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GORDON MONAHAN - Theremin in the rain (C3R)

You don't know how much I like record covers that, like this one, synthesize the release's content in a couple of lines. "Recordings from a theremin controlled sound installation consisting of amplified water drops and long piano strings vibrated by motors, solenoids and pneumatic cylinders". Right, a bit of sci-fi, the usual environmental touch, what else? Hold your horses. First of all, when one looks at the complexity of the installation's scheme (also to be admired on the digipack's interior) suddenly feels like an utter ignorant. I couldn't locate a lone wall socket to attach a cord to in that perfectly designed rational chaos. And of course this music is different from what we expected, despite the title track's literal rendition of its sources, classic theremin sounds in dripping water. First of all, the piano strings' contribution is indeed important, to the point of frequently igniting contradicting drones and unsettling inhuman modifications of an empty space. Certain segments (try "Flex strings") might even recall Z'EV or Pholde - the latter another Canadian favorite - in their irreligious clangour. "When it rains" sounds like an army of kalimbas falling down a stairway, followed by the strange peg-legged alternance of wood'n'metal patterns and engrossing howls from the main instrument's lower registers in "Aerial drop". Monahan is one of those engineers of self-sufficient apparata who would perfectly fit those contexts - like, say, the Experimental Intermedia area - where the interactions between artist, electronic machinery and chance occurrences often produce results that are as hardly classifiable as a rare animal specimen. John Oswald's role as a producer, mixer and editor had to be a revealing sign about the quality level of this fine outing.

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