

Galliano Somnavilla: “Elektro Country” and “Breathe Now”

Reviewed by Alice Neiley

Let’s just say this: if I was Galliano Somnavilla, I would be pancake-flat exhausted. He recently completed an extremely ambitious, and overall successful project of creating one original song a day for 365 days, a full year. Amazingly, though, he’s nowhere close to resting. Instead, he’s opening up yet another unexpected door into the world of electronica, both ushering other genres in and ushering anything stale or predictable out.

“Elektro County,” one of the first singles Galliano wrote after completing the “365 days” project is double entendre of a song, both in content and title. At first, I read the track name “Elektro Country” to mean that I was about to travel to a new place – a new and exciting, but perhaps not widely accessed, country of electronica. Which, of course, is exactly what happened. However, as I realized the moment I hit “play,” Galliano is also playing on the word “country” to hint at the genre of the tune.

By relying heavily on country music sounds – steel guitar, banjo -- as a platform, he allows himself even more room to experiment and create that new country to which we are drawn. Beginning with a prominent, rock-like drum lick, the tune tumbles into what at first could be mistaken as a slightly quirky hootenanny—powerful, fast paced drums, a banjo loop, playful keyboard, and long, sensual moans of electric guitar. By the time the ambient sounds typical of electronica arrive, I’m so swept up in the fun of what’s already in place, I barely notice the song slightly shift in tone away from a familiar, downhome party.

About halfway through the song, the electronica becomes decidedly more prominent than the country. Alongside the banjo and guitar, which remain wonderfully melodic, various outer space and rocket launching sound effects firmly plant the second half of the song in the feeling of a loud, fast carnival ride, complete with otherworldly colors, shapes, and 3D glasses. In short, the song gradually becomes a balancing act of musical effects and genres, the juxtaposition of which creates, without a doubt, a mesmerizing ride to a very interesting “country.”

“Breathe Now,” the next post-project single, is the opposite to “Elektro Country” in every way except appeal: it is just as, if not more, magnetic. While Galliano continues to combine genres in unusual ways, “Breathe Now” is a subtler, more calming endeavor.

It begins with gorgeous, long-held string chords, and begins to layer, almost imperceptively, with a church bell chiming and echoing. Then a light keyboard melody ushers in a faster tempo, a xylophone-like sound, and very, very light vocals, all of which combine in the ear like magic dust. The main guitar line, rising from the calm like a sharp wave, or a flame, is distinctively reminiscent of the guitar riffs in Guns & Roses more mellow tunes—“Patience,” for example—giving the listener a familiar, steady foothold, even amongst all the sleepy, entrancing sounds, even as the guitar melody transfers to a more electronically non-descript instrumental sound, and returns to guitar again.

The brushy snare drum remains constant from beginning to end, sliding into sixteenth notes in a hypnotic pattern. Again, typical of electronica, the sound effects fill out the piece. However, the atmospheric frothing of the “Breathe Now” ocean helps each

of the more distinct instruments shine, rather than muffling them, which further proves Galliano's musical ingenuity and ability to create something not only interesting, but transporting: clear and beautiful as fall air.