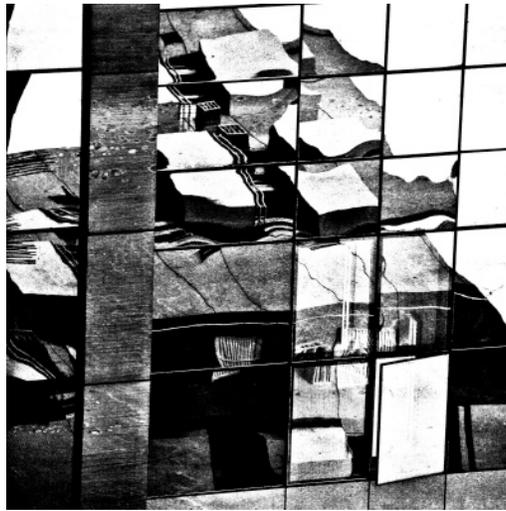


Derek Piotr – Raj

Posted: July 18, 2013 | **Author:** [redtoothnclaw](#) | **Filed under:** [2013](#), [2deep4u](#), [Ambient](#), [Ambient Noise](#), [Dark Ambient](#), [Drone](#), [Dub](#), [Electroacoustic](#), [Electronic](#), [Ethereal](#), [Experimental](#), [Futuristic](#), [Glitch](#), [Minimal](#), [Noise](#), [Noise](#), [One guy](#), [Progressive](#), [Sound Collage](#), [wut? o.O](#) | **Tags:** [2013](#), [ambient noise](#), [Dark Ambient](#), [Drone](#), [Dub](#), [Electroacoustic](#), [Electronic](#), [Ethereal](#), [Experimental](#), [Glitch](#), [Journalism](#), [Minimal](#), [Music](#), [Music Reviews](#), [noise](#), [Sound Collage](#) | [Leave a comment »](#)



On ‘Raj’, the third release from Poland’s Derek Piotr, the music featured throughout is a very vocal set of experimental and beat oriented compositions that draws much of it’s content from the voice which is processed and arrange, sometimes acting as a part of the beat itself.

This is my first introduction to Piotr’s music but before I began this review I went back to his previous two releases, ‘Agora’ and ‘Airing’, both of which show Piotr’s subtle but nevertheless, progressive movement through his vocal practices and the digitalized aura that at all times surrounds his work, that being his heavily processed but otherwise organic approach to the broad genre that is electronic music. Throughout Piotr’s previous releases it is apparent that his music has always been hard to pin down and on ‘Raj’ it is even more difficult. In a moment of harsh glitching and hot digital distortion (Spine, Grave) I want to call it noise, during the bits of eclectic beat-oriented madness (‘Amendola’) I am reminded of dub and minimalist techno, throughout the menacing atmosphere that fills the album I want to call it dark ambient, and even then there are so many other genre’s one could tack on to ‘Raj’ yet there is no single point in time on this album in which any of the aforementioned genre tags could fully describe it. With all of that said, Piotr’s third entry is an undoubtably complex effort, brimming with abstract beats, unexpected shifts in direction, and unusual song structures that can be as uninviting as they can be accessible.

Musicians, particularly electronic musicians of Piotr's kind have always expressed some interest in the manipulation of the voice and the use of it as an instrument but it hasn't been until recently, within the past few years that is, that this vocal processing, this sound shaping of the voice has become a seen and used by musicians as a tool for creating beats, melodies, and song structures. Musicians like James Blake, Vladislav Delay, and AGF (whom Derek Piotr has collaborated with) can all be heard using vocals as the primary instrument, alongside synths and the whir and glow of the computer in the post-digital age.

Unlike many electronic musicians, Piotr does not so much work within the perimeters of electronic music as much as he exploits them. The otherwise polished sheen of digital music becomes distorted; ripped free from its most "proper" uses. You can hear the static glitched out synths, pitch shifted tones, and chopped up beats all moving at varying speeds, and Piotr's own disheartening vocal embellishments that are arranged in a rather eerie way over the industrial, menacing soundscape that fills this album. The minimalist compositions and echo of the cold beats remind me of Andy Stott's two 2011 EPs prior to his move toward a more polished sound on his 2012 full length. It's a very visual type of music and I think this aspect has been made even more apparent by the two music videos that accompany the tracks, 'Sand Defacing All Surfaces' and 'Grave'.

Piotr's constant vocal manipulations paired with the desolate digital atmosphere shows a lot of ambition and potential but I do feel like there are many times where these elements come off as more of a burden for the listener than a unique aspect of his work. The vocal manipulations become especially grating along with the repetitiousness of the albums tracks. I found myself thinking it would be nice to hear Piotr's own raw voice, removed of the guise of his editing skills. While individually, most of the tracks aren't something you would listen to as independent pieces the album does pick up on that aspect in that, holistically it works very well, perhaps because the music is so conscious of what it is, even without an established concept.

The tracks are minimal, bare, stripped down, skeletal, and sometimes repetitive; there is a strain of despair and desolation that runs throughout each track. There are moments on this album where this moodiness works much to Piotr's advantage in that it leaves me feeling unease, never feeling content or comfortable in knowing where the next track or sudden shift in direction might take me; never a moment where I felt like I knew what was going to happen next, which proves to be one of the best aspects of this piece of music by the end of the album. In the end, as experimental and impenetrable as 'Raj' may initially sound, there are many moments interjected throughout where the album can feel very accessible, even for audiences unfamiliar with Piotr's unorthodox approach to electronic music.

Overall Rating: 6.8

Favorite Tracks: 'Flow Through Light'

Recommended: AGF, Vladislav Delay, Andy Stott

Released: 26 February 2013

Links: <http://derekpiotr.com/raj/>

-Tyler Thompson