



Music Review: Daniel Bernard Roumain - *Etudes 4 Violin & Electronix*

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I got up **way** too early early yesterday morning. Shortly after 5:30AM, my brain was functioning well enough to start a pot of coffee and setting down at the table with a little reading material. At least...that was the idea. What ended up happening over the next 10 minutes or so was that I stared a hole through an advertisement featuring a reproduction of Edward Hopper's painting "Nighthawks."

Hopper's artwork has always resonated with me. There's just something about how he perfectly captures an instant in time, giving the viewer a scene that's visually pregnant, just begging for an explanation. Each painting tells a story or, at the very least, **implies** one. It's that story implication that makes the painting so rich. Every viewer becomes part of the story, providing their own details

There are definitely parallels in the music world. When a piece of music succeeds, it does indeed tell a story. The framework presented by the composition gives the listener the opportunity to extend the themes, if not provide resolutions.

I've been listening to this Daniel Bernard Roumain record on and off for several months now. Each time, much like the "Nighthawks" experience, my local attention dissolves as I float up into the world of its possibilities. Collaborating with the likes of DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, Peter Gordon, Ryuichi Sakamoto, DJ Scientific, and Phillip Glass, Roumain conjures up a set of tales that manage to stand on their own as well as nest comfortably together.

The epic "The Need To Be" is a key example. The track opens with Sakamoto laying out a series of quiet, chiming chords as Roumain plays a mournful, almost spiritual theme. At first, it seems that Sakamoto and Roumain will spend the next ten minutes trading sections. Instead, the piano and violin become more and more intertwined. The music reaches what seems like a peak of intimacy just before the midway point when Sakamoto starts splattering notes all over the place while Roumain saws away with unbounded passion. The remainder of the song transforms all of that energy into the height of subtlety and tenderness. It's a beautiful thing.

What's amazing about this collection taken as a whole is that the musical styles hold together so well while being so varied. "The Need To Be" might be cinematic in all of its chamber recital scope, but it has to stand alongside dirges, hip-hops beats, funk, and other forms. More than just hanging together, *Etudes 4 Violin & Electronix* makes complete and total sense. I might not have completely deciphered the story yet, but I'm getting there.

Hmmm, I wonder what would have happened if yesterday's "crack of dawn artwork" had been *Poker-Playing Dogs*?

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