

Brainwashed - Hecker, "Speculative Solution"

Written by Duncan Edwards

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Collecting ideas from fiction and philosophy, this release clarifies Florian Hecker's reputation for playfulness and investigation. Like a rogue mathematician who is considering questions which most people will never consider, Hecker attempts to turn metaphysical query into sound. His response to the (strange and hilarious) notion of hyperchaos will be unpalatable for some; but others of us wouldn't have it any other way.

[Editions Mego](#)

Speculative Solution is partly an elaborate joke about predictability. The disc comes in a lovely dark blue box demanding adoration, with titles printed in silver letters. This object held my attention for days, not least as the box has a lid too tight to open without considerable effort. Turning it back and forth, though, meant further distraction from five tiny metal balls rolling around inside. Once open (with the aid of a second person) a dense booklet of theoretical essays is revealed providing weeks of pleasure, frustration and hilarity. During that time, I didn't actually bother to listen to the music.

More on the box: The 2008 documentary *Boxes* details Stanley Kubrick's obsession with cataloging everything from crank letters to audition tapes and photographs of hats, storefronts and gates. Eventually, Kubrick came to demand the perfect box in which to store everything. This was to be of certain dimensions and not too loose nor too tight. While Kubrick may have found the *Speculative Solution* box to be visually pleasing in decoration and dimensions, I fear its functionality would have resulted in him giving the designer of the box a right bollocking.

Hecker's blogspot claims he is investigating "whether concepts of absolute contingency and hyperchaos offer a rigorous new alternative to the employment of chance and randomness in avant-garde composition." This is a question I feel ill-equipped to understand, let alone answer, despite dipping frequently into the highly enjoyable and fascinating accompanying texts from Robin Mackay, Quentin Meillassoux and Elie Ayache. There are some disparate references including Philip K. Dick, *The Hitch-hiker's Guide to The Galaxy*, Hume's observations of billiard

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balls, and so on, and when approached in the right frame of mind, these somewhat impenetrable and preposterous writings become light and airy flights of logical fancy; at once engaging, funny and impressive.

Hecker suggests that the musical part of this project is best heard at loud volume through speakers and that headphones are not advised. I concur, and also strongly suggest that listening while driving be avoided since passages of hideous, jarring squealing, rapid-fire pulses, and unnervingly high-pitched frequencies may cause a serious multiple pile-up. My listening revealed that Hecker has facilitated a piece of musical closed-circuitry which seems to extrapolate from the starting point of the chaotic interaction between the metal balls in the box. The resulting sounds are a hyper-real edifice of (un)imagination which completely transported me to another place; albeit one from which I was somewhat relieved to escape. Clicking sounds akin to Chinese water torture, shoveling gravel, accelerating squelching electro-spasm, sudden jolts, bangs, and rare glimpses of extreme quasi-funkiness are just the start. Meanwhile, several tones had me reaching for the booklet in case I missed the small print which explains that bringing the box into your home gives Hecker permission to play a tune on your fillings using telescopic laser technology.

The more palatable periods resemble the space creatures from *The Clangers* attacking an electric piano, someone whistling through a baboon's anus, and fleas jumping on the strings of an oddly-tuned piano. Also, sections of "Speculative Solution 2" have a narrower focus than other tracks and benefit from a chugging rhythm akin to the sound of a robot continuing to speak calmly while choking to death in a mud pool. That and liposuction being performed with (alternately) bagpipes and bellows. Having said that, "2"'s adherence to a stricter rhythm becomes dull compared to both the epic "Speculative Solution 1" and "Octave Chronicles." Indeed Hecker seems to use this dullness to illustrate or mock predictability (and accentuates this by naming two tracks "Speculative Solution 2.)

My first time through the entire recording was intriguing and definitely unpredictable. I had to leave the room at one point, though, and listen from afar. So, for me, this is a disc which demands to be heard, but also demands to be put away for a long time before approaching again; in the hope of having an experience akin to the first unbelievable hearing. I must add, by way of perspective, that the box is a much more alluring and darker color of blue than the photo here and equally there is no way a few sound snippets can reflect the flow and surprise in this recording.

In his collection, *Letters From London*, Julian Barnes quotes (former editor of *The Times*) Simon Jenkins who states a logic whereby people find comfort in the existence of things which

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they themselves may never use. Thus, the Royal Family, rural post offices or train stations in places we will never visit,

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, WFMU, poisonous fish, and so on, can have distant value for those who rarely or never use them. Similarly, I don't necessarily want to hear music as chaotic and steeped in theory as

Speculative Solution

very often, but it's comforting to know that it (and Florian Hecker) is out there.

samples

- [Speculative Solution 1 \(excerpt one\)](#)
- [Speculative Solution 1 \(excerpt two\)](#)
- [Octave Chronicles](#)