

# Hannah Peel



## Album: 'Awake But Always Dreaming'

Label: My Own Pleasure

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*"A great singer and a latter day Delia Derbyshire"* **The Observer**

*"One to watch"* **The Independent**

*"Hugely impressive"* **Drowned In Sound**

*"Euphoric, orchestral pop"* **The Quietus**

*"Hauntingly-beautiful, leviathan atmospheric pop"* **The Line Of Best Fit**

The Northern Irish artist and composer, **Hannah Peel**'s second solo album 'Awake But Always Dreaming' features 10 new songs including lead single 'All That Matters' plus a cover of Paul Buchanan's 'Cars In The Garden' featuring a duet with **Hayden Thorpe (Wild Beasts)**.

Peel first came to recognition with her mesmerizing, hand-punched 'music box' EP 'Rebox', featuring covers of '80s bands Cocteau Twins, Soft Cell, & New Order. Having released her critically lauded solo debut album 'The Broken Wave', Peel then formed **The Magnetic North**, a highly praised and expansive collaborative project with Simon Tong (The Verve, The Good The Bad And The Queen, Gorillaz) and Erland Cooper (Erland & The Carnival). She also created a series of limited edition EPs, - the increasingly electronic 'Nailhouse' in 2013, followed by the stunning analogue beauty of 'Fabricstate' in 2014. A year later Peel released 'Rebox 2' with music-box covers of 'Queen' (originally performed by Perfume Genius), John Grant's 'Pale Green Ghosts', Wild Beasts' 'Palace', as well as her glorious cover of East India Youth's triumphant 'Heaven How Long'.

2016 has been yet another prolific year for Peel, so far including collaborations with **Beyond The Wizard's Sleeve** (aka Erol Alkan & Richard Norris) - she features on two BBC6 playlisted singles 'Diagram Girl' and 'Creation' - and composing under her new synth-based, space-age alter-ego **Mary Casio** with an experimental piece combining analogue electronics and a 33-piece colliery brass band (which debuted to a sold out Manchester audience in May). Meanwhile The Magnetic North released their critically acclaimed follow up LP 'Prospect Of Skelmersdale' in March.

Produced and recorded with long-term collaborator Erland Cooper, with orchestrations by Peel, both in their own, richly analogue studio in Shoreditch, London and at Attica Audio in County Donegal, Ireland, her new solo album 'Awake But Always Dreaming' is a record about memory: the luminous and beautiful formation of memories and the devastating loss or slow, insidious damage to the mind. *"I've read 1 in 3 of us will die with dementia, and a third of us are connected to someone with dementia through family and friends",* says Hannah. *"850,000 people in the UK alone have it now and 2 in 3 people affected will be women. It's quite remarkable really, and it's getting worse".*

Peel has created an exquisite, distinct album of two halves, full of vibrant, direct colour in the early stages contrasted with esoteric, dreamscape, legato movements towards the end. The bright, raw magic and joy of personal relationships are set alongside the gradual loss of her grandmother to dementia. A childhood spent in the landscape of the Irish coast inspires a sense of openness in the music – places to roam and investigate – but there's also a complex, darker, percussive thrust to these songs, as adult city life intrudes and, in its own way, inspires.

The album has the feel of a dream where all of daily life is being expressed and decoded, from feverish rush-hours to the old sunlight of her grandmother's fading memories. Peel switches from panoramic city

Hannah: *"I often use deep meditation to comb the recesses of my mind I can't reach during the day and sometime the lines between reality and sleep become a little blurred. It's an inspired feeling, the conscious awake dream becomes movement using that dreaming energy, but without passing entirely out of that waking state of consciousness. Basically, it's like being asleep with one eye and awake with the other. You see things differently and get a real sense of the world around you and what's important, which actually presents itself as being pretty simple."*

'All That Matters' opens proceedings with a pop mantra of living in the moment – *"all that matters is here"*, sings Peel over the bitter/sweet electronics. 'Standing On The Roof Of The World' is about re-invention and starting again – memories are discarded like old skin (*"Time it melts away/A world I try to grasp/Let's forget about our past"*). In 'Hope Lasts', the synths feel more organic, as Peel gazes at the *"tawny hills"* that *"speak volumes with their past"* and sings of a moment of joy and optimism, but this is immediately followed by the darker imagery of 'Tenderly'. In fact this track and the next, 'Don't Take It Out On Me', are stark, emotional highlights, both vivid and vulnerable. 'Invisible City' (partly inspired by Italo Calvino's book, 'Invisible Cities') is full of cascading piano and beautiful textures but it's a shimmering, artificial construct – *"a view that I had made to cover the pain"* – a place of security and a prison, where *"I built this city around my body/these walls they hold me."*

However, the world of 'Awake But Always Dreaming' starts to age and fragment with the powerful, psychotic orchestral thrill of 'Octavia' – another moment inspired by Calvino's 'Invisible Cities'. According to Peel she wanted to create the drama and insecurity suggested by a vision in the book of a city *"suspended over the abyss... they know the net will not last for long."* This description of a memory teetering on the brink of forgetfulness is beautifully realised by Peel, with 'Octavia' offering a tantalising glimpse of future musical directions. It marks a clear midpoint in the album. The road is no longer a straight one, *"it's a mysterious hinterland of shadowy detours with hidden and strange places"*, says Peel. Memory falls away and the constraints of time drift.

Peel continues to delve more deeply into a lost, half-waking dream, especially on the sumptuously atmospheric title track and elegiac piano strikes of 'Conversations' where echoing taped voices crowd and confuse as Peel sings, *"when I awake, don't recall your name, my only friend."* The sentiment is ever more clear and poignant given the sobering statistics on dementia. However Peel focuses quietly on her grandmother's experience in what is one her most moving songs. In contrast, the nine-minute 'Foreverest' is cinematic and ambitious. Peel's ghostly vocals seem to float in mid-air as cold synthesized winds howl and scuttling, relentless rhythms drive the track forward. It's as if she's become a disembodied figure in the city, trying to *"hold onto one last breath"*.

Hannah: *"It's supposed to feel like a journey into the mind but also into adulthood. There's a constant reminder that however large the adventure or realised the ambition, to not forget about the ones who will always care, the ones who are standing waiting to welcome you back, the ones who will forever look after you and say simply, they love you. At the end of the day, that's all that matters, caring and being cared for. To love and not be loved is one of the saddest thing of all."*

The album's closer is a cover of Paul Buchanan's (The Blue Nile) 'Cars In The Garden' which returns memory to childhood – *"find the place that we forgot."* Performed with her trademark music box and by way of a sublimely coaxed out, bittersweet duet with Hayden Thorpe from Wild Beasts, this is another fine shift in tone and perspective – from the grandeur and chaos of 'Foreverest' to something very simple, surreal and yet utterly moving and memorable.

Tracklisting: 01 – 'All That Matters' 02 – 'Standing On The Roof Of The World' 03 – 'Hope Lasts' 04 – 'Tenderly' 05 – 'Don't Take It Out On Me' 06 – 'Invisible City' 07 – 'Octavia 08' - 'Awake But Always Dreaming' 09 – 'Conversations' 10 – 'Foreverest' 11 – 'Cars In The Garden' (FT Hayden Thorpe)

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