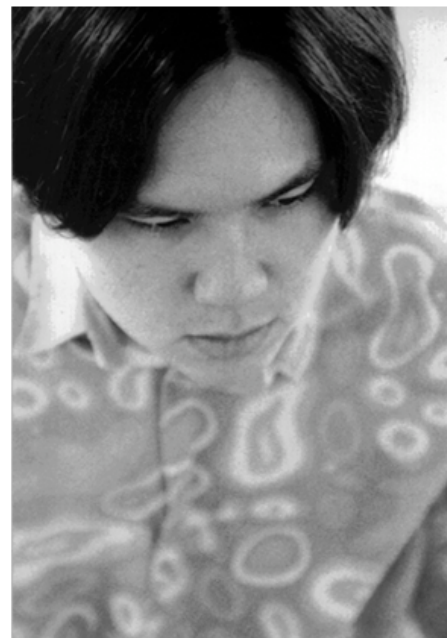


Some music exists in a dreamlike world of softened colors and indistinct images, where words are scarcely remembered and beauty is the only thing of value. Perhaps this music speaks to us in a wordless language of the peace before birth and the worlds beyond waking reality. The only certainty is that it spirals gracefully downwards through layers of mystery like the depths of an enchanted ocean. This is the music of Love Spirals Downwards: the music of dreams and worlds beyond. Love Spirals Downwards is the voice of Suzanne Perry and the music of Ryan Lum on synthesizers, samplers and guitars.



photos: David Agasi

Love Spirals Downwards

MUSE: The Projekt label says they produce ethereal, gothic and dark ambient music.

Which description most suits your music?

Suzanne: I don't mind being attached to ethereal so much as being called a "4AD type." That's too specific. Ethereal is more vaguely descriptive.

Ryan: It could be The Moon Seven Times; it could be us; it could be The Sundays. It's a very broad term.

M: Did you study music in school?

S: I had some voice lessons, but never to the point where I was studying for a career. I got a Bachelor's in psychology in '92, and a Master's in psychological research.

M: Do you have a career in psychology apart from the band?

S: Yeah. I'm applying to Ph.D. programs in clinical psychology right now. I work at a clinic doing health policy research. My music is the ultimate balance between that, where I have a professional life that's very analytical and my leisure which is singing. Love Spirals Downwards is really confined to this one part of my life, to specific circumstances.

M: What was your first serious song together?

S: The first song that I ever did was "Forgo" on *Idylls*. No real experimentation or anything. We just started doing it. I just started singing, and, "Wait! That's pretty good!" We sent that off to Projekt.

R: In fact, the first three songs we had finished, we sent off to a few labels. That's all we

ever did as far as trying to get signed.

S: We don't have a bank of songs that we draw from, like most bands. "Well, I think this is our best song right here." All of our songs are ones we end up releasing. We don't scrap them. If after an hour, we say, "This song is not working", we don't bother making it.

M: How much of your music is composed and how much of it is improvised?

R: I'll come up with some chord sequences that I like on acoustic guitar and build from there. After that, it's all very intuitive. An idea comes in the studio and it's recorded right then.

M: How do you create the lyrics? You often sing in a language that sounds like latin. It's very mystical, like chant.

S: I'll make up the notes first, and then I'll usually make up words right away to fit those notes. All the lyrics are crafted to fit the mood.

M: You've mentioned the Cocteau Twins and Dead Can Dance as bands you admire.

S: We've definitely been influenced by them. But I could say I've been influenced by Tori Amos or The Sundays or Slow Dive. Making that connection to The Cocteau Twins and Dead Can Dance was the realization that they make music, so can we. What we learned when we had the opportunity to meet them was that they're not mysterious. You know, when you're fourteen or fifteen years old they seem so different from everyone else.

M: Is there a difference in the creative process between writing more traditional lyrics and writing phonetically?

S: That's an interesting question. There is. It's a lot harder for me to write words that are personal, than to write nonsense lyrics because I'm getting into things that I reveal about myself. I don't know how comfortable I feel with expressing myself in that way or putting that into music.

R: Is it that you don't want to put yourself out there, or is it that you feel it doesn't belong in the music? I think it's both those things. In some ways, I don't want to date it. I don't want to have to listen to songs and think back and say, "Oh, that's when I was going through that. That's a bummer. That was 1994."

S: I like the timelessness of that.

M: I like your sensitivity to the differences between the timelessness of melody and the kinds of songs that you write, as opposed to something that's more confessional or commentative. There's a value in that, but it's not the only valid music.

R: I think a lot of people come to singing with the assumption that bearing their soul is something that they need to do in their lyric writing. What we do is break that assumption.

M: There's a certain purity to music like yours. It's music for its own sake: to take you somewhere, but it will almost take the listener wherever they want to go.

S: Though, in some ways, you're led by mood. There's a mood, where you're led in some direction. Still, there's a lot of freedom in that.

R: That's a good way to put it. We give it direction but leave open where it takes you. ■