

GLASSWERK / UK / August 2006

It's nice to know that at a time when many bands are out purely to slice their bit of meat off the vastly reducing doner kebab that is the music industry, there are some people out there who are purely and simply creating music.

These unsung heroes and heroines slog their way across the performance circuit, with no expectations beyond giving their music the performance it deserves.

In this category Leo Abrahams is the thinker, a musician of amazing ability and perception.

On 'Scene Memory' he feeds an electric guitar through a bank of laptop effects and records in real time, preferring not to edit afterwards. The effect, ironically, sounds highly polished.

Abrahams himself says the idea of the album is to leave a lot to the imagination. He's right, but it's only your imagination that makes something of and completes the music.

'Route II' for example strikes me as a haunting, eerie concoction, filled with images of blackened American highways, flanked by darkness on either side and concealing unspeakable dangers.

But then that could be me. You might find it a joyous celebration of the intricacies of boiling water.

That seems a ridiculous thing to say, but that's where the value of this work lies. You complete the picture.

Now, don't get me wrong: It's not to say the album is inaccessible because it's definitely not.

It's what you'd call engaging. It's the difference between watching another Die Hard film or taking in a Lar von Trier film – it engages you, it doesn't pander, indulge or patronise you in the way so much new music tends to.

'Scene Memory' covers the full range of emotional, mood-enhancing music you could wish for and the tracks are of the length that keep you coming back for more.

On tracks like 'Love Unknown' it's pure melancholy and reminds me of Nibs van Der Spuy from the incredible South African band Landscape Prayers (I would urge you to check them out!) Like Nibs, Abrahams uses the guitar to full effect and capitalises on the fact that it's the most expressive of instruments.

If film technologies were sophisticated enough to perfectly distil emotion, 'Scene Memory' would be its soundtrack.

Unmissable.

Review by: **Andrew Burden**

KULTUREFLASH # 175 / UK / August 2006

Leo Abrahams is a guitarist with a rich pedigree: studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and later working with Brian Eno, Nick Cave, Ed Harcourt and David Holmes, his own solo debut first appearing last year. It's no surprise that his delicate guitar sketches are in demand from film composers and the like, as his new album Scene Memory is an evocative, cinematic even, tour-de-force. Every track stands out as small vignette full of ambient tones and longing, which could easily be embraced by the Donnie Darko generation. The album somehow navigates somewhere between Vangelis and Fennesz. Pieces like "Route 11" sound almost Get Carter-caught-in-the-headlights, suggesting frozen scenes of foreboding, peaceful and yet haunting. The tracks are full of elongated plucked or reversed string notes and loops, melodic and sometimes cavernous, echoing into the distance. Essential listening.

<http://www.kultureflash.net/archive/175/default.htm#features>

BOOMKAT / UK / July 2006

This was a surprise, although Abrahams apparently released his debut album last year it slipped past my radars, so I can't say I've heard of him before – but if this record is anything to go by I need to back track. Apparently Abrahams is a longtime associate of Brian Eno

(appearing on several albums), and I can certainly hear echoes of that in his music, there are traces of Eno's ambience and lightness but 'Scene Memory' is much more than a mere replication of 'Music for Airports' or 'Apollo'. Abrahams blends piano, guitar and electronics to an almost euphoric effect, the record feels like you are walking in a dream, and has all the cinematic reference points of such. I can hear remnants of Vangelis's matchless Blade Runner soundtrack, elements of Cliff Martinez and the haunting shadow of Harold Budd, but the blend of all these together is what makes 'Scene Memory' so interesting. It's hard to find really consistent ambient records these days, but somehow Abrahams has sidestepped the trappings of 'new age' or over-experimentation and produced something which balances all the elements perfectly.

<http://www.boomkat.com/item.cfm?id=22688>

VITAL WEEKLY # 540 / Holland / August 2006

Despite the fact that Leo Abrahams played with Brian Eno, Ed Harcourt, Paul Simon, Grace Jones and Nick Cave, I never heard of him, means that I rarely stick my head out of the underground. Abrahams is a guitarist, arranger and producer, and 'Scene Memory' is his second solo CD (following his debut 'Honeytrap' in 2005 on Just Music) and deals with the guitar, played live, fed on the spot through a bunch of laptop effects. No sound processing took place afterwards. It's easy to link this approach to that of Fear Falls Burning, but Abrahams arrives at a totally different result. His tracks are much shorter than the epic pieces of Fear Falls Burning, and also a bit more opener. However both opt for a highly ambient approach in music and it seems to me that Eno has been a great influence on the music of Abrahams. The twelve pieces are sketch like, yet worked out enough to hold the attention and not think: 'oh that's a nice start, why does it end so soon' and refer to Eno's best works in ambient music, such as 'On Land' and 'Apollo'. There is in terms of real time processing enough variation to make this throughout a highly enjoyable album. Something can be done inside ambient and make it move a little bit more forward - Abrahams proves that. It's exciting enough, moving far away from any new age traps, and let the experiment prevail, without losing structure or beauty. Great one. (FdW)

MUSIQUE MACHINE / September 2006

The title of Scene memory is very apt for this collection of guitar mood pieces, which dips into drifting and often melancholy sound scapes, literal linking a memory of a scene or event to one's mind. Leo Abrahams has worked with Brian Eno among others, and this clearly has the air and quality of some of eno's work, But Abrahams has managed to cast his own beautiful and poignant light upon these tracks .

It's all been created purely with the guitar and feeding it through various effects peddles to offer up: heat hazed vista of sound, melodic oceans drifts, bubbling guitar cords as if coming to the surfaces of some vast silver mystical lake, vast shimmering forest of tones, caughting the soothing breeze over desert scapes, or lulling childhood harmonics. Each track painting its own different picture and shade ,with often varied pace, but always with an ear on the melodic sheen. Both charming beautiful and haunting, Abrahams manages to milk a great number of tones pitches and audio colours from his instruments. The track length never moving much above the five minute mark.

A truly enjoyable collection of sound works, by clearly a master of his instrument and ambient craft. With out doubt one for all those who enjoyed well played and thought out mood music. Splendid stuff really.

Roger Batty

http://www.musiquemachine.com/reviews/reviews_template.php?id=893

SEA OF TRANQUILITY / USA / AUGUST 2006

In 1978 Fred Frith gave us an album, released on Virgin's budget label Caroline, called *Guitar Solos*. Essentially a Cageian exercise that did for the guitar what the "prepared piano" did for piano, the album was comprised of 13 pieces set firmly in a landscape built for unconstrained exploration. Its overriding aesthetic was an utter lack of preconception about both what constitutes music and what characterizes an instrument -- an aesthetic that seems all too rare, despite all the attention today's music lavishes on the electric guitar.

Leo Abrahams' *Scene Memory* goes a very long way to restoring that sense of exploration and curiosity and surprise. Decidedly more musical than Frith's pioneering work, Abrahams does a remarkable job of integrating initial impulses with their processed and modified consequences -- essentially making music out of music. The scope of his innovation is more profoundly drawn simply because he respects a certain level of restraint -- the solo guitar -- putting into sharp relief the seemingly limitless opportunities for the resultant sounds and forms. This economy of scale serves as a signpost for some of the more interesting trends emerging today, specifically music of a more intimate and spontaneous nature, less reliant on the availability of a practically infinite number of tracks and voices and completely reliant on the skill of the composer/performer.

Unlike his preceding *Honeytrap* which presented a highly diverse range of pieces, the music of "*Scene Memory*" is a still fluid yet highly coherent work. The changes in character, from languorous, dense and lush to angular and spare, from unexpected rhythmic passages folding into dense and shimmering clouds all originate from Abrahams' ability to make the transitions and transformations seem wholly natural. There are no contortions, nothing feels forced. The distinction is simple but profound: these are not expertly programmed crossfades from one source to another, but expert musical transformations. More concise, recognizable, less "vertical" and shorter in duration, the calibre of these pieces place Abrahams' music at the elevation where much of Fripp's better soundscapes occur.

Leo Abrahams' *Scene Memory* unifies a number of the more compelling experimental, compositional and performance ideas of the past 30 years, shaping those ideas into a music that is uniquely his own. The fact that this work is thoughtful, adventurous and the result of such a high degree of artistic integrity does not prevent it from being within the reach of anyone with unimpaired hearing. If only more music were this smart, this evocative and this good.

<http://www.seaoftranquility.org/reviews.php?op=showcontent&id=4028>

OCTOPUS / France / September 2006

Ami et collaborateur de Brian Eno, mais aussi du compositeur David Holmes (bandes originales des films *Ocean 12* et *Code 46*), Leo Abrahams s'est fait connaître il y a un peu plus d'un an avec *Honeytrap*, premier album croisant folk et ambiances cinématographiques sur des plages instrumentales doucement modulées. Une approche finement mélodique qui se déplace aujourd'hui dans un champ plus expérimental, ce qui explique en partie la présence du musicien anglais sur le label marseillais Bip-hop. bercé par les influences de son mentor Brian Eno mais aussi par les études sur l'expérience abstraite d'un Morton Feldman, Leo Abrahams poursuit une forme de quête mélancolique aux confins d'un genre qu'on pourrait qualifier de post-rock. Mais pour développer ces atmosphères à la fois pesantes et songeuses (la sobre et sombre profondeur de "*Pendulum*"), les méthodes du musicien anglais restent celles de l'instrumentiste qu'il est. Plutôt que d'enregistrer ses parties de guitares, puis de les retraiter ou remonter a posteriori, Leo Abrahams fait le choix de l'instantanéité et de la simultanéité. Ses manipulations de guitares électriques sont en effet modifiées en temps réel par trois ordinateurs qui permettent à la musique de garder une fraîcheur dans la variation plus proche de l'improvisation pure que de la musique de studio. Une couche technologique qui

vient parfaire le vernis musical sensible, introspectif et suggestif du guitariste sans remettre en cause une fluidité sonore discontinue.

Laurent Catala

AUTRES DIRECTIONS / France / August 2006

Nous ne connaissions pas le musicien anglais Leo Abrahams, et nous sommes bien heureux de pallier à cette lacune à l'écoute de Scene Memory, son deuxième album et premier pour Bip_Hop.

Collaborateur de Brian Eno et compagnon de route d'Ed Harcourt, le travail d'Abrahams a plus à voir avec le premier qu'avec le second. Pour Scene Memory, Abrahams a laissé parler ses guitares afin d'en extraire un fin parfum d'ambient, aux notes orientales, aux mélodies appliquées. Issus de sessions live, les morceaux de Scene Memory n'ont pas été retravaillés à l'ordinateur mais ont été figés de la sorte : par Abrahams jouant ses compositions à la guitare, et traitant leurs effets via trois ordinateurs en direct.

Si dans la sensibilité d'Abrahams, certains solos de guitare sonnent un peu grossiers parfois (la fin de Below Ground par exemple), les climats orageux qui sont l'apanage de cet album renvoient régulièrement au post-rock (la beauté envoûtante d'Anemone), à l'electronica expérimentale (l'abstraction de Pendulum) ou à la ballade romantique (Love Unknown). Un disque plein de variations, atmosphérique et chaleureux.

http://www.autresdirections.net/article.php3?id_article=988