

# Pitchfork



**Florian Hecker**

Chimerization

Editions Mego; 2012

By Grayson Currin; January 4, 2013

7.8

ARTISTS:

Florian Hecker

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Even unheard, *Chimerization*, the latest LP from prolific and provocative German electronic experimenter [Florian Hecker](#), immediately seems like a source of wonder. Hecker commissioned Iranian author and philosopher Reza Negarestani to compose a libretto, "The Snake, the Goat and the Ladder (A board game for playing chimera)", as fodder for a new work. He then asked nine people to deliver the piece in English, German, or Negarestani's native language, Farsi, subsequently recording the readings in Massachusetts Institute of Technology's anechoic chambers, studio rooms designed to limit the echo of or interference with the voices themselves.

For Hecker, the purity and coherence of these nine takes became controls for what is perhaps his most ambitious experiment to date: three separate albums in three languages, made by recombining and reconfiguring the readings until the voices merged into one strange storytelling beast and until the tale itself became a tangle of internal hyperlinks, footnotes, and asides. The purpose of Hecker's mythical chimera (that is, "The Snake, the Goat and the Ladder," or any system that fuses disparate parts of several separate ones, whether in [mythology](#) or [fantasy](#) or [science](#)) would be twofold: to challenge the personalities we assign to literary characters and to contest the ease they afford narrative comprehension. He's expanded the system [to print](#), too.

If that seems complicated, *Chimerization* sounds precisely so, too: I've listened to the English version of *Chimerization* a dozen or more times now and read most everything I can about the record, from extensive press notes to a [multi-lingual introductory dossier](#) for the material. And I still don't grasp the full breadth of what Hecker, Negarestani, and their itinerant readers have accomplished here. And to an extent, that's the purpose of the game. Across these 33 uninterrupted minutes, Hecker layers, bowties, refracts, reverses, and otherwise disrupts the trio of voices reading the work. Syllables careen into unseen voids or sublimate into sudden glitches. Phrases chase one another in unsettling antiphony, and sentences jerk to seasick rhythms. Hecker sometimes allows entire thoughts to pass uninterrupted through his filters, conveying chunks of information - "each carrying its own respective space within the beast," one voice manages, describing the constitution of

the chimera-- meant to be decoded and reconnected through obsessive plays. *Chimerization* constructs a board game for what Hecker calls "repeated, 'active' listening," where the details have been scrambled in a way that ultimately allows them to be reconnected into a complete picture. Playing depends upon obsession, and begets it.

But piecing the puzzle together isn't tedious because, despite how academic and conceptual Hecker's work often is, he also possesses a strong sense of forward motion, even as he scatters this story like crumbs. On his previous LP, the brilliant and expansive *Speculative Solution*, Hecker achieved a rare momentum for this fringe field of electronics by daisy-chaining multiple techniques. Harsh bursts instantly billowed into ultraviolet drones or carousel-like melodies. Such constant motion made those four pieces feel restless but unified. Hecker employs the same approach on *Chimerization*, linking harsh whirs to playful skitters, soft static to sudden and strong beats. At alternate points, *Chimerization* suggests the warped humanity of early tape music, the digital arrays of Oval, the thick pulses of [Throbbing Gristle](#), and the goofy dance music of [DAT Politics](#). During one kinetic pass late in the piece, he invokes the cartoon sound of [Raymond Scott](#). Listening to *Chimerization* must be what it feels like for a household cat to chase a laser pointer across an empty living room wall, constantly scanning left and right and up and down, too busy to be distracted.

Despite its musical movement and panoply of allusions, *Chimerization* remains, above all, staunchly theoretical, but its very fount of intrigue is in its challenging nature. If the invitation to decode a long, scrambled tale recited by multiple people and wrecked by a fierce iconoclast doesn't register as its own silver lining, perhaps *Chimerization* is your avoidable rabbit hole. Otherwise, Hecker has built a multivalent system of exploration, where our central storytelling instrument-- that is, the human voice-- has become equal parts messenger, trickster and mystery.