

New Music Spotlight: William Fields

By Michael Pollock

William Fields

Timbre

Gears of Sand Records

Available at www.williamfields.com and www.gearsandsand.net

The tones and echoes on Arden electronic composer William Fields' *Timbre* play like a dream: shimmering and lucid, rising and falling, spurts and gaps cascading effortlessly over a wordless soundscape of human imagination. An alternate reality seems to jockey for position with a physical one. Even when something is familiar—"Seaglass," for instance, which recalls Radiohead's "Treefingers" and the end bits on *Kid A*—a dissonant undercurrent manages to work its way in and take over.

Was it planned this way? Yes and no. "I don't really come up with ideas for pieces ahead of time," says the 28-year-old Fields. "Usually I just sit down and see what comes out. But with this album, I tried to keep a guiding aesthetic in mind all along. Lately I've been interested in electronic music that doesn't sound electronic or mechanistic. I wanted to create something that was organic, earthy."

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Timbre is William Fields' third album of airy electronic compositions.

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Timbre, released in May, is Fields' homage to nature: the distinct sound colors produced by acoustic instruments; the wonderment of trees, soil, water, and clouds. Not that it's apparent. Most of the record's 10 compositions were constructed through multiple generations of layering and processing, with each layer tweaked, panned, or added to, using computer software programs. Once a piece felt complete, it went through another round of processing and layering before final editing.

The results allow *Timbre* to feel warm (the cave-drips of "Floatingpoint"), bright (the almost-sunny "Brechia (Erosion)"), and insular ("Coretone"'s barely-there fuzziness), all within the context of a larger theme. Pieces segue into each other without a beginning, middle or end. When the final blips of "Coda" fade out, it takes a moment to realize the album is over.

Fields, who has spent half his life creating electronic music, seems inspired by the control he has over his work.

"You can take a sound, time-stretch it to four times its original length, and suddenly place it in a large cathedral space," he says. "You can artificially cut the reverb tail and make it echo out while decreasing the pitch and increasing the distortion, then reverse the whole thing and chop it up into thousands of tiny fragments. Combine this power with traditional aspects of composition, and the possibilities are very exciting, I think." ■