

[February 20, 2019](#)

Artist Interview: Derek Piotr

Derek Piotr is a Poland-born, N.Y.-based producer working primarily in ambient, noise, and glitch, but whose eclectic output defies any single genre. KXSC's own Blake Wagner had the opportunity to ask Derek a few questions about his philosophy towards music, his most recent record, and the various artists who have influenced him.



Blake Wagner: First and foremost, if you could summarize the essence of your music in one sentence or less, how would you describe it?

Derek Piotr: An intense, perpetual attempt to interface with beauty.

BW: How long did it take you to discover that this is the music you were meant to be making? Do you have any thoughts about the direction you'd like to take it in 2019?

DP: I was always singing as a child; along to movies, in the car, badly and loudly with headphones on, etc. Later, I joined choir in primary and middle school. My background has always been the voice. When I came of age (in my early teens), the pop records I was listening to were very process-heavy, digital, stuttered (this was around 2003) so my earliest desires to make my own music responded very much to this kind of soundscape. I didn't have a microphone, but a friend recommended I download the freeware, Audacity. My earliest works were me looping, cutting-up and mauling pre-existing pop songs, and also recordings of my own voice. Since I didn't have a microphone, I'd sing down the phone to my friend, who'd record me on his laptop mic. This obviously produced some crazy distortions.

I'm presently at work on a kind of chamber music album dealing with the loss of my grandmother. Harp, bowed guitar, glass marimba, violin, saxophone...also recordings of her telling stories and conversations that I had taken over the years.

BW: What was the primary source of inspiration behind your most recent full-length production, last year's Grunt? Could you describe the defining characteristics and themes of the record?

DP: *Grunt* was a kind of reaction to how I perceive the state of electronic music today, a lot of it being very glassine, glossy, easy, slick, lacking some kind of human-ness or depth. We've come a long way from the granular synthesis halcyon days of the early 00's, and I will probably always have a sort of nostalgia for that period. *Grunt* also revisited my earliest processes of making music; really clippy edits and ham-fisted cut-and-pastes, I think I felt that I myself had also fallen into the slick trap a little bit, and wanted to shake myself out of it. Also, I love noise.



BW: Depending on the project, your work runs the gamut from serene to brutal. However, you consistently rely on the sound of the human voice. Why is this what links so much of your music, and what is the unique potential of the human voice? Is it just another instrument, or do you have a deeper connection to it?

DP: I think I answered this a little bit already above, I think if I had started my journey playing piano or guitar or something, that's still where I'd be. Regina Spektor still plays piano! But because my primary ore is the voice, I still work most fluidly with that. I am definitely lusty for all kinds of styles though, which is why my projects vary in tone from album to album. There's so little time, and I am so inspired by so much music. I definitely don't think sounds have a hierarchy. I definitely chop and fuck with a recording of a vacuum just as freely and gleefully as I would a recording of a full ensemble.

BW: You were born in Poland and now live in New England, right outside of New York City. What is your connection to Poland and how did you find yourself stateside? In what ways have your environments (past and present) influenced the sound of your music?

DP: I definitely feel nationless, not feeling like I have much allegiance to my home country but also definitely not feeling American. It's very freeing to feel that way. I was one of the first generations to grow up fully online, so I think of my homeland as the internet.

BW: You've been DJ'ing a lot more lately – creatively, what does dance music afford you that your usual ambient/noise fare might not?

DP: It's (usually) less work, and I definitely get to dance myself! The DJ lap was a self-appointed victory lap after playing many, many noise gigs last year. I also ran an internet radio show for half a year and it scratched a similar itch — I love showing off my music library and playing some really insane electro chaabi, or a really rare white label remix, or the most abrasive Vietnamese folk tune, haha. Somehow though, I'm already burned out on DJing, and am really looking forward to some live noise freak-outs this year.

BW: What artists would you recommend for fans interested in learning more about your influences? Would you like to shout-out any contemporaries or collaborators? Favorite releases (singles, albums, EPs, mixes, etc.) of last year?

DP: AGF is one of my biggest most consistent collaborators, big shouts to her! Also, I adore Jean Ritchie, Morton Feldman, Alfred Schnittke, Missy, Shirley Collins, and Fennesz.

BW: And finally, since it's cold and rainy here in L.A., what's your favorite way to enjoy a day at home?

DP: I love a good cup of coffee, game of Rummy, and a glass of liqueur.



Find Derek Piotr on his [website](#) or on [Bandcamp](#), and keep your ears to the ground for his upcoming releases.
— *Blake Wagner, Staff*