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INTERVIEW: HEIDI MORTENSON

We caught up with Danish, electronic composer, Heidi Mortenson, for a chat about her new EP, the liberating potential in not understanding the words you're listening to - and the act of recording a woolen sock.

After a lengthy hiatus, Danish musician, Heidi Mortenson, is all set to release her new EP, 'Mørk'. Characterized by it's mature essence and pensive vocals in which Heidi reconnects with her native language, Mørk is a powerful combination of ferociousness and utmost delicacy.

Since Heidi is a very interesting character I was hoping she could tell us a bit about the EP, her weird musical experiments as a teenager, (the girl recorded a woolen sock - don't ask) and her favorite music likes from last year, which include a "Singing Iceberg" (Yes, an actual iceberg.)

The Mørk EP will be out on Rump Recordings March the 5th, and you can now enjoy Heidi's first music video to a song "Et Stykke Mindre". Those of you who don't understand Danish would be well-advised to let your imagination help you with the translation. Alternatively, there's Google.

Diana: I remember your show from over 2 years ago. It was a really cool, quite eccentric and an entertaining experience; nothing like the "regular"

performance people expect when they go to see a gig. 'Mørk' sounds utterly different from the music I remember back then. Do you want to create a similar bizarre experience for your audience when playing on stage, or will the shrewdness of the Mørk EP, compared to the impulsive nature of your older work, be reflected in the more sophisticated vibe of the show?

Heidi Mortenson: *I used to show up with the machine park of efx pedals and sample my own voice. That way I could build up songs and be spontaneous. I can be a real rascal with that set up, and I like to keep it playful. With Mørk i'm getting together a band and I'm looking forward to capture and play the songs in a live context that involves other people on stage.*

D: The Danish language fits the music on Mørk like a glove and makes the whole project appear quite exotic. Are you hoping that will, perhaps, attract more attention, even though, besides Scandinavians there won't be that many people who will understand what you're singing about?

H: *the lyrics are in Danish which (for everyone but the danes) leaves a lot to the imagination and enables somekind of wholesome as the voice integrates and becomes perhaps similar to an instrument because you understand it, not by the word, but by it's expression. i've had various experiences, in eg. finish and icelandic, where i found it exotic and liberating to not understand the language. the lyrics are printed also in english in the cover, should anyone like to read them.*

D: Reading your bio I stumbled upon the sentence: "She experimented, recorded her own voice in a washing machine, building microphones from telephones and creating music through a walkie-talkie." I'm particularly intrigued by the part about a washing machine - please explain.

H: *I moved to barcelona on my own as a late teenager. This was a time where i experienced a lot with acoustics and reverb. I lived in a big old flat with high ceilings, various sized and shaped rooms, balconies, a rooftop with old chimneys and so on. You could find me recording everywhere. And it got to the point where i got curious about the "room" in the washing machine. I also recorded a woolen sock.*

D: What are you into besides music?

H: *riding my bike with hands in the air feeling the breeze while listening to music is one of my favorite things to do. Especially in berlin. It sorts out my thoughts, pumps my blood around and makes me feel free. I'm also into running - I finally bought some real windbreaking running pants as my dad's long johns couldn't keep out the cold of the winter.*

D: Is there anything you want people to know about your upcoming EP, for example, how did you decide that now is the time after 4 years of silence?

H: *I've been really distracted with all kinds of stuff for the past 2 or 3 years. I've also been working a lot on sharpening my tools at the Royal Danish Music Academy where I was doing a Master in electronic music and composition. Then I started reading Danish poetry and got very inspired and in some way reconnected with my primal language. I wrote more than 100 poems in just 2 or 3 months. It was like finding the keys to a car and I just got in and started to drive. From then on the composing was just straight ahead. I started recording and had hornplayers in the studio, a cellist and I sat at the piano in full moon or pumped the pedals of the pump organ. I live in the country in case you're wondering about the neighbours.*

D: This sort of question has been asked so many times in the recent past that it's getting obnoxious, but I am actually really curious: Whose music did you enjoy the most in 2011?

H: *Oh, I'm really bad at those questions. There's so much good stuff out there. Also I listen a lot to old records like Nina Simone or Tibetan Bells II. I find the mechanics of an instrument to be a beautiful useful sound which is one of my fascinations with Colin Stetson and Nils Frahm. Also I was quite amazed by the 'singing iceberg' which some researchers picked up in a seismic recording while looking for volcano activity. The singing iceberg is making eerie sounds when dragging itself across the bottom of the sea. this reminds me of the seals that sound like a synth. Try googling that.*

D: I'm so going to!