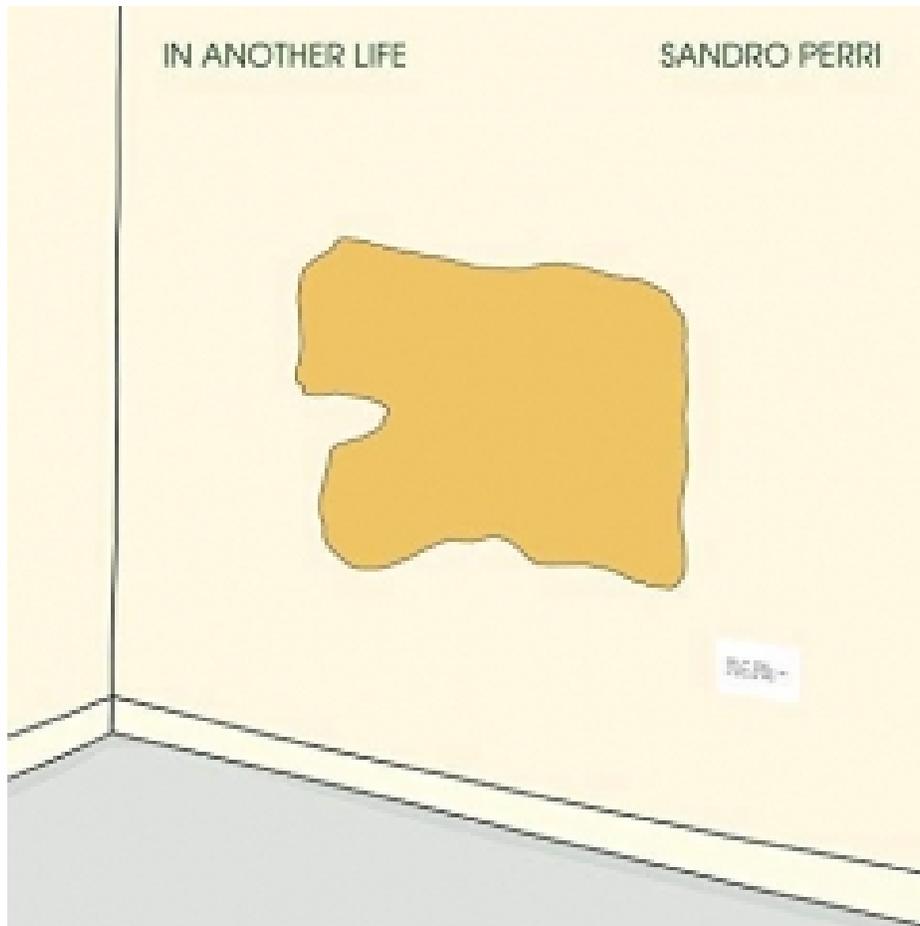


# Sandro Perri: In Another Life

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The title track of Sandro Perri's *In Another Life*, which comprises the bulk of the album, is new age for a world of shit. It spins a utopian vision, where “*freely goes the child at night*” and “*there’s no intelligence test in class,*” while sighing sadly that it can only be “*in another life*”. It’s smarter than most new age but also more frustrating, because instead of telling us that the world is perfect or that you can find perfection in yourself, it tells us we can find perfection in... itself. Like most messianic pop visions, including its close cousin—John Lennon’s “Imagine”—it offers no solution. But at least it’s bitterly aware of that fact. It runs 24 minutes for a reason: it’s trying to maintain its papier-mâché paradise as long as possible before reality sinks back in.

Its inertia might be frustrating to those who remember his last album, 2011’s terrifically groovy *Impossible Spaces*, a little less so for those who’ve heard his earlier ambient work as Polmo Polpo. And to be fair, there are a lot of ambient albums that work better to conjure the kind of paradise Perri dreams up. Its sequencer sounds more like a piece of gear than a piece of the music, and it’s a little discouraging to realize it’s not going away. It’s in the stereo field around it

where *In Another Life* truly comes alive, with all manner of little florets of steel guitar, flute and percussion. And Perri's voice is benevolent and soft-spoken enough to float above the music without distraction. Singing's hard to get right in ambient music, but Perri finds the right notes.

On side two, Perri gives up the mic to a few wily old Canadian vets for a trio of renditions of a song called "Everybody's Paris." André Ethier of underrated soul-punk roughnecks The Deadly Snakes offers a contented peace-and-love vision, playing, perhaps, a resident of the dream world Perri spins as he plops down in his chair to take in the beauty of the world. And then Dan Bejar shows up, that sly old bastard, and if you know Destroyer's music you might find yourself chuckling before his contribution even begins. Perri must have wanted to dump a bucket of fish guts on the love parade, because it's only a matter of time before he sings "not everyone's Paris," like a troublesome 9th-grader barely hiding his contempt for a class writing assignment.

He sounds like he'd rather be somewhere else, which I suppose is in keeping the theme of the album. It's easy to chalk up this record's flawed optimism to Trump, Brexit, Canada's reckoning with its treatment of First Nations people, or any other easy source of blame for a record coming out in 2018 that feels discontented. But this isn't a record that traffics in specifics, and the world's always going to be less than perfect. *In Another Life* just happens to come out at a moment in time when, for more people than ever, dreaming of another life is an act of desperation. Some will leave this album comforted. Others might be unfathomably depressed.