ELLEN FROESE *For Each Flower Growing*

Ellen Froese is what you'd call a "prolific artist"; committed, too. For someone who only just passed the threshold of their mid-20s, she's amassed a resolutely solid body of work and, with a variety of projects, achieved more than some many years her senior. *For Each Flower Growing*, Froese's fourth full-length, produced in collaboration with the Sheepdogs' Sam Corbett, is her most accomplished statement to date, drawing on her established sound as a folk & country-based singer/songwriter while incorporating a wider frame of reference in the rich production, supple instrumentation, and overall sonic soundworld. It's much harder to pin down than any simple description can convey, making it all the more worthwhile to check out.

The impressive scope of this rich, imaginative amalgam of an album is largely due to the expansive creative vision of Froese herself, who says the album is "based around ideas of 1970s science exploration via Carl Sagan's series *Cosmos*, Arthur Russell's drum machine folk music, finding humour in sadness, and analyzing past relationship choices". Some of these guiding elements can be attributed simply to the continuing growth of a serious artist, but others lie in less sunny realities. Jill Mack, Froese's original recording engineer and close friend, sadly passed away during the making of *For Each Flower Growing*, and subsequently the album became, as she puts it, "something different - it is now an homage to her and will always hold memories of my time in the studio with her".

Despite this deep sadness underpinning the album's creation, Froese was lucky to find a wonderful creative foil in Sam Corbett, helping her to move past old ideas and reimagine her conception of what "folk music" can be. With the addition of drum machines, synths, and more intricate vocal production techniques, Froese reflects that "folk music can be anything I want it to be; I don't have to be stuck in an antiquated mindset to hold strong musical ties to the past". And the results of that mindset are stellar; *For Each Flower Growing* is exquisitely warm and inviting, foregrounding the singer's lilting, ethereal vocals atop right-in-the-pocket, pillow-y drumming, melodic bass lines, ripples of Hammond organ layers, and – for the headphone listener – a bevvy of expertly-placed sonic details tucked into the margins of this highly accomplished album.

For Each Flower Growing is an easy listen, immediately inviting and begging for repeat listens. And while it sits nicely alongside contemporary songsmiths such as Angel Olsen, Laura Veirs, Jessica Pratt, and Adrienne Lenker (Big Thief), Froese's sound moves beyond those realms, also recalling the aforementioned Arthur Russell, an iconoclastic songwriter and producer whose songs traded in similar contemplative, horizon-gazing moods, and even the more relaxed moments of Jeff Tweedy and Wilco. In other moments, Froese's roots in the trad-folk world shine through, revealing an affinity for '60s British folk trailblazers such as Fairport Convention and Nick Drake, as well as under-the-radar gems like Judee Sill and Sybille Baier.

Froese recently completed a string of live dates with beloved fellow Saskatchewanians Deep Dark Woods, and she is gearing up for a residency at the legendary Cameron House in Toronto for the month of November. The album is due out on November 10 via Victory Pool Records, and appreciators of fine music would be well-advised to check it out.

(Chris Dadge, 2022)