

Description of audio: Joel Sherwood Spring – HOLECODED

Thin static like the cooling fan of a PC tower pans from ear to ear, punctuated by a hollow clank and a descending tone, a distant siren. A crudely synthesised cymbal rings ominously before being absorbed into the panning static, which builds and fades.

A hoarse drone fills the space, rising and falling beneath audibility and bubbling up again. Ripples of static move from speaker to speaker, weaving between various ribbons of synthesised and resynthesised sounds: from distant sci-fi flares, sirens, and gravelly gurgles to shuffling metallic textures, uncertain grumbling oscillations and deconstructed cutlery.

This swirling, dramatic scene abruptly departs, replaced by the sound of a lone shovel digging crunchy dirt. Sword-like clang, chop chop chop, scrape, like a waltz. This sound is all alone for some time, until a whirl begins to accompany it, soon joined by deep, rubbery bass drum notes. A wonky rhythm builds before waves of trilling drones replace it like a chorus of cicadas, convincingly engine-like.

As the trilling upper frequencies shift in tone and speed, the drone folds over itself. Growing distorted, new harmonics scream – all moving from ear to ear with clumsy determination. Over time, the notes grow heavier or lighter. More delicate details ride these heaving waves: squirts and shards and traces of the sounds from earlier. At one point, light tapping sounds move from one side to the other like the hooves of a very small, agitated horse. At others, memories of backyard sprinklers spring to mind. When a steady rhythm emerges in the drone, as it does from minute to minute, it is not far from stoner rock or death metal.

When two men staging a tunnel explosion appear in an inset video, the drone moves briefly out of the way to accommodate the corresponding audio: a thundering bang, and then another, ricocheting like a whip down the tunnel walls. At another moment, a video of a flash-lit pipe seems to correspond with the irregular, bent clanging of a hard object perhaps falling through it.

All of this sound is unstable material – surging against itself, only precariously bearing its own weight, much like the deteriorating quality of the tunnels shown on screen. Standing near the installation's subwoofer, the cavernous resonance of bass frequencies pulls my bones and flesh into complicity with the work.