

Reviews

Audiophile Audition July 4th, 2012

Breathbox – Antti Paalanen, 3-row button accordion – Sibarecords multichannel SACD 1005, 39:04 [Distr. by Naxos] ***1/2:

Antti Paalanen's accordion music is difficult to categorize; though the album itself lists it as "folk" and "alternative", only the latter seems apropos. There is little even elementally folksy about these nine tracks, though those familiar with classical minimalism will certainly have their heads turned as Paalanen seems to have created a form that fuses the now forty-year-old classical genre with the elements of pop and the rhythms of electronica. What is all the more amazing is that these disparate elements are present in the performance of a single performer who is able to manipulate and expand his instrument to a degree that multiple players seem present though are in fact superfluous. [He uses overdubbing, as well as Steve Reich-like "cells."...Ed.]

The total timing is short, making it all the more a candidate for the pop listings than the classical, and the meditative aspects of much of the music—make that *hypnotic*—won't be suitable for 24-hour listening. But the music is catchy and aggressively earthy in its attachment to our basest rhythmical instincts while appealing to the most elemental of melodic drives as well. That alone make it almost infectious in appeal, and it is very well captured here. [[Here's an interesting video clip](#) of Antti Paalanen in action...Ed.] *Steven Ritter* [Audiophile Web Magazine](#)

Ball Of Sound January 13th /2012

When thinking about the accordion, I see a somewhat traditional folk music setting where everyone is assembled before a stage enjoying a good performance, or visit memories of an uncle's birthday where the family accordionist starts playing after a few beverages. At any rate, a good time was had by everyone in attendance. But here he is, [Antti Paalanen](#), an innovator in Finnish folk music and master of the diatonic accordion who creates new sounds from his "Breathbox". Audience members become fully engaged throughout his performance, being driven into various body motions ranging from toe-tapping to full on foot stomping. His sounds range from melancholia to up-tempo as he ventures into new sonic terrain with his instrument, stretching the accordion's limits. His energy and mastery of the accordion allows him to push beyond anyone's preconceptions, combining minimalism with traditional nordic styles into the open world of musical innovation and exploration. Listen. Enjoy. And do not try to prevent your feet from moving!

www.ballofsound.com

Womex Guide October, 2011

Deep breathing Finnish accordionist, squeezing new sounds out of old folk songs. Antti Paalanen has a new name for his three-row diatonic accordion: the breathbox. Sometimes it takes deep, meditative breaths, exhaling sweeping tone-poems evoking space and light. Sometimes it breathes rapidly as it takes a traditional tune on a fast run through the city streets. Whatever moods he evokes, he does so with a sure-fingered, melodic sensibility that seeks to utilise the full harmonic possibilities of the instrument. Breathbox is also the title of his recent album, produced by Finland's experimental accordion master, Kimmo Pohjonen. A graduate of the Sibelius Academy, Antti Paalanen is in demand as a member of several ensembles and has toured throughout Europe as well as in China, Russia and Mexico, breathing fresh ideas into Finnish folk melodies and creating captivating sonic landscapes. *Womex Guide editor Alan Bass*

Gwarlingo.com October 16th, 2011

I recently came across this hypnotic piece of music by Finnish musician Antti Paalanen. Paalanen is a composer and a master of the diatonic accordion.

Accordions are made in a range of different configurations and styles. Diatonic button accordions are bisonoric, which means each button produces two notes: one when the bellows is compressed, and another when it's expanded.

The instrument was invented in the 1800s and has been an important part of many folk traditions, including French Canadian and Cajun music, as well as Tex Mex and American country square dance music.

Paalanen plays with a number of folk music bands, but he's exploring a new direction in his solo work. I love the unique, mesmerizing sound he is creating in this song "Breathe" from his 2010 album *Breathbox*. The accordion never sounded so good. www.gwarlingo.com/2011/antti-paalanen-breathbox/

Theartsdesk in Oslo: FolkeLarm Festival October 9th, 2011

Finland reclaimed the ball with the intense accordion player Antti Paalanen. A graduate of the Sibelius Academy, he's an unstoppable steam hammer. Although there were mutterings he hasn't escaped the shadow of his producer, accordion polymath Kimmo Pohjonen, Paalanen was a revelation. His adopted style is the breathbox, where a huff-puff rhythm is injected into the melody being attacked. Paalanen was so carried away that his hair stood on end, his various bits of kit flying off. Asked whether he ever broke his accordion, he confessed to having done so a couple of times. He's arrived at a souped-up serial music, a quad-speed Phillip Glass running a relay race with Terry Riley. *Reviewed by Kieron Tailer* <http://www.theartsdesk.com/new-music/theartsdesk-oslo-folkelarm-festival>

Songlines 75th edition April/May, 2011

I was Lucky enough to be at the concert given by the accordionist Antti Paalanen at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. The producer of this solo album - none other than the accordion legend Kimmo Pohjonen - was there too, right at the front. Paalanen is already an experienced musician having played in such successful folk groups as Hyperborea and Trepaanit. He's a graduate of the Sibelius Academy and has performed in dance and theatre productions in many countries. *Breathbox* is the story of his own accordion, of its sound and about the world today.

Pohjonen's influence is strong throughout the album, pervading the hypnotising rhythms and immaculately crafted playing, which makes use of every aspect of the accordion and seemingly wrings every particle out of the air it breathes. Yet Paalanen has also achieved his own identity, bringing a lyrical warmth to the most edgy of pieces. He has a great ear for colour and delicacy. For example, the punchy Pohjonen-esque 'Boggler' is followed by the pure, mysterious tones of 'Northern Wind', while 'Winter's Dance' displays a lyricism which deserves to earn a place in a film score.

For me the most striking track on the album is 'Gaza'. Dark and expressive, disturbing and questioning, his performance of it at the Helsinki concert left the room silent, with everyone stunned by its poignancy. There is no doubt that Paalanen has joined the mighty Finnish accordion army and taken up his own unique place in it. *Reviewed by Fiona Talkington*

Accordions world wide May 24th, 2011

Here we have a very interesting solo CD by the Finnish musician Antti Paalanen who plays a bitonic accordion (3 row and 18 bass) and has composed all the music.

The playlist, especially the first four tracks is somewhat "hypnotic" and in places rather minimalist with various rhythms and melodies typical of ethnic music, it is a matrix from which the artist finds inspiration, thus maintaining the roots of traditional north European folk music and realizing it in a very personal way.

The other tracks (from track no.5) are more intimate and reflective with strong melodic character, which show the other side of the musicians soul. Track no. 8 (Gaza) is the most complex and full with dense harmonies, sometimes classical in nature ... it connects directly to the last track on the CD: solitude (the title says it all) a fascinating piece of oriental/balkan character.

The entire program is the result of research work (thesis for a doctorate) carried out by Paalanen at the Department of Folk Music of the Sibelius Academy. A valuable work in which the qualities of the accordionist (both interpretative and composition) demonstrates an ability to use modern techniques (and effects) in the registration of the sound.

In conclusion a CD not only to recommend to lovers of ethnic music but that confirms Antti Paalanen as one of the most interesting exponents of World Music.

Reviewed by Alessandro Mugnoz http://www.accordions.com/reviews/cd_15_07_11it.aspx