



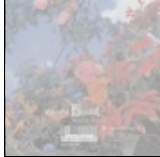
# ARC CODE REVIEW

ALBUM

## 9.4

AMBIENT / CHILLOUT

### HAROLD BUDD - Avalon Sutra



10 - Perfection	6.0 - 6.9 OK
9.4 - 9.9 Essential	5.0 - 5.9 Average
9.0 - 9.4 Superb	4.0 - 4.9 Below Average
8.5 - 8.9 Excellent	3.0 - 3.9 Poor
8.0 - 8.4 Very Good	2.0 - 2.9 Very Poor
7.5 - 7.9 Good	1.0 - 1.9 Dreadful
7.0 - 7.4 Above Average	0.0 - 0.9 Abysmal

Samadhi Sound ~ sound cd ss004 ~ November 2004

On learning that *Avalon Sutra* will be Harold Budd's last ever recording, I didn't know whether to treat this release with a sensation of happiness or gloom . It seems hard to believe that after 30 years of composing and releasing CD's, this demi-god of ambient music will no longer be enlightening us with more of his beautifully crafted pearls; one can only hope that Budd will reconsider sharing his considerable talent for us all to appreciate.

Armed with this knowledge, it would be easy to write a review that strings superlative after superlative together in Budd's honour, but the fact is, after you've spent a week listening to *Avalon Sutra*, there is little more you can do except truthfully recognise what is staring you plum in the face; that from the day Budd released *Pavilion Of Dreams* in 1978, he never lost his touch.

Still, there can be no more fitting an epilogue to Budd's career than *Avalon Sutra* - 14 tracks of contemplative, blissful, ambient, melancholy beauty, with a bonus disc, titled *As Long As I Can Hold My Breath*, that features an hour-long arrangement of Budd's work from LA-based composer Akira Rabelais - with additional production from David Sylvian.

From the haunting synthesized opening of *Arabesque*, featuring John Gibson's Sopranino sax and Budd's trademark piano sprinkles, to the heartbreaking beauty of Budd's own final piano-treated legacy – the closing *As Long As I Can Hold My Breath*, this album is nothing short of phenomenal, and without doubt one of his greatest works to date.

Other than the sumptuous, meditative warmth of the opening track, as soon as the following *It's Steeper Near The Roses (for David Sylvian)* opens, you realise you're in for a treat, as the painfully bittersweet violin and string arrangements envelope you in a warmly secular cocoon. Budd then forges his way through a stunning collection of Autumnal compositions, featuring a variety of moods that range from the achingly sad, to the medatively reflective and upliftingly beautiful, aided by a string of session musicians (John Gibson, James Sitterly, Peter Kent, John Acevedo, Marston Smith) on saxophone, violin and cello.

Most artists end the career on a low, virtually none will end it on anything as highly creative as this. Don't miss Budd at his best, on stunning ambient tracks such as *Little Heart* and *Chrysalis Nu*, even his song titles carry emotion – *A Walk In The Park With Nancy (In Memory)*. I could go on and on trying to describe this album, but words cannot always accurately do justice to music of such quality and depth. All I will say is that there isn't a single wasted note on *Avalon Sutra*.

In a world where backslapping acclaim is over-congratulatory thrown around like breadcrumbs to pigeons, Budd stands alone as a class act that truly merits every plaudit handed to him. His music will be missed - in the same way that we miss the autumn in summer and the spring in winter.