

Mika Vainio + Ryoji Ikeda + Alva Noto: Live 2002

SC spectrumculture.com/2018/02/08/mika-vainio-ryoji-ikeda-alva-noto-live-2002/

Daniel Bromfield

Don't expect anyone flicking a lighter and shouting "woo!" when Ryoji Ikeda hits a perfect 12,000-hertz tone. *Live 2002*, the only recording of fringe electronic musicians Ikeda, Mika Vainio and Alva Noto performing together, doesn't sound much like a live album: no audience noise, none of that slight muddiness that lets you know it's not a polished studio product. If you told me the "live" packaging was a prank and this wasn't recorded at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Newcastle after all, I wouldn't blink. After all, that'd be in line with the attitude of the Y2K-era computer music on labels like Mego, Mille Plateaux and Raster-Noton, which could be as puckish and capricious as it was abrasive and austere.

LOCATION: BAL TIC, NEWCASTLE, UK
ARTIST: MIKA VAINIO, RYOJI IKEDA, ALVA NOTO
DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2002
REC ENGINEER: UNKNOW N / LIVE RECORDING
EDITOR: RYOJI IKEDA, CARSTEN NICKLAJ
MASTERING: BOB AT CALIX, BERLIN

FORMAT REC: 16 BIT 24 BIT 32 BIT OTHER
 44.1 KHZ 48 KHZ 96 KHZ 192 KHZ ANALOG OTHER

FORMAT MASTER: 16 BIT 24 BIT 32 BIT OTHER
 44.1 KHZ 48 KHZ 96 KHZ 192 KHZ AAC/MPEG OTHER
 12 INCH 10 INCH 33 RPM 45 RPM TAPE OTHER

PROJECT NAME/TITLE: MIKA VAINIO + RYOJI IKEDA + ALVA NOTO LIVE 2002

TRACK	TITLE	TIME	ISRC CODE
01	MOVEMENT 1	00:00:42	UK8821718201
02	MOVEMENT 2	00:03:48	UK8821718201
03	MOVEMENT 3	00:05:21	UK8821718204
04	MOVEMENT 4	00:07:36	UK8821718205
05	MOVEMENT 5	00:09:19	UK8821718206
06	MOVEMENT 6	00:09:07	UK8821718207
07	MOVEMENT 7	00:04:20	UK8821718208
08	MOVEMENT 8	00:04:41	UK8821718209
09	MOVEMENT 9	00:05:51	UK8821718210
10	MOVEMENT 10	00:05:50	UK8821718211
11	MOVEMENT 11	00:04:25	UK8821718212

Live 2002 is no walk in the park for the casual listener, but it's a good entry point to this music. This is in part because it's so hard to tell who's doing what here that eventually *Live 2002* stops being an album and instead becomes a sort of platonic ideal of turn-of-the-millennium laptop music. It could be an album from Pan Sonic, the late Vainio's vaunted noise duo with Ilpo Väisänen; it could be a Noto record. The only sound that's easy to pinpoint is the sine tones that screech at the edges of the music, which are *probably* Ikeda but not necessarily.

It's also easier to follow than a lot of its ilk. At 44 minutes, it's a pretty breezy listen, and it's split into 11 movements that follow a basic suspense-and-release structure: a few minutes of the three exploring tones and textures, then a few minutes of explosive industrial beats that make dark comedy out of dance-music tropes. "Movements 4" even features something like a drop. While these artists' work on their own can feel perilously stagnant, there's an unmistakable sense of motion to the music here, as if the three artists are rushing towards the finish line.

The music on *Live 2002* is improvised, and most of it is careful and controlled. You can imagine the artists squinting determinedly at their soundboards, waiting for the right moment to turn a knob or trigger a beat. "Movements 11" is the closest this music ever sounds to a jam session: it's just the three guys trying to coax as much sheer sound out of their machines as possible, and the camaraderie is palpable and poignant. It can be hard to get the same sense of elation from electronic collaborations as live ones, but it's clear that these guys like each other.

How much you like this music, though, is dependent on your tolerance for music that chucks extravagances like melody and harmony out the window. When something resembling a note

finally surfaces on “Movements 7,” it completely changes the musical palate, and though that piece would be a difficult diversion on most other electronic records, here it’s like a warm cup of tea. If you can’t get a grip on this stuff, maybe it’s not for you. But if you find it lingering in the back of your mind, look up Ikeda, Noto and Vainio; from there, happy trails.

- Label:
Noton
- Release Date:
January 19, 2018