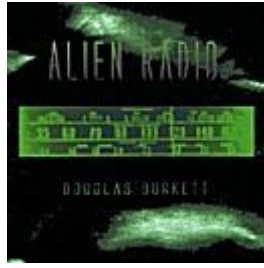


Mp3 Douglas Burkett - Alien Radio



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A sonic journey into ambient and spacemusic soundscapes; atmospheric works for drifting and escaping into the celestial unknown. 8 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Ambient, CLASSICAL: New Age Details: A new artist on the spacemusic front has emerged in one Douglas Burkett. His debut recording, Alien Radio, is a promising - and already accomplished - album full of haunting soundscapes, cheery cruisers, and classic washes of cosmic grandeur. For an artist in this genre to emerge this proficient across a variety of moods and styles so early in his musical career bodes well for Burkett's future. The CD cover gives an indication of what lies inside. An eerie image of what appears to be an old analog tuner face, with AM and FM bands and lit with an otherworldly green tint and featuring retro-futuristic numerals, foretells the variety of the songs on Alien Radio (after all, how many different kinds of music can you find as you scan the airwaves?). The cover also, thankfully, avoids the usual clichés (graphically) associated with spacemusic (another indicator of Douglas's unique vision). While some tracks ("Drifting in the Exosphere" and "A Comforting Void") certainly fit nicely into the classic spacemusic definition, others are more adventurous meldings of noir, EM, and even somewhat experimental elements. Things get off to an interesting start with "Welcome to Space" which has a gently ebbing/flowing refrain, like an oscillating tone generator, and playful rhythmic elements, sounding like cosmic "plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk." It's whimsical without being the least bit cheesy or vapid. Powerful analog chords enter the track later along with cool '50s style dramatic "SF film" organ crescendos. The song ends with pseudo-computer bleeps and bloops against a subdued backdrop. For those intimidated by the unusual opening track, the artist slows things down with "A Comforting Void," which delivers what you'd expect - softly undulating waves of classic analog synths in a strong Stearns/Demby vein. While the influences are easy to spot/hear, the music is less of an imitation and more of an homage. Also, it's a great track, period, as the music swells, soars, recedes, and

re-emerges, evoking the vastness of space. Those first two cuts display the variety of the music on Alien Radio, as well as showcase Burkett's proficiency at mixing up his synths. "The Flux Zone" is shadowy and mysterious, intermixing noir elements with more spacey electronic textures. Some of his synths shimmer with analog glory while others pulse or drone with subdued menace. "Drifting in the Exosphere" will probably wind up being the "typical" spacemusic fan's favorite track here. At ten-and-a-half minutes, it's also the longest song on the album. Less dramatic than "A Comforting Void," it's more drifting and also colors the track at times with minor tonalities to give it just a hint of mystery, yet not a trace of foreboding. "Lunar Flight" is one of my favorites on the CD - it's bubbly, bouncy, quirky yet accessible, comprised of a series of pulses, piano-like notes, and a circular repeating synth texture. The song "feels" like you are gently but speedily flying over the seas and mountains of the moon. "Unstable Frequency" is a more "out there" track, with unsettling drones and strange noise effects. It earns its title easily with all manner of peculiar-sounding electronic textures and sonic treatments. However, it's not "too" weird, either, and is not jarring to the rest of the album. The title track (the most daring cut on the CD) is difficult to describe but has experimental shadings (with mild dissonance and a slight feeling of cacophony to it). If Douglas was attempting to emphasize the "alien" part of the title, he scored a direct hit - especially as the song progresses into bizarre rhythmic territory. Closing the recording with the dramatic "The Neptune Opera" (which is what you might expect - analog synths and organ-keyboards in a neo-classical style, again drawing comparisons to Constance Demby), Burkett stands convention on its end, since many spacemusic albums conclude with a more sedate track. The sweeping grandeur of this song (even when it veers into slight Berlin-esque shadings), while occasionally subdued, sends the listener off in a blaze of awe and wonder. Reviewed by Bill Binkelman, Wind and Wire

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