

Review : Ulrich Schnauss – Summerhall – Sunday 13th March



Photo by Nat Urazmetova

Creating aural soundscapes, immersing his audience into entrancing, emotive lands of the industrial, yet also the natural, Ulrich Schnauss, ambitiously hit Summerhall to entertain the electronic music aficionados.

Ben Chatwin, supporting Schnauss, evoked the appropriate ambient minimalist, electronic vibe before Schnauss and video artist Nat Urazmetova hit the stage to allow the crowd to escape to a more sensually alluring world. Twisting knobs, raising faders and setting the ambience, Schnauss constructed layered synth, building on the sonic atmosphere in the dissection room of this old school of veterinary studies.

Aside from releases under his own moniker, Schnauss also plays keyboards for Engineers and has lent his hand to the production of recent albums by Kirsty Hawkshaw and Exit Calm. The titles of Ulrich Schnauss's studio albums to date – *Far Away Trains Passing By*, *A Strangely Isolated Place*, and *Goodbye* – allude to the artist's backwoods background, growing up in rural Germany. Limited in like-minded people to collaborate with, Schnauss' aural vision became unshackled by his discovery of the synthesizer, enabling him to create multilayered compositions on his own. However, he is far from his own at this gig.

Facing each other live, confrontationally, Nat and Ulrich almost appeared as though they were battling sound with image, instead of the reality, one complementing the other, adding

further subtext. The visual installations were varied, initially referencing the old visualisations you would get with a programme like Winamp, eventually evolving into somewhat of a 'sqaatsi' montage. Involving elements of stones and space, set against the dramatic 1980s synthesised sound, the audience find themselves lured into the visuals that fill the room. Schnauss' avant-garde repetitive electronica pulls the crowd in to pixie-like Nat's video score. This is swiftly followed by close-up images of snow-covered rock underscored by percussion-heavy synth.

With what appears to contain heavy Orbital and Massive Attack head nods, the third track begins chaotically and then transforms into a montage of images of moving items, printing presses, water and numbers whilst the music flows. There seemed to be a textural battle between nature and industry hinted at here, as Urazmetova provided us with a plethora of imagery through montage. By the fifth track from Schnauss we were greeted with red lighting and a sense of alien isolation, bird's-eye view shots of cities, distorted to resemble Mars with the red filter.

With reminders of Kraftwerk discharged from the amp in the room there are more visual montages of industry versus nature, with the core of a tree trunk being the focus along with the U-Bahn in Berlin. Respectfully the audience remained hushed in awe, entranced with the visual and aural repetition.

Not lazy repetition, however. Clearly immersive music as the crowd is absorbed by a road trip of travel shots, pulled through desert surroundings and "emotional landscapes." Shots of celestial skies and landscapes, edited in a typical jump-cut manner, open the doors for a mêlée between sound and vision. Schnauss is unfortunately unable to draw the eyes of the average punter being one man, and his synth, competing with distortion, and fuzz amidst this aural chaos.

Treated to an encore of dark discord, set against epileptic

fears, this diverse performance certainly resonated in your head, leaving this arts venue.

Discog:

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/ulrich--schnauss/id27759803#fullText>