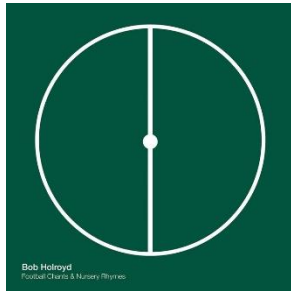


Bob Holroyd

Football Chants and Nursery Rhymes

www.bobholroyd.com



If ever there was an album that appeared with a deceptive title, then this is the winner. Electronic composer **Bob Holroyd** presents his latest work **Football Chants and Nursery Rhymes**. I can attest that there are neither roaring tributes to Manchester United, nor any hints at Mother Goose on the album. What you will find, or better yet, hear, are fourteen tracks of soul soothing vibes that brings up the sense of drifting in a vast sea of music. I have heard Bob Holroyd music before and he tends to get a lot of texture where smooth ground once existed. There is more than a bit of ebb and flow, and there is a whole lot of negative buoyancy. I say walk the plank and get on board. The music is definitely a welcomed respite from the daily grind.

The opening track is called **Beige**. The music suggests some kind of detachment, as if monochromatic thoughts ensue. It further suggests that the surrounding landscape, possibly sand, makes other things stand out. A blue sky, a yellow sun, a white sailboat. Don't be fooled by the music's neutrality.

Mangled Pianos is not created by sharp arpeggios or familiar ostinatos, but by a muted, flowing theme and an improvised piano melody that reminds me of something broken, and it needs fixing. There is a darkness to Bob's subject, musically equal to a break in the consciousness. A hole in the fabric of the universe where bad can get in. Unchecked. Unhindered. Let the listener beware.

One of my many favorites on the album has the odd name of **Straight Jacket**. Yeah, you would think it would be restraining in some fashion, but no. Perhaps it is there to confine the body while the mind wanders about. Safely and uninhibited. A lonely horn sounds throughout the piece, swaying, swinging, like some sonic pendulum. Its job is not to mark time, but to give the listener a place to which they may return.

The Surrey Ambience Service is another of those ambivalent labels that truly give no clue to the theme, but Holroyd overlays the experience with a noted heartbeat, a slow, brooding piano, and a muffled refrain in the first half, then a mid-tempo, mental excursion over imaginary cobblestones on the second half. The destination is unclear, but you'll never forget the journey.

Hiding in Plain Sight is a basic piano tune with soft reverberation and placid background. Until you look under the covers so to speak. A haunting sequence resonates inside the theme with a violin-like voice, far and away. It is a plaintive call. It is the voice at the bottom of the well. The sound from deep in a dark cave. Or perhaps it is from your own conscious. This tune is the most meditative, the most calming of all fourteen tracks. I was completely lost in it.

Low Tide is like listening to the earth rotate at half speed. Waves crash on the shore in slow motion. You can imagine the smell of salt, but the water never touches you. Birds are suspended in the air. Clouds appear to be permanent things. Holroyd's tranquil, slowly swirling soundscape proves that time (as we know it) need not exist. Ironically, you'll want to make time for this one.

Ship Sailed, the final tune, deceptively starts out with what sounded like a single note of a fog horn. It transforms into a pipe organ refrain of sorts. It's a façade of course. Deep within the music there is a storm brewing. Like imaginary waves, the music swells and climbs. We are at the top of the massive wave, ready to be deposited into the trough of sound. Whether all is lost is left up to the listener. It's a foreboding, but very satisfying tune.

There are seven more intriguing tracks on Football Chants and Nursery Rhymes. They are there to be sampled and savored. Bob Holroyd is a composer of electronic ambient music. His work is featured on big and small screens and has been used in immersive applications. Mindfulness seems to be a key ingredient in his music. I rate this album as excellent.

- R J Lannan, ArtisanMusicReviews.com