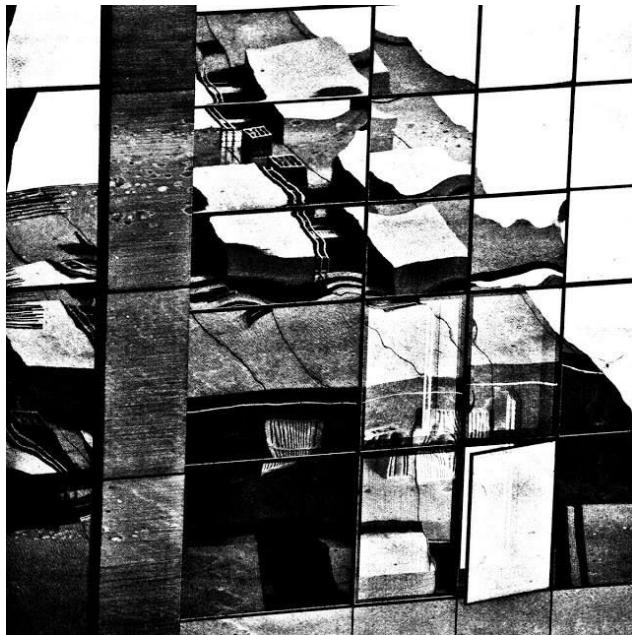


Thursday, February 20, 2020

Derek Piotr - Raj (2013)



After sending out the previously mentioned work-in-progress interviews, I found myself in somewhat of a slump as to what to write about next. Musically, I'm all over the place right now in my free time and I'm also currently working on another writing project which I'll share sometimes soon, for those interested. So in the end, the good ol' submission basket saved the day once again.

[Derek Piotr - Raj](#) (bandcamp)

Based in New England, US, this Polish-born composer/producer dropped into my view out of nowhere. Back in 2013, I wasn't too deep into electronic music and noise, so in all honesty I was completely oblivious to his past work even though his repertoire up to that point contained a number of previously released albums. The main focus of his work is centered on samples of the human voice which are then used in various incarnations of electronics, ranging from noise, glitch, industrial and even something that would be considered dream poppy.

Immediately after the first tone of "Raj" kicked in, it grasped me fully. "Spine" manages to create a certain kind of mood within seconds, setting the tone for the rest of the record in a very direct and simplistic way. It easily gears you up for what is coming up ahead and, let me tell you, you should come prepared.

Compared to other electronic noise projects that I've listened to, "Raj" is not as dirty and harsh. Sure, even the opening track hosts a considerable amount of static waves and crackling walls of distortion, but it is all executed in a delicate way. In the midst of the noise, you get introduced to small oases of serenity. There's a weird elegant swinging going on between the violence and the peacefulness, an almost naturally calculated ebb and flow.

It feels like this edged precision is the main characteristic of the vocal section of "Raj". One of the interesting things about Derek's work in general is his previously mentioned focus on using and manipulating vocal samples. On this record specifically, those samples create a thin line which is continually pushing the aforementioned ebb and flow. You would assume that the vocals would bring a certain dose of calm into a noise project, but even though they are peaceful they are also quite eerie in a way, droning and almost

mentally violent somehow. The way they are sampled, cut, used and looped, gives a nigh maddening feeling and it ends up seeming like the whole record has a ritualistic theme to it. These samples build such an image in your mind's eye that they can go towards both ends of the spectrum, soothing and aggressive, but never quite tip over fully. The cacophony of it all is methodical, almost technically precise and even cerebral in many instances. It's an endless dance of contrasts and steep divergences.

Another flavor to all this, despite having this ritualistic and naturally flowing trait, the record seems cold and alien. There's just something strangely robotic about the entire thing, as if "Raj" was a recorded diary of some rusted and malfunctioned android from an age long forgotten. And it demands that you listen to it.

When I listened to "Raj" a couple of times for this review I then decided to check out some other material from Derek. There is a whole swarm of recorded material up on his bandcamp profile, so I seriously need some catching up to do. It sincerely warms my heart when I see artists so passionate and active after so many years of working on a project. All the best of luck to Derek in all his future endeavors and I hope all of you decide to give him a chance and check out his work. Thanks for reading!

Posted by [xmoonxhowlerx](#) at [8:17 PM](#)

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