

Heat

Shinichi Atobe

DDS

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Shinichi Atobe's evolved the same way life on Earth has; after floundering about in the deep sea, he's flopped up on land. Maybe the beach on the cover of his new album *Heat* is where the dead and rusted things that populate his previous albums like *Butterfly Effect* and *World* wash up, because this is the sunniest music the elusive Japanese producer's ever made. The crusty distortion that defined his music and that of the Chain Reaction crew he ran with early in his career is gone, replaced by a spit-shined mix and insistent beats that indicate a desire to be heard in more DJ sets.



It's not as cynical as it sounds once you consider Shinichi Atobe's always made anthems. Most dub techno producers are content to let the stoned soup of their music ebb and flow around you unobtrusively, but Atobe makes tracks that stick in the head, the memory, the heart. What are "Plug and Delay", "The Red Line", "Regret", and "Butterfly Effect" if not bangers?

These tracks follow in that tradition. There are no crackly interludes made of seafoam and static, no numbers stations whispering at us out of the fog. The only track under eight minutes is "Bonus", whose title brings to mind the crustacean scuttle of "Bonus Break" from *Butterfly Effect* but is instead a pleasant interlude hewn from classic-house pianos. These tracks make the unlikely club staple "Regret" from last year look positively inert, and his earlier releases feel even darker and more diseased. This is dance music.

The tracks that will have the longest shelf life are probably "So Good So Right", which threads miles-wide sheets of synth between drums that jack like vintage Todd Edwards, and "Heat 1," whose chords contract and expand like polyps to find a sweet spot between between this friendly new approach and the mystery of his classic releases. "So Good So Right 2" sounds more like "Heat 1" than its sibling, which is emblematic of the mischievous sense of humor of a dude who won't even disclose whether or not he made these tracks this year or two decades ago.

Atobe tracks aren't exactly known for their high fidelity, so I struck by the multitudes going in in the plumbing of the record: the vehicular screech beneath the surface of "Heat", the dark water that sloshes in the bowels of "Heat 4", the short tail of pad that concludes "So Good, So Right 2" and suggests that the record's worldbuilding doesn't stop when the groove runs out.

This isn't an album that traffics in obfuscation. Its elements are all there in plain sight; you just have to squint to make some of them out. Some will miss the brininess of his early releases and grouse about how they're superior to these more gregarious tracks. This isn't an unfair reaction, but it ignores the fact that Atobe is great at this kind of music. Now that we know he's not a one-trick pony, we can hope for further elaborations on his sound. He hasn't abandoned his world but taken us to a new corner of it, and out of the murk, we can see more clearly than ever how vast it is.

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