COPERNICUS – Worthless!

Nevermore 2013

From subatomic to subconscious, the rhapsode of chaos shoots for instant karma. Popa Chubby chimes in.

There’s a strange pull in Joseph Smalkowski’s philosophy of nonexistence that can be summarized with a black hole magnetism, a recurrent image of his alter ego, Copernicus’ records. On these, for all their occasional spontaneity, the artist has always sounded like a demiurge who creates and observes but now he felt the urge to find a different way of ruling the den. He recites his poems in the studio corner, while the 15-string assemblage of musicians bounce of the lines with an eye on improvisation, and the result is mesmerizing. More so, despite its presumably chaotic nature, it’s highly logical, as Sari Schorr’s mantric exhortations adds spirituality to Copernicus’ treaties on life: her ecstatic screams run from the welcoming “Listen!” in the buzzy opener “Quantum Mechanics” to the exorcising “Go to sleep” in the grand finale of the title piece.

In such scope, where “You Are The Illusion That I Perceive” possesses the organic swirl of a country fair, even the sparse lament “You Are Not Your Body” doesn’t sound alienating with its “Moonlight Sonata” strum, it’s rather a statement of selfless unification, the “human endeavor” that gets mentioned here and there. Unlike this album’s predecessor, there’s an immediate gratification now, amplified by Popa Chubby’s guitar on the magical dirge “Everlasting Freedom!” which marries Smalkowski’s avant-garde approach to that most traditional of rock tropes, the blues, in the lazy “What Is Existence?” to gradually gain a swing in “You Are The Subatomic”. And when the voice of Copernicus’ regular collaborator Pierce Turner joins in on the shamanic “A Hundred Trillion Years,” adorned with a violin, flute and sax, the “nothing exists” concept crumbles, its “twinkle, twinkle, little star” innocence winning over the hysterical blackness.

A creation of highest value, this work pitches a paradox against its own title and resolving such an enigma brings on an immense pleasure, its every instant a shift towards a perpetual change for the best.

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