

Animal Psi



John Davis – ‘Open Ground’ [Review]

28 Dec 10 - Cassette, Review

Here are three exercises in drone from the latest batch of 15 cassettes from Peasant Magik. Straddling the conspicuously-absent PM100, the batch downplays the momentousness of the event (congratulations Sal!) while equally depriving a diverse lot of phenomenal releases of isolation for due praise. Let's try to make a dent by taking a closer look:

'Open Ground' is an unusual presentation of the familiar, and therefore hard-to-subvert concept. The latest by **John Davis** (SF regular around Root Strata, but also Digitalis and Students of Decay labels) is a C48 done in the man's virtuous drone style. However, with nine tracks in all, he breaks from the formal pattern of sidelong, double-digit expanse in favor of getting to the/a point in a diversity of compositions which don't lose sight of the literal experience of 'drone'. How's he do it? Brilliant and deceptive, Davis manipulates each track along the X-axis (time) to inset a compressed micro-pattern (that is, now a regular pattern) in an otherwise stable tonic. The effect blurs a new-found border with the Noise composition, and offers a new lens to interpret the vivid detail shared with the likes of Alex Cobb and many alumni of his SoD roster. Largely guitar-derived and effects-tweaked, these metallic figures receive a regular bolster from synthesizer which both aids in shaving down the rougher edges to normalize the drone, but also lends a depth which enables the sleight-of-hand outlined above. A prime example is "Vorpal", a warm swirl of synthesized harmonics over which the metal coil of the guitar string warms and cools with objectively unmellow pangs. Highlight "Baker's Note" uses a similar palette, though in drastically different formation, stretching the resonant vibrations out over keynotes, over a babbling stream of electronic evoking the organics of early Growing. Despite the regular heterodoxy of the album – from the room noise on "Vorpal" to the organ song of "Heartland" - finale "Jean Seberg" feels more a bonus, like a cover of some Roy Montgomery western done in muted bent-notes on a heatsick background buzz, the notes dropping as if into liquid, and Davis' masterstroke confirmed. Recommended.



DAVIS, JOHN *Open Ground* (Peasant Magik) cassette

Dec 10 - Cassette, Review – Weekly picks

Northern Californian media artist John Davis is a bit of a renaissance man. Film, photography, and sound design all come together through looping systems that pile old means of construction on top of new ones, with all sorts of erasures and additive marks along the way. The results throughout all of his media can be strikingly beautiful, if idiosyncratic in the way the old becomes new and vice versa. Such has been evident on his musical output for Root Strata, Students Of Decay, and Digitalis; and it's certainly true for his cassette on Peasant Magik. The tape begins with a drone-field of pastoral impressionism that fits very nicely within the overarching aesthetic of Root Strata as something of a reclamation of rural psychedelia (a phrase coined by Flying Saucer Attack to describe their first album), yet Davis intervenes through small phrases of electronic plinks and strange field recordings buried behind the Chalk-ish guitar drones. He then moves onto a piece driven by ring modulated tone and motorized clatter that harkens to early electronic music experiments merged with the scrabblings Keith Rowe would sometimes offer by disrupting guitar pick-ups with other magnetics and motors. Elsewhere, Davis fuses a no-fi layering of mashed textures on par with any of the Richard Youngs albums of grit and shimmer crossed with the Jasper TX / Machinefabriek means of song deconstruction. Needless to say, there's a lot going on in each of the tracks that Davis provides, but it's not an overload that he's seeking rather a curiosity to explore as many possibilities while maintaining a hushed restraint. Limited to 100 copies.



Dark UrrrU/Waterfinder split C52

“Edition of 100 “WaterFinder drifts between rickety sea shanties and full on free improv/noise/drone meltdowns. Dark-UrrrU is a transcendental collaboration between some of our dear friends at Tank 28 in Portland, Maine... Colleen and Caleb from Big Blood and Shon ‘Brother Oak’ Mahoney.”

Kyle Bobby Dunn – ‘Pour Les Octaves’ C30

“Edition of 100. Brooklyn based minimalist composer and performer offers up two 15 minute pieces for his first cassette release. Floating mist and whispered meditations.”

Terence Hannum – ‘La Repetition’ C29

“Edition of 100. Soundtrack for French film of the same name from one half of Chicago’s Locrian. On Side A Hannum guides guitar and accordion through subtle shifts, both romantic and haunting. The flip side sees metallic guitar lines mournfully cloak all in sight.”

Crouge Madame – ‘I Love to Laugh’ C23

“Edition of 100. Blown out and detuned pop songs from two local gals. CM continue the Siltbreeze tradition, without any actual reference to prior acts. Cover painting by James Ulmer.”

Juppala Kaapio – ‘Tomentum Totem’ C42

“Edition of 100. Husband and Wife duo of Carole Zweifel (In Gowan Ring / the Lost People) and Hitoshi Kojo (a.k.a. Spiracle, Kodama). “Tomentum Totem is an essential compilation of Jüppala Kääpiö’s kaleidoscopic works, from 2007 until early 2010. “Zephyr” is taken from a home session in September 2007 in Gatineau (Canada). “Momonga Ornament” is taken from a home recording session in July 2009 in Vevey (Switzerland). “Tomentum Totem – A Center of Steam” is a part of a concert in February 2010 in Bern (Switzerland). In the folded jacket of the cassette case, a blue momonga by Carole is flying over a flowery embroidery from Kazakhstan, which is spread over the Lake Lemman.”

Pet Milk – ‘Self Titled’ C20

“Edition of 100. Proponents of punklife and kitchen-sink romance. 5 originals and 1 cover in the classic indie pop style. England Belongs to Twee, indeed.”

John Davis – ‘Open Ground’ C48

“Edition of 100. 50 minutes of expertly composed and thoughtfully paced guitar and synth workouts. A true master of craft. Davis takes the simplest ideas and sculpts them into the most moving pieces I have had the pleasure of releasing. Essential listening.”

Padna – ‘The Delaware Water Gap EP’ C35

“Edition of 100. Nat Hawks has been busy creating his own aural micro-universe in Brooklyn, as half of the mighty Christian Science Minotaur and curator of Little Furry Things. After massive releases on Stunned and Tape Drift, Hawks continues his journey, wandering through haunting melodic passages and half speed video game worlds. Cover painting by James Ulmer.”

White Dwarf Spiral – ‘Counting Stars’ C40

“Edition of 100. If he’s not jamming as Architeuthis Rex or droning solo as throuRoof, Italian artist Antonio Gallucci is joined by a mysterious cast of international noisers as White Spiral Dwarf. Mutant percussion meets blown out keys in an organized mess of warbling maximalism. Artwork by Justin Wright of Expo ’70.”

Pink Priest – ‘And I Watched the Ivy Cover Your House’ C30

“Edition of 100. Quilted fuzz and sleepy keys. Cover art by James Livingston of Black Horizons, printed on metallic vellum.”

Basillica – ‘Black Delights’ C90

“Edition of 100. 90 minutes of, as Scott McKeating so eloquently put it, sprawling “Barrow Wight psychedelia”. Perfect. Art by Bill McRight.”

Lunar Miasma – ‘Heavy Mist’ C33

“Edition of 100. Athens, Greece native Panos Alexiadis latest offering at the throne of the synthesizer. Combines the tension of John Carpenter’s finest moments with nu-new age sensibilities.”

Gryn Brvs – ‘Fat Burren Moon’ C32

“Edition of 100. The UK duo suspend broken guitar and piano lines over even more damaged industrial clutter and racket. Whistles are blown, wheels are dismantled, and the end result is surprisingly organic and cohesive piece of occult magik. Cover painting by Jeanne D’Angelo.”

Clay Man in the Well – ‘Kupes Sails’ C60

“Edition of 100. Latest edition to Antony Milton’s immense discography. This was apparently recorded in two weekends on the coast of the North Island of New Zealand. It sounds more like Antony found some tapes buried somewhere in the rainforest of South America during a bicycle trip, licked some frogs, and jammed overtop of the primitive field recordings of Native Rituals contained within.”

Aldus Shores – ‘Sorry’ C56

“Edition of 100. Anonymous group of forest dwellers. Recorded off the coast of Maine and sounds exactly what you think that would sound like. Wheezy wordless vocals and strummed strings are gathered in a joyous ritual. Forthcoming LP on Time-Lag.”