

**classical/ambient****Breathe**Galliano Sommavilla  
*Independent*

★★★★☆

"Master of chill" would be a fair way to describe pianist Galliano Sommavilla. A well-known figure in Melbourne's piano bar scene, he has played for a long time in hotel lobbies, bars and restaurants. For 15 years he tickled the ivories at Crown Melbourne's Atrium Bar, but since that gig ran dry he has increasingly turned his attention to composing. His newest effort, *Breathe*, still inhabits that same chic, impersonal world of the cocktail lounge, but elevates it almost to an art form. Don't be surprised if you develop an uneasy love affair with this music. The constant, unvarying drumbeats, flattened dynamics and wafting melodies barely raise a ripple and immediately disclose *Breathe* as background music. However, this album is so highly crafted that it becomes infectiously listenable. Within the scene that he works in, Sommavilla nevertheless creates a tuneful and sophisticated language all of his own, somewhere between urban grooves, cheesy pop and soft jazz. The album title is not to be taken too literally. The nine instrumental tracks cruise sedately down the slow lane, with Sommavilla himself noodling around inventively on piano, keyboards and synth pads. *Breathe In* and *Breathe Now* have an attractively mild, laidback groove that is only let down by very manufactured-sounding synth strings. *Breathe Once More* is a busier, funkier track with kick drum, power bass and an electric guitar solo from Joey Amenta that really cooks. Wailing sax in *Just Breathe* and pangs of sadness in *Breathe Out* suggest life stories that go deeper than mere chill, while *Breathe Again* closes with another astonishing guitar solo from Amenta.

**Graham Strahle**