



IRASCIBLE MUSIC



ALEXIS TAYLOR (UK)

Beautiful Thing

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Web: www.alexistaylorsolo.com/

EPK: irascible.ch/releases/alexis-taylor/beautiful-thing

'Beautiful Thing', the forthcoming solo album from Alexis Taylor, is a very new, very individualist and – yes – very beautiful reflection of a life that's changed immeasurably since he started out in music. This is a musician, writer and singer who has carved his own unique path through the music of the 21st century. He has worked with living legends from major pop stars to free improvisors from the furthest left field, played huge arenas and tiny clubs without ever privileging one over the other, and through all of it, never stopped listening and learning. And all of this you can hear clearly woven through every part of 'Beautiful Thing', a record which brings all its myriad influences together into something strange and personal.

This is also the first time Alexis has made a solo album with a producer, that producer being Tim Goldsworthy, the co-founder of Mo Wax and DFA Recordings, member of UNKLE and LCD Soundsystem. During the recording process, Alexis and Tim found a common musical language by their discussion of ultra-diverse shared references, and worked out ways of working in the studio that could approximate some of the feelings they got from those influences.

The story of Alexis's early days in Hot Chip and their steady growth from schoolfriends mucking about and sharing strange music, to established international force, is well documented. But it's always worth re-emphasising how much they had to find their own way. "I've been playing with Hot Chip for years," says Alexis, "generally on quite big stages, and felt an excitement and rush from playing electronic music and the feeling of coming together and feeling a euphoric thing as a group. But the whole time I've played to smaller audiences on my own, with About Group, with Fimber Bravo, and with other things I do, and put the focus much more on song, and seen a very different way for audiences to respond. I've done a lot of gigs where I'm just sat down at a grand piano, the audience is seated too, and nobody dances - because that would be weird - and nobody talks and it's almost a recital environment. That has shown me that people really are interested in the songwriting side, even if it's on a smaller scale, and that in turn has influenced how I write."

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Place du Nord 7, 1005 Lausanne
Geroldstrasse 33, 8005 Zürich
www.irascible.ch

D-CH Promotion: Fabienne Schmuki
fabienne@irascible.ch; 044 271 32 83

F-CH Promotion: Gilles Kaeser
gilles@irascible.ch; 078 976 00 25



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All of the lessons from radically different projects have come to bear on 'Beautiful Thing' - as have Alexis's ongoing examinations of his own emotions and dreams. He was writing songs all along, as he always has, but the form of 'Beautiful Thing' started to take shape when he tracked down Tim Goldsworthy.

They began to record, with Tim building up sounds around Alexis's demos - but the album really began to form around the title track. Alexis had words and chords for 'Beautiful Thing' in his head but no idea what style to make it in, but he demoed it very roughly at home, "making all kinds of percussion by hitting my bass guitar" and sent it to Tim. But when Tim opened the digital files they didn't line up on his computer, and everything was out of sync. This happy accident built the track up into something "clattering, and even ugly sounding for a track with that title", and gave them a sense of "how far we could go down the experimental route without it just becoming noise". That process opened out the record...

Somewhere between that sense of extreme possibilities and the intimacy of Alexis's songwriting and vocal, a wide creative space opened up. 'Beautiful Thing' has electronic thrills, dark spaces, memories of dancefloors, heartfelt writing; it's composed, it's improvised, it's accidental, it's strange, but it's also very immediate. So "Dreaming Another Life" opens the album feeling like a song you've known all your life, the folk-ish lilt and shimmering acoustic guitars riding waves of liquid electronic sound as Alexis sings of a kind of yearning we all know only too well. "Deep Cut" floats along like a vintage R&B slow jam, and is full of warmth and human connection, as Alexis reminds us "don't get caught up in what isn't real / make something you can feel in your heart." "Oh Baby" is a gloriously strange bit of 1970s glam-boogie with piercing detuned synths ripping through it. That title track does indeed have "ugly sounding" elements, yet the crazed disco lavishness and bug-eyed acid house momentum that run through it somehow transform that into something giddy and glorious.

"A Hit Song", a gently swaying piano ballad and his favourite song on the record, is partly about the process of making music, but also articulates the tensions between what is inside the artist - in dreams and emotions - and a song's emotional impact, how it actually reaches people. From arenas to piano recitals, bedrooms to big studios, raves to avant garde improv, all Alexis's accumulated experience is in this record, but so is that magical question around which all creation of art hinges: "all the influences and all the technique are important," he says, "but what I'm always thinking about, and can never really be sure about is: how does it make you feel?" However much has changed over a fascinating career, some things remain fundamental, and that question of feeling - in the writing and in the hearing - is the most fundamental of all. And the crux of Beautiful Thing, the thing that makes give more and more to the listener on each new hearing, is that the technique and the feeling are inseparable. All of Alexis and Tim Goldsworthy's accumulated years of experience are all put to work in the pursuit of something subtle and elusive but ultimately quite profound and beautifully human.

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