

If fear keeps you from doing things, your world becomes smaller. Overcoming that fear by courting new, sometimes unnerving situations is the premise of Dutch recording artist and musician Robin Kester. Kester's experimental pop exudes a hazy euphoria and dark tension: the thrill of your synapses firing on all cylinders before turning into fully-formed thought.

Garnering widespread acclaim with her mini-album *This Is Not A Democracy* last year – with airplay from BBC 6 Radio, KCRW and KEXP – Kester has drawn a wide range of comparisons, ranging from Portishead, Broadcast to Julia Holter. Though operating on a comparable sonic wavelength, Robin Kester is a distinct voice coming fully into her own on her debut album *Honeycomb Shades*.

Drifting between the outer realms of chamber pop, electronic music and psychedelic rock, Kester writes wholly adventurous music. Not adventurous per se in the naive sense, since there's always some element of mystery on the prowl. Having moved around from town to town a lot as a child, many of her songs reframe past impressions into wandering reflections, often inspired by specific moments and sceneries.

The limber indie pop of "Leave Now", meanwhile, tells the tale of a chaotic trip to Vietnam, a rude awakening of new sensations going into overdrive. Some songs on *Honeycomb Shades* resonate like acute snapshots in time: "Cat 13" recollects a moment of staying in the car to avoid an uncomfortable place, using sun-kissed melodies as mediator rather than an escape.

The material Kester developed involved a process of conceiving, interacting and reassessing. All the songs were recorded and produced with Marien Dorleijn, chief songwriter of acclaimed indie rockers Moss. Tinkering with sounds and sketches in Dorleijn's studio – a former psychiatric ward – the duo arranged the songs, handed them over to her band to create a physical live energy to the songs. In addition, Emily Cross (Cross Record, Loma) came on board to record clarinet parts. After putting the finishing touches, producer/engineer Ali Chant (Aldous Harding, PJ Harvey) did additional post-production and mixing for *Honeycomb Shades*, while Joe Lambert (Sharon Van Etten, The Antlers) was called in for the mastering.

—

Full band: Robin Kester – vocals, guitar, synth, Sam van Hoogstraten – guitar, Stef Koenis – keyboards, Thijs Visscher – bass guitar, synth, Joep van Osch – drums

"An amazing record" – Stephen McCauley – BBC Radio Ulster

["Robin Kester betovert met dromerige visioenen"](#) ★★★★★ - de Volkskrant

"De nummers klinken stuk voor stuk [wonderschoon](#). Muziek die nooit gladjes wordt, maar wel heel precies en weloverwogen is" – Het Parool

"Eindelijk kan Robin Kester live laten horen wat een knap bandgeluid ze nu om zich heen heeft. De band van Robin Kester kan haar dromerige liedjes alle kanten op laten schieten, van rustige gitaarfolk naar stuwende synthpop." ★★★★★ - de Volkskrant

*"Awakening in me a sense of placelessness; her voice embodying the interiority of that abstract figure, lost in the crowd, on an endless journey home. It is at once impressionistic, volatile and graceful but at its heart lies a quiet euphoria"* – Conor O'Brien (Villagers)

"I think this is great" – Guy Garvey (Elbow, BBC 6 Music)

"Robin Kester maakt muziek met schaduwen en doorkijkjes – Mysterieuze liedjes die de zaal betoveren. De diepte en wijsheid van de liedjes is uitzonderlijk" ★★★★★ - NRC

"Robin Kester weet op This Is Not A Democracy een eigen universum te creëren, met nummers die blijven nagalmen in je hoofd" – OOR

"De set van Robin Kester is zo goed, dat het jammer is dat het na het prachtig hypnotiserende Sweat And Fright is gedaan. Zo'n Kester is rijp voor ieder zomerfestival". – Dagblad van het Noorden

"Robin Kester zet een prachtige sessie intense pop neer met een kop en een staart en een tintelend, hard rockend slot. Haar nummers, zoals het splinternieuwe Leave Now, zitten vol spanning en het bandgeluid is smetteloos." - de Volkskrant