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Oren Lavie - The opposite Side of the Sea

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A wide landscape locked in a small room

Oren Lavie's journey to completing his debut album has been somewhat chaotic, though it isn't anything the listener is likely to suspect from listening to his music.

Oren's striking, rich voice delivers his lyrics calmly and with dry simplicity which underlines song-writing of unique language and imagery, and a surgical accuracy of rhyme.

The semi-acoustic arrangements, which seem to have arrived from an imagined time, paint wide images with rough, deep strokes and frame the world of each song like a portrait painting, or a scene from a short story.

There is a stubborn sincerity in the stripped down production of the songs, relying on nothing but the song-writing and delivery.

There is no posing here, no attempt to wear false masks.

Oren Lavie about his music:

"I am not a fashionable man. And my music is, therefore, unfashionable. I would like to think of it as wonderfully unfashionable, but, sticking to the facts, it is unfashionable. My songs don't have an attitude which you could sell. I don't have an attitude which I am trying to make you buy, not that I'm aware of. If I am any good, it's because my songs are good. A good song, to me, is a good melody which surprises you, but pleases you, and which carries a good story told in rhymes. It is a result of talent and personality and technique and a lot of work.

A good song is loyal to the artist's truth of the moment. The song will remain good even when the artist's truth has changed."

Tel Aviv, London, New York, Berlin

Oren Lavie was born in Tel Aviv in 1976.

With a general dislike toward formal education he taught himself how to play the piano, and began writing songs at an early age.

At the age of 22 he moved to London where he was writing plays for the theater. In the small attic apartment in which he lived, the first piece of furniture was a rented piano.

On the following year his first English play enjoyed a workshop at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, and was soon picked up for a commercial production.



"At the time I was writing about young artists in big imaginary cities, living extreme lives of isolation. The characters were often charming, unique people caught in difficult situations. Therefore the plays could afford being funny without being comedies, and heartfelt without being melodramatic".

Though the plays were not musical in their nature, music was always in the background of the writing

"I often exchanged ideas between genres. Being a writer of dialogue as well as a musician I simply had twice as many tools to tell a story."

After two of his plays were produced on stage, Lavie decided to move to New York.

"Two of my plays were produced in London. The first one was a financial flop but a critical success. The second one was a financial flop and a critical flop. I decided to leave town, afraid they might shoot me for the third play."

In New York Lavie found himself spending the majority of the time surviving the city, navigated by a random chain of circumstances rather than by any real plan. There was no secured apartment, much less a rented piano. And instead of spending his time writing he moved from one strange job to another, trying to keep head above water.

Since there wasn't a patch of time long enough to work on the format of a full-length play, he began to focus on a much shorter version of storytelling: songwriting.

"Whenever I had a free moment I wrote a song. Whenever I wrote a song I began looking for the next free moment. The more songs I wrote, the more songs I wrote. I lived in this roach-hotel in a room with no space for my big, fat piano, so I began spending time with a small, blonde guitar".

When songs began to pile up it was time to leave New York and search for a place which would provide the time and means to record the album.

"I happened to know somebody who knew somebody who lived in Berlin who said it was an easy city, so I checked online and they happened to be selling cheap tickets for that same month, and I came."

This proved to be a happy accident.

"I liked it immediately. After London and New York, Berlin was a slow, lazy city with no big ambitions. It was a place where you could sleep until 2 in the afternoon without feeling bad about it. In a way it was some kind of an exile – I didn't speak the language, didn't know anyone. But it allowed me to focus on my work. It was a pleasant exile."

At the age of 27 Oren began the work on 'The Opposite Side of The Sea'.

Making sure the recordings remained true to the essence of the songs he decided to produce the album himself.

Instead of using a band he arranged the songs by building one layer on top of another of vocals and delicate instrumentations, helping flesh out the melodies and extend the harmonies of his piano and guitars with a wider palette of colors.

But lacking any real budget the recordings presented some challenges and proceeded slowly.



"Of course, compromises had to be made regarding the concept of the album. When you produce yourself, working from home with no money, there are things you just can't do.

I couldn't really compete with anything on the market for sound, but I felt I had something to say with the songwriting. The production had to help it come across.

And I had to keep it small, that was the main thing. I really wanted it to be on the quiet side of quiet.

When I wanted something bigger done I had to save up for it for a little while, then go in a studio and record as much as I could in one day. All this took time."

When the recording stage was completed the album was mixed in Kungsten Studio in Gothenburg, Sweden. The organic approach and the vintage, analog equipment helped to bring out the warmth of the recordings and the intimacy of the delivery.

A bright blue sky with clouds approaching

The finished album is a collage of fragile moments as much as it is the raw, bare, uncompromising presence of a distinct voice.

It is a wide landscape locked in a small room, a bright blue sky with clouds approaching.

The other-worldly sound of the song "A Dream Within A Dream", contrasted by "The Opposite Side of The Sea", with its powerful string riffs, present two opposite ends of a palette on which the album lives.

The song "Her Morning Elegance", driven by a mellow Fender Rhodes groove and a vibraphone, as well as the acoustic track "Quarter Past Wonderful" have already begun playing on various international Internet platforms and on the radio, even prior to their official release, generating enthusiastic responses.

Oren Lavie has not yet published any biographical, personal information or photos. The audience has been convinced only by what they heard, which has created a genuine curiosity for the story behind the music.

"The result is an album which is small, but rich. It is not the outcome of three years of my life, it IS three years of my life. Though it plays less than an hour."

"The Opposite Side of The Sea" will be available on Vinyl as well.

Oren Lavie's music can be heard live in various European cities soon.

Stay tuned

Thank You!