

## Reviews – Nascent – 2011/2012

### mescaline-injection.de – May, 2012 - Translated from German

*“Academic Electronica”*

*“Electronic music of academics - No, this should not be understood ironically as it is not so rare. One might consider Englishman, Peter Green, for example, and his 'Acid-classic' collaboration with Mike Dred, which has received numerous awards and international critical acclaim. SIGNALSUNDERTESTS is Northern-Irishman, Ricky Graham, who has completed his doctoral thesis this year. Electronic music is seemingly attractive for most musicologists, even though it can often produce musical works that are completely pointless as they are ridiculous. But sometimes there are exceptions to this rule, such as Graham, who is immersed in his latest work, 'Nascent,' for more than an hour, presenting a variety of sound structures.*

*Ambient environments are explored here, for himself and the audience. Synth textures, subtle melodies, intimate arrangements but also some very special acoustic structures. Graham has the courage to produce exciting moments of contemplation. 'Nascent' also affords the rare luxury of an extended dynamic range, discouraging the listener to simply listen with cheap headphones. The album's experimental design is still very accessible, providing very delicate details that unfold beauty like a flower in fast motion. For example, 'Selah IV' and 'Axon (Reprise)' present sparkling synths to be gradually joined by a filling, warming primer. 'Nascent' pursues no defined (conventional) musical structures as such, the tracks on the album are therefore difficult to distinguish from one another. Instead, everything fits together, fragments exploding into more fragments, which together make a whole.*

*Ambient fans can be sure that 'Nascent' will be a really exciting journey. 'Nascent' is in the class of musical works that functions successfully just by itself without the need of accompanying visual stimuli. And when 'Nascent' creates figurative imagery with the one outlier track with female vocals, 'Keep Me - 143,' it still creates a positive effect.”*

### Pretty in Noise (DE) – May, 2012 - Translated from German

*“Splendid Minimalism”*

*“Ambient solo guitar. One could describe this genre as long, atmospheric pieces or soundscapes, performed live by a single guitar and a large catalog of audio effects devices, especially Loop Stations; allowing guitarists to coax a simple guitar into an equally large catalog of different sounds and to develop an epic in its entirety. This is very much the case of the collaborative album, 'Nascent;' offering thirteen pieces presenting atmospheric sound passages that Graham creates with the use of proprietary hardware and software tailored for a specific purpose. The album is promoted by the label, 'Fluttery Records' as a musical release developed through the refinement of a series of live improvised performances. Here, the question arises, how much of the album is live and how much is post-production, how many guitars and how many computers can now be found on the album? The album itself can be described as light, drone-based, ambient, transparent; echoic guitars strumming gently and gracefully in the foreground.*

*The album somehow conveys water; sometimes clear and cold, sometimes rippling, sometimes swift, elusive, ever-changing. The first four tracks maintain a minimalist, albeit epic soundscape feel, when suddenly the fifth piece, 'Keep Me (143),' plunges into ambient realms using only a subtle bass line, female vocals and a few bit-crushed rhythmic elements - and this approach makes it a very good piece. The fragile, detached mood, obtained by this subtle but very stylistic piece definitely stands out in a positive way. There could have been more quiet moments to follow, but instead the album builds again into instrumental, minimalist sculptures, synthesized and modulated sounds, stacked layer-on-layer. Overall, it is a difficult album to further describe precisely in its entirety without time and the same hackneyed terms. However, one is presented with splendid minimalism, which can lift you with its bright, clear and transparent sound. One hears a high level of layered sounds and maintained sound sculptures, but everything is still sophisticated enough that nothing is sinking into the mud of a drone."*

### **Sea of Tranquility (USA) - 2012**

*"This is relaxing ambient, electronic guitar music which works perfect magic early in the morning for sunrise or late in the afternoon for sunset. The album is full of soft, elegant textures of guitar which sooth, calm, and relax you, taking your mind off of the busy work day ahead or behind. Perfect for relaxing with headphones on and nowhere to go. It has become an essential part of my morning routine. All of the tracks are full of interesting and wonderful variations on a theme, but Laura Graham's vocals on 'Keep Me (143)' certainly added a nice warm variation to the soundscape. 'Quiet Arcs,' 'Kapelle,' and 'Ebb and Flow,' are also album highlights."*

### **Guitar Player Magazine (USA) – March, 2012**

*"The brainchild of Northern Irish experimental guitarist, Ricky Graham, in collaboration with composer and tape-wrangler, Michael Andrews, this music began as a series of improvisations created utilising looping and processing software and polyphonic guitar hardware developed by Graham, and was later refined into its present form. Unlike other "drone" and "atmospheric" music, it possesses a subtle evocative and majestic quality reminiscent of masters such as Brian Eno, Michael Brook, and Robert Rich" - Barry Cleveland – Editor – 03/2012*

### **ATTN: Magazine (UK) - 2012**

*"The most immediately satisfying element of 'Nascent' – which appears to be the first widely available full-length from signalsundertests – is that it can operate comfortably as one start-to-finish listening experience. Such focus feels like the aftermath of laying every aspect of his musical persona before himself via 'Mecca;' now aware of which areas are most worthy of pursuit, he can take to each with a reinvigorated assurance. 'Nascent' is, to use a broadly encompassing term, an 'ambient' work, with the rhythmic element virtually ditched entirely in order to place emphasis on texture design and looser, cinematic narratives. There's some good stuff here. Some of the album evokes gigantic arctic caverns, in which sounds shimmer as glints of light catching on the ice. Other times a likeness to the depth and solitude of a space voyage feels more appropriate, as thicker swells of synthesiser chord rush up from beneath and pour in from the sides; guitars crackle into nothing like dying stars, with their slow-motion decay left to reverberate to the edges of the daunting imaginary stereo stretch. 'Kapelle' stands out as a particularly engrossing moment, with electronics stuttering like drips of motion on a placid lake of drones. Meanwhile, closing piece 'Ebb and Flow' lets feedback see-saw between pitches as a central wave of distortion drives forth and then recedes, with smaller streams of static breaking off and lapping up elsewhere" - Jack Chuter, 2012.*

## **The Post Rock (DE) – 2011 - Translated from German**

*“'Nascent' is the new album by Ricky Graham (signalsundertests). Released in December, 2011 the Northern Irishman attempts to create the 'Mount Olympus' of the 2011 releases in the experimental genre. What he had set out to do... has been accomplished. 'Nascent,' is described in a press release as an 'ambient album;' but it is much more than that. The opener and title track of the album shows that 'Nascent' is not just about ambient space, because what you hear here are clean guitar melodies that delicately create a framework that arises from ambient sounds. 'Selah I' is the first of six songs on this eponymous release, which are lined up between the other songs that can be understood to act both as a bridge and as separate tracks. 'Axon' surprises with herbaceous prog-rock guitar themes that go hand-in-hand with experimental soundscapes. After the drone track, 'Selah II,' one is surprised by 'Keep Me (143)' with rhythmic 'trip-hop' sounds and female vocals. And while you think about it, whether you like 'Keep Me (143)' at this point in the album or not, the song dissolves into guitar drone-based surfaces and merges with the previously included sounds of the album. 'Quiet Arcs' presents increasing clouds with the sound of 'wah-wah' guitar that would be placed well in a tough rock song. 'Prog-Ambient' could be an appropriate name for the overall sound, if you had to give the child a name. In any case, 'Quiet Arcs' presents furious howling guitar noise walls. 'Axon Reprise' does continue where 'Axon' left off, only that the reprise version is much more alive and evolved into a sublime storm of bright sounds that dissolves into quiet 'Geknirsche' (creaking, rasping noise). 'Chapel' (Kapelle) flows with electric guitar sounds, like sounds that lie on the path of the river. 'Selah' rears up on its sixth and final time and paves the way for 'Ebb and Flow,' which as the title promises, the final piece presents drones that compete against ambient low tide and a beat creeps into the mix again. Ricky Graham's 'Nascent' manages to create what few can: he has produced a sound of his own and combined it with contemporary sounds and old-fashioned electric guitar themes. The road to 'Mount Olympus' is not far; an album that not only will appeal to drone and ambient fans but also friends of Pink Floyd or King Crimson.”*

## **Unruhr & Black Online Magazine (DE) – 2011 - Translated from German**

*“Sometimes there is no such thing as the limitations of words. 'Nascent' is such a case. The new, second album of signalsundertests (aka Richard Graham from N.Ireland) designs a whole universe of gleaming surfaces, subdued noise, naked guitar lines and corroded tails. A (female) voice and the presented ambient musical systems are enhanced by low-frequency pulses, and all this works without one of these elements dominating the album; instead, they act as natural parts. A drone track like 'Quite Arcs' is 'par-rode-force' (rode by strength). 'Pop appeal' perhaps is the best description for what makes 'Nascent' so seductive, but a 'pop-appeal' that penetrates only one of many elements of the music, never superficial, and coupled with a surprising facility of musical arrangements of tracks for the right balance in order to create a coherent record. In spite of such a sound spectrum, and in spite of the complexity of the arrangements and its mix of long, almost fragmentarily short pieces, 'Nascent' produces a continuous flow; the (dynamic) correlation holds. A masterpiece. The final track 'Ebb And Flow' sums it all together again in just under 8 minutes” - Hellmut Neidhardt - 2011*