

## **RADIAN verses HOWE GELB , Radian Releases RR001, Trost Records**

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The seemingly curious collaboration. A wrangling and grappling, a confrontation, a quarrel. A checking-out, a weighing of compromises.

The Viennese trio Radian has recorded an album with songwriter Howe Gelb from Tuscon, Arizona. Here the situation is different: "Radian Verses Howe Gelb" is primarily a Radian release. "This is a Radian album. I'm only living in it" Howe Gelb went on record, modestly. In four sessions that were rather freely dispersed over time, Howe Gelb, usually devoting himself to a cosmopolitan rethinking of Americana and Desert Country in his day job, fed acoustic contributions into the microphone for Radian: piano, guitar, above all: voice. Sometimes as a reaction to material prepared by Radian, sometimes pulled liberally and unexpectedly from his own vast and tangled pool of ideas.

The tones of Howe Gelb provided further material for Radian: They were dissected, dissolved, reoriented, mutated and made to fit into their own world. Radian Verses Howe Gelb is the first Radian release with guitarist Martin Siewert, who joined the band in 2011 and here also is responsible for processing and sound treatment. As usual, drummer Martin Brandlmayr was in charge of the selection and arrangement of sounds, and John Norman of the bass. As always with Radian, this record resembles a particularly carefully and cautiously assembled collage: Sounds, tones, noises – the tracks are busy. They are teeming, quavering, vibrating. As before, the kinds of things that Brandlmayr, Norman and Siewert scrape and tease out of their machines and instruments make up an exuberant buffet of ideas and strangeness. 42 minutes of sound of unidentified origin. The way the sounds are arranged here however creates an aura of fragility, a lean design. No showing off, no flooding, no bells and whistles. The tones appear to be artfully suspended in space, you can feel the air flowing between them.

Which means that Radian's manipulations and reshapings didn't go as far as fixing the musician Howe Gelb beyond repair or destroying him in the process. That cannot be the point. So you can hear that this bent man, croaking and whining to us here, that's Howe Gelb. And so sections of songs, melodies, narratives remain intact. Songwriting in the process of disintegration, and in penetration, entanglement and fusion with highly focused free music.

The claim that's often made and often void – here it is true: The categories crumble away. Whether jazz, intricate tinker-electronics, dub, growling, hissing, bubbling, rock as well – a lot of things wondrously permeate this music, one that is indeed rather post-everything. A music that is hard to get a grasp on and yet does, here and there, again and again, summon the pleasant impulse we call "groove". Let's meet at the outermost fringes.

Philipp L´Heritier