



Björk

Vespertine (Elektra)

By Jessica Parker

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By all accounts [Björk's](#) albums should be commercial disasters. Her lyrics make little sense to the outside world, and she's known to invite listeners into the depths of her mind. (She also doesn't care one bit about the repercussions of dressing like a swan, but that's beside the point.) On the contrary her art sells, allowing her freedom to be even weirder and more experimental. Fortunately Björk offsets all her introspection and questionable fashion sense with great production, funky electronics, and killer melodies, a balancing act she continues on her latest album, *Vespertine*. Following up

Selmasongs -- last year's accompaniment to *Dancer in the Dark*, the film in which Björk made her acting debut -- *Vespertine* is Björk's most gorgeous, tender album, a sensuous, warm peek into her diary with ornate, enchanting instrumentation. And like *Selmasongs*, *Vespertine* is cinematic in approach with its army of strings and dramatic choral section. Björk seems to work much like frequent collaborator Thom Yorke of Radiohead, making soundtracks for dreams and personal epiphanies, and the results are often intensely intimate, haunting emotional crescendos.

"Heirloom" recounts a recurrent dream wherein she swallows "little glowing lights my mother and son baked for me," as the deep bass reinforces the surreal nature of the dream. In contrast the stock bossa nova drum programming renders the song almost poppy. And "It's Not Up to You" recalls the lighter side of her first solo effort, *Debut*, showing that Björk hasn't abandoned her own form.



Appropriately titled -- *vespertine* describes an evening occurrence, especially nocturnal animals or flowers that open at night -- the album's first single, "Hidden Place," is a perfect introduction to this nighttime reverie. It's constructed to pull listeners into the dreamer's intimate world, opening with a trip-hop bass loop that climaxes in a shower of strings and voices. "There lies my passion hidden/There lies my love/I'll hide it under a blanket/Lull it to sleep," she sings, as terse electronics anchor the lofty musical elements that swirl around her voice like birds orbiting the sun. "Cocoon" abandons theatrics in favor of static, pin-drop percussion, a warm organ, and Björk's confessional about a boy "possessed of magical sensitivity" who restores her "blisses." The glorious orchestral apex of "Undo," wherein the strings swell enough to burst, is one of the most emotive moments on *Vespertine*, making Björk's dream a reality. Throughout the album, strings wash in and out like the tides, harp and clavichord infuse eloquence, and random electronics trip and percolate.

Björk has revealed that *Vespertine* was recorded when she was, for the first time, aware of a need to create an escape, a paradise, a cocoon. And these songs are a human experience, excluding the outside trivialities of life. For that reason it feels timeless.



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