

On Evil Hour – notes

On Evil hour is the first track to drop from Ov Pain's impressive fourth album, the second on Melbourne's It Records. One of eight deliriously warped songs that make up the full album, On Evil Hour stands out as a track well worth the status of single.

The oneiric tone of Barrance's vocal summonses is lush yet decidedly cold, invoking a sad impressionistic landscape which foregrounds the runaway decline a humanity's vainglorious misadventures in the name of progress. In what appears, by now, to be her characteristic performativity, Barrance deconstructs the dominant narrative's obsessive self-satisfaction by drawing attention to how flimsy and ultimately arbitrary the trappings of success tend to be, at least in terms dictated by Western orthodoxy. That, and the irrevocable fact that greed is so bound up with success that the two terms are presently synonymous, to an alarming extent. A veritable – and justifiable – lamentation on the state of chauvinism, the significations that produce the all-too-often unchecked status quo and our anthropogenic drives.

Barrance's synth work is similarly unsympathetic. Her signature organ-like chords are thick and frighteningly bold. The minimalist in Barrance wants us to see what is kaleidoscopic in long sustained droning notes whose harmonic element is much more than it first seems. The overall effect is startlingly beautiful, each delirious moment folding into the next with a delicacy that comes from years of practice as an improviser and a firm trust in her collaborator to bring the good stuff.

Player, much more in the background here, operates the rhythm section, bringing to the track's mix a definite weightiness combined with fast-attacking white-noise hits from an array of sampled material. Player builds his web of sounds via a process of layering that matches the moments within the track to give it a song-esque feel but with an edge that seems to keep the unanticipated within the frame of reference and probability.

A marked feature of On Evil Hour is the use of negative space within the chiselled-down drum patterns and grooves. With more space between the notes the listener can hear the trace of digitalia as it implodes, multiplies, or otherwise morphs into difference. Though, in a sense, such things happen in the margins of the song, it remains a haunting experience, one that appears always already liable to change from listen to listen, or within the same listen, imprinting on the cochlea a spectral image lacking in clearly defined edges.

Completing the single package Ov Pain invited Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) based artist Beth Dawson aka Duckling Monster to contribute a video work. Dawson reputation as an artist-provocateur is well deserved, ceaselessly channelling her own muse via many different media. Soliciting for a video work contribution from the Tāmaki Makaurau based artist was broached with a simple open-ended invite to make something killer and make it own your own terms. The result speaks for itself.

