

Album: *365 Vol. 18 Chill'd*

Artist: Galliano Somnavilla

Reviewer: Alice Neiley

With an ambitious project of one song a day for a year, Galliano Somnavilla, the master of musical landscape, is back in all his magic, mist, and textured layers of sound. The twelve songs on *365 Vol. 18 Chill'd* are clearly compiled together and arranged on the album to create Somnavilla's classic mellow mood, because they weren't, in fact, composed in the order they appear. Each one was written on a separate day, complete with the varied nature of what we all feel in various hours of various parts of a week—a tendency toward movement, stillness, downright dancing, or a meditative state.

I deeply enjoy the order in which Somnavilla places these songs, as I'm a sucker for anything void of chronology; however, I thought it might be interesting to listen to my favorite tracks in order (presumably) they were written. Perhaps it will unearth new patterns, and thus new moods and sounds.

In "Song/Day 150," drums rule all, and this tune will certainly turn up the steam of any dance floor. Somnavilla's more traditional instrumental sounds rise through the ethereal wall of synth in small bursts. His usual chill vibe amps up a bit with these slices of melody, though in the background, life is familiar again with a classic down-tempo, trance like haze.

"Song/Day 295" continues the dance vibe—it must have been an energetic couple of months! The trance that "Song/Day 150" began just becomes more layered with electronic swirls and static, crumpling electronic sounds. However, Somnavilla shows his skill with originality by flawlessly sliding the tune from a pump-up to a stroll, beautiful and meditative. The keyboards echo, the percussion makes its tsssst tsssst sounds. "295" starts cheery, and while keeping its cheer, turns inward.

Both cheeriness and inward focus apply to "Song/Day 306" as well. The xylophone-like synth paired with the light, consistent drum beat sets a perfect focus inside the tune. And the focus is on...well...focus. One of my favorites on the album, I could imagine "306" playing in the background of the revelatory main characters in a movie, just as they're in the process of having epiphanies. Save for a few moments a little over halfway through, there isn't much variety in the tune, but those moments—longer held synth sounds, then their completely phase out, how that drops the tune into an almost entirely piano and snare drum interlude—are glittery. The ending is the best of those moments though, where everything but the piano cuts out for a measure, just before the snare drum slides back in to close the tune.

"Song/Day 315" throws more glitter on the scene, or should we say that Somnavilla just reached up, grabbed some stars, and cast them over us. Scenic indeed. If a song can sound like nature, this one does. All its instruments and sounds represent elements of the natural world, blending together to create an exotic, yet very familiar feel. The tribal-like drum beat is a run through the forest; the brass is sun rise, sun set, light on the grass or fields or water; the piano is the water—waves lapping against the shore; and the rest of the synth sounds—constant and sweeping in the background—are weather, the cool of the night, the heat of the day.

Though Somnavilla didn't intend the songs to be listened to chronologically, still, the only surprise so far for me came with "Song/Day 320," a dip into the rock and jazz genres. It's an active, instrumentally bright tune complete with horns and tambourine, in addition to the usual electronic sounds, light drums, and sweeps of piano. The subtlety of the jazz and the more complex sound-walls of rock begin to interact here, and continue their development in a tune composed four days later.

"Song/Day 324" begins more like some of the earlier, meditative pieces, with washes of synth as gentle and beautiful as autumn rain. As usual, Somnavilla provides beautiful piano work, ethereal and proficient, setting the tone for breath, calm. The discernable instrumentation is sparse but consistent. Other than piano, the sounds are drone-like, entrancing. But when drums enter, so do electric guitars, adding the leather-jacket-sexy to an already sensual piece. Guitar becomes the prominent instrument, and rock the overall feel, in contrast to the first half of the piece, where each instrument, including synth sounds, had equal weight.

The synth-strings finally arrive with "Song/Day 361!" I was wondering the whole album when they were going to show up. So does what sounds like a wooden flute, clarinet, or oboe, one of the first obvious instrumental solo features. The piano twinkles in occasionally, but for the most part the repetitive loop of synth strings, wooden instrument solo, and eventually intoxicating percussion drive the piece. Especially the percussion. It's club-like beat is perfectly balanced by the other sounds and moods of the piece, creating a more well rounded experience. With the percussion's entrance, the tune becomes almost undeniably about movement, but perhaps more escape than dancing.

"Song/Day 364" brings back the dancing, as well as the prominence of drums established in, again, a song composed within 4 days of this one. Rather than building up to an ending that includes all the instrumental layers, this tune begins that way—ornamental piano, electronics, synth, bass as solid as the drum beat, and of course, the drum beat itself. But there's a surprise in this track: more vocals! Most of the album doesn't touch in the vocal arena at all, but alongside the muscular, rhythmic vibes of this piece, there's a sweetness in choir sound that makes the tune in equal parts out-on-the-town and poignant.

As I said before, and have said in other reviews of Galliano Somnavilla, he is a master of musical landscape. In Vol. 18, he applies his skill to both experiment and classic structure to continue creating an incredible year-timeline of original, varied genre music. His unique style and arrangements also have a certain familiarity in what they evoke in the listener emotionally: what images of nature, what heat of skin on skin, what energy between dancing feet and pulsing floor. As he moves out of his 365 days a year project, Somnavilla is ready for worldly connection, for endlessness.

Rating: 5 stars out of 5.

Reviewed by Alice Neiley

