

I-LP-O In Dub: Capital Dub, Chapter 1

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The music on Ilpo Väisänen's *Capital Dub, Chapter 1* is so icy and polar as to make his last album *Communist Dub* – already close to the extreme of how austere electronic music can get – sound positively baroque. It'd be generous to call anything played here a note. Mostly, *Capital Dub* is all echo-drenched drums and barely perceptible waves of bass. The drums sound like they've been individually freeze-dried and shorn to perfection; each one is a perfect, pristine object handpicked for its essential qualities and left untreated save for miles of rolling echo.

Yet to those versed in the gnarly laptop punk Austria's Mego label has made its specialty, the music here might sound positively comforting. There's a massage-like quality to the way the drums gently pan from side to side for minutes at a time and then fade out so the next song can do the same. Save for the blast of noise that comprises the bulk of closer "Grace of Collapsing Unhealthy System" – an incongruous payoff that might have been better at the start of the record as an opening trial by fire – there's nothing here that's really confrontational. The most likely complaint a listener less versed in out-there electronica than a Mego fan will have with it might be the lack of melody and the refusal of many tracks to change during their runtime.

Väisänen has made a record that presents itself as a formidable beast but is ultimately harmless. Upon listening to it I was reminded of my first experiences with *Entain*, the second record from Väisänen's fellow Finn Vladislav Delay. That record seemed terrifying at first what with its blank-white cover and twenty-plus-minute slabs of digital dub, but it's become a record as comforting and familiar as a cup of chicken soup, and a wonderful thing to doze off to. *Capital Dub, Chapter 1* isn't bad as a sleep aid either. You'll probably crash during one of the low-key, ambient bass doodles, like "Hidden Capital," "Grey Zone Economy" or "Parecon."

You've probably noticed all the titles have something to do with economics, and that brings us to the theme of the record. The whole thing was inspired by the first part of Marx's *Das Kapital* (two more *Capital Dub* records are presumably coming). "Ilpo's 'circular riddims' complement the ebb and flow of the circulation of money and commodities and are mirrored by his field recordings of Barcelona rain – the final phase of the cyclical movement of water," says Mego. We can hear the water at the start of the record, though it sounds more like popping microwave popcorn and you'd need a press release to know what was making the noise and where.

This theme doesn't reward much thought. Many American listeners might see the music here as a reflection of the Communist clichés embodied in "The Simpsons" "Worker & Parasite" sequence – grey skies, grim factories, featureless tenements stretching for miles. Those who have more positive associations with communism might see it as a reflection of the machines driving capitalism, oiled with the blood of the workers and whatnot. You can project whatever machine you choose to rage against onto I-LP-O's iron-grey mechanics. Either way, though the music here is cold and crisp, it's actually a pleasant place to be in, even if you might need a jacket.

- Label:
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