

Galliano Somnavilla

365

Review by Alex Henderson

3.5 stars out of 5

If the last 30 or 35 years have taught us one thing about electronica, it is that electronica is not one particular style of music, but rather, many different styles of music. Electronica, depending on the artist, can be anything from harsh, abrasive, dissonant acid house to the more ethereal sounds of downtempo and chillout. And on *365*, it is evident that Australia-based instrumentalist Galliano Somnavilla prefers the more ethereal side of electronica. There is nothing harsh or confrontational about “Day 266: The Lonely Wanderer,” “Day 291: I Love You Guys” or any of the other songs on this 2016 release: the music, although lightly funky, is generally melodic, relaxed and laid-back. And the electronica that this Melbourne native provides is mostly chillout, downtempo or ambient.

Although Somnavilla maintains his devotion to the kinder, gentler side of electronica throughout *365*, the album is fairly unpredictable. Somnavilla incorporates a wide variety of influences, ranging from hip-hop on “Day 354,” and soul on “Day 232,” “Day 351” and “Day 209” to jazz on “Day 291: I Love You Guys,” “Day 82: A Worldly Adventure” and “Day 342: Lucy D’Albe.” In fact, “Day 342: Lucy D’Albe” has a haunting melody that sounds a bit like “Cristo Redentor,” a haunting tune that the late bop pianist Duke Pearson unveiled on trumpeter Donald Byrd’s 1963 session *A New Perspective* for Blue Note Records (“Cristo Redentor” was heard 30 years later in a scene from Robert De Niro’s film *A Bronx Tale*). Pearson’s “Cristo Redentor” and Somnavilla’s “Day 342: Lucy D’Albe” are definitely two different melodies, but even so, they have a similar mood: one that is pensive, spiritual and reflective. And when one is listening to “Day 291: I Love You Guys,” “Day 82: A Worldly Adventure” or “Day 342: Lucy D’Albe,” it is evident that even though *365* is not a jazz album per se, Somnavilla appreciates jazz.

Another thing Somnavilla appreciates is world music, which he incorporates on parts of this album. “Day 257: Home, Sweet, Home” has an Asian flavor, while “Day 351” hints at African music.

Occasionally, Somnavilla will employ vocal samples. On “Day 354,” he turns up the hip-hop factor with a sample that repeats, in true hip-hop fashion, “Listen to me, listen to me, listen to me, now.” And there are also scattered vocals employed on “Day 232” and “Day 209”; the scattered vocals on “Day 209” do a lot of enhance the tune’s soul appeal. But “scattered” is the operative word when it comes to the use of vocals on this release because *365* is, for all intents and purposes, an instrumental album.

Sommavilla never features a vocalist the way that, for example, Count Basie featured Jimmy Rushing, Joe Williams and Mary Stallings or the way that pianist/keyboardist Lonnie Liston Smith has often featured his brother Donald Smith. No, that isn't the scenario. Sommvilla, rather, will use a sampled vocal snippet (be it singing or rapping) here and there when the mood strikes him. But he never brings in a singer or a rapper to use in a traditional verse/chorus/verse/chorus fashion.

Actually, Sommvilla never uses a traditional verse/chorus/verse/chorus song structure on any of the tunes on this album. But that is not to say that material is not melodic. Actually, *365* is consistently melodic, and Sommvilla makes it clear that he is one of the more musical performers in the diverse electronica field. There is nuance galore on these performances, which have a lot of character. Sommvilla's chillout, downtempo and ambient electronica performances are light, but they are never lightweight. This album has substance.

Listeners who enjoy the lush and more ethereal side of electronica will find a lot to appreciate on *365*.

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