

Pendant: Make Me Know You Sweet

SC spectrumculture.com/2018/02/12/pendant-make-know-sweet-review/

Daniel Bromfield

Make Me Know You Sweet, released as *Pendant*, is Brian Leeds' most spellbinding submersion yet into the depths of desolate turn-of-the-millennium ambient. This isn't a cushy floating cloud but a vast neural network through which atrophied bits of sound crawl aimlessly towards oblivion. It shouldn't be anyone's first ambient album—nor anyone's first Brian Leeds album—but there's beauty in its corrugated landscape.

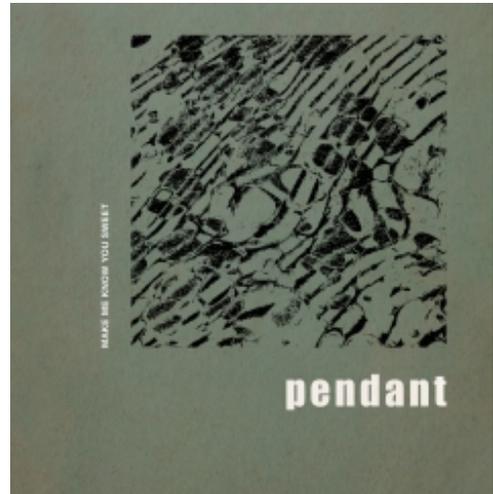
While the ambient zeitgeist is largely preoccupied with '80s Japan and '70s cosmic synth music, Leeds, who typically records as Huerco S., takes more inspiration from the IDM-adjacent movement that encompassed the glitch music of Oval and the ambient dub of artists like Vladislav Delay and Pole. Reference points are a little less obvious here, though a cut-up bell sound on a few tracks brings to mind turntablist Philip Jeck.

What's amazing about *Make Me Know You Sweet* is how it creates the *feeling* of this era of ambient without explicitly evoking it. It's just all there: the unfriendly digital crackles, the omnipresent wind, the little sounds that seem suspended in midair. Even the titles sound like long-lost .exe files. Look elsewhere for soothing synth chords or agreeable melodies; even the twinkling sequencer on "BBN-UWZ" sounds diseased.

Leeds uses a simple trick for all the tracks: he'll situate the harmonic elements deep at the bottom of the mix and let spare bits of sound float around in the foreground, creating a palpable sense of space. If you listen to *Make You Know You Sweet* somewhere loud—public transit, for instance, or a busy street—you might miss that there's anything melodic going on, so deep in the song do the music's most reassuring elements live.

Meanwhile, chopped-up instruments and snaky, tactile machine noises lurk closer to the listener. We seem to stand at a vantage point, gazing out on an abyss, as the ambient sounds fly around us like debris in a storm. On "IBX-BZC," the debris flies a little too close for comfort, and Leeds abandons the music's cold neutrality to flirt with sonic horror as the creepy little sounds leave the headphones and slither up the listener's ear.

It's forbidding stuff, and it's far from comforting—especially if you remember Leeds' last album, *For Those of You Who Have Never (And Also Those Who Have)*, and its amniotic "Sea of Love." It'll probably appeal most to those to whom names like Chain Reaction, Raster-Noton



and Mille Plateaux ring a bell. Even those might not find much to grab onto here and stick with a reliable classic like Vladislav Delay's *Multila* instead.

Make Me Know You Sweet succeeds not because it carries the listener away on a journey but because it situates us in a space we can spend an hour and change exploring and still find new sights. It's not always a hospitable place to be, but those attracted to extreme places will find it a worthy challenge and, once they've acquainted themselves with the rugged terrain, may find themselves going back again and again.

- Label:
West Mineral
- Release Date:
January 19, 2018