



small life form one

“It should come as no surprise that Small Life Form (aka Brian John Mitchell, head of Silber Records) is the distillation of everything Silber has stood for since its birth nearly a decade ago: stripped-down, unadulterated sound exploration.”

– Nathan Amundson, Rivulets

Small Life Form is about nothing if not sound. Sound as escape from life. Sound as a medium to penetrate and affect the human body. Sound as both creation & destruction. Sound as an entity meant to be concentrated on, not casually listened to. **One** is SLF's debut release, now five years in production. For it took Brian John Mitchell that long to figure out how to pull these sounds out of his head, put them into the air, and from there, onto a disc maintaining the precision and timbre he began with. Recorded without overdubs and stripped to only the most essential organic elements, absent is Mitchell's noise-guitar-terrorism, which forms the foundation of his Remora project. Instead he forged this album with horns, vocals, organs, percussion & melodica. Tones are drawn out to the breaking point and fade into overtone ringing and wave beating. The results are otherworldly atmospheres of deep hallucinatory drone, the kind of sound severe inebriation makes in the window between sleeping and waking.

SLF's process, theory, and sound draw from influences of the post-WWII avant-garde. In this way, SLF and Silber offer us another bridge between post-rock music & serious experimental composition, equal influences from Gyorgy Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna* & Cindytalk's *Camouflage Heart*.

One can be listened to straight through, but is ultimately designed for all tracks to be played back simultaneously & looped for an infinite performance of the work as a whole.

Here you will all find the qualities that keep the Silber offices flooded with demos begging to join the Silber roster: drone, psych, love, apathy, abrasion, lull, intensity, reality. Are you ready to listen?

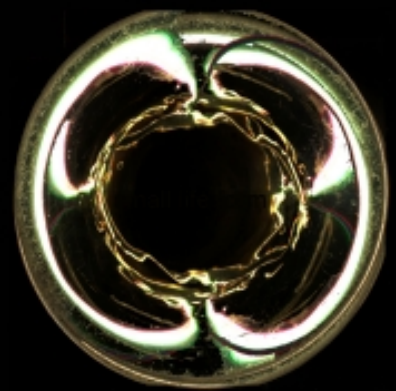


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"Small Life Form is Brian John Mitchell, head of the interesting Silber Records. Bare bone drones are at hand, exquisitely presented for the astute listener. Subtle transitions within the drones are carved into the audio as they rise, swell, & disintegrate. The airless intonation of "Small" steadily moves towards a more vocal, mantra-like feel, drifting, floating. "Cymbal" seems positively sinister by comparison, as a looped, compressed texture is ground into the listeners ears -- not by volume, but by sheer nervous insistence, even at only 2:15 in length. "Horns" wavers at that point before everything commences, as horns blast & hum, murmur in sly conference, but never commence with actually playing. "Pulsar" slithers about, like a snake in the cosmos, angrily nipping at the stars. "Golden" seems the resonance of a halo. One is extremely well done & recommended for the drone enthusiast.
-- JC Smith, Outburn

"Ok, this is just over 48 minutes of pure drone. No drum machines, buried melodies, lyrics, dynamics, chord changes, or song structures. It comes courtesy of one Brian John Mitchell, previously known as the man behind Silber Records and his own band, Remora. So, with these associations, drone obviously isn't foreign to him. However, this is the first time it's been presented by him in it's rawest and most simple form. Pure drone. Which is great! This music will either bore you to death, put you to sleep, or entrance you. Similar in vibe to Stars of the Lid or La Monte Young, One carves out a steady, unwavering and hypnotizing buzz. The songs are largely titled (presumably) after the different instruments used to create the seven tracks of drone. Cymbal, horns, organ, melodica and pulsar (via a radio telescope) all stretched and expanded into far reaching tunnels of sound. You will either love this or hate this. It's unrelenting in it's simplicity, and the hole it could open in your head is bottomless."
-- Sean Hammond, fakejazz

"This is Brian John Mitchell (Remora, Silber Records) intoning and droning these minimalist soundscapes with whispered textural mumbles and eerie atmospherics. Not music in any melodic or linear way. Comparable to: Coil, John Duncan, Nurse With Wound, a hydroelectric generator deep inside an enormous dam, the echoed overtones of a chanting choir of monks, or the undercarriage of an 18 wheeler going 80 MPH down an anonymous gray highway. Heaven or hell turning over and over like two sides of the same coin; galactic or interpersonal universes; microscopic or macrocosmic soundtracks that scour and/or lull in a painless hypnotic landscape of stone and metal."
-- George Parsons, Dream Magazine

"Small Life Form's One opens like a prayer, or the musical backdrop to one, with one sustained note floating in

front of you like
something you should be contemplating. That note holds through all 10 minutes of that first song "Small," as
sounds and voices
lightly flicker around it. Sound boring? It isn't, it's beautiful. The other six tracks all have this same intensity of
focus and meditative
atmosphere, like fog clouds of sound that grow, shrink and gently mutate as they slowly glide across they sky. In
fact, the album as
a whole feels much like the living being referenced in the band name ("band" being more a term than reality, as
all sounds were
made by Brian John Mitchell); it comes off like something growing and coming into form before your eyes. Yet
each track is
distinct-some rumble and shake ("Pulsar"), others carefully inch forward in a slightly creepy way ("Horns").
Most are titled after the
instrument featured most prominently in the track ("Cymbal," "Melodica," etc.), and if I'm reading the liner notes
correctly, if you
bring the instruments together by playing all of the tracks at once, you'll have another creation entirely. So
perhaps you have not just
one musical life form here, but seven, which together make one. In any case, One has textures and atmospheres
that are
intoxicating, if you're prepared to accept them."
-- Dave Heaton, Erasing Clouds

"The fractal image that appears on the packaging thankfully does not belie the music that can be found within, as
Brian John
Mitchell finally releases his debut drone release as Small Life Form. The head of Silber Media and sometimes
man of Remora,
Mitchell has been slaving at the record for a reported five years, striving to somehow bring to life the noises he
heard in his head, and
not relenting until he had achieved the accurate representation. One, then, is an auspicious debut, as hopefully
Mitchell can
reproduce the steps to bring this kind of music forth again. If not, this album would almost be statement enough.
The drones and
dirges Small Life Form creates are swelling with a full, warm tone that evokes images of birth and death almost
simultaneously, as
though one were viewing an entire life in the time the track has to play. Sometimes the sound resulting from the
use of organ,
percussion, melodica, vocals, and horns is indistinguishable: it is impossible to pick out one element from the
rest. This induces a
feeling of isolation and fear, the unknown you can't pick out, even though the simple titles of the track give the
more core component
away. Elsewhere, the familiarity of a horn sound or organ drew me in, expecting more of the same, only to
expose me to far more,
and the pulses soothe and excite at once. Gradual introduction of other sounds was also a real plus, and at
every moment I felt
welcome and invited. Sounds are played out to their natural end, adding a discombobulated, uneven footing. A
part of one track is
almost exactly like the other parts, but when something new creeps in it changes the landscape completely.

Some tracks may go on too long, but it is of little consequence: One is a fine achievement and I hope to hear more sooner than five years from now."
-- Rob Devlin, Brainwashed

"In today's world of experimental music, many releases consist of uninspired and hastily thrown-together layers of random noise and processed instruments. Small Life form, however, is the real deal. The project of Silber Records head Brian John Mitchell, Small Life Form draws its influences and basis from the old-school techniques of musique concrete and musique electronique. Five years in the making, One is a collection of 7 tracks of processed sound recorded live in real time without overdubs. Apparently, the album is designed for all tracks to be played back at the same time and looped to create a sound collage of infinite length. Therefore, a single 7 track CD is an unfortunate and problematic presentation of the material seeing as how the only way to play the tracks at once is to either buy 7 copies of the album (or burn 6 copies from the original) and play them on 7 different CD players or go through the trouble of ripping the CD to your computer and importing the .wav or mp3 files into a multitrack recording program. This might be feasible for an experimental electronic music concert of some type or perhaps even for a musician with a home recording studio. Unfortunately, however, most listeners don't have the equipment or ability (or determination, for that matter) to listen to this recording in the way that was intended. Being the conscientious reviewer that I am, I actually took the time to rip all 7 tracks to .wav files and mix and loop them in my home studio in order to properly experience the album. The result was a breathtaking wall of noise with both dissonant and melodic content formed from the interaction of the piece's seven components. General melodic content and character (as well as some dissonance) rose from the interplay between "horns", "organ", and "melodica" while "small" (a track made up of processed voices) and "cymbal" provided extra body and definition. "Golden" gave an extra high-end boost to the mixture while the filtered-noise quality of "Pulsar" (apparently a vera pulsar as observed through a radio telescope) really added a strong stereo component to the mix with panning sweeps and swells of intensity. A constant drone from my subwoofer combined with the rest of the sounds to create a beautiful ethereal mass of sweeping sound with something of an orchestral quality. It was definitely a spectacular experience and an excellent piece of work. While the idea of multiple tracks meant to be played at the same time with varying starting points and looping is by no means a new or original idea (in fact, the idea was even introduced to mainstream audiences by The Flaming Lips on their Zaireeka release, which also contained the required number of CDs to play the entire album at once if enough CD players were

present), One is still a very compelling release that uses the concept to its full potential. I imagine it would be extremely interesting to play this album in a setting where each track could be played through a different set of speakers, allowing you to experiment with speaker positions and acoustics. Unfortunately, as I said, most listeners won't be able to hear this interesting composition in its intended form at all much less hear it through equipment that would allow for additional sound experimentation and acoustic manipulation of the elements of the recordings. In short, it's a brilliant, ever-evolving composition of infinite length when played as one piece that will unfortunately be experienced by most listeners as 7 separate, droning and far less compelling tracks each containing one component of a much greater whole.

-- Joshua Heinrich, Grave Concerns

"Whenever we need an ambient drone fix...we turn to Raleigh, North Carolina's esoteric Silber label for the latest pertinent injection. Small Life Form is a particularly welcome release...because it was created by the founder of the label himself. Brian John Mitchell has developed a solid following by releasing music by bands and artists with virtually no commercial potential and who truly expand the boundaries of music. From the start, Mitchell's label has obviously been a labor of love...with an emphasis on releasing unique, quality releases. One should be warmly received by those who are already familiar with the obtuse and mesmerizing Silber sound. Mitchell spent five years working on this album. It was recorded in real time without overdubs, with Brian playing all the instruments himself. On the first spin, one might be inclined to dismiss this album as a mere electronic drone experiment. Upon closer observation, however, it becomes apparent that these compositions are keenly focused and contain a wealth of subtleties that make them truly hypnotic and intriguing. Some of the basic ideas here remind us of those inherent in the music of Charity Empressa. The idea is to use sound in order to put the listener into a trance-like state. These seven pieces are wonderfully peculiar and tastefully executed to perfection. While not for everyone, this album should be welcomed by those into truly mind-expanding electronics with a difference. Seven lengthy cuts including "Small," "Organ," "Pulsar," and "Melodica."

-- Babysue

"First off, let me say that with this compact disc, the press release states: "One can be listened straight through, but is ultimately designed for all tracks to be played back simultaneously and looped for an infinite performance of the work as a whole." This album is very slow ambient along the lines of early Morthond releases, or the Time Machine releases by Coil. This release

seems based in Drone/sound category in a very good way. I can imagine the songs played looped on top of each other and it would be wonderful indeed.

The Cymbals (track two) are haunting and persistent throughout, added to the infrequent Pulsar (track five) beats, and a mesmerizing feat has indeed been created.

This album would not be good at a dance club unless being used as atmosphere creation before the bands perform. At once moody and organic, this album is a masterpiece. I'm excited to hear what else Silber media does with their future releases for they sure seem to have a consistent direction of odd noise experimentation."

-- Azrael Racek, Gothic Revue

"Small Life Form's album One has been the single most unique listening experience of my life. It has no contemporaries, no peers. It is in a class all its own. This is because it is also one of the most bizarre albums I've ever listened to. Comprised of seven tracks,

One is nothing more than an intense sonic project (in the most literal sense of the word) that took the architect, Brian John Mitchell, five years to complete.

You can't fully understand or appreciate the album without the liner notes, taken verbatim: "The tracks on this recording are designed so they may all be listened to simultaneously while looped. The instruments used on this recording are melodica, trumpet,

trombone, voice, Chinese cymbal, floor tom, vera pulsar (via radio telescope), and electronic wind organ.

Recorded in real time without overdubs or multi-tracking..."

Clearly Small Life Form is a scientific project as much as it is a creative work (a work that took five years to complete). In fact, I

picture Mitchell as more of a mad scientist whiling away the hours in a secluded laboratory than as an impassioned artist pouring

his heart into a labor of love. But in the same way, minimalist art found inspiration in efficiently mass-produced consumer products,

there are subjective undertones of sheer beauty in this work.

The most outright success is the track "Pulsar." The liner notes indicate that it is indeed comprised of the sounds emanating from

one of those deep space neutron stars as captured through a radio telescope. It sounds a bit like a warped, distant helicopter,

although the scope of the frequency range exhibited is far greater than what the earthbound machine is capable of. It is the pure

sound of nature at its most exotic and extreme.

The liner notes also imply that the best way to enjoy the album is by listening to different combinations of the tracks simultaneously.

Unfortunately, some sort of multitrack audio program is necessary to do so, and most listeners don't have access to one. But I do,

and so after ripping the tracks off the CD and saving them as .wav files (they come as standard .cda audio files, although I feel .wavs

should have been provided to simplify the process) I opened my multitrack program and anxiously loaded the .wavs. Unfortunately, each track so thoroughly covers the sonic spectrum that I couldn't listen to more than two at once (and sometimes not even that) without intense clipping occurring. Now, I admit I don't have the greatest sound card and speakers in all of Computerdom, but I do have a multitrack program and a lot of patience. There are very few people who have everything necessary to enjoy this album as (I believe) Mitchell intended. Then again, I'm probably wrong. Not that the album tracks were meant to be enjoyed separately, rather that they weren't meant to be enjoyed at all, at least in a musical sense. These seven tracks are simply an extraordinary collection of pure walls of sound, thick and full and incredibly intense, deserving of appreciation for the complex process that brought them into existence in the first place."
-- Delusions of Adequacy

"Already known for his song-based project Remora -- and as the owner of the label Silber -- Brian John Mitchell, with his first Small Life Form release, introduces us to a very different side to his music. One consists of seven instrumental drone pieces ranging from contemplative to noisy and disturbed. The liner notes state that the tracks are designed so they may all be listened to simultaneously while looped. Doing so will create an ever-changing piece (since the tracks have irregular lengths) akin to a sound installation. But chances are you don't have seven CD players at home, so you will most likely listen to the tracks one at a time. These are fine drones, varied in colors and textures, occasionally a bit blurry and shy on stereo dynamics, but otherwise nicely recorded. Mitchell plays melodica, trumpet, trombone, Chinese cymbal, floor tom, and an electric wind organ. "Horns" is the strongest drone: rich, complex, and in the noisy end of the spectrum, it grabs you by the solar plexus, while quieter pieces like "Small," "Cymbal," or "Golden" simply create an atmosphere. In "Organ," Mitchell reveals the already complex harmonics and air fluctuations of the electric wind organ by playing one long note at a time. "Melodica" is a beautiful piece that retains the characteristics of its namesake instrument, even though it is carried by a pulsing magma of frequencies that sound nothing like it."
- François Couture, All Music Guide

"Small Life Form is a solo project from Silber Records head honcho Brian John Mitchell. I've reviewed a couple of Brian's tapes of sonic assault guitar drones released under his guise as Remora, but Small Life Form - though similar to Remora in terms of sound exploration and its effect on the senses - is a different beast in its execution and resulting perceptions by the listener (at least me

anyway). Rather than guitar, the instruments used on the album are melodica, trumpet, trombone, voice, chinese cymbal, floor tom,

vera pulsar (via radio telescope) and electric wind organ.

There are 7 tracks on the CD, though the liner notes point out that they were designed to be listened to simultaneously while looped.

I listened straight through and found this standard method to be a sufficiently mesmerizing experience. This is stuff that screams out

for extended development so it came as no surprise that the longer tracks were the most satisfying. "Small" is a highlight that

consists of slowly pulsating drones and OM-like chants that have a didgeridoo sensation. It's hard to describe and must be

experienced, but the combination of pulsations and winding chants is hypnotic and the 10 minutes of this track went by like 2.

"Horns" has an effect that's somewhere between a machine shop and avant-garde symphony orchestra. And while the horns are

detectable as such, they are presented in unconventional ways. Once again it's the pulsations settling into the brain that facilitated

my focus on the piece. Mitchell does an impressive job of incorporating high volume and aggression... but in such a way that the

volume isn't too high and the aggression relatively sedate... the result being not necessarily meditative but certainly something I was

able to focus my mantra on.

"Organ" broke my concentration. It's not high volume but is certainly high pitched and I had to turn the volume down on this one. But

the attraction of the piece is the melody which is so simple and develops oh so slowly, yet finds notes and tones that produced a

similar effect on my senses as "Small" did. I would also give credit to the mix, which has the music strategically weaving it's way

from left to right to left and swirling around in the center, and. "Melodica" is similar in its use of melody. Very nice. Recommended to

patient and attentive listeners who enjoy putting on the headphones and surrendering themselves to pure sound."

-- Jerry Kranitz, Aural Innovations

"When I opened to liner notes to One, the first album from Silber Media head Brian John Mitchell's Small Life Form project, it told

me that "the tracks on this recording are designed so they may all be listened to simultaneously while looped".

Now, that's a really

neat idea, but I have no idea how I could personally put it into practice. And, having no experience with Silber's releases or Small

Life Form itself, it gave me a completely wrong idea of what One would be like.

Hearing that the seven tracks here were intended to be listened to together, I imagined they would each be sparse and somehow

incomplete without the others, like interlocking puzzle pieces that only made sense as a whole, or, to put it another way, that it

would be like listening to the Flaming Lips' Zaireeka one disc at a time.

Instead, what I found was a series of thick, rich drones, occasionally reminding me in timbre of the early work of Flying Saucer

Attack, and resembling in progression Spacemen 3's old drone piece 'An Evening Of Contemporary Sitar Music' (which is fully capable of hypnotizing a person for its full 44 minute duration). Each track is named for the instruments used within ('Cymbal', 'Organs', 'Melodica') and was performed by Mitchell alone and without overdubs. Some of the tracks (including a recording of the "vera pulsar" via radio telescope) are shorter, lasting 2-3 minutes in length, while the others are in the 9-10 minute range, the longest being 'Horns' at 11:50. 'Horns' is also the most compelling work here, a single slow pulse on trumpet being bathed in delay and echo; the end effect is similar to watching a freighter dock in heavy fog, of something looming out of thick mist. Given the individual sonic depth of each of the tracks here, I'm not sure how they'd sound mashed up against one another, but I can easily see Mitchell putting on a satisfying live show using just the contents of One, introducing new elements and fading them out, building on the vocal samples of 'Small' or the swell of 'Organ'. The shorter pieces are just as interesting (particularly 'Cymbal'), and would make interesting additions once looped. The reason One makes such a good listen, though, is that even when you can't perform that sort of trickery at home, the tracks here work just as well in isolation. Mitchell's mission is, to quote the Silber website, to focus on "sound as an entity meant to be concentrated on, not casually listened to". On One, he's succeeded."

-- Ian Mathers, Stylus

"La Silber Records è un'etichetta molto attiva oltreoceano, certo una piccola etichetta, ma con otto-nove uscite regolari l'anno, senza correnti principali da seguire né coolness a cui inchinarsi, solo la musica della Silber. In poche parole indipendenza. Small Life Form è il progetto di Brian John Mitchell (la testa dietro la Silber Records) che vede il suo debutto sulla propria etichetta con numero di catalogo 30, subito dopo altre ottime uscite fra cui i Rollerball di cui parleremo prossimamente. Suono che non vuol essere che questo, suono per il corpo, suono come creazione e distruzione; una linea semplice quanto indisponente se calata in un environment fatto di citazioni e giustificazioni colte, punti di riferimento coccolati dalle testate più underground. Fortunatamente così non è alla Silber (sembra il paese di Oz vero?), quindi posso pure sganciare il cervello dai fermi che lo tengono ancorato alla scatola cranica, e immergermi in questi 50 min (quasi) di drones, movimenti circolari, riproposizioni e omotetie dei suoni. Non ho la minima idea riguardo l'environment di Small Life Form, non so quanto ci sia di spirituale, non so quanto ci sia di materiale, non so quanto ci sia di artificiale, non so se sia giusto continuare... semplicemente lo faccio. E' una sorta di discesa a spirale, non conciliante e ,con il dovuto rispetto, equidistante da David Marahnah e Terry Riley; suoni di fiati che

ricordano i corni tibetani, cupi gorgoglii, tessiture ambientali sovrapposte più volte. Insomma una specie di mandala sonoro che riesce a cullarti, a farti invaghire di altri mondi, di altri modi di essere, ma non con il sorriso in bocca. Forse il nirvana come dovrebbe essere: glaciale, lentamente mutevole; nessuna speranza, ne gioia, solo suono. "

-- Luca Confusione, Kathodik

"Boss du label Silber Records, l'homme qui a donné naissance à cette petite forme de vie se nomme Brian John Mitchell, un artiste-baroudeur arpentant depuis 10 ans maintenant les couloirs de la musique électronique. Sa toute récente offrande, One, est assez déroutante au premier abord. Il faut imaginer des pistes d'assez longue durée (on approche souvent les 8 minutes), composées exclusivement de drones ambient qui ne subissent que d'infimes variations tout au long de leur déploiement. "Derrière tout cela, il doit bien y avoir un concept !". Bien sûr, il y en a un. L'état d'esprit de l'album est pour tout dire assez psychédélique. Les nappes sont parfois d'inspiration asiatique ; on peut y déceler d'immenses trompes tibétaines ou des voix bouddhiques... Ces instruments aux sonorités reconnaissables qui participent ici de boucles très denses à l'ampleur cosmique. Pour le reste, melodica, trompette, trombone, cymbale chinoise, orgue électrique et voix sont autant d'entités formant la base acoustique derrière l'album. One est vraisemblablement à écouter sous l'emprise de psychotropes, du moins je devine que son impact en serait d'autant plus fort - l'album lui-même serait à ranger parmi les narcotiques. One impose le temps de l'écoute et de la contemplation. Le dénuement rythmique et le vol permanent de ses boucles obligent à un retour sur soi ainsi qu'à porter un regard mystique sur la réalité des choses. Mysticisme... Oui, c'est bien la clé qui sous-tend Small Life Form. Ici pas de délires rythmiques ni de prouesses structurelles, pas non plus de sons ostentatoires ; il s'agit souvent d'une nappe bourdonnante de fond par dessus laquelle apparaissent et disparaissent des samples lancinants. Le parti pris de Brian John Mitchell est évidemment d'amener à un état spécifique d'attention, où l'étalement continu et pulsatile des sons deviendrait une expérience physique à part entière (il est spécifié dans le livret que toutes les pistes peuvent être bouclées et écoutées simultanément). Les notions de cycle et de répétition sont fondatrices de ce disque perché tout près des étoiles et des dieux de l'orient. Il y a un fort esprit goa derrière cette œuvre hypnotisante qui demande à la base une ouverture spirituelle à son auditoire, et surtout du temps, qu'il distille poétiquement en donnant une nouvelle définition de la durée : la constance de l'apogée, en quelque sorte un paroxysme figé, une épiphanie méditative."

-- Autres Directions

"I get a little metaphysical about drones. At it's best, the drone can put you into a deep hypnotic state, a trance

which can put you

in touch with the ohm, or the frequency at which the universe vibrates. Either that, or you can get stoned and chill out.

I frickin' love Silber Media. You don't get many labels that focus on that brand of heady atmospherics anymore, and it's even more

unusual to have a label that does both traditional (read: academic, which is closer to what Small Life Form is) forms of drone music,

plus all kinds of shoegaze and drone-pop.

There's not much to say about a CD that is basically 7 tracks of long, ringing tones drawn out to their breaking points. What Small

Life Form has accomplished here is quite impressive however: where most bands that drone do so on guitars, these drones are done

completely organically, with all drones done by certain instruments and often named after the instrument performed on ("Cymbal,"

"Horns," Organ," you get the idea).

To add to the craziness, these seven tracks are designed to be played simultaneously and looped infinitely, which would probably

make it sound like The Flaming Lips Zaireeka on crack. I dunno. I don't want to spend \$70+ on seven discs and spend the time

tracking down 7 CD players and 7 friends to all hit play at the same time. I'd rather get high and listen track 1 on repeat."

-- Rick Arnow, 1340mag

"Background noise to a David Lynch film. I'm sure this is used in one of those scenes where he zooms into a dark corner, then it

takes you into another scene or reality. I have no idea why this stuff is released on CD when this is perfect for film instead."

-- Mike Turner, The Bee's Knees

"For the life of me, I can't really explain my attraction to drone-based "music". It's not so much an academic appreciation of the stuff

(although that's part of it) as it is an innate, natural fascination that's been with me, well, always. Even as a child, I found myself

fascinated by the droney ambience of empty rooms. I'd become fixated on the faint hum of the house's heating and cooling systems,

intrigued by the way that extraneous sounds (outside noises, sounds of people in other rooms, the creaks of the house itself, etc.)

filtered in and incorporated themselves into the sonic backdrop.

I've always enjoyed walking through backalleys, behind the offices and stores, where all of the huge fans, heating units, and power

supplies sit, and listening to the huge roars and electrical crackles. You can almost feel the sound manifesting itself in the air, the

entire area vibrating with some unseen energy. And during the summer months, while living in places with less than adequate

cooling, the drone of the window fan was often the last thing I heard before drifting off to sleep.

Somehow, I get the sense that Small Life Form's Brian John Mitchell (Remora, Silber Records head honcho) comes from a similar

perspective. On *One*, he explores drone to its fullest, bathing the listener in huge swaths of pure sonic drifts and tides. For the most part, it's not particularly pretty, or even all that emotionally involving (for that sort of drone, look to Aarktica's *No Solace In Sleep*). But what it is is impactful. You can literally feel the drones washing over you, painting your room in pure sound, and setting your entire body to vibrate as the sounds collide through you.

While many drone albums start with guitars, Mitchell eschews that approach, leaving that for his *Remora* project. Instead, as the song titles might suggest, Mitchell takes the sounds of cymbals, horns, and organs, and proceeds to sculpt and stretch them to the breaking point until they cease resembling their original form almost entirely. "Horns" is a perfect example of this. Here, the listener is plopped right down in the middle of a beehive caught in slow motion, as huge, repetitive buzzing sounds shift and float all around and threaten to crush you. And on the album's opener, "Small", Mitchell manipulates his voice into something much bigger and deeper, as if you suddenly stumbled across a canyon of several hundred monks chanting in an alien wilderness.

Is it harsh and grating? Oftentimes, it is. And yet the sounds, as blunt and oppressive as they might be, have a way of battering your feeble defenses until you eventually surrender and become completely enveloped by them - as is the case with the monolithic, carved-from-alien-ice tones on "Organ". At the same time, they can be very hypnotic, lulling you into a trance that's quite pervasive and shocking when broken. In fact, as I typed that last sentence, my roommate came home. The noise of the door opening and his footsteps on the wooden floor broke the mood so suddenly and so completely that I literally jumped in my chair - and I still have some shivers from the experience.

Those who find drone boring and monotonous are going to hate *One* with a passion, and to be honest, I've even found it rather tedious at times. I've listened to *One* several times before, and it's just never clicked. However, I pulled it from the "To Be Reviewed" pile on a whim tonight and decided to give it another listen. If nothing else, I thought, it might make for some nice background music while working on some other project. But for some reason, on this particular listen, it clicked and everything seemed to fall into place - much like my experience with *Supersilent's 6* (another release I found quite impenetrable at first).

Call it sudden enlightenment, a moment of clarity, whatever. But it just worked, and I don't know if I'll have that experience again. It could very well be that all subsequent listens might prove as tedious as my first forays into the disc - which makes me want to savor this experience all the more.
-- Jason Morehead. *Opus Zine*

"The liner notes tell us that "the tracks on this recording are designed so they may all be listened to simultaneously," but owning

only one stereo rather than seven, I was forced to listen to them one at a time. Typical of the album is the first song, "Small" which consists of one note held for eleven minutes, with some very subtle additions submerged deep in the mix. To call it boring would be to miss the point -- but what the point is, I can't tell you. It likely has something to do with the fact that these non-songs were recorded in real-time without overdubs -- a remarkable achievement that makes them no more interesting to hear. It likely wouldn't require more than one take to film a man sleeping, but I wouldn't want to watch eight hours of that. Of course, some might find this extreme minimalism challenging, or they might find that it zeros their alpha waves for some extra intense meditation or something, but most people would probably shut Small Life Form off after ten seconds or so."
-- Rob Horning, Splendid

"La Silber Records è un'etichetta molto attiva oltreoceano, certo una piccola etichetta, ma con otto-nove uscite regolari l'anno, senza correnti principali da seguire né coolness a cui inchinarsi, solo la musica della Silber. In poche parole indipendenza.

Small Life Form è il progetto di Brian John Mitchell (la testa dietro la Silber Records) che vede il suo debutto sulla propria etichetta con numero di catalogo 30, subito dopo altre ottime uscite fra cui i Rollerball di cui parleremo prossimamente.

Suono che non vuol essere che questo, suono per il corpo, suono come creazione e distruzione; una linea semplice quanto indisponente se calata in un environment fatto di citazioni e giustificazioni colte, punti di riferimento coccolati dalle testate più underground. Fortunatamente così non è alla Silber (sembra il paese di Oz vero?), quindi posso pure sganciare il cervello dai fermi che lo tengono ancorato alla scatola cranica, e immergermi in questi 50 min (quasi) di drones, movimenti circolari, riproposizioni e omotetie dei suoni. Non ho la minima idea riguardo l'environment di Small Life Form, non so quanto ci sia di spirituale, non so quanto ci sia di materiale, non so quanto ci sia di artificiale, non so se sia giusto continuare... semplicemente lo faccio. E' una sorta di discesa a spirale, non conciliante e ,con il dovuto rispetto, equidistante da David Marahnah e Terry Riley; suoni di fiati che ricordano i corni tibetani, cupi gorgoglii, tessiture ambientali sovrapposte più volte. Insomma una specie di mandala sonoro che riesce a cullarti, a farti invaghiare di altri mondi, di altri modi di essere, ma non con il sorriso in bocca.

Forse il nirvana come dovrebbe essere: glaciale, lentamente mutevole; nessuna speranza, né gioia, solo suono."

-- Luca Confusione, Kathodik