



## **Rhian Sheehan** 'Standing In Silence'

**album – exhibition – moving image – climate change**

**Release date and opening: 24 February 2009**

Catalogue number: LP050

Is it possible to be surrounded by a mass of humanity, a bustling sea of lives, agendas and expectations, and still stand in silence? It is a question that seems entirely relevant in what they tell us is an age of communication; an age of ceaseless noise and demands.

It is a question evoked in the latest album from Rhian Sheehan, *Standing in Silence*, a 14-part voyage through provocative soundscapes that is equally a sophisticated vision of futuristic musical textures and a vista of the simplicity of children at play. The delicate patter of coquettish music boxes interact with delightfully adolescent glockenspiels, and the stark sound of pianos remind the listener of an uncomplicated past. Meanwhile, intelligent manipulations of strummed and plucked guitars, intricately-designed drum patterns and aural landscapes of the sound of human interaction – recorded in the lands of India, Japan and Spain – beg of a look forward to a melodic future.

*Standing in Silence*, his first full-length release in four years, represents a new musical bearing for Rhian Sheehan. His previous original albums, 2001's *Paradigm Shift* and 2004's *Tiny Blue Biosphere*, were acclaimed for their visionary blend of cerebral beats with sci-fi storylines and cosmic sensibilities and tracks from them appeared alongside works from the likes of electronica and dub luminaries Tosca, Horace Andy and Jose Padilla. Yet these albums were conventional in comparison to *Standing in Silence* as Sheehan's latest work pushes into a new direction of organic, ambient and abstract sound. The sounds of cascading bells, wine glasses, playgrounds and airports are the substance of *Standing in Silence*, whereas the electronica was the core of the previous albums.

An important element in the evolution of Sheehan's sound is the involvement of Jeff Boyle from sonic noise merchants Jakob, who helped develop a more organic sound and provided guitars on most of the album's 14 tracks. Sheehan has brought together some of New Zealand's finest practitioners of electronica and

**LOOP**

<http://www.loop.co.nz>

modern classical including long-time collaborator Jeremiah Ross aka Module, Raashi Mailk and Thomas Voyce from Rhombus, Andy Hummel, the ethereal vocalist Jess Chambers, members of the NZSO and the extraordinary percussionist Tom Pierard (Strike).

The result is fourteen parts of an exquisite expedition into the sounds and scapes of silence, solitude, reflection and inspiration. *Standing in Silence* is an album to soak in, breathe to and be inspired by. It travels the farthest lands and drops in to the local grounds where children play and people meet. And bustle. And expect. And demand. It is all of that, and yet is ultimately an escape from it. It surrounds itself in humanity and proves that one can be among the ceaseless noise of existence and yet still find silence. - Phil Reed

## **Standing In Silence Exhibition**

The release of *Standing In Silence* also incorporates an exclusive exhibition from 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February at MIC (Moving Images Centre), 321 Karangahape Road, Auckland.

The exhibition is a joint venture between Rhian Sheehan, Andrei Jewell, Nektar Films and Greenpeace with assistance from Asia NZ Foundation, and will showcase the music, photography and moving image surrounding the *Standing In Silence* concept.

On entering the exhibition, each patron will be issued with a set of wireless headphones allowing them to absorb the entirety of the project and truly stand in silence.

Gallery 2 will feature the stunning and equally alarming landscape photography of Andrei Jewell's whose work also features in the album booklet of *Standing In Silence*.

Gallery 3 will screen a moving image installation specifically photographed for each *Standing In Silence* musical movement. The moving image works have been produced by Nektar Films with the intention of producing a non-dialog film to be screened and performed in the context of a live show later this year. These films have been shot on location in India, Japan and China weaving together a mosaic of portraits and landscapes illustrating cultures in the grips of change.

The *Standing in Silence* film and live show will explore contemporary themes of urban development, our relationship to nature, monoculture, and the effects of industrialisation on our environment. The film has been photographed and directed by Gareth Moon, and produced and field directed by Matt Steele (Japan) and Echo Zu (China).

A percentage of the profits from the exhibition and album sales will go directly to 'The Standing in Silence Fund', which will be used to help get Greenpeace's message on Climate Change out as wide as possible. The Fund will also help increase Greenpeace membership via a donation of 1 year memberships worth \$180 each to members of the Loop newsletter via a competition. To sign up visit [www.loop.co.nz](http://www.loop.co.nz).

Opening night for special guests and media only will be Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, where Rhian Sheehan, Andrei Jewell, Gareth Moon and members of Greenpeace will be there to entertain and discuss the concepts of *Standing In Silence*.

**Thoughts from Rhian Sheehan:**

**LOOP**

<http://www.loop.co.nz>

"The idea for *Standing in Silence* was born from the now album cover image I shot whilst in India of a lone man standing on a hill on the outskirts of Delhi, India. I found something captivating about the way this stranger was staring into the polluted landscape. He is surrounded by nature but standing still, head up, encircled by encroaching thick city smog. He seemed to me to be pondering his surroundings, taking a moment to breathe it all in, maybe in a state of reflection and contemplation. I wondered if at this moment in time and space, was he at one with himself. Had he found some sense of inner harmony and silence I believe we all try to attain in our lives?

"As a musical response I set out to write a series of instrumental movements that were minimalist but retained a sense of innocence, beauty, sadness and naivety - music that really had to be listened to carefully to be understood, while at the same time retaining that subliminal non intrusive approach that might be found in a soundtrack to a film. My own brief was to keep the music simplistic yet honest and emotional.

"*Standing in Silence* is an experimental effort. I spent much time recording and manipulating found objects around the house in order to get some interesting sounds from them. Often these attempts came to no fruition, but on occasions I stumbled on some gems – one of which was my daughters wind up musicbox that I tinkered with until I came up with my own melody. I also spent much time plucking and bowing piano strings with some interesting results. Most of the sonic textural soundscapes on the album are created from electric guitar washes played by either Jeff Boyle (Jakob) or myself. Other musical textures were created with wine glasses (which are often readily available in my attic studio) and glockenspiels. I wrote and recorded some scores for a 16-piece string section which added a more dramatic filmic element to the works. I also spend much time recording environmental sounds in different locations around the world such as Japan, India and Spain which can be heard seeping through the album.

"During the creation of this album I have also been collaborating with Nektar Films on creating a co-existing non-dialog film to be screened in the context of a live show later this year. So far we have filmed on location in India, Japan and China. The film concentrates on individuals existing in megacities, and is essentially a series of slow motion portraits set to the 14 movements of *Standing in Silence*.

"The physical album also features a stunning booklet of landscape photography by Andrei Jewell taken on his journeys around the globe. I had much inspiration from these thought provoking images whilst working on *Standing in Silence*"

- **Rhian Sheehan**

**LOOP**

<http://www.loop.co.nz>