

*Dreamt About Drifting*

*Some notes on Mick Harris - Drones, Tones, Drifts and Feedbacks*

We are high above, looking down at the desert landscape, it is vast and the increments of change are minuscule, but it is there. Are those footprints in the sand that we can detect from up here or is it a crack in the earth?

We are high above snow capped mountains, they are closer than we thought. We can see the snow melting and running down the steep mountain side, into a slow moving river.

We are running in slow motion through the backstreets of Birmingham at night, in and out of large desolate buildings. We are dreaming of drifting above them, but we never escape.

We are standing in a suburban kitchen, staring at the fridge. We listen to the hum and the slight changes of tone.

These are the scenarios that Mick Harris' drifts, tones and atmospheres look like. Something actually seen or something imagined.

Short of calling it "ambient", which has become kind of a bastardised, almost nonsensical descriptive today, Mick Harris' drift works are part of a lineage that includes Brian Eno and his collaborators Jon Hassell and Harold Budd, along with The Hafler Trio, Zoviet France, PGR and so on. And yet he creates sounds that are instantly recognisable as his own. Perhaps most tellingly, the "Eraserhead" soundtrack/sound design created by Alan Splet with the director David Lynch was a key influence on him. Harris once intimated to writer David Toop for his book *Ocean Of Sound*, that he was a fan of the drift sounds in that film and some of his own source sounds were from fridges and radiators, proving that somehow the domestic and the everyday can somehow be transformed into something vast and darkly sublime.

Anyone familiar with Micks' post-Napalm Death work knows of his mastery over bass and beats, via Scorn and Quoit to name just two examples. Having witnessed a live Scorn show, I felt the fabric of my clothing move by the sheer sonic force often throughout the 90 minute set. But it is worth remembering that Mick surrounds his beats with atmospherics that are equally powerful, just in a different way. The discordant drones that are the beats' context give those beats a darker menace. His collaboration with Martyn Bates for the *Murder Ballads* series is another example where the atmospherics enhance the foreground. Bates' beautifully melodic and intimate vocals that are whispered in your ear are given a darker tone when in conjunction with Harris' drones that appear to be echoing down from the hills in a nighttime, pastoral landscape.

The material on *Drones, Tones, Drifts and Feedbacks* share some similarities with Harris' other non-beat material, in particular the longer LULL works, but arguably, this work contains more movement. As slowly drifting as it is, there is a narrative emerging, a series of imagined scenarios that we as listeners are privy to. It is as if we are looking into a tiny hole in a tiny box and seeing an immense desolate world. We somehow shrink and can enter that hole and drift around the interior. And this is what it sounds like.

Perhaps we are all ladies in the radiators, though more likely, we are little creatures inside the fridge. In heaven everything is fine, in these drifts there is some unease and portent.

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