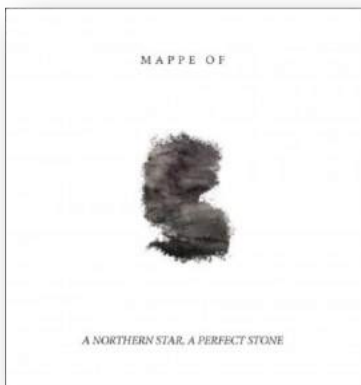


## Review: Canadian artist Mappe Of charts new, ethereal course

**Scott Stroud**

July 25



Mappe Of, "A Northern Star, A Perfect Stone" (Paper Bag Records)

A Canadian artist who spent time busking in Australia and playing heavy metal with his friends has taken his work in an ethereal new direction.

The result is an art-rock delicacy, "A Northern Star, A Perfect Stone." It's an airy mix of haunting, old-growth melodies and meandering soundscapes that bears a kinship to the music of Bon Iver but manages to find its own way home.

The artist, Tom Meikle, builds the work of Mappe Of on a folk foundation but leans on technology to take listeners on a dreamy sound-ride. On "Cavern's Dark" and "Nimbin," for example, delicate melodies rise and fall, mingling Meikle's pleasantly-ranging vocals with finger-picked acoustic guitar and swelling accompaniment.

The spells cast here reward repeat listening — this is grow-on-you music.

Of course, work this self-conscious runs the risk of coming off as too precious, and Meikle has hinted in interviews at hidden layers of meaning here. If that's the case, he's pretty good at hiding them.

Still, airy, even obtuse lyrics in ornate sonic packaging have worked just fine for Bon Iver, and the music here occasionally captures similar magic. As background music — for an elegant cocktail party, say — it just might be perfect (yes, the hipsters will love it).

Better, then, to let listeners absorb the message right there on the surface on their own terms — that this promising young artist surely has more intriguing explorations up his sleeve.