

FOR IMMEDIATE USE
12th June 2003

BE PREPARED FOR UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS IN SACRED BLACK

Australian musician Steve Roberts of Amongst Myselfes is forging new 'ear-environments' in ambient music with the release of his latest album, "Sacred Black".

This is the third release from Amongst Myselfes, continuing a quiet revolution in the ambient music scene that began with the release of "The Sun in the Bottle" in 1999.

This stunning eight-track album contains eclectic influences including fifteenth century religious persecution, astrophysics, the desolation of a sleeping city at 5am and the classic Martin Denny piece 'Quiet Village'.

"Sacred Black has enabled me to explore and express diverse emotions - meditation, tension, subtlety, torment and persecution, imagination and celebration," said Steve Roberts.

The release has already received impressive reviews from ambient enthusiasts.

"Sacred Black has been endowed with a transcendent quality. The listener feels surrounded and hopefully even liberated by Roberts' designs."

Chuck van Zyl of Radio Program Star's End

"....an album that requests deeper listening than the average stuff encountered nowadays in ambient/space territory."

Bert Strolenberg, Klem Magazine, The Netherlands.

...freeform dronescapes from Amongst Myselfes are amorphous and mesmerizing....eight tracks of lovely audio-ephemera unfurls with easy-to-fall-into fluidity."

David J Opdyke, AmbiEntrance - www.ambientrance.org

"While each piece was conceived and inspired by a definite theme, the beauty of non-lyrical music is that the listener takes full control of what the tracks are about and the feelings they create," Steve Roberts said.

"In the end, Sacred Black is representative of all ambient music - it's all about personal interpretation. I hope to inspire and involve all those who listen to the album," he said.

ENQUIRIES:
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Band Name: Amongst Myselfes

Musical Style: Ambient, Space, Landscape and New Age

Sounds Like: Steve Roach, Robert Rich, Future Sound of London, This Mortal Coil

Home Town: Adelaide, South Australia.

Members: Steve Roberts

Current CD: Sacred Black

Recorded: Uralla Studio, Blackwood, Australia

Mastered: Disk-Edits by Peter Kolomitsev

Record Label: RMC Records

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Points of Note:

- a) Several tracks on the album and including the title come from the writing of cosmologist Carl Sagan.
- b) The album was created with the assistance of Arts SA funding body.
- c) The track "5am Melbourne 1996" was chosen by consensus by the ambient@hyperreal mail list to be on the first of a series of compilation albums named "ambient@hyperreal.01".



Amongst Myself's inroads to electronic/atmospheric music began when he first heard the works of the early electronic groups like Tangerine Dream eg. "Atem" and "Alpha Centauri". During this period he was also exposed to Schulze, Synergy, Gandalf, Peak and the more commercial groups including Kraftwerk, New Order, Vangelis. National radio programs like "Dream Time" and "Scratching the Surface" were two of the few outlets where he could hear such work. This line-up of influences started Amongst Myself's twiddling knobs on his own synthesizers. So with the help of a couple of old cassette decks, a couple of synthesizers and lots of enthusiasm Amongst Myself's started composing.

Amongst Myself's starting writing under the guise of Southern Garden not to mention also performing to friends with his New Years' Shows being a great hit. He also released six cassettes worth of material, his most praised being the post-apocalyptic "The Last Day".

During the 90's he became more aware of neu-Ambient like Future Sound of London, Steve Roach, Robert Rich and Aphex Twin not to mention a new interest in the Eno's. So with the help of advances in computer based synths he took a great interest in the ambient/new age/drone arena.

Amongst Myself's released "The Sun In The Bottle" in 1999 which was a retrospective of pieces written during the previous four years. The style of this album was definitely new age in its basis with a hint of electro-acoustics as heard on tracks "Before Now" and "The Last Woman on Lysithea". "The Sun in the Bottle" had extensive airplay in Europe and the USA.

During 1999 and 2000 he started work on "Still Life" feeling at ease with the ambient/space/drone direction his work is taking. There are still reflections of new age coming through but as reviewer Hans Stoeve of PowerSpot FM mentions in his review of "Still Life" - "...he has resisted the urge to compose dramatic music".

Meanwhile, at the end of 2000 AquaFM released the first of many compilations titled "ambient@hyperreal.com 01" on which appeared an unreleased piece by Amongst Myself's titled "5am Melbourne 1996". This piece now appears on his 3rd release "Sacred Black". He has also submitted a couple of tracks from "Still Life" for the next compilation.

The success of "Still Life" led Australian radio program "Ultima Thule" to contract Amongst Myself's to create their new opening theme based on the "Still Life" track "Ship of Dreams". During 2002 the 2 cd compilation "ambient@hyperreal.com 02" was released containing the title track from "Still Life", "Ra's Playground".

Amongst Myself's last release was in June 2001 with the CD "Still Life". "Still Life" was a great success for Amongst Myself's. The styles of music explored on the CD gave him a direction to follow for upcoming releases. This CD was well supported in the US especially by Chuck Van Zyl's "Stars End" program. This is when Amongst Myself's took the whole music thing seriously and spent much time and money in producing a high quality product.

Chuck Van Zyl said "When compared to a gallery walk, this album becomes a collection of sonic vignettes ranging from the serene to the brash, the muddled to the crystalline, from calm to stormy and ultimately more interesting with each visit." and David J Opdyke explains "he paints still life's offworld audioimagery with bold strokes from his wide studio palette, decorating here and there with subtler sweeps."

After the success of "Still Life" Amongst Myself's realised that he was headed in the right direction. A direction which is a constant challenge trying to breakaway from the normal. So with this in mind he set out to start work on what later was titled "Sacred Black" a journey influenced by fifteenth century religious persecution, astrophysics, the desolation of a sleeping city at 5am and the classic Martin Denny piece 'Quiet Village'. The South Australian Government through ArtsSA were so impressed they helped to fund "Sacred Black".

Radio station "Ultima Thule" is to release a 2 disc compilation late 2003 / early 2004 containing a new track by Amongst Myself's alongside other great Australian ambient composers and world greats such as Robert Rich and Steve Roach.

"Sacred Black" is a continuation of a journey starting with "Still Life"; a story expressing diverse emotions - meditation, tension, subtlety, torment and persecution, imagination and celebration.

Dawn 1958 reflects on the life of Galileo Galili through letters exchanged with his daughter Suor Maria Celeste in the book "Galileo's Daughter" by Dava Sobel. The letters read of a life of great hardships in the 15th century as a nun and a scientist persecuted for beliefs that clashed with the Roman Catholic Church of his time. A smooth morph soundscape that takes little effort in listening – aiming to be very subtle to the extent of not being there. The track also reflects on a lifestyle that is less complicated than the 21st Century through the use of more meditative tones.

Morning of the Earth continues the meditative state through to the 21st century where a world is re-evaluating its beliefs and many choose to take an alternative life to the 'expected' workaholic path taken by the majority of this troubled world.

Taken to another world "Sea of Rains" sees the location of Earth's moon. Many great thinkers and scientists of the past have imagined other worlds before space flight was possible.

Sea of Rains is the name of one of the many dark patches on the moon – so named by the 16th century priest Riccioli who believed it to be a sea. This track transports the listener to the beach of this "Sea of Rains", taking in the totally alien landscape for the first time. Strange insects are making noise through the weird daylight, small asteroids pass and crash, strange squeaks and rumbles occur as the solar winds resonate on the landscape – and the moon expands and compresses due to the earth's magnetic field.

From the sea of rains our listener is transformed to an idyllic tropical beach setting – but instead of watching a sunset, a galaxy is setting over the horizon casting strange ephemeral shadows of palm trees on the beach. This more 'New Age' track is **The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean**, with inspiration drawn from Martin Denny's classic exotic piece "Quiet Village". Melodies from Denny's creation form the background, conveying the tropical heat of this location.

Time for tension in **Argo Navis**, led by the lead piano instrument and maintained by use of a constant warbling alarm bell sweeping around our head. The strings try for release but are foiled by the menacing, warped human and mechanical sounds. In the end the piano wins – or does it?

5am Melbourne 1996 deals with detachment – inspired by a personal experience working in Melbourne several years ago. My visits were fleeting and I always felt detached – as if I was viewing the city like an animal exhibit at a zoo. One early morning, on my way back to Adelaide I caught a taxi. While the city was desolate, I witnessed hundreds of people dressed up to impress and walking to the only nightclub still open at 5 in the morning. Using guitars and TV commercials, this track reflects the emptiness of the city and the memory of those waves of people.

The Demon Haunted World takes the listener back to the dark ages and a street in Florence. I was inspired by the tormented lives of scientists persecuted by the ruling Catholic Church for trying to change the backward ideas of the world at the time. The screams of persecution can be heard.

Returning Home relieves the desperation of the previous track – a Hollywood ending. A much more structured piece, representing the ending of a phase, the ending of this trip, with small discordant lead notes to spark some past memory of this journey. My celebration track.

Sacred Black is the 3rd cd of the Australian musician Steve Roberts who already caught my attention with his former album Still Life.

The album opens with the slow morphing soundwaves of Dawn 1958, delving into intimate reflection, riding the edge between dark and light, which is nicely followed by Morning of the Earth, which continues in same way for exactly 10 minutes.

Sea of Rains is an otherworldly adventure in ambient/space with strange cascading effects over solar winds. This is intriguing spacemusic offering some new dimensions, followed a dreamy oriented piece of music: The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean. The slightly choral-like textural environment contains a beautiful classic sample of Martin Denny's Quiet Village, a gentle match with a more than interesting outcome.

Argo Navis gives the listener an sort-of uncanny feel , slightly experimental with some vague distorted guitar at the end. Listening & experiencing 5am Melbourne 1996 is a typical happy accident in audioland: its slightly circling sound is hypnotising, making you can't just look away from what Steve is sculpturing: transforming a personal experience into audio format, not to forget the little Pink Floydish sound at the end.

The Demon Haunted World is the most difficult track on the album: its overall industrial/experimental soundscapes have the impact of strolling over the darkest edge I think it not at place here (sic).

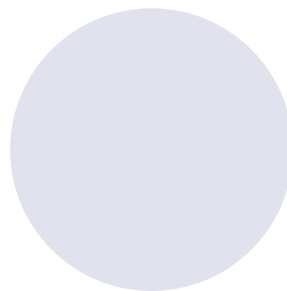
Returning Home seems to be the reward for this former hard track, as you encounter very nice, slightly dissonant & electronically moulded guitar-licks, which keep drifting an circling in your head after the disc has come to a closure after 50 minutes.

A nice reward for an album that requests deeper listening than the average stuff encountered nowadays in ambient/space territory. Those looking for some unexpected encounters should really try this on. I'm sure they won't be disappointed.

Info at www.amongstmyselfs.com

Bert Strolenberg, Klem Magazine The Netherlands

delving into
intimate
reflection



Australian ambient comes in the color of Sacred Black; freeform dronescapes from *Amongst Myselfes* are amorphous and mesmerizing.

The boiling sonic liquids of *Dawn 1958* (3:12) sometimes pulse with rippling energies, but mostly just stew in ethereal wonder which seeps into *Morning of the Earth* (10:00) where skyborne streamers arc across woofer-thrumming deepness; eventually faraway drums are discerned through the glare. Twinkly little tonal progressions traipse over the stormy cloudboiler *Sea of Rains*, until they are swallowed into its seething dark gusts of organic-yet-unnatural environments.

The piano-accented drones of *The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean* precedes the sometimes-twangy steambath auras of entrancingly shapeless *Argo Navis*. As one might expect, *The Demon Haunted World* exists in a creepier realm where nervously shifting rays writhe with cinematic moodiness. *Warmer Returning Home* features softly strummed strings that rise and fall over smooth contours of glowing radiance.

Eight tracks (51 minutes) of lovely audio-ephemera unfurls with easy-to-fall-into fluidity. Steve Roberts of *Amongst Myselfes* forges immersive new ear-environments, bathed in Sacred Black. Very nice!

AmbiEntrance © 2003-1997 by David J Opdyke

boiling
sonic
liquids

When he is conceiving the music of Amongst Myselfs, Steve Roberts must first describe the aural consistency of the work. On the album Sacred Black, we experience Roberts' knack for contrast; the putting together of varied forms so as to heighten their effect and his ability to establish the connectiveness between tones. The 8 tracks sweep and stumble between sonic states of wordless quietude and opalescent shine to chilling shades of frosted brittleness and impliable density. Roberts is an explorer amidst the vast region betwixt tonality and dissonance – his mission being to link the two.

wordless quietude

Sacred Black can be classified as an album realized using electronic gear, but Roberts draws out of his instruments an incomparable range of frequencies, pitches and sonorities – arranging them into organic, three dimensional shapes. The track "The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean" being the most reassuring, opens with the sounds of surf against the shore and on into the warm glow of synth pads, soft melodies and glistening harmonies. An undertow of musical current pulls us along on our descent into peacefulness. "Sea of Rains" portrays a strange, more somber condition. Synthetic explosions punctuate airy drones. Almost environmental in its stasis, the track seems to move and develop like a storm through its 8 minute course. "The Demon Haunted World" is somewhat unsettling with its rattling chains, dripping effects and melodic chromatism – but we are eventually rescued as the concluding track segues in and brightens up our clouded soundworld with the pleasant strumming guitar of "Returning Home".

& opalescent
shine

Sacred Black has been endowed with a transcendent quality. The listener feels surrounded and hopefully even liberated by Roberts' designs. This album deals with what is between and beyond dreams and memories. Its areas of translucency provide clarity of vision while the regions of opacity are relatively impervious to understanding. Could it be then that Sacred Black is truly based on all the complexities of the individual.

Chuck van Zyl/STAR'S END 16 February 2003