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A user's guide to KEIJI HAINO
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Frank Rothkamm Wiener Process

Rothkamm must have the most extraordinary dreams. Not only because of his fantastic biography, which takes in time spent as a postulant at an Austrian monastery, appearing in Playboy with his second wife, and joining the Freemasons, but also because of his nocturnal listening choices. The mammoth 24-hour-long Wiener Process is billed as "timeless music for insomniacs". Composed using what he calls a scientific method of psychostochastics, it started life as an attempt to block out the tinnitus that was keeping him awake.

He never quite managed to mask the ringing in his ears. What he got instead was a music that he contends is different on each encounter because its statistical means of composition renders listeners unable to remember what they've just heard.

Running a full day and night, Wiener Process may be Rothkamm's longest yet. It comes either in a purpose-built perspex box of 24 CDs, or a datstream in FLAC and Ogg Vorbis formats. I eventually managed to get hold of a couple of .zip files worth of MP3s, although no metadata was included, so I can't give you any track titles.

At least five hours is artfully crafted pink noise, ranging from filtered tape hiss to a tastefully synthesized gale. Whether this was supposed to dispel Rothkamm's own tinnitus or simply give his audience a taste of it, I'm not sure. If it managed to lull you to sleep, you'd be rudely awakened before long. There are hour-long tracks of slowly modulating sine tones, just discordant enough to keep the listener on edge; gloaming digital murmurs like the chanting of a choir of monks in a cheap horror film; globular moonscapes, bell-like and weightless. One track, an hour long, will be inaudible to many people above a certain age because it never dips below 10 kHz. But there are also moments of brilliance that recall the pioneering computer music of Iannis Xenakis or Kim Cascone.

Rothkamm's sleeveless imply that Wiener Process might be listened to permanently, at low volume, alongside any other music or sounds, "until the listener dies". My worry is that if you follow his prescription, that result could come about sooner than it would otherwise.

Robert Barry

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