

# Michele Mercure

## Beside Herself

**Michele Mercure** often dreams of music, and in her waking life, reclaims fragments of these fleeting, floating melodies in her compositions and sound art. *Beside Herself*, an anthology of Mercure's self-produced and distributed cassettes released between 1983 and 1990, collects these dreamlike passages and lo-fi nocturnes, preserving the qualities of discovery and intimacy surrounding their genesis.

Mercure's sound is a porous electronic art that overlaps ambient, abstract, and industrial sensibilities – its spaciousness reveals an artist attuned cinematically rather than for radio play or public performance. She approached the latter theatrically, and rarely, disdaining most live shows as too serious, and bringing her music to bare on her audiences in playful, immersive contexts. On recordings, Mercure's night lit synth music evokes non-confined environments, at once expressionistic and minimal and always aware of its surroundings.

Mercure was a busy collaborator during the years surveyed by *Beside Herself*, making music for theater, performance, film, and TV animation, yet it was through her self-released cassettes that she established her music among like-minded artists abroad. Circulated through tape-trading networks assisted by insightful reviews in **Eurock**, a seminal music magazine covering progressive rock and electronic music scenes, these album-length releases included *Rogue and Mint* (1983), *A Cast of Shadows* (1984), *Dreams Without Dreamers* (1985), and *Dreamplay* (1990). Though unvarnished in fidelity (and now scarcely seen), these tapes showcased Mercure's transportive aptitude within and beyond the limited sound recording medium.

Mercure's artistic path never ran through creative meccas New York, San Francisco or Los Angeles. Raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, and then moving to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in her twenties, Mercure was already an adept musician when she encountered a local and lively theater scene, and was asked to score an unorthodox performance of *Waiting for Godot*. The experience was pivotal in marrying music and image for Mercure, and so she began making music for film, television, dance, and theater. It wasn't until a long sojourn in Eindhoven, however, that she became transfixed by electronic music (ala **Conrad Schnitzler**, whom she would correspond with for years) that would inform her music to come.

Acoustic elements such as voice and stringed instruments add a haunting lyricism to the non-tonal space unoccupied by electronic presence in Mercure's music. The graduality of phrasing and measured sequence of tones also distinguish her music from the repetition and improvisation-heavy hallmarks of the Kosmische genre, a stylistic antecedent for the artist. Mercure's fascination, or obsession, with new, consumer conscious music technology is demonstrated in her inventive sequencing and sampling, adding a mechanical, sometimes menacing, feel to *Beside Herself*.

Mercure's contemporaries became the kindred minds of the Eurock "scene" such as **The Nightcrawlers**, **Lauri Paisley**, and **Don Slepian**. It was in association with Paisley and **Pauline Anna Strom** that Eurock featured Mercure in an article titled "Women Synthesists" in 1986. The three artists all shared a bravura for homespun, self-produced electronic music that looked beyond pop conventions for a higher plane of avant-gardism or musical spirituality. Not long after the article went to print, Mercure offered *Eye Chant*, her standalone vinyl album self-released in 1987.

*Beside Herself* extends RVNG Intl.'s preservation efforts to sister label **Freedom To Spend** who reissued *Eye Chant* in 2017, an occasion marking just over twenty years since its original release on Mercure's own Quick Shower Music. (*Eye Chant*, and the cassettes surveyed on *Beside Herself*, were originally credited to Michelle Musser, the name which the artist used until a divorce in 1987).

The anthological scope of *Beside Herself* joins *Eye Chant* to restore the canon of Mercure's arresting dream-music, revisiting this anomalous creator's breakthrough material. *Beside Herself* will be released on double LP, CD, and digital formats on November 9, 2018. The set features liner notes by **Emily Pothast** and an incredible array of unseen photography and ephemera of the era.

### Artist Highlights

- **Michele Mercure** is an American recording artist, soundtrack, and score composer residing in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- **RIYL**: Conrad Schnitzler, Pauline Anna Strom, Muslimgauze, Art of Noise, Lena Platanos.
- Mercure was part of a group of American musicians in the 80s dabbling with new and cutting edge instrument technologies and self-distribution including **Pauline Anna Strom**, **Lauri Paisley**, and **K. Leimer**.
- Mercure's latest collection of work, *Beside Herself*, is the next edition of RVNG Intl.'s ReRVNG archival series, presented in collaboration with **Freedom To Spend**, following the latter label's 2017 reissue of Mercure's 1986 album *Eye Chant*.
- The music collected on *Beside Herself* includes works from Mercure's releases *Rogue and Mint* (1983), *A Cast of Shadows* (1984), *Dreams Without Dreamers* (1985), and *Dreamplay* (1990), circulated through tape-trading networks assisted largely by insightful editorial in Eurock, a seminal music magazine covering progressive rock and electronic music scenes.
- A short documentary film on Michele's life and art is in production with **Mary Halberson**, Michele's partner. Together, they run **Haverstick Films**, a production and distribution company based in Pennsylvania.
- Michele Mercure is preparing her return to the live stage for early 2019.
- RVNG Intl. / Freedom To Spend's double LP and single CD co-release includes a multi-format digital download code and 12-page booklet (16-page for the CD) with extensive liner notes by **Emily Pothast** and ephemeral enrichment.



### Track Listing

1. A Little Piece
2. Ghosts Before Breakfast
3. Dreamplay 2
4. Beside Myself
5. Liberation Day
6. The Sky Is Falling
7. Beginning
8. No More Law In Gotham City
9. Time Piece
10. A Void Dance
11. Mother
12. Beside Herself
13. Dinosaur Dancing
14. An Accident Waiting To Happen
15. Reverie
16. De Dunk
17. Night Music
18. Antigone
19. Antarctica

### Cat#

ReRVNG12 / FTS011

### Artist

Michele Mercure

### Title

Beside Herself

### Genre

haunted / feral / minimal

### Release date

November 9, 2018

### Formats

LP / CD / Digital  
Vinyl Is Not Returnable

### Box Lot

LP – 13 Inner / 26 Outer  
CD – 80



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