

Album of the Day: Afuma, “Songs From the Shore”

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By Philip Mlynar



On *Songs From the Shore*, Afuma—the duo of guitarists Taketo Shimada and Stefan Tcherepnin—explore both death and the afterlife. That weighty subject matter is echoed by the sound of musicians’ lap steel and baritone guitars, Tcherepnin’s Sonica analog oscillator synth, and David Silver’s somber drumming. The result is an album that is appropriately mournful, offering reminders of life’s fragility. The ten-minute “Death of a Seagull” opens with plaintive swirls of synth and guitar before soaring off into psychedelia, as Tcherepnin sings of coasting beyond the clouds on “wings of desire.” The slow, undulating synths on “Existential Blowfish” communicate the sinking feeling of defeat and surrender.

The album’s opening and closing tracks establish its emotional arc. The 15-minute “Assisted Suicide” is serene in its contemplation of exhausted faith, and the feeling life has run its natural course. “The world will miss you / But it’s time to go,” sings Tcherepnin calmly. The sentiment is countered by album closer “Suicide Alley,” where a riotous explosion of drums and Shimada’s cackling shehnai riffs end the album on a note of defiance. It feels like a metaphor for embracing the chaos and complexity of human existence, for as long as you possibly can.

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