

INSECT ARK

DANA SCHECHTER HAS LONG BEEN A MAINSTAY IN THE NEW YORK SCENE, AS HER CURRENT PRESENCE IN THE SWANS LINEUP ATTESTS, BUT EVEN SO, FEW COULD HAVE PREPARED US FOR THE TECTONIC MAGNITUDE OF HER MAIN PROJECT INSECT ARK'S NEW ALBUM, *THE VANISHING*. JOSÉ CARLOS SANTOS INVESTIGATES..

THOUGH Insect Ark was originally born as a Dana Schechter solo project, ever since the inclusion of drummer Ashley Spungin it became clear that the power of Dana's manipulation - or should we say mangling? - of sounds through bass, lap steel guitar and synths was much augmented with a real drummer. So when the two parted ways before the recording of new album *The Vanishing*, it could have been a spanner in the works. "It wasn't hard to keep going. It would be harder if I *didn't* keep going," Dana says, which reveals a lot of her unbreakable character. "I have a lot of determination. It does feel like this is a two-person operation now; I could see it changing shape, adding extra members for tours, which would make the performance aspect less insane for me (technically speaking), because it's a lot of work switching between bass and lap steel on the fly, using my live looping pedal setup, as I'm often switching instruments several times on one song, stacking parts and playing over them. So one extra person on stage could be a big help, but we'll see. I am interested to do solo shows again, with different, quieter material. But, I do really like the two person format for a lot of reasons." For now, that second person is Andy Patterson, former SubRosa drummer, who fits the powerful yet visceral atmosphere of the record to a tee. "He is an absolute powerhouse, a person of great strength, stability and grace. He brings these qualities to the project both personally and musically. He's also the coolest person, really easy to work with."

Regardless of who's helping out, however, the great highlight of Insect Ark's present moment is this beast of a record. *The Vanishing* can be roughly described as a sort of more psychedelic, instrumental Neurosis, a comparison which is not made lightly. It feels like something that has to have been born out of great soul-searching. "Generally speaking, I am inspired to create music that makes people have an emotional reaction, because that's what music does to me, at its best moments," Dana says thoughtfully. "I wish to offer sound as transport, as salve, as comfort to tortured souls. I offer it because it is also what I need. I think in a way, yes...it is a reflection. It's quite organic. 2019 kicked my ass, so there's a lot of that woven in there."

After collaborating with such luminaries as Michael Gira (on *The Angels Of Light* and *Swans*), JR Robinson (*Wrekmeister Harmonies*), Manuel Gagneux (*Zeal & Ardor*) or Kjetil Nernes (*Árabrot*), Dana seems ready to ascend to that same level of artistry, on the strength of this new album - after all, she couldn't have had better inspirations along the way. "I've been in (or worked with) 18 bands, and I surely forgot a few. It's true, I've worked with some really special people - and I like it that they call on me to help them realise their vision. I'd say that the main effect it's had on me is seeing how strong-minded artists have seen and exercised their need to persevere, to stay true to their ideals, without compromise. I will say that I feel I haven't reached the place in my life where my vision, if you want to call it that, has been realised. I've been simultaneously in the trenches and on the fringes for a long time, decades now. I'm somewhat under the radar. Will being in *Swans* change things? I can't say. It's a huge honour to be working with M. Gira again, but my priorities with *Swans* are entirely about being part of, and making music with, *Swans*. If people discover me and my own music through that, I'll certainly not complain."

THE VANISHING IS OUT NOW ON PROFOUND LORE RECORDS | PROFOUNDLORERECORDS.COM