

Day 39: Derek Piotr

[February 15, 2014](#) [Cassie Tarakajian](#) [Leave a comment](#)

I had first heard about Derek Piotr through my brother, who wrote an amazing piece about his experiences with Piotr but which I unfortunately cannot find. I have at least found a [reversed interview](#), in which Piotr is the interviewing and my brother is the interviewee. I was intrigued by Piotr's compositional process, which involves heavy vocal manipulation layered together using Audacity. At the age of 22, he has an impressive repertoire of releases, including three full length solo albums, a remix album, and numerous EPs and singles. He is Poland-born, but currently based out of New England.

Raj was released in 2013, and is Piotr's third full length album. As Piotr states on his website, the album title in Polish means "paradise", and in Hindi means "kingdom". As the title alludes, there are eastern influences, Thematically it is dark and glitchy, experimental but does not escape the influences of IDM. The glitch elements are unpredictable, with vocals jumping out from any direction due to the panning, but each unexpected utterance or percussive sound makes the album exciting. He incorporates vocal elements in a variety of ways, whether it be percussive in "Amendola", melodic "Karakum", or droning in "Deforester". In addition to vocals, he explores other electroacoustic sounds, usually manipulated and used in unconventional ways.

It's a relatively short album, clocking in at 32 minutes for 11 tracks, but still exudes the presence of a full-length album. The album oozes into existence with the track "Spine", featuring a droning organ and deep, semi-synchronous percussive hits merging with static noise and other glitchy sounds. "Amendola" is slightly planted in reality, clinging to Piotr saying "Ten, nine, eight" over and over again, as a rhythmic theme. It feels industrial, as though the sounds are bouncing around in a giant warehouse.

One of my favorite tracks on the album is "Hutan", due to the overall song trajectory. It begins moving slowly, exploring a world of slight melodic droning with manipulated percussive hits on metal and glass objects. The air becomes tense as a white noise sound fills the space, until midway through an EDM bass kicks in, mixing in with the same but faster percussive sounds, along with what to me sounds like animals of the jungle and light allusions of Gregorian chanting.

I highly recommend listening to *Raj* with headphones on. It's easier to get a sense of the spacialization of the different sounds, coming at you from every direction. While *Raj* leans towards being somber and dark, I still find it a fun album to listen to. It's imaginative, and transports you to a different part of the world, whether it be a grimy warehouse or a secluded jungle. If you enjoyed *Virgins*, then I think you will not be let down by *Raj*.