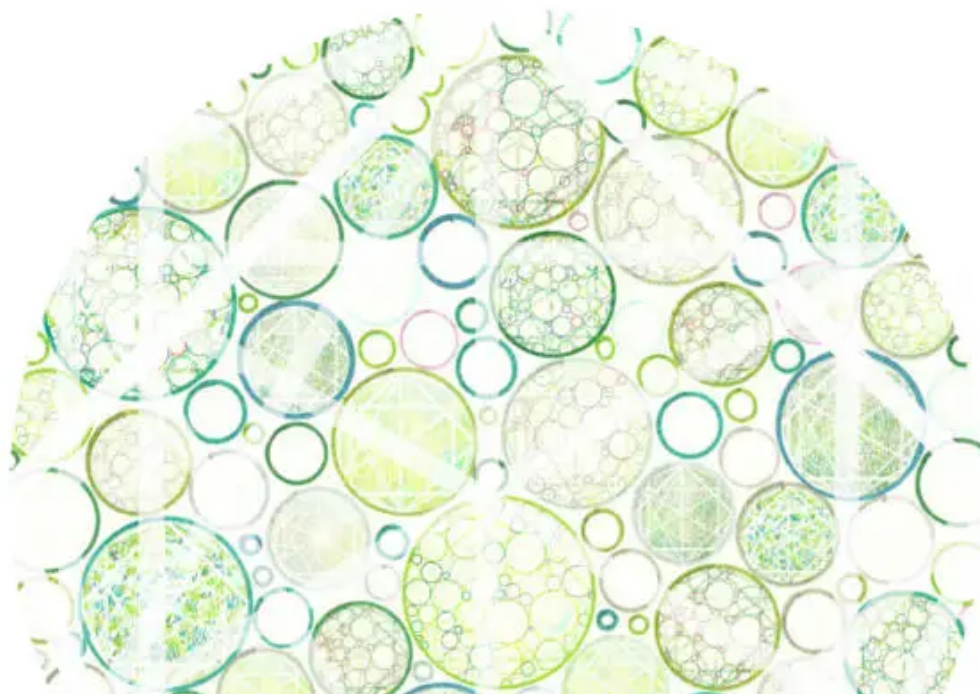




We can't get enough of Melissa Grey & David Morneau and Robert Kirkbride, stream their new EP "Always Becoming" here!

By Catherine B. · March 8, 2023





Always Becoming

Melissa Grey & David Morneau, Robert Kirkbride

Melissa Grey & David Morneau are composer-producers who design music informed by elemental themes: time, space, nature, language and dance. They have continued their string of collaborative work, this time with Robert Kirkbride, who is a designer, musician, author and professor exploring the interplay of memory, ornament and placemaking. Kirkbride contributes guitar and also nine hand drawings and an essay on humanity's tilted view of seasonal cycles. The artists explain, "*Always Becoming* weaves the colors of sunshine pop and dreampop with Robert Kirkbride's harp-like guitars and Melissa Grey & David Morneau's crystalline orchestration and signature seductive beats, wrapping the listener in a sonic tapestry of ever-shifting patterns, pulses and hues."

"Being" lays upon the bedrock of Kirkbride's guitars, of which the right-panned guitar plays at a slightly quicker tempo than the left-panned guitar, creating some intriguing polyrhythms. Also, the two guitar's picking patterns are not the same and yet because of how effortlessly their tone blends into and bolsters one another it is almost indiscernible especially with everything else going on above them. I love the percussion on this track, which has a mix of higher-frequency tinkling that reminds me of the sound cutlery makes when it clinks together, along with some



unobtrusively hollow, soft bass drum. Grey's theremin can be heard somewhat sadly in the distance early on and then it comes into full prominence only forty-seconds in, with its characteristically unique tone. The blissful atmosphere evolves into something more ominous and unsettling beginning right at the half-way mark of 1:30 with a kind of pulsing guitar feedback that gives way to darker tones, alien sounds and stranger percussive noises.

"Always" reminds me of breathing in that the music is frequently punctuated by atmospheric and sparkling pauses, which are heralded, during the first minute, by two pulses on an inconspicuous but very tasteful and warm trombone. The mood significantly changes one-minute in, with the formerly foregrounded guitars being backgrounded and in their place comes a dreamy electric guitar melody, louder trombone blasts, along with a variety of ambient noises and sparse percussion.

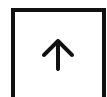
By the time I arrive at "Ever" I'm feeling entranced. There's a hypnotic element to the harp-timbre of the Martin Sigma CR-7, whose familiar falling patterns give a forward momentum to all of the tracks – carrying one along like a river might to the dizzying edge of a waterfall, but never actually over the edge. This is no surprise, for as the artists explain, "These four tracks —"Being," "Always," "Ever" and "Becoming"—are designed to play in an endless loop." A dreamy and melancholic electric guitar takes center stage as far as what is most readily and easily available to latch onto with your ears. The experimental percussion does not draw overly much attention to itself, but it works in tandem with the rest of the music to surprisingly efficient effect. The snares, hi-hats and other percussive noises have an



electronic quality that perfectly suits the partially arhythmic style.

“Becoming” is the longest track on the EP with just over a five-minute runtime. Upbeat claps and shakers enfold the running guitar brushes. The trombone’s sweet, soft tones underlie and blend with an electric guitar, giving way to harmonics. Around the two-minute mark the trombone’s benevolent bass-tones and gentle pulsating creates a strong sense of rhythm in accompaniment with a now natural-sounding drum kit. There are also still electronically percussive sections. Little tambourine flourishes appear here and there.

The production is masterfully realized and consistently creative in its own right. It allows the music to soak into you without bringing any attention to itself. *Always Becoming* invites you to be lifted up above the clouds. It invites you to become, always, because the music itself is always becoming. It feels like a constant exploratory unfolding and discovery wherein layers of sound emerge and retreat to allow for other layers to constantly shift out of a state that would otherwise be static.



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