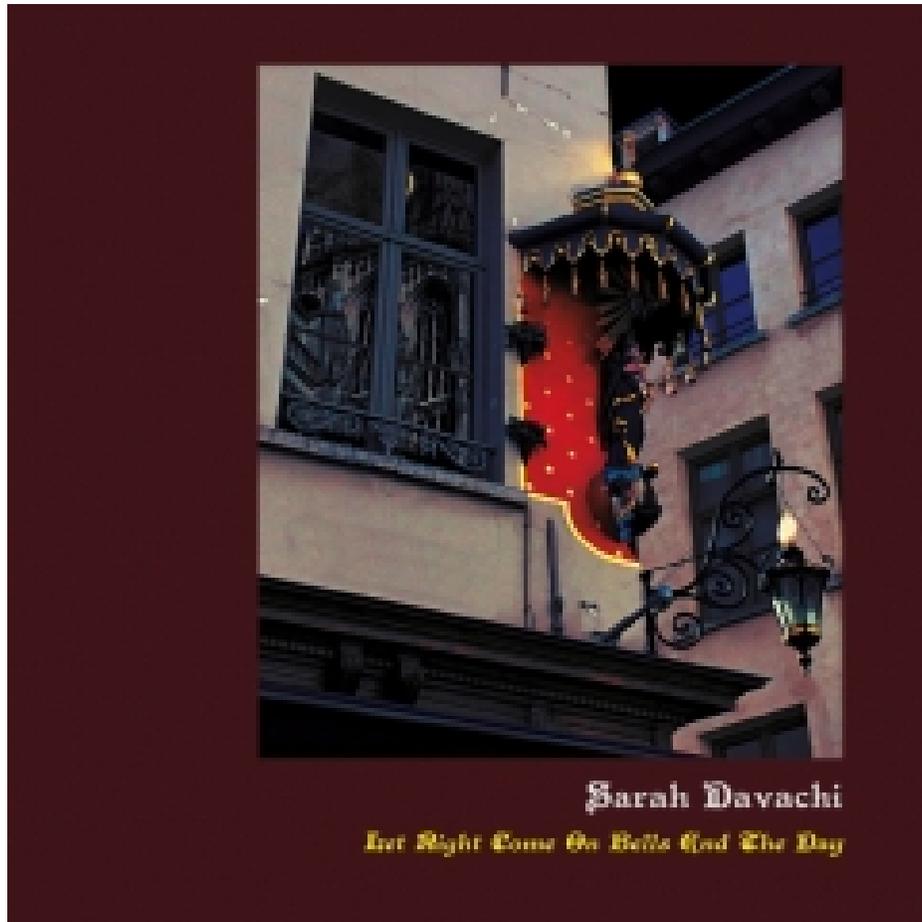


# Sarah Davachi: Let Night Come on Bells End the Day

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There's something about simple music, made with only a handful of instruments, that's more convincingly spiritual than that made with extensive overdubbing, arranging, primping and fussing. Perhaps it's something to do with buried associations with some ancient druid or shaman tooting a flute or beating a drum to will some change in the universe. Perhaps it also has to do with the actual sound of the instrument taking up less space than the extra-sonic aspect, the spiritual aspect, the sort of world-beyond-the-world that the best music generates.

This is what makes Sarah Davachi's music so exciting. Her last album, the great *All My Circles Run* zeroed in on the instruments used to make her austere drones; the tracks bore titles like "For Strings" and "For Voice," leaving the listener to fill in the rest with their imagination. Her latest, *Let Night Come on Bells End the Day*, continues in this tradition but is just a little more baroque, both in the music-crit sense (it feels more ornate, there's more going on) and the classical sense (Bach might approve of the church organ that's the source of these drones).

For the first few minutes of the album, Davachi fans might be surprised by just how much is going on. The first track barely breaches three minutes, which is grindcore length in ambient drone, and the second, rather than letting all the colors run together, focuses on insistent pairs

of two notes—a melody, almost—before it's submerged by the oceanic rumble of the organ. It's only as the album develops that it begins to fade into the distance, riding out on the 13-minute "Hours in the Evening," the most comfortable ambient track since Huerco S.'s "A Sea of Love."

The persistent feeling isn't of neutrality but of warmth, and at least for this listener, *Let Night Come on Bells End the Day* conjures images of tapestries, ornate carpets, four-poster beds draped in fabric—a warm, stately, old-fashioned sense of comfort. It's a little more of a body-high than a mind-high album, acting less on the imagination than on the physical body and becoming like a piece of furniture you sink into. What you think of this album really depends on what you desire from ambient music. To say it's better or worse than her past work means little.

I enjoy ambient music for its physical qualities, but I also appreciate it for its spiritual qualities, and despite the churchy setting, I found *Let Night Come on Bells End the Day* a bit lacking in this aspect. It conjures a world beyond itself, but the mystery of *All My Circles Run* is absent, and it presents itself not as a cipher but as something fully-furnished and fully-formed, waiting for a listener to dive into it like a warm bed you spring into after a long day. Still, it's wonderful for that purpose, and when night comes on, you might find it's the perfect way to end the day.