

**2001: Of the Jetone  
finding the correct juhtone, aka "an interview that sounds like the *Gay Science*"**

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Montreal came alive (as it always does, time and time again, no matter how shit poor they are) this past May for the Mutek festival of experimental electronic music—covered in the July *Discorder*. During Mutek, I had the chance to interview many artists, including original Vancouverite Tim Hecker, aka Jetone. Along with Canadians Tomas Jirku and Mitchell Akiyama, Tim is redefining the dub traditions of experimental and minimal glitch beats and ambient soundscapes. I met up with him at the SAT Gallery on the third day of the five-day festival and after seeing him perform the previous night. We sat outside on Ste. Catherine's and watched Montreal's mid-afternoon night-life swing into gear. Tim has a way of agreeing with you and telling you to piss off in the same sentence. Quite incredible, really. We talked about live laptop performances, his despal of Herbert's philosophy, and Deleuze and Guattari's tomb of anti-philosophy, *Mille Plateaux*, and its relation to the experimental techno of the same name. To facilitate reading, the interview has been divided into numbered aphorisms with titles taken from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*.

**[1] Taking Seriously. How do you correctly pronounce "Jetone"?**

There is no such correct pronunciation.

**Je'tone...Jet-tone...**

I would go "J(g)uh – Tone" not "Je'tone," that's how I conceptualised it in my brain. Since living in a French part of the world it's been adopted "Je'tone" more often. Yep.

**Does it mean anything?**

Ayah, it kind of had a play on words for me, jet tones and like sounds of like, real loud noises, and things like that. It was also kind of a rip-off from a film production company based out of Hong Kong.

**Is that Jet Li related at all?**

No, I think it is Wong Ka Wai's films. Something like that. Yeah.

**[2] Homo Poeta. Your performance last night went through this whole mélange of sounds. I really felt a classical ambient influence in there. Do you have classical ambient vinyl lying around?**

My head is always in that space. You can give the obvious references to works like the classics in that genre like Aphex Twin's *Works Number 2*, things like that. I'm more influenced by stuff lately like Gas... a lot more things with a texture to it and a lot more abrasive, like Christian Fennesz, some of the Mego artists, and even oldskool stuff I was into when I was a teenager like My Bloody Valentine... I strive for all those types of elements. I can't explain it really.

**Your performance was really neat, you started off with some beats, they were really well cut, you did a couple of reversal techniques and drops with the beats, and then you sort of moved out of the beats and into ambient again. I got that the feeling that instead of just working with a patch, I'm going to show you all of the places I *can* go, in terms of my releases and so on...**

I kind of wanted to play a few tracks, instead of showboating all of my styles, I wanted to do something a bit cohesive, and so what my live set ended up being was just loading a bunch of sound files, and I could drop them in and out and process them as I wanted, and I felt that these beat-oriented tracks were good for a little while, but that it was time to drop it out. So I processed my way out of it, slowly...and then left it empty for about 20, 30 minutes, and just drifted off into ambient world. I had a hard time, you know, basically figuring out whether I should put—what would be suitable—I didn't let it ride out for too long.

[3] **Excelsior**. At this point the discussion gets technical and I ask Tim if he was using Logic Audio, a sequencing program environment, and he tells me yes, he was. "It had a whole chain of processing programs, like granular freezers and things like that, so it wasn't really just like playing tracks straight up." This allows Tim to be quite flexible in his live performance—an anomaly in electronic music. "I could drop things in and out, no problem. I could throw things in, throw things out. I could run basically on samples and the possibilities of sampling samples, and sample them continually, create these internal feedback loops, I could just play off what's being generated itself for 20 or 30 minutes." This begs the question of what he thinks about live vs. not-so-live performances.

**Is it important for you that laptop performances are "live," or somewhat "live," these days? There seems to be a bit of debate, people are like, "oh, they are just pressing play or watching their DAT or letting a sound file run." What's your take on that?**

I kind of oscillate between "it doesn't matter"—you could just put on Chess Master and play chess—or, actually have a real live performance. There is just so much inbetween the complete chaotic...if you leave a set that is just completely left to improvisation, there's the likelihood it is going to sound like shit, because you can't do what you want to do. It is such an abstract concept, [my live set] is partly based on a rehearsed, pre-ordained direction, but having said that, there is just a wide open margin of interpretation that allows the way I set up my live set. You can tell people's live sets that are just pressing play, muting and unmuting loops, I think it is absolutely boring, it's a terrible thing to see and I despise most "live" electronic shows because of that. It bores me to no end. Yup.

**Last night there was Matmos, and Rechenzentrum. So what did you think of Matmos vs. Rechezentrum? One that was quite live—Matmos—and one that was a DAT—Rechenzentrum.**

**[4] To Harm Stupidity.** I didn't see [Rechezentrum]. I was out in the lounge drinking. You get to a point in these festivals where you just don't care anymore about most of the artists.

**It's only Thursday! It's the second day...**

I know, but I have to save myself for the weekend, I've got a little priority, I thought Matmos was cute, but they had these sort of windows of improvisation, they had these pre-ordained parts that are basically—you could hear these flutes and saxophones, you could tell that these are samples that are done and preset and just loaded and ready to go. So it seemed like they had segments of improv and segments of preset programming. It worked nice, it was a “cute” kind of show, with all of their probes and cameras.

**So what does “cute” connote for you?**

“Cute”? Well, it's like a quirkiness, a playfulness that a lot of people don't have. Yep.

**Do you think that they are up there with Herbert? Do you place Herbert on a pedestal....?**

No, no, not at all. I find [Herbert's] philosophies about music completely outdated and boring and traditionalist. I don't listen to his music. I think he does nice “house” but I don't—demi-god? Not at all. I mean, it's more industry hype bullshit basically. That's just my opinion.

**[5] Being Profound and Seeming Profound. If his philosophies [Dogma95-styled music making based upon the Lars Ulrich films] are outdated, what would you say is an emergent philosophy that would make Herbert out of date?**

I don't know...that's a tough question...contending philosophy—but it is not like his was the one that ruled before. I don't know if you are familiar with his belief structure, he has this doctrine of like, “you should use a sample once, you should never use it again.” All of this, all of these ideas he puts out from what I have read are kind of futile quests for some sort of purity. This is the idea that, pure samples: pure sounds, and I come at it from a completely opposite perspective, I assume that my samples are contaminated, and the more contaminated the better, the more filled with segments of memory, melodies, and bits of sounds from other pieces the better. I relate what I do to—I think Jackson Pollock did these inkblot paintings in which he...he had a stack of Japanese paper, and he threw ink over them and kept pulling them off, and each time he would start a new painting he would already have four previous works that would soak through. So each piece was contaminated by all of the other works. There was no isolated work that was pure, and removed in and of itself. So...I mean that would be the sort of rebuttal to that kind of idea. Does that make sense to you?

**It does quite a bit. I was very interested in that, because everyone is all wanking off about his new—he is trying to make the musical equivalent to the Dogma-style of film-making, blah blah blah...**

It's total bullshit, to me. But, whatever. Everyone has their own way, it is good to have ideas about what you do, you know.

**[6] Herd Instinct. Do you feel that there is an energy in Montreal right now? I come from Vancouver, and there is nothing going on like this.**

I grew up in Vancouver, and I kind of left, but I stayed here because of that reason, things were happening. . .there is an infrastructure that supports that here, whereas in Vancouver there is nothing [Ed. Maybe now, after Refrains and New Forms, things will change.]. You go to a festival like this, you see artists, who are incredible, and instead of seeing some dude who is playing on some bullshit rave machine, it sounds terrible—you think OK, I can do something better than that, and it is incrementally better. Whereas here, you see an artist from Germany, and has mastered his craft so well that it's on a whole different level, you aspire to reach that, to reach that level—and you jump, you know, all of these sub-tiers. It's an irreplaceable type of help for sure.

**[7] The Fool Interrupts.** It is somewhere around this point that I forget who I am interviewing. This happens often, actually, and especially at festivals where I have not slept, yet, have imbibed vast quantities of cheap *déjenuer* eggs, beer, and joints. Staring into Tim's face, the only connection I can suddenly make is the he is the roommate of an old friend of mine [Ed. Actually, tobias interviewed the Chemical Brothers with Michelle for the SFU Peak student newspaper back in 1997]. Quickly, I recover. He is stunned.

**What is Michelle Rainer like as a roommate?**

She is OK, she's clean in her aesthetic but she doesn't do her dishes, and I find that this really bothers me.

**What sort of roommate are you?**

I'm the nonexistent roommate. I don't see her very much, I keep to myself. Yeah, basically, yeah. So we've drifted off into roommate land? [He gives me a quizzical look. Again.]

**[8] In Media Vita. What do you think about Kid 606's comments about minimal techno being totally dead?**

He's trying to do minimal techno right now, he is trying to go in that direction, but I understand his sentiment, it is kind of cannibalizing itself right now, I don't really like minimal techno as a general blanket statement. There are particular artists which I like, Cologne [Kohl, Germany] artists mostly. Most of it, I am not that into it. Minimal to me equates being boring.

[At this point, a vehicle cruises down Ste. Catherine playing loud '80s Glam Rock. We both look at the sunglassed dude who is YELLING along to the lyrics in leather with the top down. In Montreal, the '80s never died. I guess minimal techno pales in comparison with glam rock.]

**Man that guy is rocking. OK, Mille Plateaux, you were talking about Jackson Pollock, do you follow the theory behind that label, in terms of it being named after Deleuze and Guattari's book of the same name?**

Sure, I'm a student in critical theory. I've fully read all of [D&G's] essential works and I understand what Achim [Schezpanski, Mille Plateaux label founder] is writing about.

Sometimes I disagree with certain things, but I think that ultimately what he is doing is a positive thing, trying to think about what is going on, and that is a good thing. That's why that label has stayed so relevant over the years, it is one of the only labels that hasn't fallen into some sort of cheeseball obscurity. It's good. It's strange. He is an amazing hybrid of business and philosophy. He is really Deleuzian, in the truest sense.

**[9] Thoughts. He is practical and, uh...**

He puts his rhizomatics into the real world and turns it into a moneymaking venture that keeps him well fed, I assume.

**[10] We Fearless Ones.** And this is where I wanted to say something smart, to spark a good philosophical discussion, but right at the verge, BAM I am shut down. I begin telling him how awhile ago I was talking to Seth Horvitz, aka Sutekh, and how he has an upcoming album on Mille Plateaux. And so explain how I was talking to Sutekh about the philosophy, and how he hasn't read Deleuze and Guattari, and that he isn't really into it from that perspective. I wanted to know if Tim thought about these ideas while he was making music.

**Do you think about the deterritorialization of music and go, "Hmm, I wonder what I can sort of do," in terms of the process of making music?**

Nope, not at all. It's not to say that that doesn't round-about affect you. It's not like you read a fucking book and think, OK, I want to do some fucking philosophy that relates to this chapter, it's just you've read it before and your brain has been altered by it, and it just kind of changes itself. It's like once you've read Nietzsche it's poisoned you forever. There's nothing you can do about that. You are tainted for good. And it's not like you are trying to make a track that sounds like *The Gay Science*. That would be retarded and it would be the biggest disingenuity you could do to Nietzsche. Nietzsche works within you.

I respond to him that I get what he means. But secretly, in my head, I already am preparing the opening loops for a track called "2001: Of Tim Hecker."

**[11] In Favour of Criticism. A friend of mine was saying that you don't even need to read Mille Plateaux, because you are already living it.**

No! What, the book? Well, it's an indispensable text, it's such a relevant—to now, it's not the doctrine of exploration of all details on the Earth, but it's a great sort of life-guide it's essentially a work of romantic mysticism—that's what it has been called—and I think that is true, and beautiful in a time when pragmatism has completely encapsulated the world. It's someone who dreams about other *ways*. And thinks of idea systems that can accommodate those thoughts. You can dis it all you want, but it doesn't mean shit to me, basically [siren gets loud] ...and I think that's a positive thing.

**[12] What one should learn from artists. Do you find your music approaching that possibility of escape, or opening up any sort of spaces, for that sort of thing?**

Well...not really. For me, it's just more of a meditative purpose. The music—cheesy clichés about, you know, affecting somebody, if it affects somebody, then that's good. I

don't believe in doing just some cold noise that's completely machine-like. It's finding a balance between all of these things. You can't explain how you work. You just do it. You can try to explain it in retrospect, thinking back and trying to analyse yourself, but, whatever.

**[13] The Madman. That's pretty much what Matmos said too: "Uh, whatever."**  
Thanks, tobias.

[Uh...whatever.]

*Out now: Ultramarin on Force Inc.; Haunt me, haunt me do it again (as Tim Hecker) on Substractif; "Ginotopia" on Meow 12, the Tigerbeat 6 compilation; and some tracks for some Mille Plateaux compilations.*