

«Relator»

Liner Notes to a solo CD from Tetuzi Akiyama

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My first impression on hearing “Captain,” Tetuzi Akiyama’s first solo release, was a constant lingering of the blues, the deep Setagaya blues. Music often conjures forth physical recollections for me: light, smell, an atmosphere undefinable yet tangible, transporting me to another time and place and leaving me there for the length of the recording. In Akiyama’s case, this atmosphere lingered on long after “captain’s” last track had ended: I found myself at night in one of the outlying corners of Setagaya-ku, the light source Tokyo a faint glow reflecting off the grey night sky. In Setagaya the stars shine at night and a fresh wind blows through the many trees and empty fields. There is a certain easiness about setagaya which I haven’t experienced in other parts of Tokyo. Like the languid koi in the muddy canals running through Setagaya, time there flows of its own accord—opposite to the Tokyo core, where the daily time-space continuum pushes with the infinite relay of an 0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1 interface approaching a long-awaited meltdown.

Akiyama’s music unfolds with the easy pace of the Setagaya countryside. He doesn’t push sound around and is patient enough to wait until the next note appears. When enough notes have been played, the piece is over. His music seems as simple as that to me, which is not to say that his music is simple—it is complex in both the feelings and images it evokes and in the dynamic range it covers: from the sharp attack of an unmistakable affinity with country blues to, on tracks five and six, an excursion into primordial sound: scraping, knocking, scratching, silence. These tracks seemed on the verge of disappearing as they mingled with the sounds outside my window. Akiyama’s music is big enough to make room for any sound which happens to be occurring at the time one is listening. It is truly open-source music and reveals how important the research into sound as a physical entity is for Akiyama.

all of which to say is: this cd rocks. and flows. And leaves one with a good feeling in the stomach afterwards. The greatest challenge facing any musician is to find one’s voice, to express oneself unfettered by cliché or preconceived notion—the instrument becomes transparent, secondary. The listener senses only the pure emotional expression of the person behind the instrument. and this Akiyama has done remarkably well. For me, he is truly one of the most original voices to emerge from the current scene of Tokyo musicians thinking beyond the mere conventions of music and coming to terms with sound. I think anyone hearing this cd will surely agree with me.