

Allen Ravenstine
Waiting For The Bomb
(ReR Megacorp/ Smog Veil)

Eccentricity in music is tricky in that it's difficult to embrace it in moderation. There's risk of having it come off as either overly (and gratingly) deliberate, or teetering over the precipice into full-blown novelty. Pere Ubu co-founder Allen Ravenstine's *Waiting For The Bomb* is one of these rare exceptions where peculiarity, nuance and genuine warmth align in such a way that it's perched right on that edge and all the more evocative because of it.

One of the album's most striking and disorienting attributes is its wide and volatile sound palette. Structured episodically, its eighteen vignettes jump between discrete sonic worlds. Dense clusters of raw sci-fi synth noise sit up against soundtracky miniatures while elsewhere, placid ambience emerges from stiff computer funk. Yet as one surrenders to the strange lurching quality of the journey, the uneasiness it produces somehow becomes grounding.

Given Ravenstine's post-punk pedigree, it's unsurprising that this defiant sense of malaise and contradiction isn't just a byproduct of his playful genre tourism. It's actually a key unifying element that even lurks on the periphery of the album's most serene or seemingly innocuous moments.

You can hear it in the way that the plasticky squareness of his sample-library orchestrations chafe against live brass and percussion. "Spirits," one of the album's most abstract pieces, sounds high- and low-fidelity at the same time. The prickly synthesizer on "Venus Calling" creeps like toxic fumes through a genteel jazz arrangement. On "Insomnia" Joe Sorbara's rapid drum kit scatterings punctuate a lugubrious throbbing bed of sound, yet as the ersatz fanfares begin to protrude you're not quite sure whether to be terrified or to laugh—or do both.

Tellingly, the record's accompanying notes mention Ravenstine's childhood which was steeped in second-hand Cold War paranoia. And it makes perfect sense. *Waiting for the Bomb* seems to embody that tension perfectly — a young, unbridled imagination haunted by both the grave threat, and perverse futuristic allure of total annihilation.

— Nick Storring

National Magazine Award-nominated writer Nick Storring is a contributing editor with Musicworks. His work has also appeared in the Wire, Exclaim! Magazine, the Banff Centre's InStudio Magazine and in liner notes for releases on noted labels Algha Marghen, RVNG Intl., Recital and Another Timbre.

For review materials, to set-up interviews with Allen Ravenstine or to request additional information on the album, *Waiting For The Bomb*, please contact Fly PR: T. 323-667-1344 E. flypr@flypr.net.