt

http://www.skug.at/reviews/review_b.php?id=1998

L'ENTREPOT / Belgium / March 2004

Als die Bip-Hop schijfjes in de bus vallen gaat ons hartje sneller slaan en merken we dat een lichte opwinding zich van ons meester maakt. Maar voor Novel 23 was dit zeker niet nodig geweest. De Rus Roman Belousov knutselt al sinds 1997 aan zijn discografie, de bouwmaterialen zijn de pc en allerlei oude sovjet synthesizers. Deze cd met als concept architectuur is volledig geconstrueerd rond zo een oude synthesizer. Het is evident dat het totaal geluid wat retro klinkt (jaren tachtig), veel uitgewerkte melodieën maar het heeft ook iets abstracts. En hier wringt het schoentje, de composities zijn te rechtlijnig, er gebeurt niks in buiten de mooie melodieën, het is te egaal.

<http://users.skynet.be/entrepot/reviews.htm>

NOIZE / Germany / March 2004

Nachdem Novel 23 alias Roman Belousov in den letzten drei Jahren mehrere Split-EPs mit anderen Künstlern herausgebracht hat, veröffentlicht er nun wieder einen Longplayer. In zehn wundervollen Kompositionen stellt der Musiker aus Moskau den Hörer auf eine retrospektive Zerreißprobe, seine Musik könnte gut und gerne eine Fusion der Ideen zweier großer Elektronik-Pioniere sein. Wie hätte es sich angehört, wenn sich Vince Clark nach seiner Trennung von Depeche Mode und Yazoo nicht einen neuen Sänger gesucht, sondern eine Zusammenarbeit mit einem Instrumental-

Künstler, wie beispielsweise Jean-Michelle Jarre, gesucht hätte? Diese Vorstellung nimmt beim Hören von "Architectural Effects3 deutlich Gestalt an. So melancholisch wie bei Novel 23 haben Maschinen seit Kraftwerks "Spacelab3 nicht mehr geklungen. (5/6) - Frank Ilschner -
http://www.noize.cc/reviews/main.php?p_id=4691

ELECTRONIC MUSIC WORLD / The Netherlands / March 2004

I normally would not run into Novel23 I think. I actually got this record because Nicolas from Ad Noiseam recommended it to me. And since Nicolas knows my musical taste quite well, I trusted him and bought this disc. I have not regretted it yet...

The digipack the cd comes in is not really that attracting. Which is one more reason I'd normally not pick this disc up quickly. However, the music that is inside is what counts. And what makes me happy I actually did get it. Not really innovative music can be found on this album. However, working with all the current IDM techniques, Novel23 has been able to build some quite beautiful melodies and great rhythms. The combination of those sounds make for a very pleasant album to listen to. The music is quite accessible, without any real harshness. Just pleasant, easy listening IDM.

Though, as far as I know, the two artists have completely different working methods, I find Novel23 often reminding me of the beautiful and intricate sounds that n5MD artist Spark has given to this world. Though the music of Novel23 is slightly less intricate and more minimal in nature, this does not make the music worse. The apparent simpleness of the melodies makes it even more attractive. Where Spark has moments where you have to keep your attention focussed to really get into his music, the music by Novel23 is easy on the ears and a good way to simply chill and let your thoughts go.

Yes, this is a very nice album. Melodic elements with nice beats. Something that easily be listened to. Accessible and likeable. Highly recommended for people into light, melodic IDM music.

<http://www.electronicmusicworld.com/review.php?id=113>

JADE / France / February 2004

A la manière de nombre de ses compatriotes, Belousov perpétue le lègue de ses ancêtres, un atavisme culturel et intellectuel, où se prolongent les recherches graphiques entamées par Rodchenko, Maïakovski ou Djega Vertov et plus proches d'eux Eu, voire Monolake. Un clin d'œil appuyé au suprématisme et aux vagues surréalistes qui s'y sont succédées et une révérence à l'iconographie propagandiste du début de siècle dernier.

On avait découvert le jeune homme (Roman Belousov) à l'occasion des Séries de Bip-hop, on savait également qu'il avait égrainé ses précédentes productions au fil de labels défricheurs, Art-Tek, Pitchcadet ou Shaped Harmonics Les perspectives musicales ici discutées ont la sapidité désuète des titres EBM du début des années Thatcher ; une musique en mutation, aux confluents des genres ; proto électronique ; musique post industrielle, no wave. Avec une atmosphère emprunte de romantisme et d'expérimentations tout azimut., A ce titre Novel 23 se fait le porte flambeau d'une certaine idée de la musique défendue par "OMD" ou Nitzer Ebb. Loin de toute rigidité, de toute forme de raideur du rythme, les constructions mélodiques diffusent leur engourdissement. La trame de sons ondulants et oscillatoires, prétexte à un certain apaisement insinue ses bien-faits dans notre organisme. L'ambiance établie une idée de confinement et de chaleur, malgré ce que semble nous suggérer un

bandeau intérieur ou "l'architecture est une musique glaciale" ; Ambiance qui rapproche définitivamente Novel 23 des premières productions du label Morr Music et plus généralement des productions d'électronica minimalistes et naïves.

Quelque chose comme la genèse de ce mouvement. Très agréable.

<http://www.pastis.org/jade/cgi-bin/reframe.pl?http://www.pastis.org/jade/novembre/topvain.htm>

BODYSPACE /Portugal / January 2004

A primeira sensação é a de que o tempo parou no apartamento dos subúrbios de Moscovo onde Roman Belousov aka Novel 23 passa as tardes vazias. Primeiro, porque as passa rodeado de velhos sintetizadores soviéticos, que para nós, europeus, ganham o estatuto de encantadoras peças de colecção que colecionamos um tanto ou quanto cinicamente, artefactos para repousarem junto à lassie de porcelana e ao menino da lágrima, como se fossem objectos de uma História que não nos pertencesse. O segredo que fingimos não saber é que esses são provavelmente os únicos sintetizadores que Belousov consegue obter. Estamos na Rússia. Pós-colapso. Segundo, porque tocamos na caixa antes de ouvir o CD, e reparamos na estranhíssima mistura Suprematismo vs Tipografia de Pacmania que constitui a capa. Uma espécie de El Lissitsky versão kitsch, que faz transpirar a intenção modernista do álbum, mas de uma forma bastante datada.

Terceiro, porque Novel 23 representa primeiramente um fascínio muito particular pelo High Tech já impreguenado de pós-modernismo e de referências oblíquas que foi apanágio dos anos 80, em que a permanente saudade do porvir se traduzia em programas espaciais e quiméricas propostas de colonização humana, a que não será alheio o ambiente de corrida ao Espaço que se vivia durante a guerra fria. Desta forma, não será descabido comparar Belousov a uns Kraftwerk do outro lado do muro. Sentem-se certas décalages no imaginário de uns e outro, sim, mas remanesce o essencial da proposta estética do quarteto alemão.

O conceito deste álbum passava por uma aproximação à arquitectura, submetendo os efeitos desta ao filtro não-espacial da música. De que forma elementos arquitectónicos e para-arquitectónicos como pináculos ou viadutos, presentes nos títulos das músicas, influenciaram o resultado, é impossível saber. Não certamente a um nível directo, porque são duas expressões não-correspondentes fisicamente - mais ao nível do espaço que do tempo -, mas em que existe uma evocação de cidades imaginadas, cidades talvez muito semelhantes à fabulosa Urbicand geométrica e racional que François Schuiten tão bem ilustra. Cada faixa funciona mais como uma descrição do que como uma narrativa - em que as potencialidades de storytelling do som são substituídas pela iteração constante das componentes sonoras, como se penetrássemos cada vez mais fundo num quadro e descobríssemos, através de uma aproximação vagarosa, os pormenores que habitam cada centímetro quadrado da composição.

A electrónica de Novel 23 não é áspera, abrasiva ou demasiado cerebral. A sua bússola aponta para uma relação saudável entre máquina e homem, em que este não perde as noções fundamentais da harmonia, da proporção, do belo. Por outro lado, nunca se distancia da sempre vaga procura emocional que é fácil esquecer quando se produz música num computador. Roman Belousov é um romântico, e tem uma perspectiva muito interessante da concepção da Arte. Agarra-se a um conceito que, para ele, é imutável, o olho do furacão da música contemporânea: a melodia, que vai em direcção à alma e ao coração. Ou seja, o processo de experimentação, válido per si na dimensão, digamos, científica e perceptual, ganha apenas um sentido real quando se integra numa holística criação artística feita de conteúdo e forma.

Mesmo com referências como Isan ou Plaid, "Architectural Effects" nunca consegue ser verdadeiramente contemporâneo, o que não é de todo um defeito. Está despido dos detalhes que se acrescentaram na timeline da electrónica dos anos 90, como os ruídos de estática, os glitches, os clicks and cuts. Em compensação, é um álbum sólido e consistente, nunca fugindo muito da iconografia traçada previamente.

Não surpreende, mas também não fere os ouvidos.

Nuno Cruz

http://www.bodyspace.net/album.php?album_id=273

WHIRLYPOP / Germany / December 2003

Nachdem die letzten Bip-Hop-Veröffentlichungen ja eher zum Experimentellen tendierten, kommt uns der Russe ROMAN BELOUSOV aka NOVEL 23 diesmal ausgesprochen zugänglich, rund und wohlklingend. Das ist mir schon aus Gründen des Ausgleichs höchst angenehm, flauschige Analog-Electronica ist aber sowieso jederzeit willkommen.

Dass BELOUSOV tatsächlich auf alten Sowjet-Synthies musiziert, könnte natürlich ein klischeegerechtes Gerücht sein, wenn dem tatsächlich so ist, klingt sein Equipment dennoch genau so gut wie das von sagen wir mal BOARDS OF CANADA, BOLA oder – warum nicht – JEAN MICHEL JARRE. Nach diversen Remixen, verstreuten Tracks auf Compilations und zwei Alben ist sein neues Album "ARCHITECTURAL EFFECTS3 nun beim französischen Spezial-Label für ausgefallene elektronische Musik gelandet – eine angemessene internationale Achse für diese Musik von zeitloser Schönheit, möchte ich meinen.

NOVEL 23 mag es romantisch und schwelgerisch, warm pulsen die altmodischen Synthie-Schwaden zu mittelschnellen bis entspannten Beats aus den Lautsprechern. Die Klänge sind nicht innovativ, sondern, ich sagte es, absolut zeitlos. Man bedient sich unaufdringlich bei gediegenen TANGERINE DREAM-Epen, frühem Warp-Sound und diversen Widergängern auf Skam. Mit FIZZARUM hatten wir letztes Jahr übrigens einen weiteren Russen im Programm, der ganz ähnlich geklungen hat.

Die Tracks stammen aus den Jahren 2000 bis 2002, könnten soundtechnisch aber aus fast jeder Phase der neunziger Jahre stammen. Ich betone also noch einmal den zeitlosen (keinesfalls altmodischen) Charakter dieser ausgeruhten, unpräzisen, rhythmisch geraden und grundsymphatischen Musik.

-joe

http://www.whirlypop.de/03_kw49/3.htm

FAT BANKROLL / Sweden / December 2003

Den musik som ryssen Roman Belousov, mer känd som Novel 23 i electronicakretsar, tidigare presenterat för omvärlden ljuder inte direkt som något jag skulle placera i närheten av franska etiketten Bip-Hop. Men nu har i alla fall någon klok själ på Bip-Hop trots det beslutat sig för att låta honom släppa ett album och det var inget dumt drag. Det enda positiva Bip-Hop tidigare gjort, enligt mig, är att de släppt ett majestätiskt album med amerikanska Twine. Annars har det enbart bjudits på tråkig och högtravande glitch. Det enda gemensamma Novel 23:s album har med några tidigare Bip-Hop album är annars att CD:n, förutom musik, innehåller en video till ett av spåren. Novel 23 har två svårfunna album ute sedan tidigare - ett på insomnade Pitchcadet och ett på Art-Tek. Annars har Belousov mest florerat på en uppsjö samlingsalbum och splitsinglar.

Jag undrade givetvis hur Belousovs nyare musik skulle låta i jämförelse med de naturliga vapendragarna från landet i öst – Fizzarum och EU. Likhetera är utan

tvekan större med EU:s mörker än med än Fizzarums glitch. Annars var känslan som dök upp under första genomlysningen av "Architectural Effects" att det påminde om Scarcubems album "41117 Präsenz". Fast med ljudbild och electrobeats tagna från "Tri Repetae" samt en anseelig mängd Orbital-klonade melodier för att förhöja trevnadsfaktorn. Öppningsspåret "Portal To Citadella" är en enkel, mörk historia. Ganska trevlig om än lite gammalmodig. Efterföljande "Curvature" lyfter fram melodin mer och låter riktigt maffig. Bör avlyssnas på hög volym. Andra höjdpunkter är korta mellanspelet "Lucarne" med ekande Lackluster-patenterade melodier och "Medieval Ruins" som puttrar på i Herrmann & Kleines plinker-pop spår.

Denna CD innehåller inget direkt nyskapande, bara en bunt trevliga låtar. Rysstronica som inte alls behöver skämmas för sig i Bip-Hops brokiga bakkatalog – tvärtom!

/ Magnus

<http://www.fatbankroll.nu/showreview.php3?id=1068586903>

KINDAMUZIK / The Netherlands / December 2003

Een instrumentaal synthesizerconceptalbum over architectuur. We zitten meteen weer in de jaren zeventig met Kraftwerk en Jean-Michel Jarre. En zo klinkt de muziek die Moskoviet Roman Belousov onder de naam Novel 23 uitbrengt ook. Lang aangehouden, statige basakkoorden zoemen uit de luidsprekers met daar overheen eenvoudig mineur melodieën gebleept. Op de duisterste momenten gaat het ook wel richting de horrorfilmmuziek van John Carpenter en Goblin, getuige ook titels als 'Gothic Vimperg' en 'Medieval Ruins'.

Het levert een plaat op die bij vlagen erg mooi en melancholiek is, maar ook nogal monotoon. Niet alleen hebben de oude Sovjet-synthesizers waarop het Novel 23-geluid gebaseerd niet zo'n breed scala aan geluiden, ook een gebrek aan variatie in tempo en de eenvoud van de melodieën spelen daarbij een belangrijke rol. Daarom is Architectural Effects het best te genieten in kleine brokken of als begeleiding bij een rondje hakken door een horde aanstormende slecht acterende zombies.

tekst: Martijn ter Haar

<http://www.kindamuzik.net/reviews/article.shtml?id=4715>

MUSIC-SCAN / Germany / November 2003

Es passiert mir recht selten, dass ich mal russische Electronica in die Finger bekomme, doch mit der neuen Platte von Novel 23 hat sich das jetzt geändert. Roman Belousov zaubert auf "Architectural Effects" wieder eine Menge sehr schöner Melodien und Harmonien aufs Parkett, die sich sehr ruhig und behäbig aber mit subtiler Stetigkeit ausbreiten und nach und nach ihre volle Wirkung entfalten. In gewisser Weise hat man es hier fast mit einem Konzeptalbum zu tun, denn jeder der zehn Tracks verkörpert ein architektonisches Element, das Belousov hier tonal umzusetzen versucht hat. Bisweilen bleiben mir die thematischen Zusammenhänge zwar verschlossen, doch das ändert nichts an der Tatsache, dass man es hier mit astreiner Electronica zu tun hat, die vor allem aufgrund ihrer Vielseitigkeit und Wärme begeistert und nicht wie bei vielen Kollegen in fast autistische Verhältnisse abgeleitet. Auf "Architectural Effects" bleibt alles nachvollziehbar und in tonal sehr angenehmen Bahnen, da nicht zwanghaft versucht wird, avantgardistische Klangbilder fern des gemeinen Hörverständnisses zu erzeugen, sondern hier geht es immer noch primär um den Bauch und weniger den Kopf. Sehr schöne Platte, die mich absolut überrascht hat und mich nur hoffen lässt, dass man in Zukunft noch mehr Musik aus Russland hierzulande zu Ohren bekommt.

Matthias

http://www.music-scan.de/Templates/reviews_team.php?id=2271

LECKER ELECTRO / Germany / November 2003

Electronica in a very special old school way! ROMAN BELOUSOV lebt in Russland und benutzt für seine Kompositionen alte Hammer und Sichel Synthesizer. Manchmal erinnert einen das, an die ersten mit Musik unterlegten Computerspiele, um dann aber eben doch einen ganz reizenden Charme der Kompositionen herauszuhören! Zerbrechlich, und sanft umspülen die Sounds unsere Gehörgänge und lassen den Wodka warm werden!

<http://www.leckerelektro.de>

CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES mag # 1 / UK / November 2003

Taking electronica's Autechre led obsession with cold precision one step too far. Another stride away from humanity. Fortunately Roman Belousov aka Novel 23 injects far more of himself, far more soul, into his music than those names suggest. Reminiscent of the early Warp roster – particularly LFO – Novel 23 emits fizzling, crisply melodic, analogue electro, inhabiting a sharply-constructed world similar to that of fellow Russian's EU and Fizzarum. Smartly retro, yet also strangely futuristic, it also recalls 'People Are People'-era Depeche Mode, albeit lacking anything approaching vocals but with added throbbing glitches. So lush, even that choice of title seems almost forgivable.

Ian Fletcher

MUSIQUE MACHINE / Belgium / November 2003

These days, Russia means imprisoned oligarch, war in Chechnya, Vladimir Putin, very rich people, extremely poor people. But there is more to it: Russia has its fair share of talented musicians. Roman Belousov is one of them. He has just released his fourth full-length under his Novel23 alias.

Belousov really started getting interested into music through Depeche Mode. He later discovered the early '90's electronic acts and started making his own sounds at the age of 23 (hence the 23 in his musical alias - oh and roman means novel so there you go: the name of this project explained in a few words). What makes his music peculiar is that he only uses vintage synths. Not the trendy ones, but rather cheap ones, ones that have been forgotten by almost everybody (quite a few of those synths are Russians). Belousov also is a melody lover. Vintage keys + melody = Kraftwerk. This comparison is not entirely wrong, but Novel23 has an identity of its own.

In the inner CD-sleeve, there is a quote from Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854). Schelling is a very important person in the history of philosophy, although his work is ignored by most. Anti-Cartesian, he influenced Nietzsche, Marx, Heidegger, Kierkegaard and Lacan as well as the German romantics. More importantly, as far as the review of Architectural effects goes, he said "architecture is a frozen music". What is the meaning of such a sentence? "What is common to both is obviously the element of time; both are sequential arts. In music the art object moves through sequences in time and the listener is fixed; in Architecture, on the other hand, the art object is fixed and the observer must move through sequences in time to experience the Architecture"

(<http://members.fortunecity.com/nelia5/simplynelia/id8.html>).

So what kind of houses would correspond to Novel23? Well, if you only look at the artwork, it mixes modern elements with typography and design vaguely inspired from

suprematism (Russian avant-garde from the early 1920's, led by Malevich among others) and Bauhaus.

However, the music is very futuristic (futurism is radically different from both suprematism and Bauhaus). In a way, this is the tension between all those various elements that makes of Architectural effects an album that is really 2003.

There is something naïve about this music, making me think of the dreams of a little child about exploring space and how technology would dramatically improve our lives. In a way, this album is deliciously romantic, a trip down memory lane (futuristic utopias, vintage synths, early electronic pop musicS). But Novel23 is not purely a nostalgic affair. The beats are reminiscent of today's productions, and so is the use of (abrasive or not, depending on the tracks) noise. There is something gothic too on some tracks. Not only in the titles (Gothic vimperg, Medieval ruins), but also in the way the sounds seem to echo in a huge building, a cathedral.

If this music was transformed into a building, its architecture would mix the steel of futurism, the lines of Bauhaus and the gargoyles of gothic churches. It would be surrounded by wild nature as the romantics used to love it. On the roof of the house, the statue of a Russian cosmonaut. It would look damn ugly, but it sounds fucking brilliant.

François Monti

http://www.musiquemachine.com/reviews/reviews_template.php?id=442

CRACKED / Austria / October 2003

Friedrich Schellings old saying of “Architecture is frozen music” stands as a pinnacle underneath the plastic tray for the CD on this Digipak. And Roman Belousov aka Novel 23, a Russian electronic musician from Moscow, is out to prove that the reverse holds true also: music is liquid architecture. His compositions, produced on a combination of old Soviet synthesizers and modern computers, are structurally complex but also concrete, his melodies straight and worked into energetic lines as are the lines on the façade of a building. An interesting record on more than one level and an overall beautiful piece of music to listen to. For this release on Bip Hop the same theoretical thoughts hold true as for the CD by Si-Cut.db and Full Swing that has just come out on Bip Hop or any other release on that label. But Novel23 gives it away in the title his newest CD – it is all about structural elements and building complex forms out of more or less complex bricks and stones. He even uses architectural terminology to give names to his tracks. In how much he has used real buildings or architectural theories to compose and produce these ten tracks is beyond me. And even if I knew, it wouldn't matter, because you can't hear it in the music. The parallels between electronic music and architecture are deeper, more structural and morphological than such obvious parallels.

In electronic music the differences between records are usually only in minor changes and movements, but to those who are interested and invocated, these evolutions are important steps and of great importance. Such a listener would find a lot of associations and connotations in the music of Novel23, especially in the way “older” electronic and synthie-sounds are being incorporated into the slightly off-beat electro-rhythms and blissful harmonies (it would be too much to speak about melodies). And really, Roman Belousov – for that is the real name of Novel 23, uses old soviet synthesizers in combination with modern computer audio technologies, to produce his tracks. The Eighties shine through each and every track like the sun through the cracks of an old wooden hut at a sunny day. Or maybe it is the nostalgic aspect evoked by the synthie-sounds. At some points I always expect an Eighties-dance-

rhythm to start, some guitars to strum and Nick Kershaw or maybe even Limahl starting to sing. You remember these pop-singers? You are an old dude, dude.

Starting with track 4, "Viaduc", he starts to bring in heavily vocoded voices as one more instrumental element. And yes, it reminds me of Kraftwerk in their more melodious or warmer songs, but then, I haven't listened to Kraftwerk a lot lately, because there is so much other great music around. At some point listening to "architectural effects" you will get washed away by the cascades of keyboard sounds that come rolling on an never-ending board of synthie-drums. Some electronic music is able to bridge gaps between certain opposites, in this case decades. Whenever something harsher sets in, like the drumbeat on track 6, porticus of grotta, which come directly out of an Eighties disco-noise-track, it is almost instantly guarded and cloaked in more synthiesounds to take away the edges. Thereby the record as a whole gets a more unified feeling.

Roman Belousov has obviously been making music for years, and he has taken two years (2000-2002) to complete these tracks. Now, what do you know about the Russian electronica-scene? Nothing – well, here is a good place to start. In punkrock there is a certain interest to get to know punkrock from really far away places, even if the music is mediocre to say something nice. I think I never heard Russian punkrock as well, though I own a 7" with four Lithuanian punkbands. I haven't yet sensed the same interest in obscure or far away music in electronic music, though there are of course enough examples to be found (e.g. Chinese Avantgarde and Noise Music). Is it because the listeners are younger? Or is there just too much music to get interested in anything that is hard to reach? Or is electronic music as a whole a genre too young to spark diverse interests? Anyway, this is a good record to listen to, regardless where the music comes from.

<http://www.monochrom.at/cracked/reviews/Rev%20novel23.htm>

SOMA MAG / Germany / October 2003

Novel 23 ist Roman Belousov, wohnhaft in Moskau und von Beruf Systemadministrator bei einem Fernsehsender. In seiner Freizeit bleibt die Glotze aus. Da wirft er lieber seine alten russischen Synthesizer an und schraubt mal eben ein paar kleine melodische Hymnen zusammen.

Zweifelsohne, Melodien haben es ihm besonders angetan. In einem Interview nach dem Grund dafür befragt antwortet er: "Time goes by, music creation technologies are changing, rhythms get more and more sophisticated, the sound fashion changes too, but only melodies stay the same forever." Recht hat er. Und so gibt es dann auf "Architectural Effects" auch zauberhafte Melodien zuhauf. Kombiniert werden diese mit eingängigen Rhythmusstrukturen und Electro-Beats. Das Ergebnis sind grossartige Tracks wie "Viaduc", "Porticus Of Grotta" oder "Portal To Cittadella". Wie auch der Titel des Albums und das Cover schon erahnen lassen, hat das Ganze etwas mit Architektur zu tun. Jeder Track reflektiert ein architektonisches Element, eine Konstruktion oder einen bestimmten Stil. Apropos Stil, Novel 23 hat seinen eigenen gefunden und schafft es mit diesen 10 Liedern auch an noch so grauen Herbsttagen keine schlechte Laune aufkommen zu lassen. Danke Roman!

(Falk, somamag.de, 21.10.03)

<http://www.somamag.de/article.php?id=2964&r>

DE:BUG / Germany / October 2003

Novel 23 mochte ich immer gerne, weil diese Russen immer wieder feine Tracks abgeliefert haben, wenn sie halt Zeit fanden, ihr analoges Sounduniversum mal zu

verlassen und eine CD in den Briefkasten zu schmeißen, und außerdem immer absolute Großmeister der schwelgerischen Melodien waren. Das neue Album auf BipHop aus Marseille ist nicht ganz so überschwenglich, was einfach nur heißen soll, dass hier alles auf ein Album abgestimmt ist und sich das Wunder dementsprechend mehr Zeit lässt. Die Tracks blühen alle miteinander ganz wundervoll, sind nur einfach ein bisschen stiller und leiser. Dagegen hat wohl niemand was, warum auch. Und sonst? Analoge Klangerzeugung, kleine Rhythmen und große Melodien. Klar, oder? Schwelgerisch und ohne dunkle Seite. So muss es sein.

thaddi ****

<http://www.de-bug.de/review/19917.html>