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An Extension of Me: a review of *Millennium Mother* by Mili

Introduction

Millennium Mother is the 2018 album from Japanese indie band Mili. Each song as a very deep, delightful story waiting to be analyzed by listeners. This collection of songs, as well as their other pieces from other albums, has inspired so much creativity in me. Every time I hear my favorite songs, a scene is painted in my head so vivid that I end up having to pause after each song to properly process every beautiful detail. Listening to this music isn't only listening: it's an experience, one I think everyone should have if they're a fan of indie music.

Album: *Millennium Mother*

Release: April 25, 2018

Label: Saihate Records

Songs: 19 (plus bonus track if preordered)

Length: 1 Hour 8 Minutes

Available: Spotify, iTunes, YouTube

My Rating: 9.8/10

The Band

First of all, who is Mili? The indie electronic/contemporary classical band was formed in Japan by Cassie Wei, also known as momocashew, in August of 2012. They started out providing songs for rhythm games- games where you touch notes to the rhythm of the music-

called *Cytus* and *Deemo*, made by Rayark. These rhythm games are how I found them. They would continue providing soundtrack music until 2014, when their first album was released: *Mag Mell*. This album, as well as their second album *Miracle Milk*, reached #1 in a weekly ranking of indie bands called Oricon Indies when they were released in 2014 and 2016 respectively.. Their popularity would only increase, eventually doing the opening for an anime called Goblin Slayer in 2018 and the soundtracks for two video games, *Library of Ruina* and *Ender Lilies*, in 2020

There are six members of Mili: momocashew (singer/songwriter), Yamato Kasai (composer/pianist/guitarist), Yukihiro Mitomo (bassist), Shoto Yoshida (drummer), and Ao Fujimori (illustrator/ animator). Momocashew and Yamato Kasai write the music together, creating classically-inspired pieces that touch the soul. Both have wonderful characteristics that add to each song. Yamato Kasai is classically trained, and that creates the unique sound each album has. Momocashew is trilingual, fluent in English, Japanese, and Mandarin. All of these languages and more are featured in Mili's songs. These include a made-up language with no real translation, aptly called "Mili-ish," "Momotongue," or "Momoish" by fans, that adds beautiful vocal sounds to their pieces. There are only two songs entirely within this language: "Sacramentum: Unaccompanied Hymn for Torino" from *Mag Mell* and "Gertrauda" from *Millennium Mother*.

The Album

The album features nineteen songs, all of which are beautiful in their own regard. Each song has a story to tell, and there is always something hidden within the gorgeous lyrics and catchy

tunes. Every piece also has a different tone, creating a feeling of raw emotion with every new song.

The first song that stuck with me was “Summoning 101.” It’s a prequel to a song from the album before, and it tells the story of a witch summoning a werewolf. The two grow very close before eventually being separated, only for the wolf to be summoned yet again. This time, however, it is from a place of love. The story ends with the werewolf carrying the witch through a storm of hellfire, in which the witch says her final words and the wolf tries to beg her to stay alive. All the werewolf can do, however, is howl. This song

Track Listing

- Boys in Kaleidosphere – 1:34
- Camelia – 4:39
- Summoning 101 – 2:52
- Vitamins – 5:00
- Lemonade – 3:11
- Milk – 3:14
- world.search (you); - 4:55
- Mushrooms – 3:45
- Gertrauda – 2:06
- Tokyo Neon – 4:15
- Extension of You – 4:52
- Mirror Mirror – 3:14
- With a Billion Worldful of <3 – 3:26
- Every Other Ghost – 3:23
- Fossil – 3:34
- Rubber Human – 2:26
- Excalibur – 2:57
- Let the Maggots Sing – 4:27
- Nine Point Eight (Special Edit) – 4:47
- (Bonus) Still Alive (Cover) – 3:01 (Youtube Only)

features two phrases in “Mili-ish,” but this time the “Mili-ish” has been translated by someone called Shiraki on www1.fightrising.com. One of these phrases is “lyrr viva tou conquieta aeterno amora,” meaning “I live, even though you die, I will always love you.” This phrase is at the end of each chorus, and it hints at the witch’s fate without the listener even realizing. The other phrase is the final words of the witch, which are “vive torr amora vrk,” meaning “live, my beloved wolf.” This connects with the first phrase, saying that the wolf is respecting the witch’s final words and living on even though it hurts immensely. The song is very fantastical and melancholy, but it has an epic instrumental in the background that makes it sound like a true battle is happening.

In a similar theme of losing someone you love, we get the song where the title of this essay comes from: “Extension of You.” The song begins with what seems to be a robot gaining sentience, being taught how to sing, and learning how to become human. These things are shown with lines like:

First thing I learned
I have to breathe
Secondly I learned to eat

The robot then develops skin, organs, clothes, and anything else a human could need... except emotions. It's then revealed that the presumed creator of this robot is dead, with the robot saying:

For the first time you failed
And I asked myself
Is there meaning at all
I know that bodies rot
But where are your self
Where are all your thoughts

With this, the robot begins to develop emotions like desperation, wanting to believe that ghosts are real so it could see its creator again. The robot keeps pondering these emotions, asking if they feel good because it doesn't know. It then begins to sing, just as its creator had taught it. The piece is truly touching, and it's a song I don't listen to often because it's so unbelievably saddening.

My personal favorite song on the album is “Excalibur,” an upbeat song that's a joy to listen to. The piano, high violin, and quick drums create a beautiful tune that uplifts the spirits. The story is simple: two people want to build titanium machines in order to save the world one day,

but fail until the very end when they turn the singer into a cyborg. They then go off to live another day together. The song is simple, catchy, and really makes you feel for these characters you know nothing about. A lot of Mili's songs have a dystopian feel to them, and this song is no exception. It makes you feel like these two are roughing it out in a cruel world with the line:

We've digged through the dump
Looking for treasures unfound

The two characters have to dig through garbage to find anything of use to them, but they're just happy to be with each other in the end. It's a beautiful example of lyrical dissonance, where the tone of the lyrics and the tone of the music is different. The music is happy and uplifting, but the lyrics tell the story of two people who only have each other trying to save the world from an unknown danger.

My Opinion

Millennium Mother is my favorite album from Mili in sound and poetic beauty. Every song has so much depth, the instrumentation has improved since previous albums, and some of my favorite songs of all time are from *Millennium Mother*. This album has impacted my creativity and storytelling in such a positive way, and I can't recommend this band enough to anyone I talk to. As I said before, it's an experience listening to Mili. It's not just a song with lyrics, it's a beautiful story accompanied by heavenly instrumentation. The description of this album states, "*Millennium Mother* will make you fall in love with music all over again," and I can say that it did just that for me. It is because of this that I would call this band's music an extension of me,

as I feel it's become so engrained within me. I cannot sing Mili's praises enough, and I hope that anyone who listens to them will feel the same way.