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Review: Derek Piotr – Forest People Pop

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When the voice passes through auto-tune, it is corrected. Intention and execution are brought into seamless parallel. Deviations are either snapped back into line or solidified into decisive and angular turns, stripping away those ambiguous wobbles of vibrato that ultimately swerve neither this way nor that. Of course, this is precisely what happens whenever our wavering organic intentions are funnelled into the rigid calculus of digital processing; human life is squashed into blocks, reduced to hyperbole, stripped of the darkness of self-doubt and existential perplexity. Put simply, *Forest People Pop* is an album of auto-tuned voice and computer-processed percussion; biomechanical life reduced to a scaffold of bone and digital pixel, liberated from the potentially uncertain facets of music (most notably, those slippery bastards known as melody and harmony), leaving just punches of plosive and lyrical confession: pop at its most glistening, its most flimsy, its most superficial.

Despite moving in sharp zig-zags, Piotr's voice is in a strange anti-gravitational free-flow, almost improvisational in how the words float up and down over the beat. There's something conversational in its upturns of query and breathy admissions, albeit with the intonation exaggerated to the extent of musical theatre (or at least, unravelled into a form of incantatory sleep-talk). Meanwhile, the surrounding music pulsates and flashes like a chassis of broken lights, with organic material (field recordings, accordions, stringed instruments, obfuscated sirens, tapped glass) chopped into Morse code, sampled and resampled. Little motifs appear fleetingly and fade away, leaving little imprint as they do so. While I listen to *Forest People Pop*, I'm enamoured by its smooth surfaces and intricate constellations of sound. Yet as soon as the record finishes, its energy drains out of me almost instantly. I can barely recall a single note or drum pattern. It's pure sugar. It's sexy and cold. And yet I listen again and again, hanging of its transient allure, compelled by the vigour with which it clings so urgently to the present moment.