

Beyond Sensory Experience - ‘No Lights In Our Eyes’ CD (Cold Meat Industry)

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Written by Simon Collins

The Swedish depressive duo Beyond Sensory Experience returns with *No Lights In Our Eyes*, BSE's seventh album overall and their second for Cold Meat Industry, following *The Dull Routine Of Existence* (also reviewed by Judas Kiss). BSE consists of K. Meizter, last heard by these ears collaborating with Polish project *Horologium on Eight Studies In Transition*, and Drakhon, sometimes of *MZ.412*.

As with the *Dull Routine...* album, BSE's brand of dark ambient is distinctively enervated and wan, with quiet, desultory piano lines, distant and washed-out vocal samples, simple, plangent drones and echoes, and an overwhelming feeling of listless despair. Not an ideal party album, then, but powerful in its own quiet way. *No Lights In Our Eyes* is evidently conceived as a companion piece to the *Pursuit Of Pleasure* and *Dull Routine...* albums, with the focus this time around on 'death and the subconscious sides of life'. Sex, futile routines and death – BSE's take on human existence isn't exactly life-affirming, but it fits rather well into the grimly stoical Scandinavian tradition of such figures as Ingmar Bergman and Søren Kierkegaard.

No Lights In Our Eyes contains ten tracks extending over 56 minutes, and beginning with the somber organ drones and lonely piano notes of 'Funerals'. Whispered vocals emphasise the atmosphere of disconnection and remoteness. Other particularly interesting tracks include 'Across The Divide', which has a warmer, fuller sound and even the vestiges of a trip-hop beat under jangling guitar, augmented by sweeps of orchestral strings, the title track, 'No Lights In Our Eyes', which at nearly nine minutes is the longest on the album, and which again employs slowly plucked guitar over ambient background drones, and 'Hearts And Minds', another long track, based on a repeated phrase of four plucked notes interspersed with strange muffled whimpering and sobbing, leading into extended church-organ drones reminiscent of Nico's harmonium work, and a repeated refrain of "In our hearts – in our memories". Nico, in fact, is a good comparison point for the work of BSE in general, for whilst BSE, of course, lack her unmistakable vocals, they do share a similarly dark and grief-stricken worldview. It's also easy to imagine BSE's music being used on the soundtrack of gloomy European arthouse films.

There's no doubt that the music of Beyond Sensory Experience will not appeal to everyone, maybe not even all dark ambient fans. Thrill-seekers and those with short attention spans are going to find this music boring and pointless. And although there's plenty of sadness to be found here, BSE have little to offer in the way of romantic melancholy – their music is just too bleak and stark. But those with introverted, depressive tendencies may find a sparse and wintry satisfaction in BSE's understated but quietly devastating ambient.

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