

## SYNAPSCAPE – RHYTHM AGE

I clearly remember the moment in which i've discovered **Synapscape's** music joining, without knowing them, a live performance in Milan, and that moment was the same in which i've discovered that particular world known as *rhythmic industrial*, that could be called *rhythmic noise*, *powernoise*, *post-industrial* into what more generally, and maybe this is the definition to which they belong the most, is electronic music.

Yes, because apart from particular genre's definitions, **Tim Kniep** and **Philipp Münch** are two sound technicians not so different from electronic music pioneers, constantly trying to reach the perfect rhythm, and **Rhythm age** is the most recent evolutionary step of their career, one of the most awesome expressions of the rhythmic-industrial research of 2015, but even an ode to the rhythm, primordial element without which music wouldn't have all that meaning. The idea of rhythm conceived by the two Germans whose work is produced by **Ant Zen** is to search in the more recent history of techno music, to which undoubtedly their music has been influencing, and is here that the detroit sound is brought back, subjected to a process of distortion and devitalization: a sound which loses its structure and is reprogrammed to be, at the end of the process, completed by the machine.

Here more present than in their previous works, the already cited techno music is an element particularly present, that squared rhythm from which all their music have had its origin. The hugeness of this work shouldn't be searched only in this factor, but in Tim and Philipp's skill not to be enslaved in the genre's trademarks which creation they've strongly contributed, trademarks that loads of their colleagues have afterwards inherited and differently interpreted, not always succeeding in maintaining the originality. Whereas Tim represents the vocal element, the apparently not understandable and sidereal distorted voice coming from an undefined planet, the secret of the originality of the album could be understood thinking on the huge musical openness of Philipp, a 360° musician who doesn't put boundaries to his fantasy. It's the unpredictable characteristic of the sound of each of their albums that makes them even more great, and this thing could be perceived even in this album: in fact, *Rhythm age* is an album that, in some ways, follows the **Traits's** trajectory but that, at the same time, take distance from it to offer us a maybe less distorted approach but a more evocative one, in which mood plays a leading role.

It almost seems to find ourselves in front of a debut album, as loads are the variations experimented by the Bielefeld's duo, but twenty years has passed since their 1995 debut album, and Synapscape have never lost their taste for the neverending research, and this makes them even today, after twenty years, one of the most expressions of the proud ant Ant Zen's research. We were talking about the perfect rhythm: unbinding them for the same rules created and broken by them, the duo propose very different songs, all of them linked by a single word: research, so there isn't the need to create an electro, rhythmic noise, post-industrial or IDM album. The important thing is to experiment new ways of elaborate in new ways musical genres already existing, and that's the reason why in *Rhythm age* similar songs doesn't exist.

The *opener Rhythm*, epic *rhythmic noise* run apparently characterized by a simple development but from a complex white noise pattern in the background soon shows its claws, but the following *Moon*, even sharing a certain noisy linkage with the preceding song, starts from very different premises: instrumental, discharges tribal-like rhythms more than rhythms linked to the *post-industrial* context, in which strong is the sonic influence of early '90s sound, that used in the *big*

*beat* **The Chemical Brothers** and **Richard D. James's** works (but even in **Wieloryb** sound). *Loop* is a sort of *mid tempo* which rhythm perfectly opens and closes like in a communication process involving two industrial machines: a slightly distorted and lopsided work that represents at its best a clearer and smooth evolution of the genre, upon which background a distorted (female?) voice stand. The best moments of this album are, anyway, those in which Synapscape disconnect a bit from the classic runs typical of the genre, and *Ufuture* is a clear example of where the distorted rhythms could move to in the future: a claustrophobic rhythmic pattern influenced by '90s *electro industrial* patterns, that, however, shares with the genre only the framework. The particularly rough sound and the beat directly coming from an hydraulic press are elements that widely distinguish this song from the clean sounds used in the genre recalled above.

*Fonk* is another different song influenced by an *IDM* matrix without being abstract, even if here the physicality is rendered more smoothly, toward a recovery of a different sound that sink into the softer releases of the label (Ant Zen): the song that, instead, more strongly recovers *electro* and its mental mood is the following *Them*, a report song characterized by two elements: the rough voice of Tim and the lopsided mid tempo rhythm of Philipp, that even recalls some **Skinny Puppy** episodes, always interpreted from their less orthodox point of view. *Fields* for which the above mentioned link with detroit techno sound fit particularly well: the beat is definitely techno, certainly rough but reasoned as the tradition want, and its slow development highlights Münch's capacity to create even good *techno*-oriented songs.

In *Phos*, even different landscapes are explored: deserted environments characterized by a dark taste in which Synapscape explore their more experimental side (in which they express their sound at their best), ambient mood composed really well in which clear afroamerican influences insert, that try to recover the devitalized rhythm of electronic music, a meeting between two cultures: the drum roll and the synthesized post-industrial sound meet each other and discover to have lot of things in common. Masterpiece. *Earth* is an even different episode and present ourselves the Synascape sound that we already know, that most granitic and devastating: a *mid tempo* based upon heavy beats that constitute the bone structure, gloomy synths that embellish the spaces between the beats and Tim's distorted voice. Even this one is a perfect and definitely not reduced song. *Ways* recovers fast rhythms, characterized by a pronounced and groovy soul, another case of instrumental episode in which the elements perfectly communicate with each other: this is electronic music in a more general meaning than industrial sound, and also this taste for breakbeat recovers certain '90s english sound (who said **Loops of fury?**).

*Rank* explores once again slow and lopsided landscapes, less dark and more opened to ambient and to *IDM* upon the trail of something already made by **Warp Records**. The last *Seat* and *Sol* are weaker episodes, but not less interesting: the first one tries a smoother experiment on the rhythmic trail of microhouse, more closer to Chicaco than to Berlin or Detroit, succeeding in doing this, while the secondo ne is a quite volatile ambient that don't hit for its strenght but that represents a very good ending for an album particularly rich of ideas and very good episodes.

Tim and Philipp, Synapscape, twenty years after their first album, realize an album which is a homage to the history of rhythm, to the avantgarde spirit of research of Ant Zen and, at the same time, an additional result of the will to break the boundaries of the genre that has made them famous, conscious of the fact that their fanbase will appreciate this interest to constantly change their music rules, to always astonish, and that's what we wish them: to always floor us as they are able to make so well.

Label: Ant Zen

Score: 9

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