

electronic
sound



AUTOBAHN AT 40

Wolfgang Flür, Daniel Miller, Andy McCluskey and Michael Rother
celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Kraftwerk classic

PLUS

OMD / SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO / YELLE / BORIS BLANK
JUAN ATKINS / TIM GANE / ROC / XENO & OAKLANDER



OLIVIA LOUVEL

Beauty Sleep

Cat Werk

The award-winning French-born Brit crafts a fresh set of art inspired electronics. Or is it electronics inspired art?

Olivia Louvel works on the frontier of art and electronic music, often blurring the boundary between the two. Her 2010 album, 'Doll Divider', intertwined creative electronics with a series of repainted magazine cuttings of fashion models that she created under the title 'Processed Dolls'. The follow-up, 'O, Music For Haiku' (recited entirely in Japanese), came in a lavish package, hand-decorated by Louvel with an image of the Magic Fish Dog, a character that she invented. To underline her artistic chops, 'Doll Divider' won Best Album at the 7th Quartz Electronic Music Awards and this, her fifth long player, was partially funded by the Arts Council.

'Beauty Sleep' is more song-oriented than its predecessor, presenting Louvel's hypnotic voice alongside slowly developing layers of electronic loops and percussion. It's something of a cliché to say that she uses her voice as an instrument, but that's exactly the case here. Whether purring with cat-like sensuality, wailing and yelping with Yoko-infused rapture, or quietly musing, Louvel's word images are

as evocative as any of the clever sonic tapestries that push these songs forward. Hers is a voice with natural charm and clarity, a human quality offset by subtle processing and effects that merge her lyrics seamlessly with the backdrop.

Much of 'Beauty Sleep' has a brittle fragility to it. 'I Capture' and 'Bats' exude a quiet grace and serenity, the former sounding like a piece Matthew Bourne might use in a modern ballet. The latter meanwhile takes the kind of strings that Will Gregory crafted for Goldfrapp's 'Felt Mountain', only here the textures are suffused with dubby dynamics and skewed rhythms. 'But You Know' provides tropicalia mystique, while 'Polytypes Of Love' finds dark eroticism in robotic synth gestures.

The standout track is 'In My Shed', a piece based around a disorientating vocal pattern lifted from Recoil's 'Stone'. Louvel has toured with Recoil's Alan Wilder, as has her long-time mix partner Paul "PK" Kendall. The result of appropriating and re-contextualising the sample is to retain the almost eastern European classical ominousness of the original passage, while draping it in cloying pulses and vocal spirals. Like Louvel's repainted magazine cuttings,

it is an exercise in remaking/remodelling – taking something that was complete, paring it back to its base elements, and presenting it as something entirely fresh.

As if 'Beauty Sleep' wasn't knowing and cultured enough already, the album concludes with a piece composed using a Shakespeare sonnet. A sparse, clicking track, 'Live With Me' has a stately yet euphoric quality. It sounds exactly like an Olivia Louvel original but in reality, like 'In My Shed', it's an exciting fusion of the new and the old.

MAT SMITH



David Ackroyd