



Derek Piotr Interview

Written by [Magnus Molin](#) on 26/11/2012 in [Interviews](#)



Derek Piotr, currently based in New England but born in Lublin, Poland 1991. Derek is a sound artist, vocalist and composer whose work deals mainly with sampling the human voice.

Between 2011 and 2012 Derek have released in total ten releases, with his latest release *Radio Mantras* on [Bitsquare Records](#) that also includes two remixes by *Paul Heslin* and *Safety Scissors*. His upcoming album *Raj* will be released in February 2013. Derek is also collaborating with *Kevin C. Smith*, under the alias *DPCKCS*, having one EP released back in 2010 on 'Very Nice Noise'.

Nominated by the jury for *Prix Ars Electronica* in Digital Musics, collaborations with artists such as *AGF*, [Richard Chartier](#) and *Scanner*, Derek really has an interesting history as a musician. IMPULS Magazine got the opportunity to ask Derek a couple of questions about his life and history as a musician.

Q: Tell our readers a little more about yourself?

A: I am a 21-year old Polish-born vocalist, producer and composer. I live now in the US, in the deep forest, though I am only 2 hours from Manhattan. I am grateful for this, oneness with nature is a huge part of my process; I take daily walks and enjoy the subtleness of woodland movements. But of course it is also nice to be able to play shows in New York regularly. I have released 2 solo albums since 2011, am about to release my third, and work mainly with digital composition and my own voice, as well as with other vocalists. I have interned for *Meredith Monk*, and, though all my pieces include my own voice, most are wordless. I like to think (or hope) that purity of intent and feeling can be fully felt and expressed without the container of words.

Q: When did you start producing your own music?

A: I started working on tracks in 2006, under a different name, though most were quite minimal and never released. in 2009 I began seriously starting to think about production and layering. In a way i regret having the option of the internet when i started, when i was much younger i posted tracks i am definitely not proud of now. It's a different thing than having a box of tapes you can sort through in your bedroom or whatever; some I am proud of, but publishing them for free was maybe a bit dangerous. AGORA (published in 2011) is what i consider my debut solo effort. Remixes are very important in my work; overall I love contrast so it is always very exciting to me to have some disparate artists re-interpret my work. Take for instance my Deliver single; the [Best Fwends](#) remix and [Pinkcourtesyphone](#)'s rework are so different they might as well not even be the same song. It is also amusing to me to bring together both those artists on the same release; I think this is probably the only time they'll ever end up near each other.

Q: How did you become involved in the type of music you produce now?

A: I've sort of always been doing this kind of music since I began. My earlier works were, as I said, much simpler, but glitchy production and experimental songwriting as well as abstract noise pieces have always been part of my output.

Q: Where and how do you get inspiration for your music and lyrics?

A: Mostly my lyrics are one-takes that are completely improvised. Sometimes i re-record them, for instance, i had [this vocal line](#) sitting on my hard drive and i used it in a somewhat dadaist sense for this EP with gobs, and I have re-recorded the vocal for use on my next record. Occasionally I'll write a poem or a thought down, often I write poetry sometimes, and will sift through notes or poems months later and find syllables that fit whatever beat I'm working on. I'd say of all my lyrics, 80% are pure first-try improvisation.

Q: Are there any real life stories related to your lyrics?

A: In a very abstract sense, yes. I like to think of some of my lyrics as potential mantras or affirmations, others are particular images or experiences that have affected me, but they always get put through an objective lens. It's about what's universal at the end. For instance in AGORA the lyrics focused on hands. Mainly though, I write wordless vocal material.

Q: AGF, Richard Chartier and Scanner are three big and renowned artists, how did you start collaborate with them?

A: AGF and I started emailing in 2008 and two years later she offered to produce for me, which resulted in my debut record, AGORA. I would occasionally send her tracks and I suppose she liked what she heard. I have always had a fascination with her music; when I was much younger i discovered her debut album [Head Slash Bauch](#). At the time I had no idea of her status as a musician; she continues to be a humble, inspiring friend. I was able to meet her in flesh in April, and at time of writing she is actually finishing mastering my next album, Raj. She introduced me to Richard and Scanner; Robin and I want to do a full collaborative project at some point, but he and Richard have both completed remixes for me.

Q: Are you currently working on any new releases?

A: As mentioned above, Antye is mastering my third solo album, which is called Raj. Raj in hindi means kingdom; in Polish and most slavic languages it means paradise. The album is dark and aggressive – intentionally overdriven, with a lot of noise floor, as well as a lot of eastern elements (gamelan, balafon, pinpeat). I have always been fond of eastern tones, scales and percussion, and I see the heavy inclusion of those elements on Raj as a sort of continuity of the work i began on AGORA, though this time with instrumental elements and not vocalists. I began working on the record last December, I was recording in a cathedral with countertenor singer Mikah Meyer (that material has yet to see the light of day – soon!), and all the organ parts on Raj I played myself. Aside from AGF's mastering, I am the sole performer, producer and executor of this work. I am hoping to release the album in February.

Q: What are your future plans?

A: I have quite a few collaborations planned for release in 2013, one with [Bartholomäus Traubeck](#), as well as developing my solo work. You can follow my updates at <http://derekpiotr.com>

Q: You are about to release your eleventh release ‘Raj’ – Can you explain what your listeners can expect from it?

A: Raj is a very aggressive and personal record for me, a lot of the inspiration I had for this album came from bands like Black Pus, The Blood Brothers, very aggressive music. The tracks are all quite short. I drew inspiration as well from gamelan and pinpeat orchestras – on some recordings you find, the playing is almost more of a physical exercise, and less about the sound. Overall I’m interested to bring some physicality to otherwise quite digital music. The record will be out as self-released digital and CD early next year, with distribution. I am debating whether or not to do free/pay what you wish digital of the record, with retail physical product. Overall I’m rather more interested in the work reaching ears than earning minuscule digital sales, so we’ll see what form I develop for the digital release.

Q: What is a normal process when you are working with music?

A: Think in layers, chop, arrange, make additions, then let stand. Often I create small projects or even files of single noises over the period of three or four months and then arrange them in the space of a day, after I have collected the sound palate I’m after, with some subtle (or overt) re-arranging afterwards. Overall though, the quick assembly allows the piece to gather a momentum and save it from what might otherwise be a very static or clever formation. I always use my voice at least once in a piece.

Q: A question from our music enthusiasts: What DAW are you using and what’s your favorite instrument, both hardware and software?

A: I have tried a lot of different software and the ones I keep coming back to are audacity and Logic. I find ableton to be a very confining program and Max/MSP patchwork has always driven me nuts, I guess I just don’t have the patience! Audacity was what I started making music on, and sometimes it can be quite refreshing to dump what I’m working on in there and chop away, then fix in Logic later. My favorite mic to use is the Shure SM58, in my opinion it gives the cleanest, least “accented” sound on vocals while remaining relatively warm, I use a macbook pro, micro-cassette recorder, zoom h2, and various instruments. My favourite instrument is probably the bell, or right now it’s the balafon.

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