

radian „rec.extern“

The cover of Vienna based trio Radian's second Thrill Jockey album features an oddly compelling photograph of a near deserted transport hangar taken from the air. It could be a portentous image left over from *Dr Strangelove*; or even a stealth photograph of an Iraqi airbase about to meet a violent end. Radian couldn't have found a more fitting cover image: *Rec.Extern* exists in a barren soundworld, where the clinical order of its musical forms is poised between extreme control and imploding chaos.

The malleable sonic putty for *Rec.Extern* is made up of mulched samples of „real“ atmospheres, audio snapshots capturing the acoustic properties of different spaces, such as a cranky elevator, a buisy train station and more. A frayed thump trailers the first track „Nahfeld“ which lays out the group's broad acoustic spectrum of harmony and noise. Martin Brandlmayr's Tony Oxley-like drum flourishes and single vibraphone notes emerge from inside this field, the „real-time“ rhythmic tension of which is vandalised by akward splices and sudden silences. A sustained tone pitched piercingly high adds another dimension that, like the cover photo, suggests a richness of detail without yielding any concrete information.

„Jet“ is propelled forward by the more traditional interaction of Brandlmayr's rolling snare drum and John Norman's buoyant underpinning bassline. Even so the drummer's embellished marching rhythm is subject to nasal distortion that imbues the the familiar with a sense of the alien. As elsewhere, repetitious vibraphone incongruously counterpoints electronic blasts, while Brandlmayr's jazz licks trace the blurred edges between guitar noise and sampled harmony. On this showing, Radian are true virtuosi, and *Rec.Extern* is a masterpiece of sculpted sound and daring psychological manipulations.

(Phil Clark, *The Wire*, 2002)