

Love Spirals Downward is decidedly unusual

By PHILIP H. FARBER

LOVE Spirals Downward is only nominally a band. Really, they are something more of a recording project undertaken by the duo of Ryan Lum and Suzanne Perry, just having fun with their music in a home studio. The result, though, has been three albums of atmospheric, ethereal music that has the ability to transport the listener in remarkable ways.

"We develop it and do it all at home," explains Ryan Lum. "We've got our own home recording studio. We've had it for years, and have just been growing and expanding it... We're pretty well equipped to do it all home. In fact, the way we write, too, we have to do it at home. We don't make up 10 or 11 songs and say, 'Okay! Time to go to the studio and record all the songs!' I'll have some rough sounds or ideas and I'll record them down on tape or into the sampler, and from there I'll start getting more ideas. It will build from what I previously recorded. That would be a very costly, practically impossible, thing to do in the studio. We would be racking up the kind of budget of 'Sgt. Pepper's' or something like that."

Their first two albums, "Idylls" and "Ardor," were critically acclaimed, and even if this isn't exactly the stuff of top-40 hits, they developed a solid following. "Ever," their latest effort, will likely take these musicians even farther, although that may not have been

their intention in recording it.

"I really loathe the music business," Suzanne Perry exclaims. "I really don't think about it. I hope people have a good experience, or a positive experience, but beyond that, I don't expect people to get much from it. That's not my intention when I make it. I don't even know why I do it. It's fun for me. It's fun. When you get past that, you get in trouble. Nobody ever experiences anything like you want them to. And who am I to want people to experience in a certain way? Beyond that, I can't even control that... I can't control if people are going to buy it, or even care about it."

Ryan Lum's intent in making music is more to access "the kinds of things that I experience when I listen to my music, or music that I enjoy listening to. More of a spiritual experience. Some kind of musical listening experience that guides (the listener) in a higher direction. Not higher like taking drugs, but lifting them up a little bit, engaging their spiritual dimension."

Lum and Perry have degrees in philosophy and psychology, respectively. The effectiveness of the music makes one wonder how much of their academic training plays into their art. "It's hard to say what in your psyche influences other parts of your psyche," Lum says. "I am what I am. I don't consciously think I'm making philosophy in my music

SOUND ADVICE

Artist: Love Spirals Downward
Album: "Ever"
Label: Projekt
Rating: ★★★★★ (out of 5)

or anything like that. I guess it does cross over. It's part of my whole-world view. It's hard to separate out philosophy and art and religion and music. It's just kind of the way I look at things, holistically."

Perry, who does social policy research for the Rand Corporation, tends to divide her pursuits. "When you say psychology to me, I think about my work," she says. "Because of the type of psychology I do. I do research, so it doesn't really fit with the music. Maybe if I were a clinical psychologist, or if I were into eastern philosophy and how that relates to spiritually. There are different types of psychology. There's the touchie-feelie psychology people, and the hard science psychology people. I'm more the hard science type."

Love Spirals Downward are not your typical rock musicians, and this is not your typical pop music. Highly recommended.

Philip H. Farber is a free-lance writer living in the Hudson Valley. He writes a music column each week for Preview.

Reprinted from The Daily Freeman November 29, 1996