

Mp3 A Produce / M Griffin - Altara

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Dreamy, floaty drift music, meditative and ambient to the max. 5 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Soundscapes, ELECTRONIC: Ambient Details: ALTARA is the first collaboration between LA-based trance/ambient artist A Produce and Hypnos founder/ambient minimalist Mike Griffin. This is the first new full-length work by A Produce since 1996's INSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE, and the first non-Viridian Sun work by Griffin since 1996's SUDDEN DARK. ALTARA is a collection of five slow-moving pieces, varying between rich drones, and evocative textural loops. The final piece, the 36-minute epic "You Send Me the Message" is a deep, slowly evolving collage of multiple layers. REVIEWS: Altara is the result of a collaboration between Mike Griffin and A Produce. Each artist is known for their individual style and accomplishments in the genre of Ambient music. On this new CD, it is difficult to distinguish elements of each's solo work other than the true Ambient nature of the music. Altara is a minimal, slowly evolving affair and deals with the effect of sound on the listener, filling space with sound and the points in time when the sound is perceived. The duo manipulate interesting timbres into drones that, when exposed to over time, one loses the sense of this dimension. The pieces vary in length but with no real beginning, middle or end the listener will consult the sleeve notes to be sure of the duration of each track. In the same way we contemplate the fullness of an empty vase, Altara occupies the listening environment. - Chuck van Zyl/STAR'S END * Wow. That's my initial reaction to "Altara," the eagerly awaited collaboration between two great ambient artists, A Produce and M. Griffin. This is my pick for best ambient release of 1999. Slow and patient, yet exhilarating and exciting, "Altara" is a testament to what ambient music can and should be. Starting with "Overground," I am reminded of Steve Roach's "The Magnificent Void." Like Roach's modern classic, this song strains the limits of the bass response of my speakers, even when listening on my PC. Sweet, simple drones float with the richest textures and timbres. The title track transports the listener into deep space, ambience that echoes the sci-fi feel of Griffin's work with David Tollefson on the Viridian Sun CD "Perihelion." A Produce's influence is evident on "Diffusion," which includes subtle percussive elements. The first time I heard this, I was laying down exactly centered between my living room speakers, and the effect was captivating. "Seek Nothing,"

originally intended as the title track, matches the moody calm of the rest of "Altara," but seems slightly brighter. Though every track is essentially formless masses of sound, the shapes seem a bit more solid here, ironic considering the title. It is a perfectly placed momentary diversion, leading us to the pice de rsistance, "You Send Me the Message." Exemplified by this 36 minutes of exquisite ambience, "Altara" is the perfect balance between darkness and beauty. 1999. Phil Derby * On their joint collaboration, Altara, ambient pioneer A Produce and Hypnos label head (and sometimes artist) M(ike) Griffin head straight for the outer rim of the galaxy and the inner sanctum of the human psyche. The five cuts that make up this album are more like passing shadows and evening fog banks than music, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. The occasional lack of even a melodic drone does not hinder the impact of this music. However, it does necessitate two things. One, you need to either play Altara fairly loudly, or you must listen to it in the almost complete absence of background or foreground noise. The subtleties of this recording are its heart and soul. A shimmering synth here, a brush stroke of timbre there, and a vague sense of desolation and isolation permeate this album. Normal descriptions of this music are, in a way, pointless. There were probably any number of reprocessing and treatments that M Griffin (perliner notes) applied to A Produces synths and samples. Suffice it to say that the music on cuts like the opening Overground is very deep formless ambient and/or semi-dark spacemusic. Bell-like reverberations, lower register synths, and vague undertones come and go. Altara begins with an almost palpable humming sound, like the muted vibration from a plasma or ion drive engine on a starship, filtered through the massive bulkhead that separates the drive system from the crews quarters. Higher toned sounds pulse with a cyber-organic lifeblood. Sometimes the pulse grows loud and even drones with a electrical/mechanical energy, as if the machinery was being driven to an overload. But despite this description of Altara, I would not use the word noir to describe the music. This is not dark ambient, per se . Yes, it has the essence of darkness (a la deep space) and even brings to mind the feel of shadows. But the emotional context is more ambiguous than that. Ultimately, the mood is one of unending questioning and even puzzlement. Its the musical equivalent of an insatiable desire to explore beyond the normal boundaries of everyday life. Yet, the CD it is also not pointlessly pretentious. In fact, by being so overtly minimal, A Produce and Griffin avoid any sense of arent we cool that could easily creep into a recording that stresses mood and nuance over melody or structure. Even on the vaguely rhythmic Diffusion (which sounds the most like an A Produce solo cut to my ears), the presence of the deep bell-like tone seems to

reinforce the floating nature of the song, instead of detracting from it. This song also has more of a foreground presence to it as well. The last cut on the album is the over thirty-minute long *You Send Me the Message*. Trying to encapsulate descriptive comments about a song this long into a cohesive critical statement is tortuous and somewhat silly. No song (at least very few) that is stretched out to this degree can completely avoid sounding too long, after a fashion. But if you consider that a song like *You Send...* is an auditory example of McLuhans *The Medium is the Message* than the astute listener can overlay a transparency on the drones, hums, washes and noises resulting in a philosophical statement. In fact, *Altara* is probably less about what the music actually is than it is about what the music conjures up as both active visualization and as metaphor. In its drawn out patient undulations, *You Send...* is an interpretation of how communication is not always direct or even indirect. Some communication occurs as part of a psychic or emotional undercurrent. These messages are usually muted, vague and yet drive us toward goals and purposes anyway. Not everyone will hear these heady concepts in *Altara* (and I could become completely off-base on my analysis). Certainly the idea that a CD is less concerned with structure and melody is nothing new. That this type of ambient music is at times beautiful and chilling is also nothing new. However, *Altara* ultimately satisfies both the cerebral and the emotional in a unique way. It purposely avoids dark ambient clichés and, if not strikingly original, its execution is so artfully realized that it transcends its superficial limitations and succeeds by being an excellent exploration of minimalist ambient music. While I did not enjoy *Altara* in the same way I do the work of ambient artists like James Johnson, Stephen Philips or newcomer Matt Borghi, I do admire its bold direction and its vision.

Recommended for fans of very deep space music and minimalist ambient. 2000. Bill Binkelman * *Altara*" is a collection of five long, slow-moving pieces, varying between rich drones, and evocative textural loops. The final piece, the 36-minute epic "*You Send Me the Message*", is a deep, slowly evolving collage of multiple layers. Soleilmoon * The beauty and extent of the technological age currently upon us has never been so sweet, especially for the collaborative effort between LA-based ambient experimentalist A Produce and Portland Oregon-based minimalist Mike Griffin. The product of the pairs 18-month cyber exchange entitled *Altara* is a five track voyage through thick, multi-tiered soundscapes that merges each producers disciplines and efforts together into a dreamlike ambient helix, full of stark imagery and unexpected twists. The development of each individual track offers spine-tingling anticipation as the sounds and images unfold with each passing minute. *Altara* is a powerfully dark movement, very

reminiscent to the feelings of frontline entrenched soldiers moments before dawn, moments before the frontal assault on enemy positions. The echoing, sporadic metallic swirls on Diffusion reveal both producers vision to push the limits of imagination beyond perception, creating a surreal, yet attainable understanding of orchestral ambience. The final piece entitled You Send Me the Message could be the digital end-product of A Produce and Griffins interactions throughout the course of this project, having still not met face to face, which makes this release as genuine, as real, and as innovative deep as imaginable. "Altara" is introspection at the highest level, and will be remembered as such in the years to come. Kilburn

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