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## Atom™

Winterreise

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By David Dacks

Do I detect the tiniest hint of 21st century rhythmic gratification with this excellent new Atom™ disc? Certainly this record has less of a rigorous factor than *Liedgut*, his "lied"-off release on Raster Noton a few years ago. But it's pretty clear the old drum & bass Atom™ is never coming back, much less Señor Coconut, Schmidt's one-time alias. *Winterreise* possesses a greater range of sounds, with tinkling piano and plangent bass in the "Dree Schneewalzer" suite sounding particularly naturalistic in contrast to the stiff, harsh, programmatic noises and structure. On the one hand, the disc's repetitive rhythmic elements are severe, which discourages momentum, but delicate sub-styles scurry in and around the loudest elements, providing constant intrigue. You may break out in a rash thanks to the digital mosquito swarm within "Streing," whose other sounds have a retro-futuristic dystopic feeling about them. Yet the analog warmth of "Ein Winterabend" tips the balance more towards romantic notions. This is a more satisfying release than *Liedgut*, one you will want to listen to again and again for clarity, depth and rhythmic nuance. Highly recommended.

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*I'm at a bit of a disadvantage, in that I only have the audio and not the full package of *Winterreise*, for the total context of what you're doing. The music more than stands on its own, but do you feel that the album experience is incomplete without the package?*

Actually, no, I don't think the music is incomplete without the package. The experience though — having a nice object coming along with something you have bought/purchased — is nicer, having it complete. However, I think in order to appreciate or dislike the music and talk about it, what you have should be sufficient.

*Would you say this album has a freer sound than the previous Raster Noton release?*

I would say it follows a different sonic idea, if compared to *Liedgut*. I don't know if this is "more free" or not, yet *Winterreise* has more to do with creating a certain mood and texture, or aura, than *Liedgut*. *Winterreise* is certainly more about sound than songs or tracks, or pieces, as *Liedgut* was. The photo series to which *Winterreise* initially was the soundtrack does deal with mood and texture in a similar sense and I tried to capture that with the music. In a way, the idea was to create romantic, slightly melancholic, yet scientific music at the same time.

*Do you feel like you're growing into the Lied sensibility, finding new ways to express its essential characteristics in new ways?*

I am constantly trying to push myself into territories formerly unknown to me. The Lied structure and history were important to me, in that sense, while I have never tried to replicate romantic Lied compositions. I see those influences much more freely, rather like an aura or feeling than literally. The romantic era, for example, is much more some kind of texture, to me, whether it's music, literature, poetry, science and so on, than a concrete, defined spot or something I could quote or rework. Sometimes my area of interest can be a moment in time, sometimes it may be a certain space, culture, country, etc., or a blend of the two. Those areas are naturally of interest to me, as they contain elements that often may be alien to my understanding. I find it important to absorb those elements and make them my own.

*Do you perform this material live? If so, how do you do so?*

This particular material is not performed live. However, during the two photo exhibitions of *Winterreise*, in Tokyo and Frankfurt, 2011, the music I played during the entire time of the exhibit.

*You live in Santiago, how is your Atom™ material received there? You've been there for 15 years; do you feel you are part of a larger community of like-minded artists at this point?*

I have never felt part of any larger community or scene, since I find it suspicious to be part of one. This was the case back in Frankfurt and it has been like that here in Santiago. Scenes, especially in music, are usually initiated by those who want to benefit from others. Whenever I have even slightly touched the Frankfurt, as well as the Santiago, community, I had rather bad

experiences. Also, moving to Chile to a big degree was related to not being part of a scene. Not to be absorbed by a scene was actually quite some task and not easy to achieve. However, I see individuals that make such scenes unfortunately way too often as some kind of vampire-esque parasites, which, once they have obtained something from you, move on to the next. Scenes, in general, have never given me anything in return. Now, independent from scenes, I do work with people here in Santiago or in other places. To me, it's more about a common mindset though than about anything else. I have just recently restarted my work with Vicente Sanfuentes, for example, with whom I do Surtek Collective.

*You've used so many names over the years and Atom™ has different personalities for different labels. What are your plans for the Raster Noton version of Atom™?*

Actually, I stopped using different names about five years ago. This hasn't sunk into the public consciousness just yet, but it's pretty much a fact. I am very much focusing on Atom™. I would disagree with saying that Atom™ has different personalities for different labels, but rather that ever since everything I did, using one name or different ones, has always been one same thing. This had become clear to me when I began to remaster my entire catalogue some years ago and I was able to look back at blocks of work I had done over a time span of 15 to 20 years. I suddenly realized that, even though single works may appear to be very different, in the end, they were all related and could be perceived as one large piece, instead of fragmented ideas and approaches. Now, as for Atom™, I am currently working on a new album, called *HD*, to be released on Raster-Noton later this year.

Read a review of *Wintereisse* [here](#).