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## The Affair \*\*\*\*



MARCELO ZARVOS

Varèse Sarabande 302 067 374 8

29 tracks - 57:12

The popular Showtime TV series *The Affair* chronicles the events of a sudden and unexpected romance between two strangers, both of whom are already married. This isn't just your typical adulterous interlude, however, and by showing the relationship from both the male's and the female's perspective, the story uncovers just what can be lost in translation, and how the same event can take a different toll on individuals.

Scoring such a diverse and narratively rich series could throw up a few problems for some composers but, in the hands of Marcelo Zarvos, the music takes an interesting turn. Separating the two main character themes, Zarvos gradually interweaves melodic devices and instrumentation, revealing how the lives of the two families slowly become caught up in each other over time. While sounds remain distinct, there is a slight muddying of the musical waters, and before long, themes start to take on elements of each other.

There's a real ethereal undertone to Zarvos' scoring. His pieces for the "Noah" side of the soundtrack utilize minimalist synth drones, building a sound that is both placid and rich. As the cues progress, further themes are explored and uncovered; over time, we get to understand more of the characters and their inner demons. "Noah Wanders" is particularly good at this; based on a relatively simple tuned percussion melody, the track is understated and pared back, and yet brims with emotion. Ostinati come and go, reverberating throughout the piece. The sound is tentative and uncertain, driving home the exact point it intends. This tone continues throughout the soundtrack, underscoring with both a sense of hesitation and foreboding trouble. While tracks may contain discernible melodies, they rarely last for long; stopping and starting, the broken tunes mark the development of the dangerous affair, and the hesitations between the two central characters.

That's not to say that there aren't moments of real musical worth, either. "Lighthouse" and "The Ranch" seep into one another, creating an extended melodic moment that really goes places. While the former works as a romantic, yet troubled piece, the latter has a much darker sound, replacing the previous track's piano and synth with sporadic percussion and guitar. The liaison between the two cues works as development, enabling Zarvos to explore multiple themes within the same storyline.

While the soundtrack does employ similar motifs in most of the cues, there are enough differences to warrant extended listening. The guitar-led waltz "Oscar's Call," for example, uses the same electronic drones as found elsewhere on the album, but by introducing a new theme into the mix, it adds a new element to the general sound of the score. The dance elements of the track do a wonderful job of describing the relationship between the central characters, who too must dance around one another. While each knows where the other is going, there's no sense of who is leading whom, and with that comes widespread uncertainty.

In *The Affair*, Zarvos has hit on something special. While the music might be understated in tone, it has enough variation and intrigue in order to both tell a story and to keep listeners wanting more. The sheer simplicity of the score lends a certain tension, and for large parts of the album it's hard to determine exactly what sort of emotion the music is trying to communicate. For a series like *The Affair*, there couldn't be a better kind of soundtrack. With his ability to build intensity and subtly provoke emotion, Zarvos more than proves his worth as a composer, and whatever he has in store for the next season of *The Affair* should be highly anticipated. —**Hannah Lamarque**

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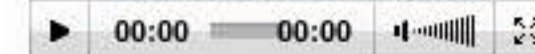


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