

# Ólafur Arnalds

## COMPOSER

Ólafur Arnalds has steadily built a reputation as one of the world's most bright and able young composers. Purveying a neo-classical style with an array of influences which range from electronica to minimalism, he is an artist who draws from a variety of sources whilst maintaining his own unique sound. Since the release of his 2007 debut, *Eulogy for Evolution*, he has put his name to a variety of projects. The accompanying small-scale live shows have taken him across Europe, North America and to China, and are where the intimacy of Arnalds' performance and personality shine through. 2013 saw the release of his third full-length studio album, **For Now I Am Winter**; which is a categorical side-step away from the sound he is best known for. His most recent album, **Island Songs**, (2016) features seven songs recorded and performed with local artists in seven different locations across Iceland.

There can be little doubt that the recent and rapid progression of Arnalds' career has hastened his development both as a composer and as a figure of renown, and the increasing variety of his work has clearly been an aid. Originally the drummer in hardcore/metal bands Fighting Shit and Celestine, amongst others, Arnalds is now highly acclaimed worldwide as a multi-instrumentalist and producer. The 26-year-old Icelander from Mosfellsbær, a small-town suburb of *Reykjavik*, mixes strings and piano with loops and edgy beats to create an immersive, immediate, bold and tantalizing crossover between ambient, electronic and pop. He has been involved with various projects outside of his album work, having had his music appear in many films, television shows and advertisements. His songs have been featured in multiple seasons of **So You Think You Can Dance**. He also spoke at length on the subject of fan-submitted art in the 2011 documentary film **Press Pause Play**. His song "Til Enda" was used in a trailer for the 2012 film **Looper**. More recently, Ólafur was commissioned to compose the score for the highly acclaimed and wildly popular ITV/Kudos series, **Broadchurch (Series 1-3)** starring Olivia Colman and David Tennant. In 2012, his song "Allt Varð Hljótt" was used in **The Hunger Games** score and soundtrack. The combination of all of the above has helped Arnalds find his own space in a scene which spans a great deal of the musical landscape, from the ambient works of Max Richter to the expansive soundscapes of his countrymen, Sigur Rós, and the neo-classical compositions of Jóhann Jóhannsson.

In 2004, Ólafur composed and recorded the intro and two outros for tracks on the German metal band **Heaven Shall Burn's** album, **Antigone**. He described how he got to know them: "I was playing drums in a hardcore band and we were Heaven Shall Burn on their Icelandic tour. Being a huge fan, I gave them a demo with some very overly dramatic prog-rock songs I had been making at home - it was not so classic like this but had some badly computerized strings and piano in it. A few months later they contacted me asked if I would write some intros and outros for their new album, but only with the piano/strings elements - So I wrote my first classical pieces. Their album was a big success in Europe and a few months later I got a phone call from a label asking 'would you be interested in making a full album with compositions like this?' I hadn't really considered continuing writing music like this, but said yes." As a result, on 12 October 2007, Ólafur's first solo album **Eulogy For Evolution** was released. It was followed by the EP, **Variations of Static**, in 2008. In the same year, Ólafur toured with **Sigur Ros** and sold out London's Barbican.

In April 2009, Ólafur composed and released a track daily for seven days, instantly making each track available within 24 hours. The collection of tracks was entitled **Found Songs**. In October 2009, the ballet **Dyad 1909** premiered with a score composed by Ólafur. Choreographed by **Wayne Macgregor**, and performed by his Random Dance ensemble, the ballet was inspired by Ernest Shackleton's Nimrod expedition to the South Pole in 1909. In April 2010, Ólafur released his next album, **...And They Have Escaped The Weight Of Darkness**. In the same year China based promoter **Split Works** invited Ólafur to go on what turned out to be a very well received tour of Asia. On October 3, 2011, Ólafur started another seven-day composition project similar to **Found Songs**, this one entitled **Living Room Songs**. The tracks were made available on subsequent days throughout one specific week. The project was released as an album on December 23, 2011. In November 2012, Ólafur announced a new partnership with the **Universal Music** label **Mercury Classics**, the first album being **For now I am Winter**, which was released to huge critical and public acclaim in February 2013, and the title track of which was used extensively across Showtime's **Masters Of Sex**.

The use of fuller orchestration allows **For Now I Am Winter** room to breathe, grow and flourish as well as emphasising its dynamic shifts, with the cinematic conclusion to **Only The Winds** managing to provide some of the record's deepest and most dramatic moments. The minimalism of foregone outings is noticeably less prominent, but undoubtedly the biggest leap is made with the frequent use of vocal melodies. In the past the suggestion had been to collaborate with a well-known singer, a prospect which did not sit comfortably. "None of that really felt right to me. It felt so forced and it didn't feel like we were doing it for the right reasons". Having worked with and used the vocals of **Agent Fresco** singer **Arnór Dan Arnarson** in a track for **Ryuichi Sakamoto's** Japanese tsunami benefit project - which would make it onto the new album as **Old Skin** - the shimmering result was so successful and enjoyable that Arnór's vocals now appear on three more tracks, **For Now I Am Winter**, **Reclaim** and **A Stutter**. The slow-moving title track is like nothing which has come before it; its lethargic and sullen melody creating an outcome that may have been near-unimaginable just 18 months ago. **For Now I Am Winter** undoubtedly represents Arnalds' biggest step so far. It is a transformation in which the form is redolent of

what it has succeeded, but one in which something has evolved in the Icelandic musician's approach. Despite a prolonged process of creation, it is a release which has the full weight of its maker behind it.

"I really want to concentrate on this album and I really believe in this album. I think it's by far the best thing I've done. I'm really happy that I made this decision to try something different." For Arnalds, the concept of evolution and seasonal change is one which has been nearly ever-present in his music. Here it continues both musically and conceptually – Arnalds' own framework is fulfilled and we hear a personal evolution as a composer and, for the first time, as a songwriter.

## **FILM & TELEVISION**

### **PHILIP K. DICK'S ELECTRIC DREAMS**

Channel 4 / Sony Pictures  
Directors: Julian Jarrold, David Farr  
Producers: Lynn Horsford, Rupert Ryle-Hodges  
Starring: Timothy Spall, Bryan Cranston, Steve Buscemi

### **BROADCHURCH (Series 1 - 3)**

Kudos Film & Television / ITV  
Director: James Strong, Euros Lyn  
Producer: Richard Stokes  
Starring: Olivia Colman, David Tennant  
\*\*\*BAFTA Award Nomination: **Best Original TV Music 2014**\*\*\*  
\*\*\*BAFTA Award Nomination: **Best Original TV Music 2016**\*\*\*

### **SEQUELA**

Sedig Productions  
Director: Iman Azar  
Producer: Zavosh Zabolian  
Starring: Arman Ghafouri, Erin Stewart

### **ANOTHER HAPPY DAY**

Cineric  
Director: Sam Levinson  
Producer: Ellen Barkin, Pamela Lynn Fields, Johnny Lin, Michael Nardelli  
Starring: Ellen Barkin, Ellen Burstyn, Demi Moore, Thomas Haden-Church, Kate Bosworth, George Kennedy

### **GIMME SHELTER**

Day Twenty-Eight Films  
Director: Ron Krauss  
Producer: Jeff Rice  
Starring: Rosario Dawson, Vanessa Hudgens, Brendan Fraser, James Earl Jones

### **THE INVISIBLE FRONT**

Forest Brothers  
Director: Mark Johnston  
Producer: Mark Johnston

### **ÓRÓI**

The Icelandic Film Company  
Director: Baldvin Zophoníasson  
Producer: Júlíus Kemp, Ingvar Pórðarson

### **VORNARSTRÆTI (Life In A Fishbowl)**

The Icelandic Film Company  
Director: Baldvin Zophoníasson  
Producer: Júlíus Kemp, Ingvar Pórðarson  
Starring: Hera Hilmar

### **BLINKY TM**

Image Now Films  
Director: Ruairi Robinson  
Producer: Marshall Rawlings, Nick Ryan