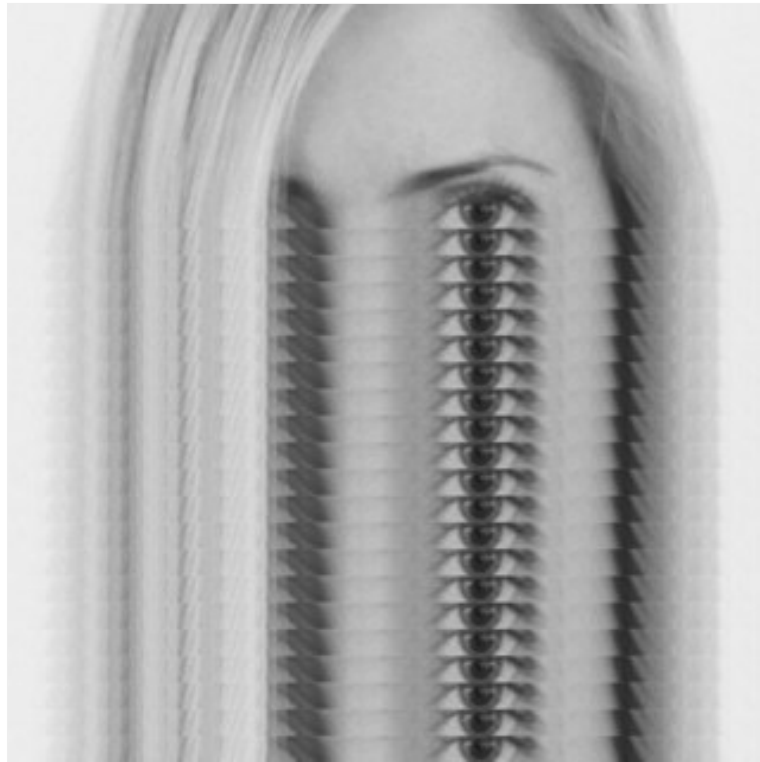


Ellen Allien

Nost



7.6

BPITCH CONTROL • 2017

by **Stacey Anderson**

Associate Features Editor

/ ELECTRONIC

MAY 20 2017



The BPitch Control label founder brings the intoxicating humidity of classic techno with a crackling texture reminiscent of 2 a.m. sets at Berghain that became their own balmy, utopian ecosystems.

FEATURED TRACKS:



"Innocence" — Ellen Allien

Via SoundCloud

Saying Ellen Allien only spins "real techno" is like Roman on "Party Down" saying he's only into "hard sci-fi." It's no unspoken mark of superiority anymore, being a snobby scene purist, now that pop culture continues to vaporize those borders. Those who stick to the fringes are often the ones outside the party. Today's veteran house artists, in particular, have embraced crossover projects with shiny FM radio stars, from Benny Benassi pairing with John Legend to Armand Van Helden remixing Katy Perry and Sam Smith.

Techno has always been a different wheelhouse; it's streamlined without being elitist, its names not so interested in crossovers while still offering a welcome,

blooming space. Ellen Allien is one of the brightest and boldest techno DJ/producers in her native Berlin, famous enough to have taken residencies at Tresor and the Bunker, fronted her own minimalist fashion label, and released seven LPs without ever collaborating with a pop star (unless you count one Beck remix in 2007). BPitch Control, the label she founded in 1999, is no small shakes either, having counted [Paul Kalkbrenner](#) and [Modeselektor](#) to its ranks (and [Thom Yorke to its fanboys](#)).

Given her techno mogul status, Allien could surely be complacent with her sound—but on *Nost*, she brings the intoxicating humidity of classic techno to a place that seems to war with its own humanity. Fittingly for an album themed in the rearview—its title taken from [the Greek root for “nostalgia”](#)—it motors on a popping, crackling texture reminiscent of 2 a.m. sets at Berghain that became their own balmy, utopian ecosystems. “Innocence” is particularly charming with this sort of fuzziness; garbled, lightly processed whispers waft amid an unhurried beat that feints and dodges into more minimalist breakdowns. It’s one of the shorter tracks here, clocking in just shy of eight minutes, but feels like the most self-contained world.

Yet, tellingly, this gorgeous sprawl isn’t Allien’s opening salvo—that would be “Mind Journey,” a track as metallic and uneasy as “Innocence” is warm and adoring. Here, a sheaf of ominous, Vocoder-like grumbles roll over high, prickling tones and a synthesized hi-hat pulse. Paired with “Innocence,” the track sets a type of tidal

friction between soft and stern that carries across *Nost*; the scorching, *Blade Runner*-worthy brunt of harsh tones and crisp breaks in “Mma” push against the orchestral palette of “Physical,” and the sweetly crackling, vaguely electroclash callback of “Electric Eye” follows the acidic funfair sirens of “Call Me.”

“Call Me” is another tetchy intersection of the past and the present. Allien’s ode to Tinder and Grindr, as she’s explained it, has the unblinking, brutalist vibe of CCTV footage: As a female vocal intones “I want your sex” with a dispassion that would make George Michael weep, icy minimalism underneath yields to a softer, more tropical shrug. Hey, this is no romantic era we live in—but a boss like Allien can always find her own way forward.







Ellen Allien

MORE ALBUM REVIEWS FOR ELLEN ALLIEN



LISm

BY: NICK NEYLAND / MARCH 11 2013

Adapted from a work Allien produced for a dance performance at Paris' Pompidou Centre in 2011, *LISm* is a single track that clocks in at 45 minutes. It's her most fractured work to date, veering from abstraction into song-oriented forms through the clubby territory that made her name.