

Simon McCorry
Border Land
Album release
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"The leading voice of McCorry's cello is an irresistible beam of light in the darkness."

Tristan Bath, The Quietus

*"The unhurried meditative pace of **Arvo Pärt** runs through *Blue*. Graceful melodic lines writhe above a fidgeting bed of loops interacting in complex harmony."*

Ears for Eyes

Border Land is the new album by cellist and composer **Simon McCorry**. Originally born in London to mixed Indian/British heritage, McCorry trained in cello at The Centre for Young Musicians & Morley College then studied philosophy at Durham University, he is now based in Stroud, Gloucestershire. *Border Land* follows the albums *Blue* in 2017 and *Song Lines* in 2018.

Border Land is a rich combination of field recordings, adept loop based cello compositions and atmospheric improvisations that explore the rich sonic possibilities of the cello through a host of treatments and effects chains. The results of these experimentations are diverse to say the least, from the droning stillness and devastating harmonic simplicity of *Spheric* to the abstract microtonal atmospheres of *Not One Thing*, *Border Land* recalls post classical work from greats such as **A Silver Mt Zion** at their most plaintive, and **Stars of The Lid** at their most majestic.

When asked about his musical influences, McCorry states, "**Aphex Twin's Selected Ambient Works Volume 2** had a profound effect on me. I loved the strange, otherworldly super minimal sound worlds and the way the compositions subtly contort the duration of time". Other inspirations include the era defining work of experimental trumpet player and pillar of contemporary music **Jon Hassell**. *Border Land's* mix of tape degraded processing and microtonal sound layers has a debt to both the masters of dub such as **King Tubby** and **Lee 'Scratch' Perry** alongside iconic 20th Century composer **György Ligeti**. On the need for stillness in the chaos of the modern world, Simon says "my music is durational and mostly inward looking, and there seems to be an increasing need and desire for moments of calm in a crazy world that's bombarded with disparate information".

Having worked as a composer for theatre, contemporary dance and circus, Simon has channelled his experiences of creatively supporting the conveyance of a narrative or theme, and laid down a series of responses to what he sees in the world at large, see over leaf for a more detailed Q+A with the composer.

As a performer Simon is well travelled, he has performed at many prestigious events and institutions, including in *Orlando Warrior* with **Julia Cheng** at the South Bank as part of China Changing Festival 2017. In support of the release of *Border Land* he will be supporting **The Orb Sound System** at The Brunel Goods Shed, Stroud on 6th April, appearing at the Borough New Music Series on 7th May and is supporting the legendary **Banco de Gaia & Andrew Heath** at The Brunel Goods Shed, Stroud on 10th May.

simonmccorry.com

For all press + radio enquiries, contact Seb at Pindrop Publicity seb@pindroppublicity.com / +447932635856

Even though they are instrumental, are there any themes in the individual tracks worth noting? Or running through the album? Inspired by any personal events or experiences?

The field recording material for *Sacred Geometries* and *Not One Thing* came from a road trip to the island of Westray in The Orkneys. In *Not One Thing* there is a recording taken from wind blowing through a metal gate to a lighthouse on Noup Head. The gate was singing. It had three holes either from missing screws or where it rusted in the elements. These emitted three different pitches which interacted in an unpredictably pleasant way. That evening I listened to **Don Cherry's** *Organic Music*, it felt that in some ways he was emulating the way that gate played. No metronomic pulse and unpredictable.

Do you do anything outside of music making that inspires or informs you practise?

A lot of my feeling for music is through conjuring spaces, probably very much linked to my work in theatre. Different places and spaces evoke thoughts and sound worlds within me. So being in nature is very important. Being in wild places, up mountains, near the sea and not just when it is sunny and safe. Derelict or rundown urban spaces too. A couple of ways I engage with a place is with a camera. I find the act of looking through a lens makes me stand still and engage with a place on a microscopic level. I also find a deep sense of calm and rootedness through doing this. I find the same with field recording. Several years ago I borrowed an SLR and made a long journey on foot starting near the River Lea between Stratford and Poplar and slowly made my way through the Isle of Dogs. Moving from nature reclaiming abandoned Victorian industrial architecture to the stark soulless steel and concrete around Canary Wharf, and I've continued to explore my responses to these sorts of environments ever since.

How do you go about composing and recording? And how is it connected to the live performances?

As to process I guess it varies from track to track. Writing music for me is mostly improvisational, drawing from the technique development work, and I have a collection of ideas I have been exploring over the years. Drones as harmonic series, playing about with removing the fundamental and first few harmonics of the series to create ambiguity of tonal centre, also altering a note by a semi tone. Interlocking phrases that have different periodicity using prime numbers (is this the same as polyphonic phasing?) locked to 1/8th or 1/4 notes, and unsynchronised layers of loop phrases. I experiment with layering ideas from different improvisations and underscores. Also a lot of the more sound design noise stuff is made from experimenting on the fly with fx, looping and resampling/looping. I collect that as material to draw from and to add to other pieces. For performance the work falls in two groups of work that is fixed and I've written/transcribed the idea & structured improvisation.