

## Mp3 Ilya - Somerset



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Passionate and melodic. Dusty Springfield and Nina Simone play 70's style Bowie with jazz/blues swamp, psycho bossa's and 60's french pop. 12 MP3 Songs POP: 50's Pop, EASY LISTENING: Lounge Details: ILYA are Joanna Swan and Nick Pullin. They are from Bristol and work from their studio in the woodland that surround the Avon Gorge in North Somerset. ILYA started work on their debut album in 2001 and 'They Died For Beauty' was released on the Virgin Label in 2004 to massive critical acclaim ; delivering the band's first flagship song 'Bellissimo' (which was used in worldwide advertising campaigns by Revlon and Cacharel). ILYA played live extensively throughout the UK and Europe during this period. Joanna Swan has a voice of rare and astonishing beauty; somehow combining aspects of Ella Fitzgerald, Dusty Springfield and Nina Simone. The range and power of this incredible vocal presence is now more in evidence on ILYA's second album, Somerset, where they have largely eschewed the widescreen epic easy-listening of their debut. Somerset has a rawness and vibrancy resulting from being recorded mostly live. This is very much in evidence on tracks like 'Falling Everywhere', in which 'California Dreaming' style backing vocals are somehow fused with glam klesma. September Rendezvous is a dark 50's jazz classic with injudicious outbursts of prog rock guitar, and Juanita combines swamp-blues with New Orleans jazz. Other tracks on the album evoke 50's torch songs (with Bowie-esque 70's guitar), skewed psycho-bossas, folk, and, what seems to be, Can jamming with Karen Carpenter. READ REVIEWS

EXTRACTS: Ilya's 2004 debut They Died For Beauty was overlooked. In fact, it was passed over so criminally that they were released from their Virgin contract soon after its release. Yet they were liberally showered with critical acclaim - you'll remember their Bellissimo from those Revlon ads - hailed as the best thing from Bristol for donkey's years. After two long years in the wilderness, are they jaded? Brilliantly, they are not. Quite the opposite, actually: Somerset is the glorious delivery of all those

wonderfully exciting promises they made the first time around. It swims in a thick fog of classic sensuality, the songwriting having eventually caught up with Joanna Swan's vintage, ethereal tones. They Died For Beauty's inconsistencies have been ironed out to phenomenal ends. Ilya, it would seem, have no contemporary rivals: with the exception of certain instrumental outfits (GoTan Project, Stephane Pompougnac), nobody and nothing can touch their sparse-yet-rich arrangements; their delicately realised resolve; their antediluvian solutions to prevailing musical posers. It's almost as if they've been brought to us from the 1950's Parisian lounge scene, a crash course in all the essential transitionals thrown in along the way for good measure (Falling Everywhere's vaguely glam stomp; Wonderful's Clapton-esque guitar sob). Somerset's opener September Rendezvous picks up where their Virgin efforts left off, replete with tantalisingly delivered continental lyrics, prudent verse and an opulent chorus that burrows gently into your subconscious, snuggling warmly next to memories of Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone and hair-raisingly beautiful artists of yesteryear. In The Valley joins all the same dots in a different order before Falling Everywhere wanders confidently into the fray, wielding - of all things - what appears to be an electric guitar and an effects pedal. It's an unorthodox move on Ilya's part, but it works. Oh boy, does it ever work. The freshly-nurtured songwriting strength reaches an epiphanic zenith on Wonderful, a profoundly realised, softly touching piano-led love song the likes of which have not been heard for a long time. "If I fall lightly to the ground," asks Swan in her dulcet timbre; "Will you lie down and stay there with me?... Will you always be wonderful?" It's a question all too easily asked of a band given a new lease of life. Whereas the mid-section marked the point at which They Died For Beauty fell away ever so slightly, Somerset's midriff is as toned as they come: Airborne's smokey caf bass is the perfect foil for Swan's vocal flightpath; We Shone carefully ups the tempo with palm mutes, hi-hat riding and some over-dubbed harmonies that have to be heard to be believed; Winter In Vienna digs out the accordion and horns, lifting the band from the streets of Bristol to the cabanas of Havana. And it doesn't end there: Somerset soars from ear-pricklingly good to unstoppably great; from four stars to five. Glory takes on the aforementioned GoTan Project at their own game and comes off favourably, while Juanita's skewed, insane trumpet solos lounge suggestively beside a seductive, Jessica Rabbit-like vocal track. Sealing the deal with an aural kiss, Sleepwalking propels Ilya's anything-to-hand attitude to new heights with a breathtaking mlang of double bass, capricious flute licks and some deeply inflected, throaty lines. With their debut LP they made promises they couldn't quite keep. With Somerset, however, Bristol's Ilya have fulfilled their own

prophecies and then some, meeting their most far-fetched expectations and, thrillingly, going even further. Without the slightest exaggeration, this is one of the decade's most devastatingly beautiful albums. Il y a un Dieu. Vraiment. - David Welsh "Wonderfully melodic, with intricately woven sounds that seem to bring in all types of different styles." 5/5 WLC "The album seamlessly mines folk, glam, bossanova and swing, throughout which Joanna Swan's enchanting Billy Mackenzie-like swoon remains intoxicating. An original and highly seductive example of late night listening at it's best" MS/ CMU Newsletter. "This is a truly remarkable fusion of different sounds" 9/10 Culture Deluxe. "Falling Everywhere is a delicious chunk of radio-obliterating coffee-table pop that unfolds around the most delightful hook imaginable." The Downloader. "For pretty much the whole of the summer of 2004, 'They Died For Beauty' was never off my player and having lived with it for a couple of days so far it looks like 'Somerset' will be repeating the trick this year". Virgin Megastores. "One can only hope this rather sublime album achieves the recognition it deserves". Virgin.net. "Sheer pleasure" DJ Hits. Ilya are Bristol based duo Joanna Swan and Nick Pullin, and 'Somerset' is their second album, which hopes to build upon the success and massive critical acclaim of their 2004 debut, 'They Died for Beauty'. Many different styles are incorporated into this album, with no two tracks sounding quite the same. 'September Rendezvous' opens with Swan's deep, husky vocals; a muffled, muted electric guitar screams quietly behind the trippy, midnight feel of the dark, laid-back Jazz vibe, while the second track, 'In the Valley', goes down a more guitar-orientated route, with deep, elegant contemporary folk vocals almost reminiscent of later Joni Mitchell. Until this stage the tracks err on the side of smouldering background music, full of warm melodies, but 'Falling Everywhere' shocks slightly with its punchy swagger, big vocal chorus and a catchier, stomping melody, before breaking down into funky finger-clicking rhythms. 'Airborne' returns to the more echoing, laid-back jazz sound of earlier tracks, with hot trumpet and a melody that floats in the air while the vocals envelop you with their velvety tones. Meanwhile, 'We Shone' shifts again to a more up-tempo shuffle, coupling catchy, twinkling melody with harmonized whispering vocals. 'Winter in Venice' melts muffled, up-tempo drumbeats with more of Swan's elegantly haunting vocals and a distinctly European influence, which also seeps into the French-caf sounds of 'Glory'. As the album heads towards its conclusion, there's something beautiful but sinister in the mixture of gently ominous drumbeats and delicate, icy piano, while Swan's vocals soar to smooth new heights. With its mix of chill-out and smouldering intensity, jazz fans, contemporary folk fans and maybe even Indie fans could easily find

themselves captivated by Ilya's exciting mix of sounds and genres. [roomthirteen.com](http://roomthirteen.com) Review by Jack Foley / Indie London

ILYA are comprised of Joanna Swan and Nick Pullin and they specialise in deeply laidback music that recalls the vocal brilliance of Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald and Dusty Springfield. The main reason for seeking it out - given its Internet-only release - is the astonishing beauty of Swan's classic vocals, which really take on a melt in the mouth quality, whether set against the jazz style of old New Orleans or classic prog rock guitar. Ilya are, of course, previously known for their critically-acclaimed debut album, *They Died For Beauty*, which spawned the single *Bellissimo* that has subsequently featured prominently on world-wide advertising campaigns by both Revlon and Cacharel. Their second album, *Somerset* builds on the success of that debut, drawing on many classic styles that seek to ring the maximum effect out of those breathy, dreamy vocals. There are times when you can imagine their music providing a fitting backdrop to some of the European adventures of Sean Connery's '60s-based 007, or set against the smoky bar scene of high-society Paris, such is the rich imagery that is conjured from their music-making (and that's not bad for an outfit from Bristol!). Some of the tracks are more of an acquired taste than others, yet there is absolutely no denying the distinctive quality of those vocals that ensure Ilya defy comparisons with anyone contemporary. Opening track *September Rendezvous* kicks things off in sultry fashion, providing a dark jazz backdrop for Swan's vocals to seduce you, while there are some more sunshine melodies surrounding the follow-up *In The Valley* that recall the breezy style of *California Dreamin'*. There's an altogether rockier feel attached to the lively *Falling Everywhere*, with its foot-stomping bursts of guitar and grittier vocal style. It gives way into a genuinely catchy chorus that invites a sing-along to emerge as one of the album's brightest moments. There's more electric guitar on the tender, piano-based *Wonderful*, a dreamy love song that builds slowly with verses such as 'if I lose everything I have, if I break apart so easily, will you always be wonderful', before giving way into a beautifully intoxicating chorus that abounds with hope. *Airborne* drifts blissfully back into the jazz era, slowing things down a notch and delivering another set of vocals to drool over, while there's a happy go-lucky, folksy appeal to *We Shone*, with its cute melodies and generally warm glow. The rest of the album continues in similarly expressive fashion, with tracks like *Glory* providing a shuffling style and vocals that hint at the deep, husky tones of Bassey. It's in stark contrast to the slower, more deliberate final tracks *Sleepwalking* and *Still You Can't Say No* that ease the album to its close in meticulous, slow-building style (the latter, especially, becomes a powerfully emotional listen). It means that *Somerset*

is an amazing listen that really does catch you off-guard with its ability to be different. Those that seek it out from Universal Digital won't be disappointed. Adam Sweeting The Guardian April 24th 2004 Ilya live at Ronnie Scott's London Weird and exotic things have a habit of tiptoeing up the M4 from Bristol, and the latest is Ilya. Part band, part high-art concept, their debut album They died For Beauty proved an instant intoxicant for critics. Ilya's sumptuous track Bellissimo has just been bought up by cosmetics momolith Revlon for a world wide advertising campaign, and you sense that this is an outfit on a roll. This show was a somewhat experimental toe in the water before Ilya hits the road in May, but the relaxed atmosphere at Ronnie's on a sleepy sunday night made a perfect fit with their languid beats and daring stylistic inventions. Maybe they set out with the intention of making life tough for critics, because their music comes close to being indescribable, there's something like trip-hop in there somewhere, but there's also Edmundo Ros-style dance music, cool jazz, modern jazz, Hungarian dances and grand opera. The core of Ilya is guitarist/writer Nick Pullin, bassist Dan Brown and Singer Joanna Swan, with the sound filled out by extra violin, mandalin and trumpet, plus a devious palette of samples. Their "act" is just them in the process of making music, though Swan is one of the more striking vocalists you're likely to see. She stood centre stage in a black chiffon night gown with red feathery trimmings, hinting at a bottomless decadence hidden behind suburban net curtains. Her voice has a husky bloom to it that travels comfortably over the cracked rhumba of All For Melody or the Balkan -Hispanic brew of Happy And Weak as if these sorts of hybrids happened all the time. In Quattrra Neon, Swan held the microphone further from her mouth to unleash a strident contralto-ish tone Jessye Norman might have admired. Thanks to her bell-like diction, you could hear all the lyrics too-"Here in paradise dog's are sleeping on the ice". It don't mean a thing, but it swings.

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