

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

RINGS by St Petersburg-based producer **Monokle** is one of those rare things, an electronic album which is a joy to listen to from beginning to end. Released on the 4th of September by Hamburg's *Ki Records*, the follow-up to breakthrough *Saints* melds lush ambiance with the deepest of house grooves to stunning effect. By

JOHN BITTLES



Abb: Ki Records

Rather than revelling in the rush of hedonism and egotism which pollutes many a dance floor, **Vlad Kudryantsev** creates music which explores a more introspective and melancholy side of house. This is electronic music to be listened to in bedrooms, on headphones, or on lonely dance floors while allowing the beat to take you far, far away.

Composed of rich, emotional IDM influenced music, the album moves far beyond the mere functionality of the floor. So much so that I am convinced that *RINGS* is one of the most beautifully affecting collections of music I have heard all year. The gorgeous melodies make the heart soar even as the sumptuous beats and mesmerising deep techno pulses seduce both limbs and feet.

The album opens with the hushed atmospherics of *Rouse*. Vinyl scratches, gently plucked strings and a rousing chorus of voices join majestically to produce a sense of slow, steady build. From here *RINGS* explores hushed ambiance, post-dubstep soundscapes, basement ready jams and more to produce a set which will keep most electronic music fans happy for years. Rising above the quiet hush which forms the body of the album, it is the more beat-based numbers which allow the album to truly soar. Reminiscent of the emotional electronica of **Caribou**, **The Micronaut** or **Glitterbug**, *RINGS* is an immersive listen which never once falls below the realms of the sublime.

In the following interview **Monokle** discusses his new album, working with the people at *Ki Records*, emotion in music, *Warp Records* and more. If you fancy a soundtrack to your reading pleasure then the album can be streamed in full here [Monokle RINGS](#)

By way of introduction, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?

My name is Vlad, I live in Russia and make electronic music under the name **Monokle**.

Your new album *RINGS* comes out on the 4th of September. What can people expect from it?

This album will be a little different from the previous one, but the basic idea is the idea remains the same, it's a combination of thoughtful melodies, ambient, intricate rhythms and beautiful vocals.

What were your main influences when you began working on RINGS?

In the process, I tried to stay away from strange music. If there's anything I listened to, it was something neutral, or very experimental music. I don't want to say that I was scared or afraid of someone to copy, just at that moment, I was over-saturated with music news and trends, I decided to just relax.

Calypt which features the vocals of Milinal is an early highlight. Can you tell us a bit about how this song came about?

Yes, from the beginning it was just a sketch on the piano, then I sent it to **Milinal** and he recorded the vocals. We did it long enough for about 2 months, had plenty of options, but in the end we settled on what you now hear.

The melancholia-drenched Loss is another album stand-out, while final track Radiant Pieces almost made me cry. In an interview with Inverted Audio you said „My music is often dark and sad“, a statement which reflects both these tracks perfectly. How important is emotion in your creative process?

Initially, of course, important melody, although the experiments are not alien to me, especially in electronics. Important for me is not melody, and thematic material. The music is the emotion that counts, it's the most powerful weapon in it.

Is there enough emotion in electronic music today?

I think so, Yes. There are many good and heart-rending things.

Tracks like Backwash, Holytin and Borealis utilize house grooves and techno flourishes to devastating effect. How important are the demands of the dance-floor to the music that you make?

I always want to do without any rhythmic figures or drums, but eventually I get bored and I start to develop the composition and the whole idea changes. I can't say that I'm doing this specifically for the dance floor, but in live performances, this really helps to cheer up people.

Your last LP Saints was a highlight of 2012 and is still a firm favourite of mine. How does RINGS compare to Saints?

Nice to hear that. As I said it will be a little different, but the sound remains the same, during this time I accumulated a lot of experience and I hope it will be heard in new works. I very carefully treated the selection of materials. During these two years I did about 5 hours of music, 4 of which I just deleted. I don't know whether to do that, maybe there were things of value, but I don't want them to distract me. If you have the slightest doubt why lie to yourself, you need to easily part with it.

Both these albums were released on Ki Records. How did you first hook up with the lovely people at Ki?

I spoke with Paul and Christian since the days of *MySpace*. I really like what they do, it is very close to me in spirit and we still communicate well.

Your artist page on the Ki Records website claims that you take „inspiration from silence“. How big a role does silence play in your music making process?

Did I say that? (ahhaha) Maybe they meant not the inspiration, and the rest is not constrained in a calm

atmosphere, for example in the woods, I love nature especially the North of Russia there is a special sensitivity. Modern man is quite a rare case, I'm glad that I now live a year away from the metropolis. I think it really affects creativity. As a musician what I am interested in is to write something similar to what I did before. Otherwise it is nonsense.

[Do you have any plans to tour the album at all?](#)

Yes, last years I was unable to leave the country due to certain reasons. But now I'd really like to play outside of Russia.

[Can you tell us a bit about your studio set-up?](#)

It is still very modest and simple: I use *Ableton*, several controllers and a guitar.

[What is the first piece of equipment/software any would-be producer should get?](#)

Most importantly the desire to make music, there are no precise rules. But I think that having some real instruments will take you to a new level and will simplify the task.



What was it that first got you into the joys of electronic music?

It was the early *Warp* records and the early electronic scene of Russia. I had a Walkman and a bunch of cassettes. Since my childhood I love to listen to music and I'm glad my youth fell in the 90s, at this time in electronic music happened very many interesting things, including many which affected me.

And what is it about electronic music that keeps you excited today?

I think everything remains the same (hahaha).

What five tracks are doing it for you right now?

AFX - *simple slamming b 2*

William Basinski - *The Disintegration Loops I*

The Durutti Column - *Never Known*

Hunee - *Crossroads*

Tim Hecker - *The Piano Drop*

What does the future hold for Monokle?

I will be releasing an EP consisting of two long or five short tracks. I want to focus on the concepts of future records. Releases will be shorter, but they will come out more often. We started a new project with **Milinal**, it will be very thin and light music with beautiful vocals.

Do you have any final words for our readers?

Listen to more music, don't focus on what's the same, don't be afraid to make mistakes and move on!

RINGS is available to purchase in all good record stores, here <https://bleep.com/release/62530-monokle-rings> and here <https://pro.beatport.com/release/rings/1581363> Remember, money is cheap, but music is forever!

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)