

# Cultural Daily

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## Skywriting with Glitter

Alexis Rhone Fancher · Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

*Skywriting with Glitter* is iconic spoken word goddess Ellyn Maybe and genius composer Robbie Fitzsimmons fusing poetry to the spine of singer/songwriter coffeehouse. Or maybe it's a Grand Guignol Cabaret as envisioned by a cross of Stephen Sondheim, Bertolt Brecht and David Lynch. Or maybe it's dance floor disco as tango in the burning ruins of an apocalypse. Or maybe it's the plaintive key of loveless longing as whispered by the lonely on yet another empty night.

Or maybe it's all of these things and more, depending on how you perceive them and who you happen to be at this exact moment in space. What is definite, is, you start the album thinking: "this is great!" and you end it knowing that this is essential listening (and owning) not just for spoken word lovers, but also for music lovers.

Maybe is known to legions of fans as an incredible poet and spoken word artist and, here, she does not disappoint.

Fitzsimmons, also a powerful and incredibly elastic singer, as well as talented piano player, invokes at times the harmonics of Joni Mitchell (*Up Is Down*), the endless creativity of Regina Spektor (*Life Of A Raindrop*) and the sonic bird flights of Kate Bush (*Anybody*) and French chanteuse Patricia Kaas (*Onset*). It's interesting that when I first heard the album I thought it was Maybe singing. Fitzsimmons has such a wide range, that those soaring harmonies had to belong to a female counterpart!

He complements Maybe's poetry perfectly; in tune with the temperature of her spoken word and lyrics. What is truly amazing is that this is all stripped down piano. No percussion, no auto tune, no additional instruments. Just piano and Ellyn and Robbie.

And yet, there is definitely variety; each piece or song (there are six spoken word pieces and 4 songs), like a separate character telling a story, Fitzsimmon's piano mirroring the emotion of that character.

The story can be wistful, noting:

"There was a girl who lived in a house.  
She sat at a table with place mats and  
monogrammed patterns.  
Everyday went like every other day  
& today was tomorrow too quickly." (*The Girl In The Wishing Well*)

The story can be amused, and then turn almost sad:

"You have a twitter account  
Born in Autumn to a giraffe named Autumn

You have a Facebook page.

Kiko someday I'll see you  
And we'll dream of xylophones and music  
way up high in the sky  
And the world goes on and on" (*Kiko in Greenville*)

And the story can even sound downright whimsical and almost euphoric:

"When my parachute is around me I become very giddy.  
Talking to strangers all over the hemisphere.  
When my parachute takes its lunch hour  
I fly on my own.

My endorphins singing to the dolphins that have lifted their tails  
to greet me in an opera of water  
and glittering, abundance and song." (*What Color is your Parachute?*)

"This is an amazing album. Get it. Listen to it. Rejoice in two artists of the highest caliber bringing their A-game and changing the rules to the game at the same time." – Jaimes Palacio, Former poetry picks critic for *The OC Weekly* and *Next...*, Amateur filmmaker and non-pet owner.

*Image: Ellyn Maybe and Robbie Fitzsimmons.*

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