



IRASCIBLE MUSIC



Laetitia Shériff (FR)

Album: *Stillness*

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Web: <https://www.laetitia-sheriff.com>

EPK: <https://www.irascible.ch/releases/laetitia-sheriff/stillness>

Laetitia Shériff's fourth album, titled *Stillness*, takes the form of a mirror. It took time for Shériff to polish this record—to set down her burden, rest, and catch her breath before arranging the songs, as one builds a fire.

Shériff collected and archived snippets of sentences, and carefully selected, considered, and set aside found words or lines inspired by readings. Then it was time to put the pieces together into a puzzle in the shape of a face, her own—the opposite of the smokescreen of social media, in which we never see ourselves as we truly are.

Here, the portrait is of Shériff, in her naked truth, but it could reflect anyone: this mirror contains every human face. *Stillness* is about the need to find oneself. It is a battle of sorts, in these troubled times when everything keeps us away from ourselves and separates us from one another. This is why *Stillness*, while channeling calm and serenity, is also a cry of rebellion against conditioning, oblivion, and passivity—all forms of self-abandonment. The title presents an enigma: the calm in question is that of water, which must be still to reflect, but it is also the deceptive calm before the storm. Stillness is both quiet and full of anger, meditative and bewitching, and fiercely electric—just like Shériff, who is a remarkable figure in the pop rock scene thanks to her longevity and consistency, the sincerity of her approach, and her never-ending research.

Before writing this record, Shériff traveled extensively, both alone and in good company, with the collective Trunks (*Use Less* in 2007, and *On the Roof* in 2011). She crossed paths with Noël Akchoté, Lydia Lunch, and Bibbe Hansen at workshops, and worked closely with choreographers and directors.

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

Promotion:
Gilles Kaeser
gilles@irascible.ch
078 976 00 25



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For *Stillness*, she is once again joined by her musical partner Thomas Poli (Montgomery, Dominique A, ESB) on guitars and analog synthesizer, and Nicolas Courret (Bed, Headphone, Eiffel) on drums. The musician from Rennes stuck to her method: the album was recorded as if it were played live, keeping as faithful as possible to those emotions, balanced between raw energy and extremely sophisticated sound, as it was produced by Poli's gold fingers.

What does it sound like? Open-tuned guitars, emaciated, stripped down to the bone, which sometimes evoke Neil Young's epileptic passages, mix with sober and precise drums, creating rough songs, filled with splinters and rage. Then, suddenly, everything clears up and fills with light: dainty arrangements transport us into reverie and enchantment, evoking Broadcast's fine sonic tapestries. Shériff's world is populated with many references, such as the Oh Sees, Sunn O))), Sebadoh's Jason Loewenstein, David Bowie—all personal idols she shares with Kurt Vile and Courtney Barnett. The ten pop songs on *Stillness* also echo the haunting and repetitive rhythms of bands like

Can and Beak, but soaked with scathing rains, reminding us of Shellac or Tropical Fuck Storm. One is reminded of Shannon Wright when experiencing this yogic balance between electricity and meditation, which is definitely central to this record.

A humanist, an admirer of Edgar Morin, Nadia Murad, and Denis Mukwege, and a reader of Henry David Thoreau, Shériff shares with Patti Smith, another of her great influences, a taste for political rock. For Smith, rock is a form of spirituality. There is something of this in Shériff's chiaroscuro record, which portrays anger and appeasement as two sides of the same coin. It is a call to unite, to raise consciousness (“*People Rise Up*”), an unveiling of apocalyptic and perhaps prophetic visions (“*A Stirring World*,” “*Deal with This*”), a pacifist profession of faith with recurrent themes of downfall and redemption (“*Ashamed*,” “*Stupid March*”), a search for a second innocence (“*Pamper Yourself*”), with constant notes of struggle. The whole album is haunted by an urgency to awaken, to open our eyes, which are perfect mirrors of the world.

Both a reunion with oneself and a cry of revolt, *Stillness*, like all mirrors, shifts depending on how you look at it. Turned toward oneself, it awakes consciousness. Turned toward the world and others, it asks a question: Where is the common reflection of our humanity?

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