

halie and the moon  
(long-form bio, written by Rick Levin)

Ethereal and lush, orchestrated and pop-smart, the music of *halie and the moon* washes over you like a perfect soundtrack for life's most intimate moments. The band's sound is at once easy and intense, a sonic tapestry that weaves quietude and hiatus into rich contours of harmony and hook. This is music for dreaming, or daydreaming, and it whispers of cosmic things that remain forever close at hand: the memory's dance across time and space, the huddled warmth of a winter's day indoors, lovers clutching hands against the city's swarm. *halie and the moon* create music you don't simply listen to; you also feel it and see it and taste it. It soars across the mind's eye, it pierces the weary heart, it lays a knowing hand on your shoulder. This is a band that knows its way around a song but also through it, to the inside, where it lives in the deep grooves of style and substance, accident and purpose, creation and engagement. As with the conjured surf symphonies of the Beach Boys or R.E.M. at its most ivy-dense and textured, *halie and the moon* reveal an abiding respect for the more sophisticated possibilities of pop music, where strong craft and complexity still abide the spontaneity of creation — classic forms jazzed up, the old made new. The result is a sound that pulses and breathes with a feeling of risk and reverence. *halie and the moon* make deeply personal music that waxes universal; music for everyone, but also just for you.

The four songs that make up the band's debut EP, **Blue Transmissions: vol. 1**, offer an evolving vision, like the passage of seasons in all their emotional complexity, ripe for reflection and renewal: "The Story (Never Told)," the EP's opening track, moves on the rhythms of a warm summer night, with Halie Loren singing "I'm the girl inside your window painted blue, who holds the shadows, waves goodbye and shelters you" before she urges, "Well it's high time that we stumble to the city..." On "Winter," a single guitar and the icy plink of a piano slowly gain the warmth of cello and brushed drums, building into a lullaby for renewal in which Loren, her voice exquisitely vulnerable, sings gently about keeping love alive. A swooning, thumping bass line kicks off "Breathe," in which Loren delivers a funky, playful rap before bursting into a chorus of pure melodic triumph: "Breathe now baby, let the constellations take you..." The EP closes with songwriter/guitarist Daniel Gallo's "Into the World," a haunting song that matches musical oomph with lyrical force: "He spoke you into the world on the edge of his tongue, you see," Loren sings, "he was a crestfallen tapestry..."

This, then, is how *halie and the moon* sounds and what it feels like to listen to their music. It must be said that how the band sounds is defined by and intrinsically (dare I say, magically) connect to the serendipitous path these five veteran musicians traveled before finding each other, as well as by how they now work together to conjure a musical sum that is equal to and inseparable from the whole of its parts — a rare accomplishment among a collection of such talented, innovative artists. At the core of the story is the songwriting of Daniel Gallo. "We were all in different constellations of different musicians," Gallo says. A mutual friend, fellow musician Marty Chilla, first introduced Gallo to drummer and producer Beau Eastlund, and the two began playing Gallo's songs. "It was an instant chemistry," says Eastlund. Gallo echoes the sentiment: "It's like finding that collaborator who's an incredible musician, and humble and funny and talented."

Chilla, a tireless champion of talent, also introduced vocalist Halie Loren to Gallo's work, bringing her a tune called "33 Songs." Loren loved the song, and though she and Gallo met, she was too overwhelmed with her solo career to take on another project. But, she says, "I got a taste of what the music was, and I always found so much magic in it."

With Loren off pursuing her rising career as a jazz vocalist full-time, Gallo and Eastlund continued collaborating. Bassist Bobby Stevens, who'd done session work in Eastlund's studio, joined the group. "We had a lot of fun and there was a lot of chemistry," says Gallo, though he admits that "we were all sitting there summer before last feeling like our cups weren't full." At this time, Loren — having undergone some profound changes in her personal and professional life — again joined the mix. Time is funny that way: we come full circle. Reconnecting, Loren and Gallo both realized the cosmic connection they felt, on all levels. The spark they both felt during their brief collaboration, they realized, was somehow meant to be.

Gallo recalls the early meeting with Loren to play music in 2007. "I was just so in it, and I just thought, 'This is incredible,'" he says. "Then we went off and did our things. We've all had these failed attempts at finding chemistry and here it is. This is the reason why all those other bands fell apart. It gives later meaning to the Sisyphian experience. It's clear that it's all there now."

Now, with the band in full swing, the final piece fell into place. Enter Katherine Dudney, a cellist whose music had grabbed the attention of Eastlund. "I was just gobsmacked," he says of Dudney's playing. "Her solo pieces are just a one-woman show of brilliance." The band agrees it was the addition of Dudney's voice and her fluid, haunting cello-playing filled out the band's dynamic, soulful sound.

Atoms ping at random, it seems, but there is a design, sometimes inscrutable but always manifest. Things fall apart, come back together, often stronger than before. Time is sandpaper, rough but smoothing. In the case of *halie and the moon*, individuality compliments collective, and history informs the eternal now. It is not crucial to the enjoyment of the bands music to know that that each of its members has experienced the tidal shifts of the creative life — isolation, collaboration, the development of an aesthetic, the spring of success, the autumn of disappointment, the struggle and breaking-through — but such evolutions certainly inform the gorgeous depth and rich textures of their sound.

Watching *halie and the moon* play live is a personal, intimate, almost sensual experience, like being invited into the studio where art itself is created. There is an ease among the musicians that is no less energized for being familiar. Each member is a multi-instrumentalist of sorts, an interacting piece of the whole contributing the necessary sounds upon the canvas of Gallo's songs: vocals, strings, acoustic and electric guitars, bass, percussion. As Loren moves from center stage to piano and back again, we witness the organic flow of a musical collective in service to the sanctity of the song. The result is a complete atmosphere — a sort of harmonic respiration that breathes into the peaks and valleys of each composition. Unlike many bands, *halie and the moon* is a truly democratic outfit: No one person is the focus or lead; the ear and the eye are drawn toward interaction, the movement of parts, the interplay among people who know and love what they are doing.

"I think when a band's right, it's sort of like a relationship that's right," Gallo says of playing in *halie and the moon*. "You don't really have to talk about it that much. There's not that much effort. It's a brilliant group of people to work with."

"There is a respect among each of us for space," says Stevens. "There's kind of a sixth member of the band in terms of vocal harmonies. You've got this velvety, luscious tone with Halie and this clear soprano in Katherine."

Such an interplay and blending of parts creates moments of discovery, not just in the listener but for the musicians themselves. "Nobody here does the predictable thing," Gallo says. "I want to be intrigued and I'm always involved in textures. Somewhere in the music, there's a road map for a total aesthetic. I feel really privileged to play in a band where people are so good in knowing what silence to take away — silence in festive dress."

"It takes confidence to understate things," Stevens adds, "to feel like you're presenting it and selling it and throwing it out there."

The flip side of confidence, of course, is trust, two qualities sublimely evident in the music *halie and the moon* put into the world. This is a band that trust not only each other but the language of the music they create — a language that is ever seeking connection with something larger than itself, something out there in the wide universe.

"The way that I'm approaching things, and we're collectively approaching things, is that nothing is in isolation," Loren says. "There are things that ripple out holistically from the music. There's this whole vision of the life that surrounds the songs. We let these songs take our imaginations and run with them."

For Eastlund, such an abiding attention to atmosphere welcomes listeners to submerge themselves in the songs. "My hope is that they get some sort of little vacation from all their troubles," he says. "Maybe just that little vacation, hitting that place in your life where you just need something that's beautiful."

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