



Reviewing: Emerald

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'CHARLOTTE, FRANCES' 'Emerald'

- Label: 'Tangled Records'

- Genre: 'Alt/Country' - Release Date: 'October 2005' - Catalogue No: 'TR-0005'

Our Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆

Robust and repetitive acoustic rhythms create a trancelike and obsessive feel to Frances Charlotte's mantra-driven vocals – the rich textures in her primal and psychotic delivery are concerned with human relationships as they exist in the minds of those involved. The looping soundtrack of soft distortion beneath the retracted folk adds the kind of depth that is perfect for introspection, as the imagery unfolds in streams of blurry realisation.

A deep, discordant bassline underpins the title track, one of six that I'm sure have been strategically positioned in order to allow the subconscious to float to prominence on its semi-ethereal journey through the spirit. With pastoral imagery reflecting the size of the internal landscape where mental journeys are made, the San Diego artist weighs down her voice in order to plunder the darkened corridors of loneliness in a self-searching exploration for the sort of clarity that makes her voice so distinctive.

'Closets' has a subtle, melancholy string arrangement that strengthens the overall notion that the record is a complete journey in six movements – and is undoubtedly meant to be played from start to finish. Where physical stillness could easily be mistaken for temporary paralysis, a childlike fear is suppressed, and the drifting soul is cut loose without percussion amidst a veritable symphony of thought.

Telephones that rarely ring and the wait, the search for completion of the self through romantic love spells out the kind of patience that will tie your stomach in knots – and by appealing to the limits of your attention span in the same way that classical, jazz or even ambient techno does, it is inviting you to shift your focus. However, the metaphysical nature of Charlotte's work is concerned not, I suspect with the search for answers so much as a demonstration of how vast the places are where we must look in order to find them.

Deceptively simplistic and absorbing, the record's acoustics provide the basis for psychic self-discovery via a poignant appraisal of the nature of being alone. That's what these songs about vast external landscapes communicate so well.

This is music that makes you think and for that, you have to love it.

www.myspace.com/francescharlotte

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