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Plante, “Harvest” LP

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Kansas City based guitarist Andrew Plante proves once and for all that true musical talent can actually make a difference, and in fact make for a *great* drone album, in a genre that falls prey to amateurism far too often.

Drone is frequently maligned as the epitome of senseless music snobbery, and sometimes, I’m forced to admit, the evidence is quite damning. Who the hell could possibly derive any enjoyment from a single cycle of chords (if there’s even more than one chord) repeated ad infinitum, with no rhythm section or discernible “lead” melody? “Surely,” say those with untrained ears, “you just pretend to enjoy it so you can act more sophisticated than me—well fine! Enjoy your hour-long refrigerator humming symphonies, and I’ll stick to verse-chorus-bridge songs!” Sadly this representation isn’t entirely inaccurate. It wasn’t until I heard Earth’s influential 90s albums that I was really able to appreciate what this style of music was trying to do: much like black metal or doom metal, it could conjure up a totally bleak and evil sound, but drone ditched the structural constraints of other genres and focused purely on the atmosphere. You can feel the electric vibrations drenching the air in analog potency.

So when I first set the needle down on the lime-green vinyl of this LP, I found myself agreeing with KZSU Stanford DJ Awyeh’s declaration: “Holy shit, Fedora Corpse [Records] strikes gold again.” Indeed, though the small east coast label has released a reputable amount of strange vinyl, they could easily rest on their laurels with this record if they wanted to (which I’m sure they won’t). The record is short and sweet, balanced, perfectly symmetrical—I can’t imagine the artist having anything short of a masterpiece in mind when he first started recording this.

Plante delves deep into heavy metal ruminations, indulging in overdriven studies of timbre much like household names in drone music, e.g. Sunn O))) or Earth, but he also explores more intimate, quasi-melodic subtleties. Side A opens with gentle, dreamy resonances and harmonics, hushed and airy arpeggios that very gradually find their way down into deep baritone rumblings. The symmetry is immediately evident when you compare the two sides of the record—each opens with a shorter, lighter song, and concludes with a monolithic mini-symphony of drone. The stark beauty of these lighter tracks, “The Moon To Guide By Day” on side A and “Unbroken Communion” on side B bring to mind Evan Caminiti and Jon Porras, guitarists of Bay Area ambient duo Barn Owl.

But boy, what a treat we’re in for on the second half of each side! “Earthshine” and “Damnation Is A Lie” are both massive, epic drone opuses—yet they’re only epic because they have a definite sense of melodic direction. On “Earthshine” the eerie tremolo passages bring to mind some frosty Norwegian black metal (Plante’s side project, Shroud Of Winter, focuses on his black metal influence); there’s a haunting, repetitive cycle of droning notes in the lower register, never resolving but always feeling lucid and purposeful. It’s an effective reversal of the listener’s expectations—rather than having the subtlety in the high notes and the ostinato in the low part, it’s the other way around. Plante’s powerchord wizardry is nothing short of masterful, and once he’s done with his slow doom meditations, he’s liable to throw in a twist or two with some tasteful guitar leads.

Side B’s closing track is even more astounding, and certainly (to these ears) the highlight of the record. Sparse post-rock-esque arpeggios float in a hazy ether, eventually being suffocated by the weight of a massive, metallic melody. It’s a melody, make no mistake—not a “riff” or “chord progression,” but a distinct melodic voice exploring the lower depths of a somber scale. When a black metal tremolo passage emerges later in the track, it adds a sense of triumphant closure to everything, as if it were a theme reemerging from an earlier overture, signaling the end of this experience.

Fedora Corpse has indeed struck gold; I hope we listeners have as well, and that this guitarist will have much to offer in the way of serene yet bold drone musings in years to come. I should end by noting that the fortunate owners of this record have a bonus treat to enjoy: although the album is pressed to 45rpm, IT SOUNDS WAAAAAY HEAVIER ON 33!

[Fedora Corpse](#)

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