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Review: Bike for Three! (So Much Forever, 2014)

 [January 14, 2015](#)  [Valerie Polichar](#)



If their first album made fire with the smoldering "Lazarus

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The Unappreciated MiniCast

Phenomenon,” *So Much Forever* explores the elements of air and earth. Joëlle Phuong Minh Lê’s music is sweeping and lofty, multi-textured and soaring; Richard Terfry’s lyrics traverse space and distance. Music and words reach skyward, but Terfry’s flow is anchored, steady, heavy, keeping the music grounded, just within reach of the listener’s heart. Lê’s production is for the most part thoughtful and remarkably clean, allowing the dozens of instrumental and vocal layers to find their own space and yet to speak harmoniously.

The story of *Bike for Three!* is already the stuff of legend: she’s in Belgium, he’s in Canada. Terfry already had a following as indie rap artist *Buck 65*; Lê was making a name for herself with electronic work as *Greetings from Tuskan*. They’ve never met. And together they make music that is intricate, profound, never revealed immediately but expanding and unfolding on repeat listens.

If the music is rich, its messages are also finely concentrated. The initial throb of “Successful with Heavy Losses” conveys the entire concept of the song’s title in that single hook. It goes on, of course, building a multilayered tapestry in Lê’s classic fashion. The repeated vocal — “Suffice to say / there is a heavy price to pay” — comes across as extraneous, but Terfry successfully employs his voice as a textured percussion in the piece as well.

“Sublimation,” possibly the album’s loveliest track, is sticky-sexy with dubstep buzz and Lê’s French vocals, but a steady piano hook pulls the song through an inside-out musical transformation that feels a bit like being sucked through an SF-movie warp drive, and Terfry’s lyrics here are immense, life-central, validating: “I’m exactly like a phenomenon, and so are you.”

The jarring “Wolf Sister” gets in your face; low-fi and dubstep elements combine with the most conventional rap flow Terfry creates on this album. The mix here favors the vocal track, and Lê’s production choices initially feel less well conceived than on other pieces. These factors



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ultimately weaken the song, but the repeated phrase “Don’t let go,” along with Lê’s clear vocals, redeem the track.

The journeys here are complex, interrupted, extensive. The music on “Stay Close Until We Reach the End” has an almost cinematic feel — a spy movie, for sure, with tight cuts following a motorcycle down narrow cobbled alleys. Meanwhile Terfry lays down a sharply rhythmic flow that’s chopped off menacingly at the close of the track. “The Dream” mixes sexual breathing with the dream itself, “a boy and a girl destroying the world: you and me,” as it segues first into a private party, then a journey through planetary skies. Listening to a single song we travel through continents of change, experience a novel’s worth of adventure.

“This is the end again. This is where we change our faces,” “Conflation” warns, in arguably the album’s most brutal and poetic turn. “We’re so close and further apart than ever. We’re blind owls in elevator shafts...The truth is ugly, and simplicity is overrated.” There’s no attempt to mask painful reality here. “We love the way we hate ourselves. We love from a safe distance,” Terfry sings —he could be singing about himself, about the human race, about the creative partnership that is Bike For Three!: “My love will level this city.”

Unappreciated Scholars Review Grade: A

So Much Forever is available on [iTunes](#) and [Circle Into Square](#); some tracks are available via [Bandcamp](#) and [Soundcloud](#). Follow Bike for Three! on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/bikeforthree>.

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