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# Review: Derek Piotr – Raj Article by Jack Chuter Jack Chuter's Website

*The Polish-born composer self-releases his third full-length, expanding on his own mysterious adoption of electronic dance music.*

*Raj* stands like a totem pole, its core elements (marching bass drum thumps, aggressive synthesisers, chopped up vocal moans) stacked towards the sky. It's a meditation on a solitary vision – a sort of vertical liberation that arises from its insistence on reprising the same sonic arrangement over and over again – and while the album isn't without the odd surprise or quashed expectation, progressing through it feels like travelling upward along an undeviating straight line, uncovering the intimate details of *one* idea rather than skirting nervously around the edge of many.

The same rhythmic stomp always comes back, etching a central gravitational point around which the rest of *Raj* can congregate: voices chopped and spewed into malfunctioning patterns, distant organ drones (recorded at St Peter's Cathedral), electronics that buzz and rev like distorted guitars. The same arrangements recur under the guise of different samples and embellishments, boring deeper into the same concentrated point as though adopting the sound as an essential life process – breathing in the same rhythms, sighs and glitches over and over again until Piotr becomes inseparably entwined with them.

At times it seems to float between the blissful return of modern day club music and the mysterious energy of primitive ritual, verging on danceability during the crackling onward drive of "Grave" and heaving laboriously like some futuristic machine on "Karakum". Piotr's voice is an interesting element; unstable, slinking snake-like between notes coated in breathy sighs, lacking the lyrical or melodic definition to pull any of these tracks toward the territory of "song". It's a strange sort of music, and despite drilling home its essence throughout its 32 minute duration, *Raj* remains beautifully alien throughout.

Tags: Derek Piotr, Raj