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## Beyond Sensory Experience : No Lights In Our Eyes

"You know what they say about funerals? There is always someone catches his death..."

Perhaps as time continues onward, the urge to experience feelings of fatalism, gloom, and/or melancholy do not seem so inappropriate or misplaced. Whether or not you agree with the alarmist proclamations of environmentalists, radical politicians, ministers, and 'culture advocates', there is no denying the inevitable fact that every living organism has a finite time of existence. This fragile existence is increasingly threatened by the outside environment, not only through the actions of other humans (malevolent or otherwise) but through environmental factors and statistical probability as well. In such troubled times, the need for a musical expression of this collective sadness is not only logical, but essential and even welcomed in some respects. Thus, in the same manner that Ulver's "Shadows Of The Sun" portrayed a somber portrait of loss and longing (while using different techniques, of course), "No Lights In Our Eyes" explores themes of death, dying, and the underlying thoughts which line our subconsciousness, and how we react to such occurrences.

"Next year, they think. Next week, or tomorrow. No later. But it is later than they think. They should not make life so complicated for themselves, now that they have brought about their own destruction. They cannot avoid the complexity, for death is their only alternative..."

This release completes the second "BSE trilogy". While "Pursuit Of Pleasure" investigated themes of (naturally) sexual/personal relationships and "The Dull Routine Of Existence" explored themes of boredom, stagnation, despair, fatigue, and seemingly 'mindless' routine (the linear notes even state that the album was 'recorded under the spirit of dullness', but what this exactly means is unclear), "No Lights In Our eyes" takes this examination to its logical conclusion. Although the album tends to maintain a neutral and ambiguous stance regarding what it is attempting to convey to the listener, it can easily be argued that feelings of nostalgia, *weltschmerz*, mourning, loss, regret, sympathy, melancholy, and sadness are all appropriate attributes to attach to these songs.

"From one dream into the next..."

With the evolution of BSE's conceptual backgrounds comes a pleasant evolution regarding their sound and approach as well. While this is not to say that their previous albums were necessarily bad in any way, there were at times certain elements to their songs which could (arguably) detract and/or lessen the impact they would have otherwise had. Specifically, I am referring to the slightly awkward samples found on "Pursuit Of Pleasure" and the somewhat 'hit-or-miss' rhythms of "The Dull Routine Of Existence". However, it is difficult to conclusively state that these small nagging points are anything more than personal preferences, especially since they display an admirable willingness for BSE to experiment, evolve, and maintain a unique musical aesthetic. Regardless of these

concerns, "No Lights In Our Eyes" is much more minimalist in construction than their previous albums, approaching 'dark ambience' at times, yet refusing to be pigeonholed into a specific genre.

"It seems strange that my life should end in such a terrible place..."

After listening to this album, you might agree with me that it is somewhat difficult to give a track by track description. Most of the songs feature BSE's increasingly iconic and identifiable dark ambient backdrops, often augmented by choice samples in English and (presumably) Swedish and sparsely introspective guitar and/or piano segments. My personal favorites are "Funerals" and "Standing Silent": the former being a dark minimalist masterpiece opening the album with the grim quote which opened this review and the later incorporating an awesome multi-segment choir movement in its midsection that seriously has to be heard to be believed. That is not to say that the other tracks are not worthy of mention: the featured track "Long The Nights" is almost frightening in the manner in which its strings hover around you, whereas "The Only Alternative" is darkly speculative in the extended contemplation of "The Only Alternative" (aided by subconscious drones and echoing choirs).

I read somewhere that this album is a near-religious experience in its funereal and somber themes and sounds. While I do not necessarily agree with this assessment, I will readily agree that it is certainly a meditative, contemplative, and intellectual experience, which continues the philosophy initiated and pursued by Beyond Sensory Experience since their first album. While their earlier albums were basically conceptual/theoretical in nature, their latest trilogy deals with the various facets of existence. How strange (or perhaps how fitting) that the exploration of endings should be one of their best works to date. Despite the fact that this album is concerned with death, funerals, and endings, it is (hopefully) not the end of Beyond Sensory Experience, but instead a new beginning.

The future looks very bright for this group. Highly recommended.

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