

THE
SQUID'S EAR

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Gen Ken Montgomery* *Pondfloorsample* * (XI)*

POND FLOOR SAMPLE



GEN KEN MONTGOMERY

Ah, the sounds of life. Cage gets name-dropped by everyone, his epithets repeated blindly but few and far between are the sound artists who actually walk the path and beyond, truly paying attention to the sonic world around us and, most importantly for a "product" like a cd, manage to bring it to the ears of the listener in a convincing manner.

This two-disc release by Gen Ken Montgomery does just that and is one of the more fascinating

documents I've heard in a while. His sources might be (mistakenly) described as mundane and range across the natural and manmade landscape: radiators, birds eating, crayons, bath drains, laminators, voices, street noise—all suitable grist. Montgomery enhances these sounds liberally but, crucially, never allows their rough-hewn nature to dissipate to academic musings, always retaining the real life grittiness. Most of the pieces are relatively short, devoting themselves to the exploration and sonic evisceration of a given aural generator. These tend to be more or less impressive on their own (notably, "Goafishbreath", wherein the material is derived from the breaths between words in the text of a spoken story), but the several lengthier works take on epic scalar qualities, not so much imposed by the composer, but evolving from their own inherent complexity. "Father Demo Swears", for violin, voice, microphone hung outside window and four simultaneously played cassettes, swells into an immense maelstrom or roars, clicks, drones, engines, dog barks and who-knows-what-else, always retaining an organic integrity that allows it to unfold in almost narrative fashion. Superb and challenging in an entirely different fashion, "Droneskipclickloop" begins as a quasi-natural soundscape full of what seem to be augmented emulations of insect chirpings and the like, forming overlapping repeated patterns. Over the course of its 52 minutes, however, it evolves into a relentless series of loops, more purely electronic in aspect, the incessant patterns iterated in a way that verges on the seriously aggravating but tiptoeing on the boundary between that and absolutely absorbing. It even establishes a subtly funky groove about half way through.

Challenging stuff, for the conception and forceful imagination behind the pieces as much as for the sounds themselves, it is highly recommended to all connoisseurs of noise.