

Derek Piotr: Raj

Our Rating:

87 / 100

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[>] Derek Piotr - Amendola

Raj, the new album from Polish-born composer [Derek Piotr](#) is haunting, like the sound of a mental collapse. Fueled by rhythms built on natural and artificial sounds, eschewing the term *beats* for something more vague and less concrete, he arranges sounds in both aesthetically pleasing and mentally straining, complex ways. Using chopped vocals to harken back to some unknown time of humanity, like a reflection of a hologram, *Raj* is the visual epigraph of something perceived as no longer here. In a way, the experimental ambiance of Piotr expresses some interest in early [Thom Yorke](#), but that's the thing - Piotr is interested in many elements of music and sounds, but none of these influences overwhelm to the extent that this becomes anything other than what it is. This music sheds influence ambitiously. It is the kid of fearful product that creates genres while informing and reestablishing others.

To be honest, *Raj* relies heavily on "found sounds," a technique we've both praised and lauded in past reviews. In every possible way, Piotr escapes the context of "found sound" used so haphazardly in other forms of techno and dub step music. Piotr arranges sounds the way they should be, which is what an art form should do. It should take an existing element and define every other work of "art" that has implemented as wrong by its own definitions. *Raj* is radical enough to do so, and justifiably. It incorporates noise without being noise. *Raj* is more a statement on the internet age, the constant cacophony of information and demands for attention that circle around our brain like vultures, nipping and tearing away at the few remaining fibers of the once collective unconscious. It is a form of art that could not exist without the internet, but it is also the kind of art that should be around considering we *do* have the internet.

To rephrase that, *Raj* and Piotr's cannon in general reflect on an internet inspired world, it examines with open eyes the contextual and thematic repercussions, the confusion and stress and mass ambiguity, that exist where information is completely open and free and universal, or so it seems. For *Raj* also expresses interest in that fact that while we perceive the internet and the information it provides as universal, it isn't - not yet. Imagine playing *Raj* to someone without the internet, without context, without even a firm understanding of what a computer is or what makes something digital. To those persons, *Raj* could sound like anything, those predispositions are all up to imagination. It would probably be terrifying, but beyond that who is to say what connotations the music could receive outside of its form? For these reasons, the ability to inspire complex thought and actual cognitive discourse, *Raj* is a success, both as a musical album and as a piece of art. For *Raj*, if it was technically capable by medium, would have just as strong of a presence on the wall of a modern art gallery. Indeed Piotr has found some recognition in strange literary and art circles, expanding a cultural movement that has had slow starts in various genres. *Raj* is a sign that all art forms are attempting to address the issues of a post-internet age instead of one simply living inside of it.

Piotr is known to combine electronic and analogue, ambient sounds in his work, but the real catch is how static and tonal sounds are mashed together to form some kind of mechanical human sound machine. The effect is disturbing in a nightmarish sort of way, and a dystopian socioeconomic sort of way all at the same time. There is no distinct context in *Raj* but Orwellian thoughts do spring to mind, if not something more sinister. In this way *Raj* is yet another algorithm for our modern world with its miss-mash of sounds all plummeting into earlobes, losing meaning as soon as they are consumed. The mind bending sounds of *Raj*, however, fail to lose meaning. Soundscapes are carefully contracted, stranding the listener in a wasteland only for them to find themselves in some sort of utopia, or bound within clandestine walls moments later.

Raj and the [rest](#) of Piotr's work puts our modern definition of experimental to shame. When you look at the rest of our generations's "experimental" music it is simply quirky miscalculations layered onto of melodies from decades past, passed off to the public as another commercial ideology to make yourself "different" and to stand outside of the crowd without ever, in actuality, having to separate yourself from anything. Piotr stands proudly, if perhaps alone, on the fringes of the art world, creating something that can, justifiably, be called art more than any other description. Even still, the work stands for itself and defies even that description, yearning for some new form of expression to rise from its meaning.