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Accordion anthems for our times

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"What is supremely attractive is the earthiness, the urgency, the absolute conviction of voice meeting accordion."

I first heard **Antti Paalanen** around the release of *Breathbox* (2010). In the same audience was **Kimmo Pohjonen** who'd had such strong belief in Antti that he'd agreed to produce the album. We listened to Antti's brilliant playing, lyrical and thoughtful sitting alongside the permission he'd given himself to be an accordion wild-child too: he was emerging as someone for whom boundaries simply didn't exist.

Ten years on, and Antti has achieved his vision of giving the accordion a place in a much wider musical world than its heritage as a traditional dance instrument might expect.

Rujo means barbarous or coarse, "unrefined" he says, yet, here, I don't feel that the lyricism and beauty has gone (*The Sky is Blue and White* is exquisite). What is supremely attractive is the earthiness, the urgency, the absolute conviction of voice meeting accordion in a compulsive, anthemic production partnership with **Samuli Volanto**, **Lauri Halavaara** and **Jonas Olsson**, and drummer **Teemu Vuorela** and **Piia Kleemola** on kantele.

Pollination is a pop-emblazoned song about climate change, while the fiery growls of Antti and his accordion are thrilling and empowering in *Elä* and the opening *Dance for Me*: "come on, dance for me, baby" he beckons. Who can resist?

ANTTI PAALANEN: *Rujo*
Zen Master Records / Rockadillo Records ZENCD 2170

