

## Dusted Reviews

**Artist:** Radian

**Album:** Juxtaposition

**Label:** Thrill Jockey

**Review date:** Sep. 7, 2004



*Juxtaposition* is the third album by Austria's Radian, which features Martin Brandlmayr on percussion and electronics, Stefan Németh on guitar, synthesizer and electronics, and John Norman on bass. Radian's music is quite different than its rock-band lineup suggests, usually sounding like precise, insistent electronic music even when manually played instruments are prominent.

*Juxtaposition* could refer to Radian's juxtaposition of manual and automated instruments. While that juxtaposition is no longer particularly unique in and of itself, the way *Juxtaposition* was created is. The members of Radian recorded their instruments (drums, bass and so on) through synthesizers, then processed the resulting sounds and sculpted them to work in tandem with live performances again featuring drums, bass and other instruments.

There's just a hint of Chicago post-rock in *Juxtaposition*, particularly when Brandlmayr plays vibraphone (engineer and Tortoise drummer John McEntire must have appreciated that). Other than that, though, it sounds more like carefully crafted electronic music (which it partly is) than anything performed in real time. Brandlmayr (on drums) and Norman play minimal, robotic semi-grooves like Pan Sonic rediscovering the dance floor; elsewhere, all three members of the group aim to take their instruments as far away from their usual realms as possible.

As lovers of unusual timbres who often aim to make their music sound electronic, Radian are engaging with new directions in improvised music, and Brandlmayr has performed with John Butcher, Axel Dörner, and Sachiko M, among others. But *Juxtaposition* never *sounds* improvised – precise timing is too important to Radian's sound.

*Juxtaposition* closely resembles Radian's last full-length album and Thrill Jockey debut, *Rec.Extern*. But *Juxtaposition* is more accessible: it's louder, and its bass and drum parts are more prominent and compelling. And though it may be tempting to describe Radian merely as an instrumental post-rock group in the Chicago tradition – they *are* instrumental, and they're signed to Thrill Jockey, after all – there aren't any post-rock bands that are engaging with ideas from electronic and improvised music to the degree that Radian does. Just as importantly, the extreme clarity of the playing on *Juxtaposition* makes most post-rock acts sound mushy in comparison. *Juxtaposition* is the best album to start with from a band that's successfully following its own path.

By Charlie Wilmoth