

L'OCELLE MARE

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LP

Artist: L'ocelle Mare
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Tracklist:

Untitled I-XVI

Line-up:

Thomas Bonvalet

Maybe more than any other cognitive aspect of life, balancing your mindset into a comfortable manner of reasoning between the instinctual and the over-thinking is key to a healthy sanity. Music is no different. The mid-point between the sheer urgency of impulsive, emotional release and obsessed-over, highly composed musicianship is where the most effective music can be found. The minimal guitar explorations of Frenchman Thomas Bonvalet circle this median constantly. He plays with knee-jerk veracity, but the warm chordal products have to be the result of some serious premeditation. It's music lined with curiousness, played with gut feeling and looking to balance the polar sides of music creation. Though now recording and performing under the solo moniker L'ocelle Mare, Bonvalet is best known as one-half of Cheval de Frise. With drummer Vincent Beysseance, they purveyed a sound similar in concept: a balancing of refined experimentalism and primitive noise rock. Bonvalet's first solo outing, this self-titled exploration into the melodious immediacy of the acoustic guitar released on RuminanCe in Europe and Chicago's Sick Room Records in the States, stays the defined course. Sixteen tracks in under twenty-five minutes recorded in secluded spots throughout France, and each one more curious than the next. Bonvalet almost approaches the guitar in the same manner Cecil Taylor did the piano. A heavy inhalation of the immediate surroundings, a concentration of thoughts, ideas, momentary inspirations, and finally a shove of the culminating feelings originating in the deepest auricle of the artist's inner-creativity traveling near-instantaneously into the fingertips and immediately on to the instrument in a flurry of awkward rhythms and chords. The rush is typically over in less than a minute and the result somewhat unnerving and confusing on the cursory listen. But with each concurrent study, the odd tunings begin to make sense, the hiccupping rhythms take an understandable shape and the music comes together into a sort of awe-inspiring rumination of individualism. To texturize and diversify the sound, Bonvalet not only utilizes the individual reverberation of his particular settings a different one for each track but occasionally takes a small piece of hand percussion into his strumming hand or attaches a harmonica stand to his neck. So while "Untitled Track 12" is simply a study of upper harmonics on his acoustic, the following song adds a faint rattlesnake hand-shaker rhythm for eeriness? or is that crickets chirping in the background? Where "Untitled Track 14" initially sounds akin to the soft guitar experiments of Gastr del Sol, the atonal harmonica swell and unnerving rattle that offset the warm acoustics bring Jandek to mind. On one side of the album you'll find skittering, full-fret board workouts not unlike Hella's Spencer Seim, and on the other side the pieces echo John Fahey during his introspective best. L'ocelle Mare is not for those looking for a pleasantly humming acoustic guitar album, nor is it for those hoping for an aural onslaught of guitar experimentation. It is somewhere in between, galloping and bucking one second, teetering and nodding the next. Bonvalet doesn't sound as if he is completely improvising on spot, but utilizing his many years of exploring the sonic possibilities of the guitar to conceptualize instinctive urges. It's a balance. An evening of the cognitive seesaw so that his mind neither runs amuck at each drop of a thought, nor spends hours on end deconstructing the situation. Our ears - and his sanity - are the beneficiaries.

- Michael Ardaiole, Audiversity.com

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