

# Call Super: Arpo

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Call Super's *Arpo* feels like it was sculpted out of red clay—and perhaps a bit of “Red Clay” as well. This is a mossy, earthy techno record that takes care to ensure nothing on it sounds like it was made on a computer—not because the producer is ashamed of his chosen genre, but because he sees it as a springboard for ideas rather than an endpoint.



This is an unusually *performance*-centric techno album. An oboe or clarinet, played by the producer's own father, often floats on top of the beats' burbling soup. The son chops these samples, loops them, picks his favorite parts, and weaves them into the fabric of his sound. As with Teo Macero's tireless edits of Miles Davis's studio jams, the editing seems like a showcase of virtuosity in and of itself. And Call Super isn't content to simply let his loops lope on. His fingers are always busy, adding and subtracting elements on a whim.

There's not much else like this, but his closest analogue is Italy's Donato Dozzy, whose *Voices from the Lake* is one of the decade's true techno classics. Dozzy likewise brings a player's attitude to programmed music, culling *Voices from the Lake* from a Japanese festival set and—for his best solo work—spinning Bee Mask's “Vaporware” into a 40-minute album called *Plays Bee Mask*. They even like a lot of the same sounds, like a swishy submerged bell on “Ekko Ink.” But while Dozzy's tracks are ethereal and weightless, *Arpo* feels slow and labored, as if struggling to claw its way out of a swamp.

*Arpo* clocks in at 45 minutes but feels a lot longer, which isn't a bad thing. It's unusually bottom-loaded for an album of any genre, getting the two-minute sketches out of the way in its first half before closing in with the more traditionally lengthy techno behemoths. It contributes to the feeling of getting lost, and if the album seems slight at first, it's easy to be surprised when it deepens. It feels very *substantial*, a quality it does not have in common with the last Call Super album *Suzi Ecto*—a good album that sounds a lot like this one but fell to the artist-album cliché of spending too much time on ambient doodles.

*Arpo* is impressive, but it might be hard for some listeners to love. It requires an intimate appreciation of its sound design and is best experienced with no distractions – a commitment a lot of listeners might not be willing to make (especially for what's basically ambient techno). Listeners who prefer more of a sheen over their music might find an absence of visceral pleasures to latch onto; there are no sleek synth chords, no funky

basslines, no symmetrical kick drums, no knowing references to rave scenes of the past.

But there's a lot of just about everything else, and there are plenty of squiggles swimming around in the mix you're unlikely to notice until, say, your tenth listen. Not everyone will want to give it that kind of attention—that's really up to taste—but it's hard to deny Call Super's skill as both a sound designer and a good old-fashioned *musician*.

- Label:  
Houndstooth
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