

EXIT UNIVERSE – Because the World is Round, April 2018

Susana Sawoff: vocals, piano

Raphael Meinhart: marimba, vibraphone, drum pad, synthesizer, percussion, glockenspiel

What remains of a love affair that has ended? For Susana Sawoff and Raphael Meinhart the answer is music. The two have reunited as an artistic duo to form EXIT UNIVERSE. Their debut “Because the World is Round” reveals a unique symbiosis between the two: in perfectly balanced soundscapes thirteen songs unveil a touching intimacy and emotional depth. Their music meanders between Jazz, Indie and Neo classic and reminds us of Chilly Gonzales, Steve Reich und Radiohead. They playfully create haunting melodies, weaving piano, vocals, vibraphone, marimba, drum pad and a glockenspiel into a colourful tapestry of sound that just might put a spell on you.

Raphael Meinhart and Susana Sawoff are EXIT UNIVERSE. Privately they once were a pair, and now they are just that musically, proving the old adage that opposites attract each other. He being the laconic avant-garde musician and she the eloquent, instinctive voice. He, the academically trained vibraphonist and she the self-taught pianist. On their first album together the ethereal lightness of the vibraphone meets the dark melancholy of the grand piano. For Susana EXIT UNIVERSE is not just another band-project: „There’s a reason why twosomes work so well. A duo is like matrimony. It can only work after a creative and personal encounter.”

Raphael and Susana met 2007 in their hometown of Graz. After their love-affair they remained good friends. Independently from one another they moved to Germany. Raphael, born in 1986, was practically raised in his father’s school of percussion and went on to study classical percussion before moving to Berlin to study the Jazz-vibraphone. He formed his own bands and collaborated with artists such as Shackleton, Elliot Sharp and the Jazzwerkstatt Vienna. Susana also comes from a musical family but studied humanities in Graz before moving to Hamburg. Together with her two sisters she founded the electro-pop trio “Resisters”. Under her own name she also has a solo career having released two very successful Jazz-albums and repeatedly touring Europe.

Talking about the creative process of EXIT UNIVERSE Susana says that it wasn’t the typical male-female division where “she” writes the lyrics and “he” makes the music. “We sat next to each other at the piano and sang and composed together.” The title of their debut “Because the World is Round” was inspired by the Beatles-song “Because”: it is This album has become avant-garde but catchy, tender and fragile, yet danceable – and foremost: full of self-confidence. The use of special effects shows this. Raphael works on his vibraphone with guitar-effects and with the bow of a cello – a wonderfully gentle sound that pervades the whole album. To be able to play the vibraphone with these tools, Raphael uses a pick-up system. Microphones are implanted into the sound bars, making him one out of the few people worldwide that can play like this. EXIT

UNIVERSE truly combines the worlds of classical and pop-music.

The percussive and repetitive playing of Raphael's marimba and vibraphone are the perfect contrast to Susana's clear voice which never sounds too sugary. This can be clearly appreciated for instance in „The Future (or the Now)“. The catchy song „Piano“ with its elegant electronic beats cannot undo the impression that much on the album is off the beaten path of the usual listening habits: there isn't much repetition of choruses, and songs like „Into Love“ and „Highlands“ have extensive instrumental outros which again contrast with Susana's delicate voice. For Raphael, who in spite of all his instrumental virtuosity never overdoes his solos, Susana's song-texts have a „morbid beauty“: they are songs about parting and endings, about one's own inadequacies and doubts about the big picture. But as the singer says: “the word „EXIT“ in the band-name can also be the door to something new”. EXIT UNIVERSE lyrically as well as musically reflects the Zeitgeist of our times.

In „Because the World is Round“ EXIT UNIVERSE celebrates nothing less than the beauty of all that is finite. Whereas the word „celebrate“ may be bit exaggerated, because what Susana and Raphael do is dance and play poetically with the passing of things. The Broadcasting Commission of Hessen in Germany once wrote about Susana that „When this lady sings the sun rises“. The inexplicable, bittersweet moments of the last sun rays of a waning afternoon also herald a new day. There cannot be more fitting music to celebrate this magic.