

CYCLIC DEFECTION XII





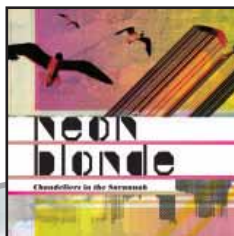
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assisted by the Australia
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Government's art funding and
advisory body, through its
Audience and Market
Development Division.

EDITORIAL

We are three years old. Despite the thousands of words that stand before you, this issue is notable for what is missing. There's been so much great music come across our desks in the last few months that we're barely scratching the surface with this issue. Although there are some 50 or so reviews in this issue and more on the website some of our favourite albums, tracks and songs of late are missing, still submerged in an enormous 'to be reviewed' pile. There are even records that we've featured in the Cyclic Defrost Music Club that have missed being reviewed! Part of the reason for this inundation is just timing – the end of the year rush that sees every independent label try to get their hottest albums out before the end of October when the shops stock up on Britney Spears' Baby Christmas Album. Despite the big changes afoot in the music industry at the moment, traditional retail still has a strangehold affect when it comes to Christmas. Foremost amongst these changes is the power move from Playloder, a UK-based ISP that is an offshoot of the Beggars Group (Beggars Banquet/4AD etc), who have announced a monthly broadband plan with unrestricted music sharing plan which not only gives subscribers the ability to trade music but also compenstates artists by tracking exactly what is swapped on the walled network. Its not only the indies who are involved but Sony/BMG has given the go-ahead for all its current and back catalogue to be shared. It's a model that if takes off it will make pay-for-download services like iTunes, the new Napster and others less appealing.

So what is in this issue of *Cyclic Defrost*? The cover design comes from the booming studios of Umeric, a dynamic cross media design agency based in Sydney who also did the cover of the Noise/Alchemy/ Cyclic CD included with Issue #6. On the local front there are interviews with Melbourne's legendary experimental guitarist Dave Brown, sublime and sombre Sydney producer Tony Dupe and his Saddleback project, beat maker Kaho Cheung as Unkle Ho, and Triosk's Laurence Pike takes us through his favourite drummers. Looking overseas there are interviews with South African ambient electronic experimenter Felix Laband and leftfield hip hopper Josh Martinez, and a look at the seminal psych-experiment of Bill Holt's Dreamies; as well as the aforementioned reviews.

The magazine was a huge success at Sonar and everything that we took over got snapped up quickly. If you look at our website you can buy up the remaining teeshirts that were printed for the trip. Otherwise, stay tuned for issue #13 and a brand new website in the coming months. If we get the time you might even catch some of those missing reviews on the web. **Seb Chan & Dale Harrison**

STOCKISTS

NSW: Victory Music, Plum Music, Market Music, Troy Horse Rock Shop, Hi Fidelity Lounge, Salamander Sound, Spot Music, Redback, Spank, Music @ Byron, Hum on King, Hum on Miller, Hum on Oxford, Leading Edge Warriewood, 360 Sound, Leading Edge Penrith, Mall Music, Electric Monkeys, Fish – Newtown, Fish – Glebe Music, Bizarre, Euphoria, Freestyle, MCA, Metropolis, Recycled, Explore Music, Disc, Reefer, Record Store NSW, So Music, Red Eye

VICTORIA: Licorice Pie, Slap, Readings Carlton, Northside, Kent St, CC Geelong, Recycled, Missing Link, JF Porters, Boston Sound, Voyager Port Melbourne, Record Collectors Corner, Second Spin Tech, Voyager Ivanhoe, Greville, Sister Ray, Polyester, Synaesthesia, Central Station Melbourne, Substrata, Gaslight, Raouls, Kriskay

ACT: Impact, Landspeed

QUEENSLAND: Skinny's, Rockinghorse, Butter Beats, Sunflower, Toombul Music, Alleyway, Cosmic Music, Leading Edge, Music Scene

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Dada's, Mills, Central Station Perth, Planet Video, Chinatown Records

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Muses, Big Star, B Sharp, Chatterbox, Uni Records

TASMANIA: CD Centre, Ruffcutt, Wills Music, Aroma NT: Casuarina

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UMERIC

Cover design – Interview with Ash Bolland
by Bim Ricketson

MOTION SICKNESS

INSPIRED EQUALLY BY THEIR KIWI HOMELAND AND EACH OTHER, THE UMICER PARTNERSHIP OF VON DEKKER AND ASH BOLLAND ‘JAMS’ IN ALL ASPECTS OF DESIGN. HAVING MOVED TO AUSTRALIA, THEY HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE BEST NEW INNOVATIVE CROSS-MEDIA DESIGN AGENCIES IN SYDNEY. THEIR FIRST WORK FOR CYCLIC DEFROST WAS THE COVER OF THE NOISE/SBS ALCHEMY CD THAT WAS INCLUDED WITH ISSUE 6; NOW THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED THE COVER DESIGN FOR ISSUE 12.

‘I think our biggest influence is growing up in New Zealand and partaking in the “Can do” Kiwi attitude,’ begins Bolland ‘The New Zealand landscape is quite amazing. It’s incredible how dramatically the scenery can change in such a small country. I think you can see those influences in our work. Our projects jump around a lot in mood, tone and colour.

‘We enjoy creating projects with a strong, simple concept. Our concepts range from moody and dark to fun and cute, and are always very detailed so people can spend some time with them. We seem to make a lot of environments with our work – maybe that goes back to grow-

ing up in New Zealand too,’ she muses. ‘Above all we try to make sure our work comes across as honest and loved, as we love the work we get to jam on.

‘With every piece we try to do something different, learn something new. We don’t really have a “house style” but rather attempt to have a “house of strong ideas”. Umeric is a constantly evolving entity exploring new forms and styles. In essence we believe that this is where our talent lies: in adaptation and experimentation.

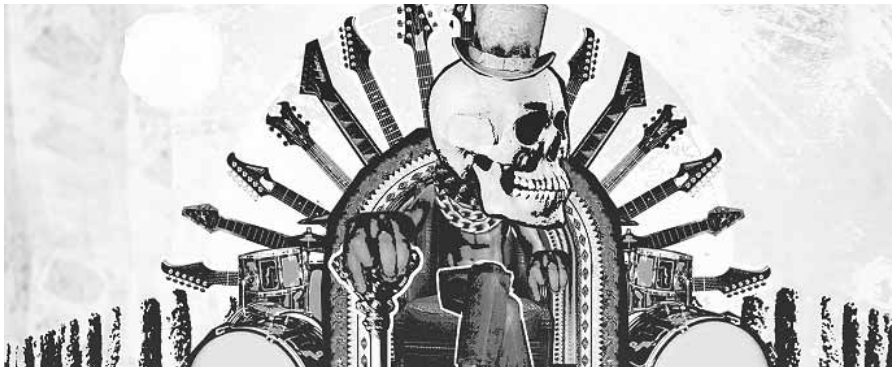
‘There are two sides to our studio: Motion and Still. Motion deals with music videos, shorts, show titles, TVCs – pretty obvious really. Still



deals with illustrations and design for printed and online media. I direct and lead the motion side of Umeric.

‘I love Motion! I love how it is about conveying an idea in the most upfront and interesting way possible, without the need to tag extra information to it. It’s the closest thing to making the visions in your head become a reality.

‘It’s a lot of fun trying to get ideas across in a few seconds; manufacturing objects and characters that come alive in an environment you have created. Deciding how realistic or artificial this world is, by controlling how fast or slow time passes and making your character destroy a ten-



storey building or whatever you can think of ... it rocks!

'Von leads Still, but we are both pretty multidisciplinary and we cross over from time to time.'

This strong friendship and creative synergy is surely another reason Umeric stays fresh and keeps the clients coming in. 'Von and I have been working together for nearly ten years,' he says. 'We complement each other's styles and both know when a completed piece feels "right". We both work very hard towards this and sometimes it takes many all-night jams to nail it, or else it happens in just a few hours. We also both rely on each other's opinions; its great having a fresh pair of eyes to call on 24-7.

'In September 2001 we decided to start our own studio; four years later we are still jamming. We've never worked more hours or harder in our lives, but we don't regret the decision for a minute. It's fun and sometimes hectic juggling all the work at the same time, but we are still very hungry for more.'

Bolland admits that maintaining creativity within very technical disciplines can be a challenge: 'I do sometimes have trouble balancing the technical aspect of 3D and the creative. There is so much to learn and sometimes I'm just not sure what area to attack and keep up with next.

'The biggest challenge with 3D is to make it not feel like 3D. 3D renders can feel so cold and boring; I've spent quite a lot of time working out ways of adding a human feel to my 3D renders. I'm not aiming to be photo-realistic, I'm trying to capture the human touch – not perfect, not calculated.

'We use 3D in most of our motion projects because it allows so much freedom to move. It takes more effort at the start of a project: setting up the props that need to be modelled, textured, shaded and lit. Plus, it's very easy to loose yourself in the detail of trying to capture "real life"; you sometimes lose track of the storyline.

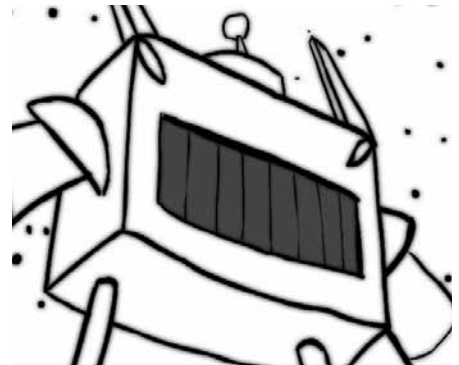
Looking into the future, Bolland hopes their own projects will come to the fore. 'We have a strong desire to be independent; to start producing our own things and learn to be our own clients,' he explains. 'I'm currently in pre-production of a film and Von and I have a few other self-initiated projects to be produced and released in the next year.



You can see more Umeric goodness at their website www.umeric.com. There are also more colour images at cyclicdefrost.com



Umeric's varied work: clockwise from top left, includes the cutesy birds they designed for a Yen Magazine exhibition; rawk graphics for the Jack Awards 04; and Salmonella Dub's video for 'Steppa'



CLUE TO KALO

ONE WAY, ITS EVERY WAY

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www.spunk.com.au





UNKLE HO

Interview with Kaho Cheung

by Anna Burns

A FAMILY JEWEL

IT'S A SUNNY TUESDAY AFTERNOON AND I'M WAITING IN A CAFÉ IN SYDNEY'S NEWTOWN FOR KAHO CHEUNG, WHO, WHEN HE'S NOT WORKING WITH SYDNEY HIPHOP BAND THE HERD, MAKES MUSIC UNDER THE MONIKER UNKLE HO. HALF-AN-HOUR PASSES BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM. I DOUBLE-CHECK MY DIARY, CALL AND LEAVE A MESSAGE, BUT NO REPLY. WHEN I CALL AGAIN, A CHIPPER CHEUNG ANSWERS THE PHONE. AS I SAY HELLO HE JUMPS IN WITH A 'SHIT! ANNA, I TOTALLY FORGOT! SORRY. I'LL BE THERE REALLY SOON.' NOT LONG AFTER THAT, CHEUNG ARRIVES, OUT OF BREATHE AFTER A LIGHTNING FAST BIKE RIDE.

I don't know if tardiness is usually something you can pin on Cheung. Certainly, his debut album *Roads To Roma* has been about three years in the making, but considering the amount of stuff he does, this delay is easy to overlook. Here's the story so far.

Cheung got into writing electronic music about seven or eight years ago. Realising that the most important part of the process was the idea, the rest came naturally. 'After I started writing music I realised it was easy, and that it didn't matter what kind of equipment you had. I just had a PC and that was it.' Eventually he met Kenny Sabir (who started independent hiphop label Elefant Traks in 1998) and got involved in the first Elefant Traks album, *Cursive Writing*. The rest flowed on from there. The Herd was formed a few years later, but like many fellow Herdsmen, he's always been making his own music on the side.

'It's only now that I've felt comfortable and ready to release it,' says Cheung. 'I've always had the intention of releasing a solo album from the beginning. Every year I'd go, "Okay, I'm going to get something out this year" And then that year would pass and I'd be like, "Okay, I'll get something out next year."'

When working on two not-entirely-different projects such as The Herd and Unkle Ho, you could imagine that there'd be moments of tension, or perhaps an internal conflict of interest when you come up with a great beat or stumble across a great sample. However, Cheung is quite relaxed about such a quandary. 'I usually just write stuff and won't have thought about which way to send it, and then I'll play it to the other guys and ask them what they think,' he says. 'It also depends on the timing. There were a few tracks on my solo album that could've

made it onto a Herd album, but we weren't writing tracks at that stage. My main thing is just to get the music out there; the quicker it does the better.'

Perhaps another reason the aforementioned scenario doesn't bother Cheung is because he seems to have an excess of samples hanging around the place. Running out doesn't seem to be a likely problem. On *Roads to Roma* there are roughly 421 samples, but Cheung isn't really and obsessive vinyl bin digger. 'It's mostly off CD actually. I'm pretty new-school about it all, and proud of it! Vinyl is good, but I don't have a record player. I never grew up with vinyl so I don't have that attachment to it in that sense. I scour second-hand places for music, but I opt for CD over vinyl. The sound quality is better and it's easier to work with.'

Keeping track of that many samples might cause some of us to shudder, but Cheung doesn't seem phased by it. 'There are a lot of samples. And that includes drum samples, all the percussion samples. So that bulks the numbers up a bit. There are 11 tracks on the album and about 30 samples per tune. I usually spend a couple of days sampling before I start writing and I have a pretty big library. I split things into categories like "wind instruments", "strings" and "percussion". Within all those categories there's heaps of stuff like clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, guitar, violin and all that,' he explains. 'When I'm writing a track I get one or two samples as the basis for the song, write a beat for that and then go "I could do with a flute sample right now", so I go to the wind section and flick through. I usually have the loop and sample playing at the same time and so I can hear it when it fits.'

To top this off there's also live instrumentation on the album. 'There's a bit of live trumpet in the song "Eureka". I gave Senator Jim the song as it is and said "I kinda want this sort of vibe" and hummed some melodies. Then Jim sort of freestyled with the trumpet, we'd do a few takes and then I'd just cut them up and use the appropriate bits.'

This union has worked so well it's now become an integral part of the live Unkle Ho experience. 'It was a very conscious decision to get him in the live performance. After we did all the recorded stuff I was just like "You should play this live too!" He plays trumpet, accordion and melodica and also has a theramin. He runs everything through effects so it has

Aside from being a talented producer, Cheung is also skilled on the graphic design front. When he's not making records he works as a designer, so the artwork is also all the fruits of his creativity. There's some sweet synchronicity with the cover art too. By pure coincidence there's a picture of a happy couple dancing. The dark-haired boy is looking all proud, holding a beautiful blonde lady. 'I just put it on there and afterwards realised that my girlfriend is blonde. At first neither of us noticed, but then someone else pointed it out and we were like, "That's really cheesy!" But it was just a good picture from a book called *Folk Costume from Western Europe* and it was nice. It was



'I'D PLAYED A COUPLE OF GIGS JUST BY MYSELF AND IT WAS PRETTY TERRIFYING, PLUS IT'S HARD FOR PEOPLE TO TELL IF YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING OTHER THAN PRESSING PLAY.'

a really big sound,' says Cheung. 'I'd played a couple of gigs just by myself and it was pretty terrifying, plus it's hard for people in the audience to tell if you're doing something other than pressing play. I am doing something up there, but it can look pretty boring. So having Jim improves the performance (and sound)'.

Roads to Roma has a beautiful smoky, breezy, chilled, gypsy thing going on – a very different vibe to *The Herd*. 'I was listening to heaps of old time jazz,' Cheung says. "'The Phantom Dancer" on [Sydney community radio station] 2SER is one of my favourite shows. Greg Poppleton who does the show plays all this old swing from the '30s and '40s and for some reason that strikes a chord. I was also listening to a lot of gypsy movement and heaps of hip hop as well. Some of the music I was listening to I don't actually like that much but I find quite interesting and I seek it out.'

dynamic; they're just wandering off into the fields... I just found that book at an op shop and it reflected the music nicely. It's got the European influences and the birds; a hummingbird, which is the national bird of Jamaica. You know, Jamaica ... dub. See, there was method behind it all!

Where to from here? 'We're working furiously on *The Herd* album right now, which is going to take a huge amount of my time. Then after that we'll be touring. I'll definitely be squeezing in time to work on the next Unkle Ho album. There are grand plans to get another one out next year ... but we'll see how we go!



Unkle Ho's *Roads to Roma* is out now on Elephant Traks through Inertia. See unkleho.com for more

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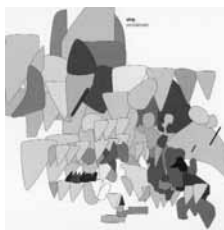
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Sean Rabin, *The Australian*

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DAVE BROWN
Interview with Dave Brown
by Adam Carey

BROWN SOUNDS

WEIRD. DIFFICULT. OBSCURE. PRETENTIOUS. NOISE. AFTER ALMOST THIRTY YEARS EXPLORING THE MARGINS OF WHAT CONSTITUTES MUSIC, AVANT-GUITARIST DAVE BROWN HAS LEARNED TO LIVE WITH THE BEMUSED RESPONSES OF THE WIDER PUBLIC, WHILE SLOWLY BUT SURELY CARVING A FORMIDABLE REPUTATION AMONGST THOSE WITH AN EAR FOR EXPERIMENTAL SOUNDS. LONG PROMINENT IN AUSTRALIA'S MUSICAL UNDERGROUND, BROWN IS BEGINNING TO TURN HEADS OVERSEAS TOO.

On a chilly April day in North Fitzroy, a crowd of about thirty people has overcome the weather and Sunday-afternoon apathy to venture down to the Empress Hotel to watch improv trio Pateras/Baxter/Brown, playing their first Melbourne show since their European tour late last year.

The trio take to the stage without any fanfare. Drummer Sean Baxter, sitting side-on to the audience, cranes his neck to speak: 'Hey dudes, I was gonna stand up and introduce us but the fuckin' Pope's dead so now I don't give a fuck about stuff'.

And on that note he starts to play, attacking his drums with what looks like a primitive scrubbing brush and a dented hubcap. Centre stage, Brown sits almost perfectly still, guitar laid flat across his knees. He has attached alligator clips to the strings, and scrapes different objects over them – adjusting the instrument's tuning all the while – drawing out unearthly sounds. From the side of the stage, Anthony Pateras tip-taps a rapid stream of thin, plinking notes from a prepared piano.

It is intensely tactile music – crackling, crunching, slithering – and creepier than any horror movie score. It is what three errant child geniuses with no previous contact with musical instruments might produce if you locked them away for a week. But these are not errant child geniuses. They are, in essence, three generations of Melbourne's musical avant-garde sharing the stage.

For Dave Brown, the trio is merely the latest incarnation of a lifetime's dedication to musical adventurism. He has been doing this sort of thing since the early 1980s. The younger Baxter joined him in the early 1990s in what has been a fruitful partnership, and Pateras is a 26-year old, classically trained enfant terrible already forging an international reputation through his solo album *Mutant Theatre*, released on John Zorn's Tzadik label in 2004.

There is a long list of musicians eager to work with Brown these days. His crowded resumé also includes roles in jazz/noise quintet Buckettrider, abstract minimalists Western Grey, contemporary classicists Elision Ensemble, and ongoing

solo guitar project Candlesnuffer, to name just a few.

But if Brown has assumed some kind of seniority among Australia's musical avant-garde, he has battled long and hard for it. Circumstances and recurring bouts of self-doubt have often undermined him as he has followed his difficult calling. Early signs of a musical career weren't promising. Born in 1956, Brown had a culturally cloistered upbringing, raised by conservative, working class parents in the outer Melbourne suburb of Heidelberg. He learnt the piano for a couple of years as a boy, but says he 'just got completely bored' with it.

As a young man, his first love was painting. He credits his artistic awakening to an American high school art teacher who shared his enthusiasm for the work of surrealist painters. 'If it wasn't for him I wouldn't have known that art schools existed,' says Brown.

He also joined the high school band, taking up bass guitar because 'all the other instruments were chosen.' In true punk spirit, he had no schooling. The other members of the band simply taught him to play the bass parts to suit the chords, but it wasn't long before he began developing his own intricate and melodic playing style – a style that he said has stayed with Brown until now. As a bass player I was always a bit of a frustrated guitar player, he says.

After a string of roles in cover bands and art rock bands, Brown had an encounter that could have catapulted him to the apotheosis of rock and roll fame. In 1975, AC/DC moved to Melbourne, searching for a fresh start and a new rhythm section. Brown auditioned to play bass, but his artier musical inclinations clashed with AC/DC's raw rock sound, and both parties agreed it was not a good fit. I was a bit naïve and didn't understand that pure dirty rock because I was listening to other things,' admits Brown.

'Only from a completely selfish point of view' does he confess to pondering

today how differently his life would have turned out had he got the gig. His childhood friend Phil Rudd did, and Brown never heard from him again. (Brown told me, conspiratorially, that his real name is Rudinski.)

Instead of playing riff rock anthems in crowded stadiums around the world, Brown went to art school to develop his painting. There, he formed the group Signals with fellow students David Wadelton and Chris Knowles.

'Very early on it was a noise band, but we had no notion of noise music,' Brown says. 'We'd do things like stand three guitars against amplifiers and turn them on and let them run for fifteen minutes, and that was a performance.'

Signals joined a community of like-minded groups including Tic Tic Tic, Essendon Airport and the Institute of Dronal Anarchy, that worked at the margins of Melbourne's music scene, tending to steer clear of the pub circuit, performing in arts spaces like La Mama and the Organ Factory.

'It was really art for art's sake, rather than controlled by the need to play at venues or to subscribe to some musical fashion,' says Brown.

By the time they released *Gimmee Some Lovin'* in 1983, Signals had refined their sound into something altogether more musical. Brown says Signals created a huge archive of recorded material, but *Gimmee Some Lovin'* remains their only commercial release. Listening to it today, it is striking to hear how much their sound pre-empted certain celebrated contemporary bands that have mined the spiky post-punk and 'mutant disco' sounds of the early eighties for inspiration.

Brown felt like Signals was on the cusp of something truly groundbreaking, but when Wadelton left the band to pursue his painting the group disbanded. Brown put aside his disappointment at Signals' demise, placed his musical ambitions on hold, and followed his friend Wadelton into the art world.

'I think it was uniquely my own

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‘VERY EARLY ON IT WAS A NOISE BAND, BUT WE HAD NO NOTION OF NOISE MUSIC... WE’D DO THINGS LIKE STAND THREE GUITARS AGAINST AMPLIFIERS AND TURN THEM ON AND LET THEM RUN FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, AND THAT WAS A PERFORMANCE.’

language, influenced by [post-surrealist painters],’ Brown says of his paintings. ‘It’s about a skewed way of looking at the world [and] saying maybe things aren’t the way you think they are.’

For various reasons, by the early nineties Brown’s painting career was stalling. Despite having previously exhibited at the National Gallery in Canberra, and at solo shows in Melbourne, he says he lost confidence, and began producing less and less. He stopped exhibiting, and eventually abandoned painting altogether.

Meanwhile, he had joined riff-heavy art rockers Dumb and the Ugly, and music took precedence again. The Dumb and the Ugly had a larger following than any other band Brown has played in – they had support slots with Einstürzende Neubaten and Rollins Band when they toured here – but it was never really his band. Brown says the group started as a democracy, but guitarist Michael Sheridan became increasingly autocratic, writing all the songs and telling the other band members how to play them. For Brown, it was an unsustainable, even destructive, situation.

‘It was actually quite detrimental to me,’ he explains. ‘I felt like I’d been pushed into a corner where my natural inclinations were completely suppressed.’ He finally quit in frustration, and didn’t pick up a bass guitar for some time.

If the early nineties marked a low ebb in the career of Dave Brown, with the dissolution of his painting career and yet another promising band that failed to take off, he certainly wasn’t about to throw in the towel. Brown formed Buckettrider and Lazy with drummer Sean Baxter, two groups that, although presently in hiatus, we may not have heard the last of.

Nominally a jazz/noise band, Buckettrider’s live performances fast became legendary around Melbourne. They are capable of being simultaneously visceral and cerebral, their performances a thrilling juxtaposition of seemingly incompatible elements; composition and

abstraction, high art and pop culture. One of their live staples is a blistering deconstruction of Destiny’s Child’s ‘Say My Name’.

Lazy is a different and far more austere entity, in which Brown draws Derek Bailey-like sounds from his guitar as Baxter clangs his drums with selected ‘junk’, creating busily abstract soundscapes.

For Brown, both groups have performed highly complimentary roles over time by being so disparate. ‘Buckettrider became more and more formal and composed, and Lazy was a much more abstract thing and becoming more abstract, so they went in opposite directions. So for both of us it was a chance to get really different parts of our personalities out, musically.’

These days, solo project Candlesnuffer is fulfilling the same role for him. On 2003’s eponymous CD, electric guitar sounds were digitally processed beyond recognition into brutal noisescapes and more delicate, sinewy compositions. Like his work in the trio, he frequently draws startling sounds from an electro-acoustic guitar.

‘Candlesnuffer can really go all sorts of places,’ he says. ‘I’m fascinated by... juxtaposing high art and low art, analogue technology and digital technology, acoustic music and electric music, formal music and abstract music.’

While many of the bands Brown has been involved in have been celebrated in select circles, none has quite succeeded in paying the bills. Brown still works five days a week in a bookstore. Despite this, he rejects the notion of compromising his music in an effort to reach a wider audience. ‘I can’t go and play in, like, a funk band a couple of nights a week for money,’ he explains. ‘I’ve always been a bit of a purist. It’s not to say I couldn’t do that, but I could probably only do it for a very short period of time before it started to drive me crazy. It’d be like me as a painter doing layout for a newspaper. It would be another job.’

If these words came from the mouth of a young man you might dismiss them as undergraduate posturing, but Brown has been sticking to his principles and refusing to dumb things down for close to three decades now.

Brown’s definition of success is disarmingly simple: ‘I just like to be happy with any given performance. And that’s hard because I’m also full of self-doubt, and always have been.’

Wondering if it’s any good is an abiding anxiety for most artists, but with Brown you get the sense that recurring battles with his own inner demons have thwarted his ambitions at times. Now approaching 50, it is a part of himself he has come to terms with. ‘Ideally, what I’d like is to be able to exist in some sort of a way that is self-sufficient, doing what I want to do, and not doing a whole lot of shit I don’t want to do. And I feel a lot more determined lately about that. But it’s a slow process,’ he says.

The answer may lie in Europe. Pateras/Baxter/Brown toured ten countries there last year, and were well received by audiences and the music press. *The Wire* writer Dan Warburton listed a performance by the trio as one of his highlights of 2004. Brown observed a greater acceptance of experimental music in Europe, as well as a stronger tradition of playing it.

‘I still feel like for a lot of people [in Australia] it’s weird music,’ he says of the trio’s work. ‘Something that Pateras/Baxter/Brown talk about is that we’re an improvised band, but that we’re trying to refine a method of instantaneous composition that is strongly influenced by European formal music as much as it is by improvisation.’

In the short term, Brown is set to release the second Candlesnuffer album, and a CD in collaboration with David Wadeldon, titled *Morpho*. He said they had initially hoped to reform Signals, but third member Chris Knowles was unavailable.

Characteristically, the musical reunion has been no mere nostalgia trip, but a chance to explore something new, this time a loving deconstruction of sixties pop and porno funk. It’s as though Brown is psychologically incapable of covering old ground.

For all the hard slog of working in obscurity and playing to small audiences all these years, it is hard to imagine him being satisfied in a band like AC/DC, despite the millions that would have flowed his way. Playing variations of the same song over and over for thirty years, well, that’s just a bit unambitious, really.



The Pateras / Baxter / Brown CD *Ataxis* out now on Sinaesthesia.



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SADDLEBACK

Interview with Tony Dupé
by Dan Rule

MOUNTAIN MAN

ALMOST EIGHT YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE SYDNEY PRODUCER, COMPOSER AND MUSICIAN TONY DUPÉ LEFT HIS HOME CITY FOR AN ISOLATED REGION OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES SOUTH COAST. AND FOR THE FOUNDER OF '90S AMBIENT POP ENSEMBLE GLOVEBOX, THE CHANGE IN SCENERY ALSO SIGNALLED A SHIFT IN APPROACH. RECORDING IN DECREPIT COASTAL BUILDINGS, HIS OWN ONE-BEDROOM COTTAGE, OR OUTSIDE IN THE OPEN, DUPÉ HAS SINCE GARNERED AN INIMITABLE REPUTATION FOR HIS VERY PERSONAL AND HANDS-ON PRODUCTION METHODOLOGY, AND DEVELOPED A UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SONIC QUALITIES OF HIS CHOSEN RECORDING ENVIRONMENTS. BUT DESPITE HAVING WORKED ON RECORDINGS FOR THE LIKES OF ARCHER PREWITT, TANIA BOWERS, JAMIE HUTCHINGS, HOLLY THROSBY AND GRAND SALVO AMONGST OTHERS, PERHAPS HIS MOST SATISFYING ACCOMPLISHMENT YET HAS BEEN HIS OWN RECORD UNDER THE SADDLEBACK MONIKER – LAST YEAR'S SPACIOUS AND MELODIC DEBUT *EVERYTHING'S A LOVE LETTER*.

Tony Dupé was sitting in the dark when I first called. It was the night prior to the interview – a still, cold, winter Thursday – and the power was out; it had been for an hour. Although weary, Dupé still managed to laugh as we spoke. He told me that he was in the middle of recording a band when the lights went out, that he hoped he hadn't lost anything. As I hung up, I too couldn't help but laugh. Here was this guy – one of the more in-demand producers going around at the moment – sitting in his ancient one-bedroom cottage on Saddleback Mountain in the dark, twiddling his thumbs. And all the while, Sydney's Derwent River Star, the band who had travelled all the way down to record with him, were presumably sitting in the same tiny space, doing the exact same thing.

The following night, the power is back on and Dupé is still able to see the humour in the situation. 'We never found out what happened,' he says. 'But I guess it happens in the country a bit. I didn't lose too much stuff.'

Last night's events seem somewhat indicative of Dupé's sensibility at present, which sees him working with minimal resources to create music of astounding beauty and place. Indeed, Dupé

has fostered a truly unique sound, both working with others and, more recently, with his own Saddleback solo project. 'I don't know if this is accurate or not,' he posits. 'But I think being in this environment, and perhaps being isolated, there's a heightening of an emotional state or an awareness that you may not have when you're in a more busy environment. It's a stripping-back of things, which I think is fairly necessary if you do want to covey, communicate, or express.'

'Where I live is just a little weatherboard cottage on a mountain,' he continues. 'It's really beautiful – I think it's the most beautiful place I've ever been. It's a fairly old property, so it has a very established garden, and it's quite high up, so you can see all the way to Wollongong, out to sea and all the way across Jamberoo. The studio room is the lounge room, there's a kitchen, and a bedroom that I use a fair bit for a recording room as well. It's pretty cosy,' he laughs. 'Apart from [the property owner] Caroline, there's not anyone for a very long way, so we can make some noise. But then again, the music I do is pretty quiet. It's really peaceful; there's lots of birds and animals.'

Brought to the wider public's attention by 2004's debut long-player, *Everything's a Love Letter*, Saddleback sees Dupé drawing from both a personal, domestic directness, and a more pastoral sense of spaciousness, which tend to mirror his current living and working environments. While he creates richly textural and intimate melodic passages, he manages to contextualise them within expansive, flowing arrangements – atmospheric guitar, piano and brass add subtle nuance and lingering emotive ellipses to a base of gently abstracted electronics.

But despite its well-considered intricacies, Dupé understands his music as a strictly expressive medium. 'It's just a matter of playing an instrument and seeing what comes out,' he explains.

Even in the short time we have been chatting, it is a trait that seems to envelop much of Dupé's personality. He is someone who allows his ideas time to develop – no thought or phrase is rushed or forced – he reflects, he considers, he reinterprets. 'I see the record as an expression of how I felt at the time. I like the idea that music is an abstract language and that you should just blurt, and then try and make some sense of it or

extend it to another conversation by blurring on another instrument. And if you're composing in the situation of production as well, then you're kind of flipping between either technically assessing it or compositionally assessing it as to what it might need, and just playing. It's about just using a musical language and trying to decipher it at the end.

'I'd hope it would seem like personal music to people who hear it. I think an emotional response to music is one that I have so, for me, music that I respond to most is of an honest and personal nature, because it's kind of like a communication thing.'

Now 40, Dupé grew up in Canberra, before moving to Sydney following high school. He played in several bands as a kid, holding down bass duties before moving on to guitar and vocals. 'I never really liked too much heavy music,' he explains. 'Joy Division and The Clash were about as heavy as it got for me. It was more bands like the Go Betweens and people like that, who didn't take themselves too seriously, and had a slightly more kind of bookish approach to things.'

Dupé's creative interests culminated in the formation of Glovebox in 1990. Taking a lithe, ambient approach to indie-pop, the band soon built a reputation for their melodic drifts and swirling atmospherics – even catching the eye of US avant musician-turned-production



dignitary Kramer (responsible for producing records for the likes of Low, Galaxie 500, Urge Overkill, Daniel Johnston, The Boredoms and Palace Brothers amongst many others), who Dupé later travelled to America to record with. 'I don't really like the word 'pop' too much, but it was a couple of guitars, bass and drums,' Dupé admits. 'There were instrumental stretches and it was kind of atmospheric, I guess.'

The band utilised a supple, rotating line-up, with Dupé

**'THE COTTAGE ISN'T
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UNDER THE SOUND.'**

and fellow guitarist Liberty Kerr the only permanent players. 'It was kind of her and I for the most of it, but the rhythm section changed. She was a cello player as well and she had a really atmospheric way of playing, which I really liked. She kind of played the guitar like a cello, because of her upbringing I guess. There were other people who stayed for a long time, but it was always her and I who were the main pilots.'

Even at this early stage, Dupé began to recognise the

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how long are you staying
an explosive debut that delves into hardcore punk and post-punk experimentalism; influenced by the likes of television, throwing muses, the discord label and early hood.

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The Further Adventures Of
Lord Quas
Stones Throw

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Fine

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potential for recording in domestic environments. It was a truly edifying realisation – even if only via circumstance – which was to inform the vast majority of his later work. ‘Having our really good friend Tim Whitten, who was a great producer, and not really having budgets to make records, we began making records in houses and stuff,’ he says. ‘I mean, the first records we ever did were in a studio, but since then I haven’t been back. I really enjoy recording in a house-type situation. We’ve pretty much always done it that way.’

In 1998, Dupé heard of a house on the New South Wales south coast, owned by friend’s parents. ‘It was just by chance that there was this house that we knew of in Gerroa, which is such a pretty little town,’ remembers Dupé. ‘It was actually built by the Marist brothers; it’s been suggested that it was a nunnery, but I think the Marist brothers owned it originally. It was one of those places where they had a little holiday home, and all the fittings were kind of scaled to a ten-year-old, so it was kind of a bit creepy, basically. It had a big, long, shining corridor and it was a pretty dilapidated house.’

After setting up an eight-track reel-to-reel by the window, and recording some material in the building’s vast interiors, Dupé had a revelation of sorts. ‘It seemed like such a nice way of doing things; I mean, the house looks over a seven-mile beach, which is really naturally beautiful.’

‘When the opportunity came to be at that house more regularly, and be the caretaker for that house, I just took the plunge. There was a little flat next to it and I stayed in the flat and mowed the lawn as the rent, so it was affordable. I just used the house when a group of people came down, like a band or something.’

But his decision to move to the Gerroa house wasn’t a mere a lifestyle choice. Indeed, the building’s sonic and creative qualities were motivation enough. ‘It had really big rooms so the reverbs were really nice. It was just a very big, warm sound. And it had a huge window onto the seven-mile beach and just the sleepy, little town where everyone lived. It had a lot of atmosphere.’

Archer Prewitt of The Sea and Cake soon travelled down to stay in the building, recording his beautifully austere 1999 EP, the aptly titled *Gerroa Songs*. Several artists followed, including Tania Bowers of Via Tania (then working under the Sunday moniker), The Woods Themselves and Jamie Hutchings of Bluebottle Kiss, each with stunning results. But the old house was sold and Dupé moved to his current home on Saddleback Mountain, in the hills behind Kiama.

Predictably, it was around this time that the Saddleback project came into effect. And while unable to articulate its full meaning at the time, Dupé began piecing together *Everything’s a Love Letter*. ‘I’d done some

tinkering in Gerroa and done a few things, but once I got here it seemed to come together a little bit more,’ he explains. ‘I didn’t really embark on it; it was just what I spent time doing; recording it, playing with it – like a musical diary or something.’

Through his own process of interpretation, Dupé eventually came to understand the record as a very personal and place-inspired collection of works. ‘I did spend a lot of time on my own in the middle of nowhere, and it was a very kind of reflective period and a pretty peaceful period, but also a pretty sad time, some of it. Equally, there are some more joyous moments. So yeah, now I can definitely connect it to the time and to how I felt.’

Scanning the track listing – with songs like ‘Seven Miles’, ‘Train South’, ‘Inside Rain’, ‘Remote Remorse’ and ‘Gerroa Thursday’ – you start to gain an understanding of the record’s thematic paradigm, and coupled with its evocative sonic qualities, it possesses a very observational, tactile and personal dynamic. For Dupé, perhaps more than most, this comes from both the creation of the music and the recording process.

‘It generally starts from an instrument, from playing a little, but then maybe recording it and mutating it a little bit,’ he posits. ‘Then, possibly looping it and playing over it again so you’re sort of feeding back into the instruments. I guess it’s probably evolving too. Probably, over time, I’ve got a little more involved in using the computer as an instrument. For the later songs like “Scramble To”, I was using more loops and things to create songs, but I like the idea of blurring the lines.’

‘All the houses that I’ve been involved in have been wooden houses, and quite a lot of the sounds are room sounds ... I’m of the more organic school; I like the sound of actual rooms as opposed to virtual rooms. But there are a lot of other benefits when you’re recording a group of people, because it kind of brings an atmosphere of community and harmony in the project.’

Another marked element of Dupé’s recorded output is the sound that makes its way onto tape from outside the studio. This was something that characterised recent recordings with Holly Throsby and Grand Salvó. ‘Yeah,’ he laughs. ‘It’s pretty hard to keep the nature sounds out, so they’re in a lot of the recordings. Some of it – not very much, but some – is done outside. The cottage isn’t soundproof so sound does come in; there are a lot of crickets at night, and a whole lot of things that, obviously, I don’t mind at all. To me it’s just a little bed of nature that sits under the sound. I enjoy a headphone listen myself – I’m sure other people do too – and it’s nice to have that kind of aesthetic. It sounds nicer than an air-conditioning unit.’

So how do Dupé’s two creative lives – that producer

and musician – intertwine? As he explains, points of continuity are all-important. ‘I only really record people I like, in terms of dealing with them, because it’s a very personal space,’ he explains.

‘For whatever reason, you let your own stuff go by the way for a bit. I haven’t done any of my own stuff since the last record. [Producing and making music are] probably different in that the compositions are already in place when people come, whereas for me I’m composing as I go. But at the same time, the way I enjoy recording other people most is to be involved in coming up with arrangements and things; like a spontaneous construction of a rhythm part or a melodic part by using what’s laying around here. There is a similarity to do my own thing in that way, like “What else does it need? Okay, well let’s do that.”

‘You do get a slightly different satisfaction to when you’re doing your own thing,’ he continues. ‘It’s a selfish kind of pleasure, but I like being so involved in making other people’s music that I feel like it’s my own thing. I invest a lot in it, so I do feel very involved and very proud of what I do; it’s like we made it together. That’s one thing I like about music as distinct from visual arts and – it’s an opportunity to collaborate and share in the joy of the experience.’

Dupé will hopefully experience this sense of collaboration and unity with his next project as Saddleback, which will involve a kind of bits-and-pieces collective of local south coast musicians. ‘I’m hoping to get a bit of a ragtag orchestra together,’ he says. ‘I’m looking to expand the palette of instruments and see what happens if I do similar things having gotten other instruments. I’m going to get people to improvise and kind of cut up what they do with other instruments.’

And it is a project he is genuinely looking forward to. ‘I haven’t involved myself in the community, strangely. I don’t know why that is, but maybe it’s because I’m just up here in the mountains doing my thing, and I haven’t really reached out to the community too much. Doing this record will bring me in contact with more people,’ he pauses. ‘Making my own music is actually the most important thing to me, so it’s a matter of me really focussing on it, prioritising it and doing it.’



Saddleback’s *Everything’s a Love Letter* is out now on Preservation through Inertia



FELIX LABAND

Interview with Bob Baker Fish
by Bob Baker Fish

ONE MAN LABAND

SOUTH AFRICAN PRODUCER FELIX LABAND IS AN ARTIST WHO PRODUCES GENTLE, WHIMSICAL ELECTRONICS THAT EARNESTLY REFERENCE ELEMENTS OF FOLKTRONICA, SMOOTH GENTLE JAZZ, AND PARISIAN FILM SOUNDTRACKS OF YESTERYEAR WITH A WIDE-EYED YEARNING INNOCENCE. WHILST THESE SOMEWHAT DISPARATE ELEMENTS ALL FIND A LIGHT, BREEZY HOME WITHIN HIS CAREFULLY-CRAFTED SOUND WORLDS, HE IS ABLE TO CONJURE UP A DIFFERENT EMOTIVE REACTION WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE TRACK, YET IS STILL ABLE TO RETAIN A UNIFIED SENSE OF FLOW THROUGHOUT THE ALBUM AS A WHOLE, SOMETHING THAT HE SUGGESTS WAS A CONSCIOUS DECISION.

‘That’s definitely a big objective,’ he offers on the line from his record company headquarters in Durban, ‘to try to make each track its own unique piece. I don’t like albums that run one feeling the whole way through. I like to go all over the place and then tie it all together to make one album. I like the way records used to be when I was younger, you’d buy a record and it would be four songs a side and you’d get to know each song so well – rather than these CDs that run to the last minute and you never end up listening to the whole thing.’

Surprisingly Laband’s history is in punk rock, playing in numerous aggressive, hardcore, industrial and guitar bands before being drawn to electronic music. Though it was less an abrupt departure and more an opportunity to express some of the sounds he was already listening to. ‘I’d always been into electronic stuff, more into the German ‘80s vibe, almost what electro is now. So I started messing around like that and then it kind of developed into me doing my own thing more and more, and then eventually I discovered that you could make music on

computers, because I’d always been doing it with hardware, keyboards and sequencers and stuff.’

Dark Days Exit is Laband’s third release, and his most evocative and distinctive. It’s also his first to be picked up by German label Compost. Whilst his first album for South African label African Dope is decidedly trip-hop influenced, with a few strange waltzes and flourishes, his second, also on African Dope, features more darker electronics. For *Dark Days Exit* however, Laband was keen to do something different, perhaps due to the fact that at the time he was writing it he was actively questioning his whole approach to music.

‘About two years ago I reached a kind of peak in the whole electronic thing, wondering where I wanted to go,’ he offers. ‘I wasn’t interested in playing nightclubs so much; people on pills wanting hard house. I kind of took a break to try to establish what direction I wanted to go in, and the result was this album.’

‘I don’t think it was a huge feeling of “Fuck this” or anything like that, but I do think it was a natural feeling of “What am I trying to do?”’ he

continues. 'I think a logical way to decide was to take off a little bit because influences might not be a conscious thing – you always have things filtering through your work, so it's quite good just to do your own thing for a while.'

As a result, Laband hid himself away in the studio for two years crafting *Dark Days Exit* to within an inch of its life, attempting to free himself from the influences that surrounded him in the electronic realm. Working with live musicians Laband processed, cut and rearranged their sounds, only utilising snippets to further his compositions. Taking note of minimalist composers such as Steve Reich and Phillip Glass, Laband was initially keen to craft more beatless music and explore other aspects of composition. Ultimately he couldn't resist the rhythmic lure though, to his credit, he has refused to approach beats in a typical or even a derivative way.

'It's boring – the same kind of beats all the time,' he states. 'At the same time it's interesting because in electronic music something like Pole will come up and then everybody will sound like Pole, and at one stage everyone sounded like Autechre. It's fucking ridiculous.'

Becoming a recluse in the studio was how Laband resolved this issue, yet even this is fraught with its own dangers, namely the perils of option fatigue. 'I spent almost too much time on this,' he reveals ruefully. 'As my time in the studio has developed I've learnt

'IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC SOMETHING LIKE POLE WILL COME UP AND THEN EVERYBODY WILL SOUND LIKE POLE... IT'S FUCKING RIDICULOUS.'

more and more about software and the possibilities that you can do. So I've spent a lot of time with the production of sounds in there: stereo, filtering that kind of thing. But at the same time I think I could have spent too much time and got a bit lost in it. I couldn't find any solution to anything. It was just endless. I mean that's the album, but there's another thousand fucking sounds that didn't make it onto the album. Electronic production is quite odd. There's an endless-possibility aspect to it; it's quite scary. For my future projects I want to keep it more directed, make decisions, get it down and that's it – rather than spending ten years on something.'

Whilst being slightly dismissive of the Soweto scene – 'deep house with Zulu vocals over it' – Laband sees himself as part of a small but burgeoning electronic scene in South Africa, loosely based around the African Dope label and Open Record, a more avant-garde type label with classically-trained musicians. In particular he singles out the work of Markus Wormstorm who he breathlessly refers to as 'the Aphex Twin of South Africa'. He is also quite excited about another of his projects, a harder, darker electro-styled, Suicide-influenced outfit called Guavarama (a play on '80s pop band Bananarama) that he has been working on over the last few years that he is keen to play live and exhibit. Mostly, however, he is excited that, thanks to Compost, *Dark Days Exit* is travelling around the world and playing to a new audience.

'In the end, that is why you make music,' he offers. 'You want to make something interesting for people to enjoy and help shape their life, and hopefully that's what I'll be able to do from now on: carry on making good stuff, meet cool people and travel and just and have fun.'

***Dark Days Exit* is out now on Compost through Inertia (see www.compost-records.com for more info)
African Dope can be found at www.africandope.co.za**



New releases on Warp

BROADCAST 'Tender Buttons'

WARPCD136/WARPLP136



Broadcast return after a two year absence with a stunning new album, *Tender Buttons*. It marks a new line up for the band, now slimmed down to the duo of Trish Keenan and James Gargill. Blending their trademark influences of '60s pop, film soundtracks and the BBC Radiophonic workshop, Broadcast's fourth album has a stripped back simplicity, an emotional boldness and a psychedelic darkness reminiscent of the Velvet Underground.

JAMIE LIDELL 'Multiply'

WARPCD131/WARPLP131



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JACKSON AND HIS COMPUTER BAND 'Smash'

WARPCD137/WARPLP137



Magnificent and messy, daring and original, *Smash* by young French talent Jackson Fourgeaud, is already being heralded as one of the finest debuts in years. It's a 50-minute trans-genre audio fantasy rippling with Martian funk and melody-spangled symphonies, forging a wild romantic pop hybrid that sounds unlike anything else. Fans include Richie Hawtin, Matthew Herbert, 2 Many DJs, Erol Alkan, Paul Epworth, Gilles Peterson, Trevor Jackson and Michael Mayer.

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Josh Martinez
Interview with Mathew Kimber
by Bob Baker Fish

NOM DE PLUME, AYE



JOSH MARTINEZ IS AN ENIGMA. SIMULTANEOUSLY EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE, HE IS PART REALITY, PART CREATION, A BASEBALL STAR FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AND A SOAP ACTOR FROM *GENERAL HOSPITAL*. HE'S ALSO A VERBOSE WORDSMITH, PART OF A GROWING FOLD OF CANADIAN HIPHOP MCS AND PRODUCERS WHO ARE REACHING OUT BEYOND THEIR SHORES MAKING MUSIC THAT IS AS INTELLIGENT AND RELEVANT AS IT IS PROGRESSIVE. WHILST THE FORMER TWO EXAMPLES ARE LIVING, BREATHING PEOPLE WITH BIRTH CERTIFICATES TO PROVE IT, THE LATTER IS SOMEWHAT MORE COMPLICATED, A CREATION DREAMED UP BY MATHEW KIMBER, HIS NOM DE PLUME AFFORDING HIM THE FREEDOM TO REACH OUT A LITTLE FURTHER AND BLUR THE BOUNDARIES OF REALITY.

'With Josh Martinez I get to pull off this interesting balancing act. When I'm on stage or when I'm recording I can say or do what I want, even though it isn't always necessarily connected to reality,' he offers on the line from his home in Vancouver BC.

Yet there's also greater purpose at work – more than dropping a few red herrings or adding to the mystique of Josh Martinez – one that may not immediately be apparent. Whilst 2000's *Made in China* signalled a new take on a well-worn genre, it was the complex structures and smooth flows of 2004's *Buck Up Princess* that really introduced Josh Martinez to the outside world. It's on *Buck Up Princess* that it becomes apparent that by distancing his real self from his work and allowing this 'Josh Martinez' figure to take the reigns, Kimber provides himself with extra distance and freedom to examine both his life and those around him with greater emotional scrutiny, seemingly without fear of recrimination. Consequently his music, though at times humorous, upbeat, frantic and a celebration of good times, is also deeply personal, poetic, reflective, and almost romantic, possessing a unique ability to tap into our

collective experiences and emotions.

'The underwriting goal of what I try to say is not that everyone can do everything, but that nothing is impossible to do,' he explains. 'I mean I'm not a visual artist: I can't see, I can't design, I can't psychoanalyse or come up with complex scientific formulas. I can tell stories and seemingly can relate to peoples feelings. A lot of the feedback I get is "Wow, what you're writing is really familiar to me because it sounds like what I would say if I could get the words out." I seem to be taking the words from peoples mouths and for whatever reason, that seems to be a good thing to do.'

However it's a strange irony that people are responding not to Kimber but to the emotional honesty of his Martinez creation. 'I realised that I didn't owe anyone any explanation,' he offers, 'and consequently I could lie all the time or tell the truth or make things up or tell stories in any way shape or form, because I wasn't held to any particular barriers. At the end of the day, people don't necessarily want real people to be making music or culture. Real people are tangible and just like you, and it's not necessarily the lifestyle that is inspiring. It's like "Oh well, another dreary

I WANT TO BECOME A LAWYER, BE ABLE TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF ALL THE NONSENSE OF POLITICIANS, ALL THE LAWS THAT ARE CRAFTED THAT ARE AS REPUGNANT AND DIRTY AS THEY ARE ELEMENTS OF CONTROL.

person making more dreary music.” My understanding of the whole thing is that people love myths, they want super heroes, even if it’s not true.’

Martinez stumbled upon hip-hop in college, where as a hobby he would pen poetry and rap lyrics to avoid doing essays, before gradually losing interest in school and drifting into hip-hop circles. ‘There wasn’t much that was really interesting in school for me,’ he reflects. ‘It was music that really captured me, moved outside of whatever career progression I was slated for.’

Martinez’s latest album *Midriff Music*, his fourth proper solo release (aside from the numerous different versions of each of them) is firmly and very deliberately couched in the mood and collective good times of summer, a relaxed though upbeat work of laidback grooves, fun times and summer loving. Martinez raps sound warm and sleepy, lulled by the warmth of the sun, it’s ‘summer music for winter blues, it’s background tunes for dry humping, it’s skater rap for roller bladders, it’s all that and then some, it’s the soundtrack of awkward teenage mating’ he offers cheekily in his liner notes.

‘If there’s one thing that summer’s good for, it’s being outside,’ he laughs wistfully. ‘You see a lot more skin on the ladies, and I suppose the fellas too. There’s beer, there’s BBQ’s, there’s ample excuses for a good time. And most of the time people are not working as much or they make excuses not to work. Summer’s an ideal time to romanticise. It’s just too easy; summer’s just too much of an enjoyable season to not take advantage of the mood.’

Whilst he sees *Midriff Music* as a bit of a stopgap until his new album proper, it’s also the most explicit example of the new directions he has been following, expanding upon the melodic elements of *Buck Up Princess* and actually singing. Here he’s managed to meld his rapping and singing together with such conviction that at times it’s almost impossible to determine where one ends and the other begins. And unlike other rappers who have

attempted similar approaches, he actually can sing.

‘Mostly what was happening was I was listening to a lot of Beach Boys,’ he offers. ‘That really started to throw my ability to do the more traditional fare that I’m known for, mostly due to the fact that I was pushing in this other direction; I was really liking singing. If you know some of my previous work, I definitely mess with harmony in the past, but not in any real concrete way, just with a little flourish here and there to keep it interesting. But what I was noticing was that a lot of people were responding particularly strongly to those singing moments or the harmony moments. I guess, rightly or wrongly, they encouraged me to continue exploring that direction, the idea of harmony and melody and writing these summer tunes.’

Martinez’s other hip-hop project is a collaboration with Old Dominion MC Sleep entitled *Chicharones* – apparently named after crispy deep-fried pork skins coated in spices. Trading verses, often call-and-response style, initially it appears the duo are operating within a more traditional hip-hop realm, though listening to their 2004 debut, the self-titled *Josh Martinez and Sleep – The Chicharones*, it becomes clear that Martinez’s melodic inclinations had well and truly infiltrated the approach of both artists, perhaps best evidenced in what can only be described as a hip-hop ballad in the morose “Opposite Of Fair”.

‘Luckily, Sleep’s as comfortable as I am in pushing himself in weird directions which may not necessarily be so connected to our pasts,’ reflects Martinez. ‘He comes from a very strong rap background. His crew is 25 dudes; they all rap and they’re all battlers and all this other stuff, none of which is actually my past, I’m a college-educated, acid-doing dropout,’ he laughs.

‘I’ve definitely taken to harmony and Sleep was able and willing to go there,’ he continues. ‘*Midriff Music* was the furthest I’ve pushed the harmony on my solo stuff,

and the new *Chicharones When Pigs Fly*, our second album, that’ll push that harmony stuff even further. There are songs that are like two-and-a-half minutes before a rap comes in, but I’m pretty sure no-one will be displeased by the result. There’s an attention to songwriting classics and methods that both of us have taken to. We’re taking advantage of the fact that there’s a lot of kinds of music out there and that there’s no reason to be pigeonholed into what music you like and only writing that kind of music.’

The biggest shock is when Kimber somewhat flip-pantly remarks that he is not going to be Martinez forever; that at some as-yet-undetermined point in the future he will shed the skin of the outlandish rapper and rejoin the real world. It’s an attitude that helps keep him grounded, a realisation that life can exist outside music, though it’s also an acknowledgement of the difficulties inherent in making a living in the business. Though it does come as some surprise when he reveals that until recently he had a two year plan: a new solo record, a new *Chicharones* album and the debut release from his rock outfit *The Pissed Off Wild*, then he would leave music behind. Now he’s not so sure, suggesting that some modicum of success may persuade him to remain in the game a little longer.

‘I won’t do it forever. I have different fish to fry,’ he states before dropping the bombshell: ‘I want to become a lawyer, be able to speak the language of all the nonsense of politicians, all the laws that are crafted that are as repugnant and dirty as they are elements of control. There’s a lot of people out on the streets saying “Hell no, we won’t go,” and at the end of the day you just do go and it’s done. I like doing what I’m doing right now because I feel like I can connect with people in a certain fashion, but eventually I want to stop connecting with people and connect with issues in the world that are out there.’

‘I live a pretty segregated life from real life,’ he continues. ‘I don’t go to work on a regular schedule, my job occurs in a bar with alcohol and pretty girls – it’s not reality for a long period of time for people unless you’re Mick Jagger and you drink blood. But the best I can do is try to have as much and as positive an impact as I can while people are listening. Then it’s off to law school.’

***Midriff Music* is out through CamoBear (www.camobear.ca)
Chicharones’ When Pigs Fly is out now on Bella Union via Inertia
see www.joshmartinez.ca for more**





'Sunday morning song
Flashing in my eyes for all to see
Sunday Morning song
Take me on to sleep and I'll be free'

'Sunday Morning Song' from
Bill Holt - *Program Ten*

Interview with Bill Holt
by Lyndon Pike

DARE TO DREAM

IN 1972, GREATER AMERICA WAS FEELING THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, THE HEAT OF POLITICAL UPHEAVAL AND THE BURGEONING SOCIAL MELTING POT THAT FOLLOWED THE YOUNG COUNTER-CULTURE'S FADED REVOLUTIONS OF THE MIND. ONE OF THE NATION'S FUTURE SONIC VISIONARIES, BILL HOLT, WAS A HAPPILY MARRIED COMPANY EXEC WITH A FAMILY AND A FOOHOLD ON THE CORPORATE LADDER VIA HIS JOB WITH THE GLOBAL GIANT THAT WAS THE 3M CORPORATION. ONE DAY, BILL, ARMED WITH A LOVE OF THE BEATLES AND NEIL YOUNG, DECIDED TO GIVE UP HIS CAREER CLIMB AND DEDICATE OVER A YEAR OF HIS LIFE TO THE CREATION OF ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE AND STARTLING RECORDINGS TO COME OUT OF THAT OR ANY OTHER DECADE — *DREAMIES*.

The story of *Dreamies* is largely untold, as I guess is the recording largely unheard by most ears. I chanced upon the intriguing album cover several years ago whilst working behind the counter at Red Eye Records second-hand store in Sydney. Its bold statements promising '...a new form of personal entertainment, a splendid time is guaranteed for all' and that it was '100% Recommended For A Beautiful Electric Journey Into Your Imagination' was enough to convince my psychedelic-sound loving mind that I should investigate further.

The album consists of two 25-minute tracks, entitled 'Program Ten' and 'Program Eleven', the titles inspired in part by The Beatles 'Revolution No.9' from the *White Album*. Within these two compositions sit three songs: 'Sunday Morning Song', 'The User' and 'Going For A Ride'. Holt sings the songs in a mantra-like cyclic structure with Lennon-esque vocal treatments, hypnotic repetitions and thoughtful, personal themes based on emotions, dreams and escapism. Repeated listens bring out new feeling within the songs, which are on first listen almost overridden by the astonishing sonic collage that accompanies them.

Long before sample-based music was a part of the popular landscape, Holt was pioneering the use of spoken word taken from television, integrating the sounds of kitchen appliances long before Matthew Herbert, and defining the avant-pop treatment of how a 'normal' song should ever be considered. The swirling, squawking Moog synthesizer accompanied by the strummed acoustic guitar along with political speeches from Richard Nixon and John F Kennedy (and even a small section grabbed from The Beatles' 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' thrown down deep in the mix) create a tapestry of psychedelic otherness. It is, to be sure, a real trip.

I spoke to Holt, an entirely affable and humble man earlier this year and he shed a light on the project that he created some 33 years ago. I asked him about the origins of the album and the mindset he was in at the time as well as the recording process and his own dreams and visions ...

'The inspiration for me to make the album was, I guess, the freedom of the times itself. Prior to the '50s and '60s, music seemed incredibly straight. Then, the '60s expressionism of 'do your own thing' enabled me to have the courage to put out something like *Dreamies*. Prior to that I probably would have been carted away for treatment!

'I was, at the height of the counter culture with LSD and Timothy Leary and the like, essentially a pretty straight guy. I was a family man with a wife and a job and was never involved in any of the major hippy scenes. That's not to say there was not some 'erb floating around at times!

'Making the album was a lot of fun for me and a reflection of what was going on around me. I had a great career and have sometimes wondered what would have happened if I had stayed at my job with 3M, but I gave it up as everyone around me seemed to be having more fun than me and my briefcase. Being young, it was an opportunity I felt I could take. Sure, it was risky, but

'I WAS, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE COUNTER CULTURE WITH LSD AND TIMOTHY LEARY AND THE LIKE, ESSENTIALLY A PRETTY STRAIGHT GUY. I WAS A FAMILY MAN WITH A WIFE AND A JOB AND WAS NEVER INVOLVED IN ANY OF THE MAJOR HIPPI SCENES.'

that's what life is about – closing one chapter, starting another and always chasing your dream.

'Part of my dream was hoping that *Dreamies* would have more of an impact in terms of commercial success and recognition. I think any serious artist has, in the back of his mind, an ego and hopes for fame and fortune through his art. I was disappointed in that aspect, but to know that the album is still alive and that people still appreciate it gives me a tremendous thrill. I get more comments today than I did back then, so I'm almost getting the satisfaction, although not the commercial success or the money. But hey, here's a guy ringing me from Sydney, Australia ... it doesn't get any better than that!

'People might listen to the album and think that it was jumbled together, but in fact it was very meticulous. Every sound you hear was placed very carefully. Today, we think of cut-and-paste techniques as a result of a computer programme. I would physically cut the recording tape and paste it together myself. It really was wired together with a lot of thought and tender loving care – every minute of it.'

Holt recorded the entire album from the depths of the basement of his home in Claymount, Delaware. He would work late into the night, coming up with the creative parts. He would then rest, and with the new day's dawn and a

clear head, he set about the mechanics of it – the cutting and pasting or as Holt puts it, 'the real heavy lifting'.

'Another thing that enabled the album was my interest in technology. Back then it was the Moog Sonic 6 synthesizer that caught my attention. It was a portable, suitcase-sized device with about a hundred knobs that could emulate almost any sound you could imagine. At the time not many people were using it and I thought it was just great.'

Along with his acoustic guitar, the Moog served as the main instrument. Holt was wildly experimental with its use and he also included 'a whole heap of ... different stuff' (namely the aforementioned found sounds and 'samples') on the recording.

Today, Holt runs his website of politically-charged and satirical video art – still utilising technology and computers to juxtapose vision and sound, all the while commenting on society and life itself. It was real a treat to talk to a maverick artist such as Bill Holt, a man who wasn't afraid to take time out from life and follow his dream(ie)s.



Bill Holt is planning to release a remastered and repackaged *Dreamies* in late 2005.
See www.dreamies.com

PIVOT MAKE ME LOVE YOU

The long overdue debut album from Sydney instrumental 5 piece Pivot (feat. members of Triosk). Set to be one of the most impressive local releases of 2005.

www.pivotisagoodboy.com
www.cavaliermusic.com/sensory-projects



MUSIC REVIEWS

GAIN:

Chronic electronics:
including every imaginable
software-based permutation from
electro to clicks and cuts.

HIGHS:

Culture, dahling, culture:
Sound art, contemporary classical,
jazz, improv, world and elsewhere.

MIDS:

Strummed, stunned & shunned:
From post-rock swankery to metal-
solo wankery; from folk to farked,
it's pop n rock in all its forms.

LOWS:

Rumbling and mumbling:
Hip-hop, drum'n'bass, reggae and
the odd broken beat and/or leg.

MUTE:

Silence and the absence of it:
Ambience, field recordings,
outsider, noise, and everything
that's unclassifiable.

Chronic electronics:

GAIN

Ai Yamamoto

Euphonius

(Outer)

The music of Japanese born Melbourne resident Ai Yamamoto is gorgeously textured ambient electronics. With beatless vistas of subtly shifting drawn out melodies and tones, she imbues her sounds with a nostalgic, almost wistful tranquility. Whilst initially it may seem like there is very little activity, closer inspection reveals a shimmering quality to the swells of drifting textures, bringing to mind the work of Susumu Yokota or Brian Eno's ambient experiments.

Whilst she retains this consistent reflective mood throughout *Euphonius*, there is much diversity in her approaches and palette on individual tracks, utilizing gentle synthesizer (or organ) runs, skipping electronics, warm pulses, some rigid acoustic guitar and who knows what else – there's possibly a xylophone in there somewhere as well. Regardless, the languid pacing, the gentle tones, its sweet natured mood and Ai's compositional rigour and diversity all conspire to produce a sound world that is so calming, inventive and rewarding that you may never want to leave. **Bob Baker Fish**

Andrew Pekler

Strings + Feedback

(Staubgold)

Best known for producing detailed jazz inflected collages for ~scape, Andrew Pekler here turns his hand to abstract minimalism. On first listen the results are mixed – tracks seem overly basic in their construction, often made up of just one sound at a time. However, tune in and lovely details open up, rewarding closer listening. A few minutes into some of these deceptively simple tracks and

you're suddenly disappointed that they end so soon. Like Jan Jelinek's *Loop Finding Jazz Records*, tracks can be built up from small fragments that repeat and grow, detailed static in the background adding colour. This is quiet and unassuming music which works better turned up or heard on headphones. When you're able to hear all the detail, a sudden bouncing piano note can be a revelation, and unidentifiable snatches of organ-like textures take on a noir sheen. **Peter Hollo**

Black Lung

The Coming Dark Age

(Psy Harmonics)

Black Lung is the hard-edged dark tech work of Australian techno experimentalist, screen composer (The Hard Word) and DJ David Thrussell, also known for his work as Snog or in his duo with Pieter Bourke called Soma. In Black Lung Thrussell likes to direct his sounds, giving them a form of thematic unity. The last record was a concept album about meat and the *Coming of the Dark Age* would be difficult to view as anything other than an indictment on greed, oil, and the subsequent war mongering to support these notions. The inner slick even features an academic essay entitled 'Eating Fossil Fuels'. Just to ensure we don't miss the point there are track titles such as 'Sins Of Megalopolis', 'The Great Automobile Hunt' and 'Towards The Petra – Apocalypse'. The music is relatively hard and dark, though quite atmospheric and cinematic techno with a peculiar experimental bent. 'Armies of Oil' for example has an electro melody slightly Middle Eastern in tone stomped by a dense mechanical layer of static and hard machinery. Though like all of Thrussell's work *The Coming of the Dark Age* is seamlessly crafted, this time

over a shifting bed of complex sounds and structures arranged in a deceptively simple manner, where the space only unfolds and reveals itself after repeated listens. **Bob Baker Fish**

Kevin Blechdom

Eat My Heart Out

(Chicks On Speed/Inertia)

This artistic package (for it is more than just a CD release) is utterly perverted. Sliding the case out of its box (fronted with a big cartoon heart, complete with valves and veins), reveals an inner cover photograph of Kevin Blechdom staring directly at the viewer and holding a bloody animal heart against her bare breasts. It's confronting, gross and playful and sparked my prejudice (as a vegan) reviewer. Next, a double sided fold-out of brightly coloured doodles of angsty love-related scenarios (the album lyrics) which recall a bored high-school student's doodles. Finally reaching the CD leads to the short film 'Countdown to Nothing' starring Blechdom & Lucile Desamory in an ultra lo-fi rescue-journey into Desamory & Blechdom's inner selves which sees Blechdom inside a cartoon version of her own innards singing grabs from each of the album songs and ending in a squealing rendition of 'I will always love you' (scared yet?). Framed by all this is the music which is as much an expedition as the rest of this sequence. It's a cheesy, melodramatic reprisal of classic '80s pop complete with synths, glam-influenced vox & lots of simple 4/4. The short, snappy songs run directly into one building up stylistic excess to absurd proportions to traverse all that is wrong with dysfunctional love in almost every pop genre. 'The Porcupine And The Jellyfish' is a carnivalesque pop track featuring cartoonish soundFX - "She is my jellyfish & she's a free swimmer/ She lives in my stomach collecting her dinner"; 'Love You From The Heart', a harder-edged distorted rock duet with verses containing a dialogue from Jerry Springer (complete with beeping) - "What if I was

in love with something I couldn't fuck?... / What if I was in love with something that couldn't breathe?" The absurd lyrics, manic vocal performances and hyper-stereotypical arrangements have the aftertaste of Rocky Horror and will leave you humming for days afterwards. It's so bad and so, so good. And for some reason the internet CD database returns this as belonging to the genre of 'country'? Shudder.

Eve Klein

Bronnt Industries Kapital

Virtute Et Industria

(Static Caravan)

Virtute Et Industria is a meticulously layered brew of horror-movie synths darting through a pastiche of industrial scrapes and sparks, gamelan and generic tribal hand drumming. Its hearty blend of discordant church organ shards, sustained synthesizer tones, theremin warblings and corroded electronic squawks erect images of dim, damp torture chambers, walls of dry blood, crumpled faces and the screams of people being gently lowered into a pool of green acid. Unpleasant to say the least, it's a fact made all the more disconcerting by how Guy Bartell and Nick Talbot nevertheless foster interest out of these wheezy, throbbing machines and drunken, bar-stool piano ruminations, even when one feels the events to be a trifle too eerie. Deep space echoing and shadowy feedback is ever present, but doesn't dominate the proceedings. Instead, many pieces rely upon half-built industrial rhythms to propel them forward. 'Polaris', for instance, denotes much of what is to come, its muffled drum machine rumbles beneath a steel sheet while a leaky pipe spits with a serpentine hiss. These thick networks of intertwining sound, which teeter on the brink of losing control, are finely punctuated by juddering halts; moments where minor key synthetic tones, reflective piano trickles and hushed breath of static electricity pass through deep caverns of disembodied voices. **Max Schaefer**

Captain Comatose

Up In Flames

(Playhouse/Stomp)

As if Captain Comatose's appetite for hedonistic debauchery weren't obvious enough, a shopping list of the group's preferred indulgences is enumerated in *Up in Flames'* overture 'Theme From 'Up In Flames' (Cool As Ice)': 'We just enjoy our lives, ... we like champagne, ... we like to have sex, ... we like to eat good, ... we like tambourines.' The album's an unabashedly trashy affair by veteran provocateurs Khan and Snax that resurrects the disco-party vibe of cocaine-fueled marathons at New York's Studio 54. The album's first half is the strongest. The best song, the anthemic electro-soul monster 'To My Song,' wails and flails, especially when a soloing synth writhes like a flagellated lizard. 'Na Na Now' roars out in a guitar-stabbing groove while the title song's slithering electro-house shuffle escalates into an exhorting chorus. Resembling an S&M soundtrack, 'Show Me Your Power' pairs a grinding goosetep electro-shuffle with sleazy singing and free sax wailing. The two members of this self-proclaimed 'last standing disco band' share the mic: Khan adds a teasing, filtered vocal to the club pounder 'Road to Devastation' while Snax's understated turn nicely complements the infectious skip of 'Night to Begin.' For all its cheekily fun moments, though, the album isn't perfect. 'Poppertalk Blues' is an undistinguished blues interlude of rambling drug talk and 'Had It All,' a drawn-out club groove marred by excessively raunchy guitar, verges on filler. Still, enough strong moments appear throughout *Up in Flames* to recommend crashing the Captain's party. **Ron Schepper**

David Elliott Incigneri

I Sat In The Corner Of A Page Of The

Novel In My Mind

(Feral Media)

A young Melbourne bedroom musician, *I Sat In The Corner...* is the debut release for Incigneri, coming from a dodgy

computer, and some old four-track tapes, utilizing guitar, Casio, and a Roland synth. It possesses the intimacy and freedom from boundaries that you commonly hear on bedroom recordings, yet with a much better sound quality. The music is twisted singer songwriting, tripped-out psych-folk. Instruments are tweaked, vocals stretched and torn and yet it still remains highly personal. Links can be drawn to the acid soaked revelry of the Flaming Lips, the harmonic niceties of the Beach Boys and the drifting groove of the more tripped out Pink Floyd jams. Sounds are bouncing off each other, colliding and floating off into the ether yet no matter how noisy or chaotic things become he never loses sight of his jagged pop-edged ancestry. At times it descends into some very strange territory, with Incigneri demonstrating his ability to craft interesting soundscapes, yet in the main these are merely platforms for his engaging, idiosyncratic and half twisted songs. **Bob Baker Fish**

End

Percussions

(Tigerbeat6/Stomp)

As the title suggests, this EP from End the focus is upon digitally manipulating percussion in all its varied forms, whether clattering jazz breaks or gentle samba-tinged shakers. Confusion sets in when putting the disc, however, as several compositions are actually intended to flow over several indexed 'track points' on the CD, the overall flow indicated by a curious series of coloured dots on the cover sleeve. While hyperactive skittering moments such as 'Patterns' suggest Squarepusher violently interfering with Martin Denny-esque cocktail lounge and clattering batucada breaks, traces of gnarled hip-hop also rear their heads on tracks such as 'Bengal Spice Mix', beats that call to mind Jimmy Edgar loping beneath ghostly vocals, chiming bells and furiously mashed-up Brazilian percussion. A soundtrack for the most twisted tiki bar you can imagine. **Chris Downton**

Jacen Solo

Virgo

(Ai/Inertia)

Jacen Solo (Doug Adamson) confidently revisits Detroit but with a twist – a love of the mid-nineties. *Virgo* is therefore oddly timeless through a freedom from contemporary production quirks. Headphones reveal subtlety and sophistication – and an absence of hiss, which suggests a digital genesis. Adamson uses sounds from a classic palette, however: crisp 808s and 909s combined with squelchy or atmospheric keyboards. Acid pops in for a coffee too, in an 'Acid Eiffel' (by Laurent Garnier/Shazz) kind of way. In fact it could almost be an early FNAC/FCom release. 'Dancefloor Tingles' dreamy insistence and off-key riff is the closest to a standout but really it's just solidly good throughout. Although the album could do with a few more hooks, the eleven tracks have plenty of momentum and variety, making it great freeway or dancefloor listening. A high quality instrumental album, like Australia's Mieli but without the detailed and contemporary sound. **Johnny Merkin**

Julien Neto

Le Fumeur de Ciel

(Type/Couchblip)

As the muted rhythms and delicate sequencing of 'Sketch' come shimmering into focus, it's clear that Parisian Julien Neto has a sure grasp of form and dynamics. True, the crackles, purrs, hisses and whistles of a sampler can be salvaged by anyone, but to craft music out of them requires musicianship, something Neto has in profusion. A brief opening composition sets the pace and outlines the agenda. Neto employs a compositional process that flourishes from embroidering ever more elaborate threads of melody around a repeating core or loop. A benignly hypnotic piano lends the form spectral hues, its tones climbing and tumbling melodic ladders, sometimes nodding to Sylvain Chauveau and Max Richter along the way, above a thick weave of strings, galloping clicks

and short-wave encryptions. Although imbued with the elegiac lyricism of Chauveau, Neto retains a distinguished mark in the lapping tides of digital interference which pound and otherwise polish the surface of his howling string arrangements, making them as smooth as stones found along the shoreline. His minimal, often melancholy, arrangements revolve in wafer-light patterns, sprouting lifelike branches and thorns as they trample through clouds of distortion and fuzz. The effort's only flaw is its penchant for faintly overcooking the brew. More often than not, the multi-tracking and studio smearing is so dense as to border on the syrupy. Still, these are vivid portraits of frozen lagoons where one can smell the midnight oil and see the snow-flecked necks of streetlamps.

Max Schaefer

Michael Manning

Public

(Ai/Inertia)

Michael Manning's first full-length *Public* is a more chilled affair compared to the more dance-based releases in the Ai catalogue, but it's hardly less satisfying for being so. *Public* encompasses a diverse spectrum of styles ranging from ambient to hip-hop but pursues introspection above all else. At first, that doesn't appear to be the case, given the more aggressive style of initial tracks like 'Sound Check' and 'The Street Television.' The former merges crisp hip-hop beats with blurry voices, percussive clatter, and the soft cascades of a female vocalist, while the brooding Arabian ambience of the latter, coloured by bell percussion, tablas, flutes, and strings, suggests a visit to a Moroccan opium den. But 'Walk in the Park,' a delicate ballad that pairs Helen Lord's breezy vocals with Manning's Rhodes piano playing, signals a move into more placid territory. Many of the fourteen tracks spread across the album's forty-five minutes are two-minute vignettes, though that's not a weakness as the songs cumulatively establish a strong impression.

The elegance of Manning's music belies his nineteen years as he forges a surprisingly mature personal style. His restrained piano playing on the longest song, the rather hymnal 'Cautionary Tale' shows a minimal approach reaping maximum rewards, especially when paired with phantom voices that drift in and out in drone-like manner. Another impressive addition to the Ai discography. **Ron Schepper**

MU

Out Of Breach (Manchester's Revenge)
(Output/Inertia)

I'm not really sure of the intentions behind *Out Of Breach* (Manchester's Revenge), the new longplayer from MU, the working moniker for the husband and wife pairing of American DJ Maurice Fulton and Japanese horror-core glamour-puss Mutsumi Kanamori. But all the same, I can't help but respect a girl (in this instance, Kanamori) who wears a see-through tutu and wields a carving knife, whilst sporting an oversized glove on her head – as is the case on the cover of *Out Of Breach*. However ridiculous, the image is somewhat indicative of the record. A crazed, nightmare-ridden cacophony of screams, shouts, growls and searing electro noise, MU have created a dark, mildly disturbing and thoroughly enjoyable album. Swerving wildly from genre mutation to genre mutation, MU indulge in echoed vocal madness, warped house, disco-clash, electro-punk and fractured horror-funk. But despite the intense, primal nature of the sonics, it is the longer, more drawn out tracks that are the key to the record. After beginning abruptly, the screechy and noise of tracks like 'Out Of Breach', 'Tigerbastard', 'Throwing Up' and the brilliant 'Paris Hilton' – which features Kanamori's best impersonation of an excited hen – melt into late-track grooves. This might all sound ridiculous, but so does the album. Confronting, shocking, hilarious, and in a phrase: Fucking brilliant. **Dan Rule**

Obadia

Where Does Dust Come From

(Autres Directions In Music)

Comprised from 'excerpts from a larger mass of recordings' accumulated between 1998-2003, this seven-track EP from film-maker and 'passive sketch artist' Stephane Obadia occupies a peculiar meeting point between Four Tet's digitally-manipulated acoustics and DAT Politics' playful electronics. While offerings such as contorted mutant hip-hop moment 'Rubix Groove' graft Funkstörung-esque gnarled DSP textures onto spidery boom-bap beats, 'Crooked Grind Variation' approaches the sort of treacherously-shifting electro-pop territory Mouse On Mars explored on 'Radical Connectors', bouncy synths and strummed guitars riding over a jerky RNB-tinged backing. 'Some Hot Lazy Day' reveals folk elements peeking out beneath the electronics, gentle guitars intersecting with washes of sampled strings and stripped-down beats. While this is certainly well-worn territory, there's a freshness and imagination at work here that marks Obadia apart from the sea of acts exploring this sort of fusion. **Chris Downton**

Pastacas

Tsaca Tsap

(Kohvi Records/Couchblip)

Pastacas is the musical project of Romo Teder an artist whose twisted doodlings adorn this disc of, well, twisted doodlings. Approaching electronics with a scattered intimacy, Teder offers twanging flecks of acoustic guitar with gentle but unstable scatty lo fi breaks. His focus however appears to be on vocals, gentle tender nonsensical utterances in Estonian, Finnish and his own made up language, that are twisted, looped, cutup and treated with little respect. The result is endearingly haphazard and deceptively careless, with actually quite complex song structures, with Teder coming across like some kind of eccentric slacker genius. The sixteen pieces here on what may be his debut LP are

amusing and unexpectedly diverse, both in terms of sentiment and structure, existing in a netherworld of intersecting genres as Teder appropriates elements of acid, drum and bass, folktronica, even regular folk yet never sees awed by them. Never for an instant does *Tsaca Tsap* feel derivative or uncomfortably put together. Rather the genres and influences he appropriates become slaves to his decidedly unique and endearingly weird and beautifully skewed musical vision. **Bob Baker Fish**

Portable

Version

(~scape/Inertia)

On his ~scape debut, South African born Portable (Alan Abrahams) digitally merges minuscule electronic particles with samples of traditional African sounds, resulting in tracks that sound both current and timeless. That latter quality derives in large part from his sources, specifically field recordings made at various locations throughout the vast African continent and compiled over many decades. In less talented hands, the musical results might be no better than a vulgar 'world music' pastiche; Abrahams, by contrast, alchemizes the material into a deeply original and fresh re-invention of techno and house.

Portable's songs are mesmerizing marvels of construction. While a lonely guitar riff opens 'Ebb and Flow' evocatively, the spotlight gradually shifts to hollow croaking sounds and increasingly dense patterns of shakers and drums; most memorably, a wooden flute call initially lurking in the background moves to the forefront, warbling loudly like a distressed bird. Though electronic splatter jumpstarts 'Down Stream,' the track quickly segues into streaming house pulsations overlaid by incessant thrums of percussion and phantom voices. Hypnotic swirls of voice samples, smears, and panning textures verge on vertiginous in 'Temporal Distortion' while the croaking voice fragments that pepper bumping rhythms in 'Tempura'

are as reminiscent of Kraftwerk as Africa. In the album's most impressive outing, the ruminative mood that initially dominates 'Typhoon' is swept away by a bewitching storm of voices, clangs, and horns. Portable's music constitutes a near-perfect mind-body fusion, one as satisfying for the body as the intellect; one can just as easily appreciate the masterful compositional layering and textural richness of 'Notions of Slow and Fast are Set at Naught' as surrender to its hypnotically potent polyrhythms, a quality that extends to *Version* in its entirety. **Ron Schepper**

Rec_Overflow

Madrid

(spa.RK)

Clicky, scratchy, DSP beats jostling with washy synths and spoken word samples characterise this debut spa.RK release for Spanish net artist Rec_Overflow.

While that path is well-trodden already, the insistent chatter of beats and synths on 'Graffiti' works well and it's all very

detailed and meticulous; there are plenty of interesting sounds to listen to. But perhaps that's the problem: too much focus on detail and not enough of anything else to glue it all together – music for instance. Some tracks feel overlong, too. 'Division Thing' would have been far more effective at half its current length of 6'40', and the same goes for 'Orgánico'. He's clearly talented, I can't help but wish 'Rec' spent as much time writing the actual music and programming richer keyboard sounds as he clearly does creating interesting noises. As it is, if you fancy *Bladerunner* lite plus rococo glitch, it will appeal.

Johnny Merkin

Si-cut.db

From Tears: Beach Archive

(Bip-Hop)

The seventh album proper from Si-cut.db continues his exploration of warm electro dub textures, melding stripped back elements of micro house that oscillate between upbeat dance floor orien-

tated constructions and more horizontal and hazy lounge room fare. With the soft beats functioning as a warm repetitive pulse throughout the majority of tracks, Si-cut.db delights in filling the remainder of space with dreamy wisps of extraneous digitalia careering wildly around his constructions. It's all filters and effects, carefully clipped and treated semi industrial whooshes, whirrs and wisps of white noise and sizzling static that comes off strangely enough with a welcome though woozy nostalgia feeling. Whilst the beach theme is lost on this writer, there is no austerity here as Si-cut.db's reverb soaked fare is impossible not to connect with on an emotional level. His more experimental work, where he moves beyond his established approaches such as 'Based on the Lost Episode', with its tearing static and *Blade Runner* melodies, and the gentle dreamy groove based 'Before Beach Archives', in particular are technically bold yet also incredibly seductive. **Bob Baker Fish**

Solarium

Olari

(Spezial Material/Couchblip)

In some countries, it has become rather de rigueur for one to pre-program one's ultimate funeral selections. For those contemplating a cryogenic route, might I suggest Solarium's *Olari* as an ideal soundtrack. Though Martin Wigger's first album (2002's *I-XIV*) favoured ambient and soundscape material, his 53-minute sophomore outing oozes cerebral electronic crunch of the first order. Even the presentation reinforces the coolly severe aesthetic, with numbers substituted for letters (thus 'Olari' becomes '15 12 01 18 09'; for example) and song titles numerically matching fragments of the word 'solarium' (backwards and forwards, no less). With its incessant detrital chatter and lurching parade of pinballing beats, the opener 'Olar' perfectly captures the textural finesse of the Spezial Material sound, as does 'Riu' which opens with a warped Jew's Harp seizure before settling into a

Hanne Hukkelberg **Little Things**

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piledriving groove of dystopic synths and bass throbs. *Olari* includes a few ambient sojourns through deep space ('Sola,' 'Uir') but for the most part it's a non-stop cavalcade of pounding beats, spectral glistens, menacing tones, and thrumming pulses. It's resolutely machine music, with the sole 'natural' sound (and even it a likely simulacrum) a subtle woodwind honk that appears amidst the grimy flutter and glistening tones of 'Iral.' Mimicking the beautiful and deafening roar of whirring and clanking factory machinery, *Olari's* future-funk doesn't define a new template but is a near-perfect instantiation of an existing one. **Ron Schepper**

Susumu Yokota

Symbol

(Lo/Inertia)

Yokota weaves samples, most of them classical, into often mesmerizing electronic wholes on *Symbol*, with songs like the wistful opener 'Long, Long Silk Bridge' and 'Fairy Dance of Twinkle and Shadow' as sonically striking as their titles suggest. In one of the strongest pieces, 'Purple Rose Minuet,' Yokota arranges fragments of Debussy's 'Claire de lune,' Arabic vocal ululations, harpsichord filigrees, and orchestral bombast into a sparkling multi-layered fusion that shouldn't work yet somehow does. Unlike some sample-based artists, Yokota hardly camouflages the identity of his source material; samples of Meredith Monk and Steve Reich, for instance, appear liberally on 'The Dying Black Swan' and 'Blue Sky and Yellow Sunflower' respectively. Sometimes that's a problem; tastelessly coupling a string sample from Mahler's Fifth Symphony 'Adagietto' with techno beats in 'Symbol of Life, Love, and Aesthetics' does neither Yokota nor the Viennese composer any favours. Although elsewhere Yokota displays a delicate manner with 'Music from the Lake Surface,' a pretty coda of strings, piano, and voice that reprises a Mascagni sample to haunting effect.

Still, as pretty as the music often is and as imaginative as Yokota's treatment of the source material may be, the worm at this apple's core is that it's at root parasitical, or at least remains too conspicuously so when samples are left unaltered. At times their juxtaposition can also be jarring; Monk's voice doesn't really merge comfortably with marimba patterns at the beginning of 'Song of the Sleeping Forest,' though the lovely orchestral elements (the 'Intermezzo' from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* and Ravel's 'Pavane pour une infante défunte') that follow definitely do, making for one of the album's most affecting moments. **Ron Schepper**

Various Artists

Aurora 2

(Merck/Couchblip)

While many ambient collections adopt a wallflower approach, the eleven immersive pieces on Merck's *Aurora 2* exude a riveting grandeur that commands attention throughout its seventy-six minute duration. Almost five years have passed since the initiating installment, so it doesn't surprise that an entirely different cast appears: familiar Merck names Deru, Blamstrain (Finland-based Juho Hietala), Twerk (Shawn Hatfield), and Cepia (Huntley Miller) plus new recruits Ginormous, Max Spransy, Shapeshifter (Malcolm Goodman), Sabi (Taro Peter Little), and Kettel (Netherlander Reimer Eising).

The collection is bookended by the understated majesty of Deru's 'Only the Circle' and Shapeshifter's 'Tranquil Vapor' whose crepuscular waves of droning washes and ripples bring the album to a marvelous close. In between, shorter pieces like Cepia's 'Ncoin Arrange,' all glitchy piano and electronic loops, and Twerk's vaporous dub meditation 'From Brown to Green' rub shoulders with ten-minute epics; interestingly, dub receives another, more forceful workout in Sabi's smeary 'Black Ink, Dancing in a Rainstorm.' Hewing to a more conventional ambient line are Max Spransy's

lulling acoustic guitar-laden 'The Lights in the Sky are Stars,' Sabi's peaceful and summery 'Uki Reflection,' and Kettel's crystalline 'Goodbye in September' which hazily unfurls like the resurrection of a long-suppressed memory.

While all of the material impresses, three especially powerful pieces stand out: Ginormous's 'To Reveal Interiors,' whose industrial shuffle grandly rises above cresting waves of tonal shimmer and stormy ripples; Blamstrain's cavernous drone excursion 'Spring/Summer' which slowly intensifies during eleven hallucinatory minutes; and Kettel's 'Times of Running Eyes Closing' which teems with beautiful streams of elegiac synth tones. What a shame that Merck is releasing a mere 1000 copies of *Aurora 2*, given that music of such magnificent splendour surely deserves to be heard by vast multitudes of listeners.

Ron Schepper

Various Artists

Spectral Sound Vol 1

(Spectral/Creative Vibes)

Now, really, could *Spectral Sound Vol. 1* be anything but fantastic? Consider: two discs, the first eighty minutes long and comprised of thirteen classic and exclusive tracks by the likes of Matthew Dear, Geoff White, and James T. Cotton, and the second a 33-track mix assembled by Ryan Elliot that spans Spectral Sound's rich catalogue. While its parent label Ghostly International is promoted as the more cerebral of the two, Spectral's material may be more dance-focused but it's hardly less advanced.

The set thoroughly undercuts the naysayer's portrayal of dance music as one-dimensional. No more proof is needed than the incredible convulsive stomp of Reinhard Voigt's remix of James T. Cotton's 'Buck!' and Hieroglyphic Being's (Chicagoan Jamal Moss) mesmerizing Afro-house fusion 'Je Suis Musique.' Cotton (Tadd Mullinix aka Dabrye) in particular impresses with his endlessly inventive outings; jaw-droppers like 'T-Y-O-C Painkillers,' 'The Drain,' and

'Beat Ya!' are as structurally advanced as they are danceable. Elsewhere, Peter Grummich gives Matthew Dear's 'It's Over Now' a jacking overhaul that skips and swings when not twisting disorientingly. Naturally Dear's justly celebrated 'Dog Days' appears (plus gets a Pantytec makeover on disc two) but it's merely one highlight of many. To wit: the gargantuan throb of The Vanisher's (aka Håkan Lidbo) 'The Tic-Tac Tactic,' Jeff Samuel's massive 'HeB. GBz,' White's spindly 'Nintendisco,' and Isolée's sunlit take on Osborne's 'Daylight.'

Dear's DJ partner Elliott does nothing too flashy in disc two's hour-long 'Spectral 25 Megamix' beyond crafting smooth segues, but little more is needed when the material is so strong. Needless to say, the two-disc set commemorates in superb fashion the label's 25th release and five years of existence. If ever the term essential applied, it definitely does here. **Ron Schepper**

Various Artists

Home Invasion Volume One

(Dose Recordings)

Although its title strangely calls up associations with mid-1990s gangsta rap, 'Home Invasion' gathers together tracks veering towards nu-skoool breaks, electro and progressive house from a range of Byron Bay producers including Phil Smart, Nick Taylor and Organarchy. While some of the material comes across perhaps as a little unadventurous and grounded in well-established genre conventions, the production is meticulous all the way through and there's still the odd unexpected surprise waiting to snare the unwary. Superfluous associate Zoku Onsom's unhinged 'Le' Vamp Stamp' practically steals the show with its bizarre fusion of cartoon samples and skankin' sub-bass drops, while Nick Taylor's 'It's Over' ventures out into dark stomping electro-house rhythms that call to mind Blackstrobe's robotic thump. Treading a well-worn road certainly, but in this case the focus is more upon moving your arse than your brain. **Chris Downton**

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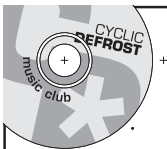
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Acoustica

(Cantaloupe Music)

Acoustica is an album of Aphex Twin covers, played by a contemporary classical ensemble. It's a laudable project, but one shouldn't emphasise the live-covers-of-electronica thing too much: after all, the Balanescu Quartet were doing Kraftwerk songs back in 1992, and remember the Philip Glass orchestration of 'Icct Hedra' on 1995's 'Donkey Rhubarb' single? Over the 13 arrangements there's plenty of material covered, and there are a number of phenomenal successes. The two ambient selections in particular, 'Blue Calx' and 'Cliffs' (SAW II CD1 track 1), work wonderfully; when the latter begins with pulsing vocal fragments and vibrato-less strings, it's a truly magical moment – which they manage to sustain through the whole track. Meanwhile, '4' ought to work better than it does – it's an obvious choice from the fake-strings-heavy *Richard D James* album, but suffers from having the drums way too low in the mix. 'Fingerbib', on the other hand, plays up the pastoral orchestration delightfully. Where they fall down is in their interpretations of RDJ's intricate drill'n'bass programming. These classically-trained percussionists just don't seem to quite feel the rhythms, and so some of the fast-paced tracks don't hang together as they should. The two remixes by Dennis DeSantis are gratuitous, and the album favours the Drukqs material a little too much, but these are slight problems with an album that I wholeheartedly recommend. **Peter Hollo**

David Chesworth

50 Synthesizer Greats

(W.Minc)

Still, over 25 years after its initial release, *50 Synthesizer Greats* stands up as one of the essential electronic records of Australia's recorded music history. It's simple, naïve at times, but more so just a mindful example of the kind of playful audio discoveries that emerging technology allow for. Each of the pieces here are primitive and raw, with little more than editing and the occasional gloss of reverb but it's in this rough and ready approach that the heart of the record beats. You can still feel Chesworth's family home situated around these recordings, there's a homely and charming quality to these pieces that is no doubt a result of the reel to reel on

which they were recorded. 'Have Beat – Will Travel' suggests a love of minimal composition and 'Forbin Project' sounds like some kind of off-beat theme song to a 1970s quirky sitcom. Truly an amazing record that reminds us that less is almost always more! **Lawrence English**

Fennesz/Sakamoto

Sala Santa Cecilia

(Touch/Fuse)

Similar to certain museum paintings, *Sala Santa Cecilia* hangs in the mind long after the tour is over. Across nineteen minutes, Fennesz and Sakamoto blend the mercurial and imaginative qualities of improvisation with the satisfying structure of composition. Born is a sound almost sculptural, without a drop of superfluous gesture. The celestial aura of Sakamoto pervades the textural fraying of Fennesz's earthy guitar ruminations, as each moment pulses with the rotation frequencies of orbiting planets. Infusing color and mass, the pair drops elliptical melodies and watercolor electronics into nearly static forms, where they flare up just beyond the horizon, briefly illuminated by aurora bursts of tone. Moments remain suspended in an eerie void, where players exhibit restraint to avoid making full statements. Instead they plod around the edges, sowing hazy silhouettes that ebb and flow in waves, or shimmer like a cascade of china poured off a rooftop. Consisting largely of long-held chords, pitchshifts and evolving clusters spawned by electronics and compressed guitar, the various elements mingle in a cordial, though not always eventful, manner. Be that as it may, this trait also works to foster tension, as hordes of barbed tonality contrast with the underlying feeling that time has somehow stilled. It's only in the final eight minutes that the fine celestial vistas and gossamer melodies coalesce into an iridescent haze that inhabits the body much like a dead spirit does the medium enveloped in an act of incantation; all of which crafts a moment of much beauty, not to mention anticipation for the promised full-length effort to come. **Max Schaefer**

Luigi Archetti & Bo Wiget

Low Tide Digitals II

(Rune Grammofon/Fuse)

The mood of these twelve improvised compositions for cello, guitar and electronics is that of seafloor music – alive with clicks and pings, ominous hull knocks and so many pounds of pressure per square inch that your eardrums buckle under the weight. As objective observations, they are compelling, what with all of their percolating details and scrabbling textures. Crafting contrast, Wiget and Archetti contextualise theses sounds next to profoundly ugly electric field disturbances, painfully loud digital explosions and gut-churning low-end frequencies.

This work is a beautifully rendered smear of fragmented sound; a trait which situates the events of the albums in the twilight neverland mapped by margin walkers such as Taku Sugimoto and Kaffe Matthews. On the majority of pieces, Wiget melts the source material into a fluttering spray of sine waves that's all but beatless, displaying his characteristic sensibility for minuscule variations in tone. Archetti, meanwhile, whittles material down into a splintered rhythm section, snagging the melodic midrange on its heart-embazoned sleeve. Now and again one finds pieces in which blasts of noise are relatively tempered while shrill siren gurgles and astringent chords are nursed by someone squeezing lemony textures out of a guitar and fashioning quiet beats from raindrops.

Other pieces find quieter dwellings. On 'Stuck 21', for instance, every tickle of the guitar rings out as clearly as a bird whistling at night. As the work continues, compositions become shrouded in dread, a sense heightened by a greater reliance upon minimalist techniques. The album crests with 'Stuck 22', in which a moaning cello winds away from the screeching electronics and pours out a distressed, most stirring lament. Throughout some forty-four minutes, this effort establishes that human emotion can remain quite distinct in quite abstract settings. For

this reason, *Low Tide Digitals II* is made radiant with wraiths of electronic tone, drug-slurred cello and rustic harmonies that twine like smoke. **Max Schaefer**

Mike Ladd

Negrophilia

(Thirsty Ear/Fuse)

I sometimes find the supposed 'importance' of Mike Ladd's work a burden on its unbiased appreciation. Despite what seems like a sense of humour (with albums such as the Infesticon/Majesticons et al), it's always infused with a sense of political self-importance, as though the act of listening comes second place to some higher act of demagoguery. Contrasting him with an artist like Madlib, who also comes from a hip-hop background and has similarly branched into divergent explorations of genre, but has avoided, whether through intention or simply by stoned impassivity, the pitfalls of being a self-professed spokesperson. Though Madlib's blunted conscience is never gonna lead the revolution, it's more likely he'll be blaring from the speakers when the guns start firing. Back to *Negrophilia*... taken at face value it's an interesting and rewarding listen – and as divergent from Ladd's earlier work as an MC/poet as perhaps possible. Apart from the odd detour it's in essence a jazz album, albeit with a skewed aspect and touches of electronic interference – like an updated version of Teo Macero's work with electric era Miles. Notable for the fact that Mike Ladd rarely makes an appearance vocally, and when he does his laconic drawl is perfect for the setting. With repeated listens it becomes apparent that *Negrophilia* is something just a little special. Thirsty Ear have been, to their credit, attempting to shake the cobwebs from the staid world jazz for a while now, and this is one of the successes. At the same time nodding to the golden years of 'out' jazz it is able to remold it – without resorting to simply sampling snatches or getting caught up in virtuoso playing. Musically challeng-

ing but never dire or clinical in its experiments, *Negrophilia* is a rare thing indeed. **DH**

Peter Rehberg

Fremdkoerper

(Mosz)

Rehberg's works for theatre are always worthwhile listening, even if experienced with little or no idea of how the dancers etc related to the works. On *Fremdkoerper*, Rehberg has developed a quite different sonic approach than that of his works for Daem. Rhythm plays a vital role in these pieces, and rather than acting as a backbone to the rest of the sonic content, they remain fluid and flowing – never overbearing. The results of this are powerful and pieces like 'Scream' have a floating quality – at no point does the nature of the composition ever become too abstract, no matter how much noise and chaotic sound work is placed within it. 'Blue Worry' has an electro-acoustic sensibility that brings to mind older works by the French masters – there's almost a vocal quality to the source materials, which creates a 'breath' like movement to the piece. The strength and diversity of the disc only continues in the later half with a reductionist Basic Channel-like experiment 'Skin' falling into the perfect conclusion to the disc the understated, but progressively gritty 'More End'. **Lawrence English**

Rova Orkestrova

Electric Ascension 2003

(Atavistic/Inertia)

Ascension exists as a nosier more chaotic yet also more neglected cousin to John Coltrane's much-lauded *A Love Supreme*. Recorded some 12 months later in 1965 it's a highly improvised work in which its numerous participants improvising in a series of smaller pre arranged groups or via hand signals from Coltrane, without ever seeming to lessen the all encompassing power of the lumbering whole. Whilst the Rova saxophone ensemble have previously performed *Ascension* and released a cd of it in 1995, this time

they decided to invite some of the best improvisers around for this 2003 performance that was never intended to make it to disc. So consequently we have the likes of Nels Cline (electric guitar), Fred Frith (Naked City) on electric bass, Ikue Mori on her drum machines and sampler, and Otomo Yoshihide on his strange turntable and electronics as well as percussion and strings mixing it up with the Rova quartet. The idea, explained in the liner notes is that if Coltrane was still alive he would no doubt have began fiddling with electronics and expanding his repertoire, and pushing the boundaries of his ensembles. As a result Rova, utilizing *Ascension* as a base, feel they have the artistic license to do so in his absence. And it's a bold step, introducing electronics into a composition in which none previously existed. Though it works, drizzling electrics adds density during moments of chaotic freeform; however provides an interesting grounding through some gentler abstract moments. It's this gentle interplay between unlikely combinations of instruments such as between violin, electronics and drum machine early on where, the most revelations lie. What's also amazing is that this recording is only the second time that this outfit has performed the piece, having had one run through earlier in the day. It's such an intricately composed freeform work, and like much improvisation there's much bluster, however there are also plenty of gems to be found. **Bob Baker Fish**

Various Artists

-40: Canadian Propaganda Films of the 1940s Reworked

(Cocsolidiciti)

From the outset, it would seem that *-40: Canadian Propaganda Films of the 1940s Reworked* is the sort of project designed to trigger and evoke, rather than profess and explain. The venture, which sees 20 Canadian digital artists – selected by a jury of representatives from heterogeneous local label Cocosolidiciti, the Canadian National Film Board and

Terminus1525.ca multimedia group – remix and modify either the audio or visual elements of Canadian wartime propaganda films, is a relatively abstract, but still analytical take on its subject matter. The curatorial statement reads that the project allows Canadian digital artists to ‘explore where past and present meet and diverge,’ and while ambitious, simultaneously, this statement is relevant and accurate. Indeed, the -40 project does hold a certain pertinence in a time where propaganda is a prominent, if not omnipresent, part of contemporary culture. Funded by the Canadian Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage, no expense has been spared on this release – one CD and one DVD come beautifully packaged in a hard-covered, matte-finished case, complete with a 26-page booklet detailing the concept. Split into ten films with manipulated audio, but original visuals, and ten tracks with reworked visuals and original audio, we’re never taken too far from the original context of the work. Most effective of the audio remixes is Mek’s sinister ‘Definitely Not Internment Camps’, which deals with the forced relocation of Japanese-Canadians to restricted inland zones during WWII, amongst a sea of abstracted, bouncing, Aphex-like beats and whirring drones. Other highlights include Akufen’s 40s swing chop up in ‘Dynamisme des ondes’, Lowfish’s comment on battle glorification in ‘Action Stations’, and the beautifully ambient textures of Deadbeat’s ‘Trees That Reach The Sky’. From of the visual reworks, Creatix’s ‘Oil + Water’ and the line-based animations of David Lemieux’s ‘Amen’ prove the most illuminating, but each cut is fascinating in its own right. -40 doesn’t really offer anything even bordering on definitive, and neither should it. What projects like this aim to achieve is to reopen the channels of discourse relating history and identity. I knew nothing about WWII Canadian society before experiencing this release, and I know little more about it now. But the point is, I’m now aware, and I’m now interested to find out more. **Dan Rule**

Strummed, stunned & shunned:

MIDS

Adult

D.U.M.E

(Thrill Jockey/Inertia)

Lots of acts are reinventing the ‘80s of course, but not many have picked the wailing post-punk goth-dub style of Bauhaus, albeit a tighter and slightly bleepier version. If you heard their split 7" ‘Pray for Pills’ or 2003’s *Anxiety Always* album this 6-tracker won’t come as too much of a surprise. Simplistic guitars with lots of roomy reverbs and delay, and echoes of punk attitude, especially in the vocals. Singer Nicola Kuperus’ anxiety-laden lyrics are sung in a style reminiscent of cartoon punk Lene Lovich, which you’ll either love or hate. The sleeve features a plastic skull, a stuffed raven and some plastic fruit that still has its barcode so the goth references are all very knowing. Instrumental track ‘Hairing Impaired’ is the standout for its inventiveness. In all it’s a polished performance but is definitely a very particular taste – just like their predecessors Bauhaus. **Johnny Merkin**

Clue To Kalo

One Way, It’s Every Way

(Mush/Spunk/Inertia)

Press material informs us that *One Way, It’s Every Way*, Mark Mitchell’s sophomore Clue to Kalo effort, is both a ‘musical palindrome’ and a ‘celebratory meditation on death.’ The palindrome dimension isn’t hard to pin down—the brief opener ‘The Younger The Old’ (‘Where I’ll end is the point where I begin’) is mirrored by the closer ‘The Older The Young’—but why the Adelaide, Australia native should be preoccupied with issues of human finitude at such a tender age isn’t so clear (in the phraseology of the female character in ‘The Tense Changes’: ‘You can’t cut ahead to the part where you’re dead, so why not

work in spirited ways instead, to best live out your critical days?’).

With no breaks separating the ten songs, the 42-minute album becomes a song cycle that conflates classic folk, bedroom electronica, and lo-fi production into an eccentric, hazy whole. Mitchell crafts incredibly intricate, even psychedelized arrangements that recall the baroque stylings of the Brian Wilson-Van Dyke Parks Smile era (audible in ‘The Older the Young,’ for example). At other times, Clue to Kalo traffics in hallucinatory, ‘60s-flavoured electronic folk of a Caribou vintage (‘Come to Mean a Natural Law’) and the sophisticated pop of The Postal Service (‘As Tommy Fixes Fights’); though not Beatlesque per se, Mitchell’s album could be imagined as a pastoral expansion of ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ into a full-length form. Despite the dense sound (instrumentation includes saxophone, accordion, chimes, flutes, recorder, violin, and ‘guzheung’), the music feels light as it languidly drifts from one episode to another. Songs often morph through multiple time signatures in a single piece (‘Seconds When It’s Minutes,’ ‘The Just Is Enough’) and, though it’s striking, the effect diminishes the clarity of a given song’s character. Mitchell possesses a breathy vocal style that’s pleasing to the ear and the intricate weaves of multi-vocal counterpoint that appear in many songs are also impressive. At the same time, his singing is one-dimensional; and this is symptomatic of the album as a whole – for all its artful construction and elegance it lacks the raw melodies and hooks that linger on once the album is finished. **Ron Schepper**

Gang Gang Dance

God’s Money

(Social Registry/Smash)

On first listen I really didn’t like this. Subsequently I’ve begun to enjoy the depths of its murky experimentalism, where melody can get crushed as it soars, entire songs dissolve, and electronic/organic divisions are redundant. Percussion clatters with abandon as riffs come and go. The tinkling intro of ‘Egowar’ evolves through drones to a panpipe melody before, ultimately, self-destructing. The beatless ‘Untitled (Piano)’ hints at MBV in its detuned beauty before a stuttering demise. But the problem is the singer’s voice. While on the grand ‘Before my Voice Fails’ it’s quite restrained, elsewhere it can be a grating wail, perhaps because she’s often flat. ‘Nomad for Love (Cannibal)’ is close to excruciating, especially the spoken word; fed through a delay, lines like ‘You see what happened was/He bathed in her laquer/And it was scented!’ engulf the track. So if you can get past the voice it’s a rewarding listen. **Johnny Merkin**

Halfset

Dramanalogue

(Elusive)

Irish duo Halfset merge electronic sounds and programming with traditional instruments such as guitar, banjo, trumpet, glockenspiel, melodica and one vocal track. Folktronica would be an easy tag but in the main it doesn’t quite fit. It’s not quite glitchy enough for the IDM heads, so if you are tired of overcooked programming that’s a plus. The electronic components mainly take a back seat apart from making the occasional splash, allowing the organic instrumentation to shine. While enjoyably melodic and contemplative it sometimes sounds a little plain – more seasoning and a few contrasting flavours would give it a lift. Or they could just write more songs because the standout by far is the lovely, simple melancholic vocal track, ‘Riversong’. ‘Laptop Dancer’ runs a close second, where Halfset sound a bit more

gutsy and a vocal sample brings that welcome third element into their musical domain. **Johnny Merkin**

Isolée

We Are Monster

(Playhouse/Stomp)

What makes *We Are Monster*, Rajko Muller's long-awaited Isolée follow-up to *Rest*, so appealing is not merely the distinctiveness of Isolée's sound but more its elusiveness, its refusal to conform to the familiar earmarks of any one style. As rubbery synth patterns and eerie themes float above punchy cowbell beats in 'Pictureloved,' one wonders: Is it techno? microhouse? disco? electro? The answer, of course, is that it's all and none of the above, with virtually every track defying such reductionist urges. Bolstering that slippery character is Muller's penchant for constant metamorphosis. While most artists define a pulse and then gradually add and subtract layered patterns, 'My Hi-Matic,' for instance, starts out as a banging groove accompanied by a sweeping synth theme, briefly turns disco and then slamming electro-funk before sailing out on a sublime wave of Boards of Canada sparkle. New ideas constantly surface in what appears at first to be non sequitur manner but which eventually comes to seem like calculated design.

'Schrapnell' and 'Enrico' are especially stunning. A raw, '50s-styled guitar motif animates the strolling stomp of 'Schrapnell' though Isolée includes silken strings (generated by what sounds like a mellotron) that airlifts the song into the '70s. The equally remarkable 'Enrico' opens with a gulping bass lurch and tremulous vocal stutters before getting smoothed out by clanking beats and scratchy guitars. Admittedly there is a slight drop in quality during the final third. Snarling electric guitars and drums in 'Today' sound rather anomalous in this context (though vibes bring a somewhat jazzy twist to the song near its end) and Muller lets the minimal pinprick beats of 'Pillowtalk' cruise for a

too-long ten minutes. Such flaws matter little, however, when broached in the context of this formidable and captivating album. **Ron Schepper**

M.Takara

Com Chankas E Jon

(Slag)

Brazilian multi-instrumentalist M.Takara may only be 23 years old but he is firmly fixed as one of the key figures in the Sao Paulo underground. Initially performing with avant rock outfit Hurtmold, he plays drums as well as the trumpet, manipulating these through a series of digital processes. *Com Chankas E Jon* is his second album and is released on little Brazilian label Slag Records. Sitting somewhere between the electronic post rock of Radian, the sublime improvised jazz of Triosk and the rhythmic and noisier elements of Four Tet, this is a beautiful and complicated album comprising twelve untitled tracks. Gliding vibes, chiming guitar, slither over loose processed drum patterns with heavy latin influences, blurts of trumpet interrupt, cymbals glitter and fade, digital manipulations trigger static and detuned samples – it is a very live sounding record with moments of wild improvising. **Sebastian Chan**

Melodium

La Tête Qui Flotte

(Autres Directions in Music)

French artist Melodium has been around for a surprisingly long time, which makes it all the more embarrassing to be discovering him with this fine release. The label Autres Directions in Music has been around for a while too – originally as an mp3 label and net-zine – and they've shown impeccable taste in the past. Melodium's roots are in electronica, and that shows in the music on *La Tête Qui Flotte* ('The Floating Head'). The rhythms are surprisingly forthright, often made from found sounds and strange electronic noises. In fact, all in all for an album that as a knee-jerk reaction one might label as folktronica, there's an

awful lot of electronics. The thing about this folktronica thing is that it's all things to all people, which is kinda cool because there's so many ways to get it right – and Melodium's way is just as individual as The Books, or Four Tet, or Tunng, and just as varied as all of them at once. Vocals feature on a number of tracks, but 'Monsieur Melodium' is more Charles Aznavour than angsty indie, and accordingly, melodica or rustic flute are just as likely to carry the melody as keyboards. My only objection is that the guitars are a bit out of tune but that just adds to the undeniable charm! Highly recommended. **Peter Hollo**

Mike Cooper

Metal Box

(Rossbin)

A summertime regular to our shores, Mike Cooper's lengthy career and divergent musical language continues to develop with astounding clarity of vision. This is his latest solo guitar work and easily one of the finest releases he's

issued in some time.

Resting primarily around his live approach of lapsteel resonator guitar and electronics, Cooper layers live playing in with slowly looping passages and sampled fragments to create a unique sensibility of counterpoint and interplay between his instrument and his electronics. Sonically this record is anything but singular, Cooper seeks out a range of unusual textures and melodies from his tools. 'A Big Wave Event' carries lost echoes of Hawaiian moods set against chilling creaks and grinds, which almost suggest a sense of being lost at sea, hearing some distance guitar notes carrying over the ocean whilst the ship sways in choppy seas. 'Intuitive Acoustic Archaeology' is sparser than many of the other pieces on the record and shows Cooper's ability to work with a variety of sonic ideologies. **Lawrence English**



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Minotaur Shock

Maritime

(4AD/Remote Control)

In the past, musical comparisons have been drawn between Minotaur Shock and Boards of Canada but in fact the two share little beyond an affinity for folk elements and pastoral ambience. If anything, it makes more sense to speak of Minotaur Shock in the same breath as Four Tet and Caribou, given the degree to which all three demonstrate a seemingly effortless command of multiple genres

A similar argument applies to stylistic labels. While there are electronic elements in the music, calling it folktronica or post-rock is not only misleading but limiting; call it instead sonically rich instrumental music that primarily emphasizes classic acoustic instruments (strings, marimbas, clarinets, drums, glockenspiels) and to a lesser degree electronic sounds. *Maritime* isn't filled with grooves or tracks but intricate, fully-realized compositions. 'Muesli' announces immediately that *Maritime* will be a unique collection. Faintly suggestive of classical minimalism, a Glassian interweave of dancing clarinet lines, marimbas, and assorted hand percussion makes for a compelling prelude. The acoustic country romp 'Somebody Once Told Me It Existed but They Never Found It' broadens out halfway through when what sounds like an army of mellotrons enters the fray, followed by a lush choral vocal sample. 'The Broads' showers laconic hip-hop beats with bright crystalline melodies, while an exuberant Motown groove and sparkling synth swirls animate 'Six Foolish Fishermen.'

Taking its inspiration from seemingly

divergent interests during its creation: Romantic imaginings about sea voyages, smugglers, treasure hunts, and pirates on the one hand (evidenced by song titles like '(She's In) Dry Dock Now'), and a fondness for the '70s FM sounds of Steely Dan, The Cars, and Hall & Oates on the other. Teeming with original and unexpected delights, *Maritime* is an unqualified and joyful listen. **Ron Schepper**

Patrick Wolf

Wind In The Wires

(Popfrenzy)

21 year old Londoner Patrick Wolf's debut 2003 album *Lycanthropy* made major waves in indie/electronic circles with melancholy folk arrangements reminiscent of Nick Drake anchored around a framework of minimal electronics, and this follow-up seems certain to build his burgeoning reputation even further. In this case 'folk' certainly doesn't mean light listening, as evidenced on brooding opening track 'The Libertine', which takes in such dark lyrical snapshots as the hitch-hiker who gets 'bound, gagged and raped on the roadside' over a stuttering backing of violins, accordians and digital editing that calls to mind some meeting point between the Bad Seeds and Akufen. With a broad instrumental palette being employed that takes in ukeleles, reed organs and piano (Wolf contributing all parts/vocals himself), the focus here is upon building extraordinary and haunting arrangements and in a sense treating the electronics as another instrument, rather than subsuming the songs themselves. Lurking just behind the stripped-down English folk arrangements, there's also a perceptible dark New Romantic pulse that calls to mind Depeche Mode's Martin Gore and the glitch-ridden soul explored on the Mode's recent *Exciter*

album. Considerably more cohesive and encompassing than Wolf's stunning debut, *Wind In The Wires* definitely ranks amongst the albums of 2005 that deserve your attention. **Chris Downton**

Pivot

Make Me Love You

(Sensory Projects/Inertia)

Pivot's long awaited debut album could have been overcooked. Given the gestation period it was likely to be born with a full chest of hair and a postgraduate degree, the band having played in and around Sydney for more than five years. But somehow it's emerged as a cute and cuddly set of songs that surprise in their innocent wide-eyed stare as well as challenge with their unsullied-by-experience observations. Comparisons with Tortoise are going to be inevitable – especially with the sixteenth note hi-hats and lush keys of the opener 'Make Me Love You', but *Make Me Love You* has little of the determinedly difficult nature of Tortoise. Instead it progresses with the ease and delight of a conversation amongst close friends – and though there are some dark moments, and some moments of extreme seriousness, it never descends into an adversarial mire (or bickering). In fact the album is filled with a sense of joy in its completeness, both as tracks and as an album whole. The pieces themselves are elegantly played out to their conclusions, and manage to be multilayered without being overly complex or fiddly, and even rarer is the wonderfully melodic sensibilities of each of the players and their ability to intertwine like a finely wrought tapestry.

'Incidental Backcloth' stands out with its pretty guitar and keyboard interplay intersticed with the decaying frenetics of drummer Laurence Pike; and 'I May Be Gone For Some Time's' dual bass lines, floaty guitar and vibes sum up the album's gorgeous simplicity. Already one of the standout albums of 2005. **DH**

Shining

In The Kingdom Of Kitsch You Will Be A Monster

(Rune Grammofon/Fuse)

Norwegian progressive art rockers count two former members of Jaga Jazzist amongst their lineup, and this lengthily-titled debut album shows them drawing upon heavy guitar rock, jazz and symphonic elements to create an unpredictable hybrid that sits somewhere between This Heat's volatile energy and the proggy explorations of The Mars Volta. While opener 'Goretex Weather Report' conjures up some head-on collision between King Crimson and the Sun Ra Arkestra with its low-slung bass metal riffage bleeding into a widescreen cacaphony of horns, this debut certainly integrates an extremely broad range of musical influences that step well away from crunching guitars. 'REDRUM' teases the brain with a continuously reshuffling punk-funk bassline that struggles its way through chaotically edited clattering jazz drums, while 'The Smoking Dog' touches on the sort of hair-trigger cartoon noir atmospheres explored by John Zorn's Naked City, disturbing Patton-esque guttural intonations skittering below a menacing backdrop of bleeding jazz screeches. While at times there's a sense that the musical reference points are being worn on Shining's collective sleeves, *In The Kingdom Of Kitsch...* is a staggering debut that deftly balances intricate arrangement with visceral impact. Not one for the fainthearted. **Chris Downton**

Rumbling and mumbling:

LOWS

A Gun Called Tension

A Gun Called Tension

(Rogue/Inertia)

With a list of guests as long as it is renowned this was always destined to lie between the two poles of starfuckery and touch-god brilliance. The result of the partnership of Dan Gallucci (Modest Mouse, Murder City Devils) and Sean Reveron (Free Association, Exodus 77, The Beta Band), A Gun Called Tension's debut seems like it's attempting to take up the slack left in the wake of the division of Antipop Consortium – albeit with more decipherable lyrics and the odd foray into post-punk. At times it suffers from being overproduced – too many layers of sound muddying the path in 'Gold Fronts' and some overly fiddly beat programming in '5 + 1', but when it hits that subtle balance between deliberate obtuseness and elegance, such as in the TV on the Radio-ish 'Electric Chair' or in the menacing creep of 'Thelonious' it really shines. Though it features plenty of guest vocals it's Sean Reveron's nitrous oxide rasp that stands out – his flow part way between toasting and rapping – suiting the post-millennial doom that pervades the album perfectly. A strangely affecting album that is more melancholy than anger – goth-hop perhaps? – and manages to push boundaries without breaking any rules. **DH**

Alexander's Dark Band

Dobutsu Bancho

(DC Recordings)

Named after a particular effect created by some rain-bows, Alexander's Dark Band is yet another pseudonym for J Saul Kane better known for his kung fu sampling proto-breakbeat Depth Charge (his earliest tracks date back to 1988!), or mutated analogue electro as The Octagon Man. Alexander's Dark Band sits, sonically, smack bang in the middle – crossing some brutalist electro sounds with clattering breaks and drums, scratches and a b-movie aesthetic (plenty of weird animal samples and is that a sample from Caddyshack?!). Although two albums under this pseudonym have previously been released on vinyl this is the first release to also be available on CD, and as such it contains a couple of bonus tracks from those two earlier records. *Dobutsu Bancho* is ridiculously funky in parts – 'Dead Metal Dyno Rock' is a psychotic analogue funk workout that recalls the best of

mid-'90s acid breakbeat (without the 303), whilst 'Space Donkeys On Crack' lives up to its name as a sci fi breakbeat freakout. More excellent perverted dancefloor pressure from DC Recordings.

Sebastian Chan

Ammoncontact

New Birth

(Ninja Tune/Inertia)

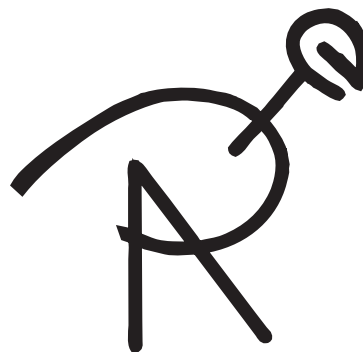
Carlos Niño and Fabian Ammon are prime movers in a collegial community of West Coast music-makers. Promoting values of peace, brotherhood, and warm vibes, the burgeoning scene integrates hip-hop, house, soul, funk, Latin, and jazz into fresh hybrids. Even better, Niño and Ammon keep their ears wide-open to current sounds and legends like John Coltrane, Sun Ra, and Miles Davis. Rather than denying the past, the two embrace and draw inspiration from their deep legacies. While all of that might make it sound like they're executing some grandiose plan, the duo likely would consider their ambitions to be more modest, specifically a desire to do nothing else than produce distinctive instrumental hip-hop. Lead voices are given not to horn players or guitarists but, consistent with the group's rhythm focus, to bass players: Greg Malone's entrancing electric lines take the lead on the spacey head-nodder 'Omniverses 1' while Dexter Story adds funk to Joshua Speigelman's kalimba playing in 'Naeem' (named for Ammon's baby boy). Elsewhere, Lil Sci spits over Speigelman's kalimba in 'My People' and Niño's large ensemble Build An Ark closes the album with the inspired Latin-jazz of 'Temple Jam.' Though *New Birth* is a mere thirty-four minutes long, the tracks stream continuously, lending the recording a more substantial feel. The question of album duration becomes moot, however, once the steaming space-funk of 'A Satellite's Return' and the futuristic hip-hop of 'Futuro' kick in. **Ron Schepper**

Beta Erko

I'm Ok You're Ok

(Quecksilber/Inertia)

I may be okay but they are definitely not. Take a deep breath, hold on to something solid and freak the fuck out. It's hip-hop with the guts sucked out, horribly mutilated and then thrown back together proudly with protruding entrails. It's stupid hilarious, scary and wrong.



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It may be genius, but it's the kind of genius that should be locked away so it can feed on itself without damaging the rest of humanity. Beta Erko are Sydney turntablist Martin Ng (Gcatt), laptop magician Robin Fox (Backscatter), Vulk Mackadonski (Curse Ov Dialect) and new music composer and prepared pianist Anthony Pateras (Mutant Theatre). It may have began as hiphop, with Vulk's strange scattergun rhyming, moaning and beat boxing, though it has been either processed by Fox or snipped within an inch of its life by Pateras who also produced this chaos. At times Vulk sounds like his ADHD skull has been split open and the thoughts are rapidly spewing out nonsensically. There are links to cartoon music, to avant electronic and glitch music, to noise and yep possibly even hiphop. But if it's hiphop it's in the final stages of dementia, and has strayed so far from the hood that it's been accosted by a gaggle of sadistic geeks intent on mischief. There's much scalpel work, but also inconceivable elements such as sped up swing, the scratching has an odd flesh like quality to it and very little fits the way it's meant to. There is a vague semblance of rhythm over which Vulk free-associates, though the link is remarkably tenuous at times. As is his grip on reality. **Bob Baker Fish**

Bong Ra

Grindcrusher EP

(Ad Noiseam)

I'm not sure if it has to do with eating too close to going to bed and the ensuing nightmares, but in the recent past my ears have been inextricably drawn to bands fronted by animals. Caninus – a grindcore band fronted by two pit bulls, and Hatebeak – a four piece with a front-parrot being two of the standouts. So when Bong Ra's *Grindcrusher EP* arrived I was excited to see that the breakcore stalwart was joined by his cat Kriss – though I'm still not sure what role the puss had in this mash-up of grindcore and hyperspeed amen breaks. My other musical fetish *du jour* has been '80s/'90s

metal – so imagine my delight in the fact that it was made up of samples from grindcore bands of that period – particularly from the Earache/Peaceville end of the spectrum. Though it's a crazy experience aurally and intellectually, how on earth anyone could ever dance to it beats me – as it simultaneously takes out of funk from jungle while excising the headbanging rhythm from metal. But anything that namechecks classic thrash and grindcore and involves cats is more than OK with me. **DH**

Dwight Tribble & The Life Force Trio

Love Is The Answer

(Ninja Tune/Inertia)

Essentially a pairing of when Tribble appeared on Carlos Niño's (Ammoncontact) radio show and mentioned making some kind of hiphop record; in short order, work got underway, multiple producers came on board, and *Love Is The Answer* was born. LA native Tribble brings quite a pedigree to the project: the vocal director for the LA institution Horace Tapscott Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, he also has worked with the Pharaoh Sanders Quartet, Bobby Hutcherson, Harry Belafonte, and Charles Lloyd

While there's no discrediting the lyrical content itself — 'Peace, unity, love, and having fun' are, after all, values that should never go out of fashion—nor Tribble's soulful delivery, it's a shame the producers didn't give him fresher words to sing. All the more reason, then, to focus on the strong instrumental backings: Sa-Ra's '80s synth-squealing disco-funk ('Equipoise'), Story's Rhodes-fueled pulses ('Freedom Dance'), and minimal hip-hop ('The Rhythm'). 'Waves of Infinite Harmony' sounds as bizarre as might be imagined, given the production involvement of Madlib, Niño, and Daedelus, while 'Life Force' features typically baroque stylings from Daedelus. Rather than merely dropping the vocals on the bonus *Love Is The Answer* instrumentals set, producer GB reconfigures the 51-minute song selection into a 33-

minute nonstop mix that's less thematically ambitious than the vocal disc but still musically satisfying. Though the Instrumentals disc is a welcome complement to the vocal collection, what's especially great is to witness Ammoncontact's community spirit extending so effortlessly across multiple generations in *Love Is The Answer*. **Ron Schepper**

Exile

Pro Agonist

(Planet Mu/Inertia)

Tim Exile's been making excellent music for some years now with tracks for Moving Shadow, Renegade Hardware and even Christian Vogel's Mosquito label. What is slightly strange is that the composer of this very Planet Mu album has been working in the mainstream drum'n'bass world – being rinsed by Concord Dawn and most of the DJs who frequent London's Blackmarket store. The result of this pairing is a stunning blend of experimentalism and beautifully-produced drum'n'bass. The first track is a case in point, and almost a call to arms to these ears. A loping, almost-dancehall bassline drives the track forwards while precision breaks scatter around. 'Open Mike' follows like a reprise, with bizarre vocals taking it in a different direction. But this stuff could just as easily reside on record store shelves under the 'breakcore' section, and one can't help recalling Venetian Snares on some of these tracks. The programming is exquisitely complex yet danceable, and the atmospherics just so, with just the right amount of digital fuckery to match the beat fuckery. 'Spring Cum Air' vocoders a pretty synth with some jungle beats, giving a whole new meaning to ambient drum'n'bass. And Exile's remix of John B's 'Broken Language' takes his Beta label boss into genuine breakcore territory, making it all the more bewildering that this was storming the d'n'b rooms a few months back. Am I mainstream all over again? I don't care when it's this good... **Peter Hollo**

Hermitude

Tales of The Drift

(Elefant Traks/Inertia)

The second album from ex-Blue Mountains beat producers Hermitude finally emerges. I was pretty surprised that their first album didn't get licensed by a label overseas but *Tales of The Drift* definitely should. Well constructed and beautifully produced, this is one of the best local instrumental hip hop releases to emerge from a still growing scene. What separates most of *Tales of The Drift* from other similar records built around similar libraries of jazz, funk and soul samples, is the detail and, for want of a better word, 'musicality' behind the assembly of what is usually over-computerised loop sequencing – complemented as it is by Luke Dubs' ear for buttery and sweet keyboard lines. Thus beat-driven tracks like 'Tapedeck Sound', the orientalist 'Nightfall's Messenger', and the cascading guitar-based 'The Drift' become rich, organic and multi-layered adventures moving with sonic narratives as strong as any vocal track. 'Observation Deck' is a killer analogue bass workout in the vein of their best track from their first album, *Alleys to Valleys*, whilst 'Fallen Giants' with Herd MCs Urthboy & Ozi Batla is a noteworthy vocal inclusion on a record that has such strong construction that it doesn't really need rappers. There are some weak tracks – Blu MC's saccharine summery rap on 'Music From The Mind'; and despite its robotic skank the comparatively directionless 'Zacktor' and its follow up 'Galactic Cadillac'. Even these though are a class above most other local hip hop beats. Another excellent release from Elefant Traks.

Sebastian Chan

Josh Martinez

Midriff Music

(Camobear Records/Remote Control)

If someone like Austrian laptop artist Fennesz can draw a long bow and arrive at The Beach Boys *Endless Summer* then surely there's no reason why the vocally

dexterous Canadian hip hop MC Josh Martinez can't throw his own towel down on the sand and make his own dash for the water. Cloaking his self confessed underdone album between albums within the sun-kissed good times of summer lovin', BBQs and getting bizee, he crafts a series of warm low key tunes with relaxed easy flows. Much less demanding than his complex though quite staggering opus *Buck Up Princess*, *Middriff Music* effectively develops upon the melodic elements of *Buck Up Princess* and focuses on the flow. His style has developed dramatically, arriving somewhere between singing and rapping, grabbing hold of the melody and riding it out all the way to the shore. And he's no longer the brash poetic verbal gymnast attempting to rid his head of numerous ideas within the one tune, rather the sun seems to have mellowed him rather dramatically. The remix of the *Buck Up Princess* track 'Nightmare' sounds like he's chatting from a recliner, whilst 'Just a Dood' is just the kind of catchy heartfelt pop that makes women's heart melt and men want to get in touch with their sensitive sides. The beats of 'Samix' are similarly light and funky, though with an unexpected depth and complexity, particularly on the three instrumental cuts, where he is able to demonstrate his ability to meld numerous disparate genres into one smooth groove. Surf's Up. **Bob Baker Fish**

Nick Sweepah & Aux-One

Self-titled

(Awakenings/Inertia)

Nick Sweepah and Aux-One's debut EP is indicative of a new order in Australian rap. Aux-One's intricate rap guides Sweepah's poetics. Dim 'hiding holes in Richmond' temper tracks 'Ghost Mutt' and 'Adrenachrome' with a sense of the ominous. Others such as 'Lalreindorenan' and 'Created in Your Image' are lit by the brightness of 'strobe lights there'. This play between darkness and luminosity sets the tone of the EP, invoking an at times Gothic urbanity. Aux-One is pre-emptive in his rhythms; creating a conversation that responds to Sweepah's dialectics. Samples from Bill Hicks and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* create moments of breath between tracks, while reiterating themes of transcendence, intoxication and urban peril.

Aux-One's pauses and stutters say as much as the beats themselves. Jagged rhythms build tension to the point of climax. In 'Local Beat', the sound producer fuses original rap beats with Hawaiian audio trinkets to generate a private space for contemplation before the onslaught of 'Ghost Mutt' – the most powerful on the EP. The disjointed rap/hip-hop beats echo the force of Sweepah's fury: 'Start a fight if you like before you've even thrown a punch'. His lyrics build to a crescendo that is softened only by the languor of the follow-on track: 'Created in Your Image'. Elsewhere 'Wings' is a soulful tribute to Sweepah's 'angel'. His rhymes shift between the

passionate and self-deprecating; in articulating the awkwardness of love, Sweepah speaks with an honest integrity. Intelligent and poetic, with beats that are original, Nick Sweepah & Aux-One's debut is a success in many ways – not least the acknowledgement of Australian culture and its colloquialisms. **Melissa Milton-Smith**

Nobody

And Everything Else

(Plug Research/Inertia)

And Everything Else is an explorative and eclectic collection of twelve hip-hop instrumentals, vocal cuts, and folk settings that's enhanced by a joyous vibe. Despite its wide range, the album's unifying core is its warm hip-hop beats, with the sweet splat of the snare in the soulful 'Jose De La Rues!!!' a typical example. Opening strongly with the breezy instrumental 'The Coast is Clear (For Fireworks)' the muffled boom of tight beats powers a hypnotic 4-note guitar motif. Equally impressive are two later instrumentals 'Wake Up and Smell the Millennium', which pairs a pumping rhythmic punch with harpsichord filigrees, and the La Correccion outing 'Tori Oshi', hip-hop folk that oozes signature Prefuse flavour. Elsewhere three dramatically different vocal cuts stand out; a memorable psychedelized cover of The Flaming Lips' 'What is the Light?' – a dense, swirling arrangement of baroque piano melodies and organ washes alongside mellow '60s-styled vocals; the placid backdrop of 'You Can Know Her' for Mia

Doi Todd's lulling vocal; and 'Con Un Relampago' featuring Spanish singing by MC Xololanxino.

In its psychedelic-hip-hop moments, Nobody's music recalls Caribou's; 'Tilijem's Forrest', for example, would sound equally at home on The Milk of Human Kindness, and 'Go Go Interlude Go' pairs slamming Caribou-styled beats with a distorted voice-over. Though not every moment rises to the same level as, say, 'The Coast is Clear (For Fireworks)', the album ultimately establishes itself as a thoroughly pleasurable whole rather than a gathering of unrelated songs. **Ron Schepner**

Okapi

Where's The Beef?

(Inflatabl/Couchblip)

Welcome to the zany, somewhat childish world of Italian turntablist and producer Filippo Paolini. The childishness is in reference to the tone of the album, to the level of playfulness, to the youthful exuberance and sheer energy of the music, not necessarily because of the picture book cover art and song titles like sheep news, odd dead dog, chicken candies and monastic bingo. Whilst humour definitely plays an important role in Okapi, Paolini exhibits a bizarre and dexterous approach to sampling; expertly reassembling minute fragments of sound together to craft together a series of cheeky vaguely kitsch electronic jigs and odd sound sculptures that seemingly haphazardly form new pieces. At times there's a link to the yearning

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nostalgia of LA producer Daedelus, however Paolini operates in a much broader less beat orientated environment. And the music whilst at times is quite experimental and complex, it always feels so light, colorful and chaotically cheeky. Whilst Okapi makes it clear he knows his chops, touching upon multiple genres and techniques, he is much more content to produce nursery rhyme breakbeats, silly staticy swirls and happy bursts of frenzied glitches that may have your brain dancing, but will definitely have any three year old within earshot bugging out like they just ate a giant plate of sugar. **Bob Baker Fish**

S.E.V.A

S.E.V.A

(Mush/Stomp)

Having spent a bunch of time abroad, immersing themselves in spiritual, philosophical and religious pursuits, the Californian production duo of Matthew Fowler and Dahvin Bugas – known respectively as ‘Mumbles’ and ‘Gone Beyond’, and collectively as S.E.V.A. – have created a highly percussive and intricate set of compositions with their debut release as a unit. Although delving into the somewhat passé and cringe-worthy musical paradigm of jazz-inflected hip hop, and the equally problematic thematic arena of (groan...) spirituality, the pair pull it off remarkably well, and in the process, throw a new and interesting light on instrumental hip hop practice. Indeed, S.E.V.A. – an acronym for Spirit Evolves Via Awareness, and a Sanskrit word meaning selfless service – sees the pair negotiate both their thematic and musical objectives with remarkable tact and skill, leaving both strands palatable and accessible, if so desired. While the record is thematically underpinned by an evolving spiritual narrative – including excerpts of readings by Swami Akshara and Swami Paramatmananda – musically Fowler and Bugas incorporate any

number of stylistic variations, adding a range of sophisticated Eastern flavours to their strong hip hop base. Layers of sitar, guitar, flute, saxophone and keys float in and around melodic loops, pulsing hand percussion and dense textures and rhythms, making for some brooding, contemplative and intensely mood-driven arrangements. The S.E.V.A. duo have pulled off something increasingly rare with this release; they’ve managed to inject their self-serving spiritual, conceptual and philosophical beliefs into their record, without it having a detrimental effect on the listening experience. And for those who are willing to dive into the spiritual abyss, I’m sure S.E.V.A. will prove all the more rewarding. **Dan Rule**

The Flashbulb

Kirlian Selections

(Sublight)

Benn Jordan *aka* The Flashbulb has always liked to mix in odd elements with his drill’n’bass – acoustic guitars and the like – and for *Kirlian Selections*, his second album for Sublight, he proves himself a true Renaissance man of the breakcore world. He can still do cod-Squarepusher with the best of them, but the amen breaks are here combined with a wide array of different forms – the album really does get better and better. The second track is one of the few real splattercore moments on the disc; it’s followed by a track combining quasi-classical piano and slightly less full-on beats, and that’s a sign of things to come. While there’s plenty of beat-juggling, there are also plenty of half-speed tracks glitching the beats like Funkstörung’s best, but then all of a sudden we’re being serenaded by a beautifully played violin. What’s impressive is that it’s all so well put together; to these ears nothing seems out of place, whether it’s heavy metal breakcore flowing into warm ambience, or some rather proficient classical piano improvisation morphing into jazz-funk

drill’n’bass. A gorgeous gypsy violin-and-acoustic guitar number only betrays its setting with subtle digital edits at the end – and part of the joy of this album is that the acoustic instruments are recorded in such high fidelity. **Peter Hollo**

Underlapper

What Came Forth From The Sea

(Feral Media)

What Came Forth From The Sea is the debut offering from Sydney six-piece Underlapper – and what an ambitious debut it is. Discontented by Australian hip hop’s limited aesthetic span, Underlapper have produced a record that tests the outer limits of what we might consider hip hop. Taking strong directional cues from the Anticon and Mush communities, the six-piece spin an elaborate web of stylistic and musical counterpoints, fusing an expansive array of live instruments – clarinets, guitars, melodicas, accordions, strings, keyboards and drums – with a base of subtly abstracted electronics, field recordings and sample-craft. The results are incredibly varied – from glitched, stuttered beats and thick swathes of low-end, to wonderfully textured and atmospheric instrumental stretches, glowing with inflection and nuance. Tracks like ‘Child Bearing Flies’, ‘2pple’ and ‘Springtime’ feature lovely instrumental arrangements and melodies, with well-placed vocals and confessional lyrical flows. While ‘3 Sides’, ‘Ampersand’ and ‘Abacus’ see a more experimental, beat-driven approach, punctuated by obtuse lyrical content and stark delivery. Although vast and almost cinematic in its musical scope, *What Came Forth...* seems a little unsure of its direction. At times, the vocals feel like an intrusion to a musical grounding that is easily strong enough to exist on its own. And while a sprawling extension of left-of-centre hip hop aesthetics, the record’s multi-directional qualities do become a little disorientat-

ing. That said, *What Came Forth...* is a truly impressive and important debut. Underlapper are addressing some very challenging ideas and very challenging material – the kind of material that may well have a lasting impact on how we think about Australian hip hop – and for that, they should be applauded. **Dan Rule**

Various Artists

Hipothetik Disaster

(Hipnotik Records)

Based in Angers, France, Hipnotik Records class themselves as an electro-post-hop record label, which seems as good a summary as any. Their first compilation combines a couple of known French and Canadian names (Ra, Thavius Beck, Ghislain Poirier) with a bunch of newcomers. Ra’s track is a more sedately hip-hop version of the crazy stuff on his Coredump album. It’s nice dark stuff that serves as a good opener for the comp. Sparse hip-hop beats and electronic are the flavour, but Vernon LeNoir’s ‘Tandoori Fist’ takes us into slightly more frenetic electro territory. There’s a pleasant experimentalism to some of the tracks: Kuma vs Yoo-Klid turn in some stuttering orchestral samples and breaks that gradually coalesce into a kind of warped hip-hop, while Horten V3’s track goes the other way, with the beats gradually getting more chopped and drum’n’bass-like. There’s some nice accordion-hop from Tanuki and Thavius Beck gives us some characteristically dark breaks and rapping, while Prester’s ‘Far In To Me’ features speedy French rapping from Amnésie over oddly spooky textures. A label to watch. **Peter Hollo**

Silence and the absence of it:

MUTE

Alpen

Overdub

(Feral Media)

Now that producer and Feral Media label boss Danny Jumpertz has emerged as a fully formed, accomplished artist with this debut, the word 'Alpen' will never again recall overpriced and sugary pseudo-authentic muesli. But there's a bit more to get excited about than that. *Overdub* is a mix of understated songs and instrumentals that straddles electronica, rock and acoustic with elegance and apparent ease. It sounds like many other things, and like nothing else at all – not even like Danny's other band Plankton. One of the instrumentals, and a high point, is 'The Clinging Clan', which most closely recalls Rainstick Orchestra's Reichian cycles. None of the rest of the album does, yet it fits perfectly. Elsewhere shades of Eno and post-rock stir the pot, but it's hard to make direct comparisons. The album is rich but not overworked, grand but never pompous, inventive while dodging 'look-at-me' cleverness, and musically accomplished without being showy. Danny's voice brings Underground Lovers to mind, it has a similar timbre and melancholy. Lyrically it can be poetic or, surprisingly, motivational: 'when are you going to do something with this life?' on 'Start Now!'; 'Do the thing/and you got energy to do the thing... I don't want no more talk/It is time to deliver' on 'Obsolete Vernacular'. But it's personal rather than hectoring, almost as if he's telling himself. If that's the case it truly is obsolete vernacular because he certainly has delivered, both elsewhere and with this album. Highly recommended. **Johnny Merkin**

Autechre/The Hafler Trio

aeo3/3hae

(Die Stadt/Couchblip)

Packaging fetishists will deem this second Autechre-Hafler Trio collaboration on Die Stadt of value for the deluxe presentation alone. A subtly textured, handmade case opens to reveal a three-panelled insert, two of them containing discs and a central pocket housing translucent sheets of achromatic abstractions; in place of personnel info or track titles, there's a lengthy paragraph of enigmatic text. The facts, then: Autechre's disc features a thirty-two minute piece entitled 'æo?'; starting unhurriedly and nearly inaudibly, it travels through a series of stuttering spasms before the piece re-enters quiet of the windswept zone;

while The Hafler Trio's 'hæ' is fifty; a subdued micro-soundscape filled with glacially mutating drones of ringing noises, haunted moans, insectile chatter, and phantom whistles, generally pitched at a level of near-inaudibility. Is *aeo3/3hae* an essential addition to the groups' respective discographies? It would be hard to imagine so. It is interesting to hear Autechre take on a long-form piece and the group's indelible signature does permeate every moment of the disc's second part, but the more generic opening and closing sections could have been authored by any number of electronic artists. Though 'hæ' is longer than 'æo?'; it lacks the latter's dynamic contrasts, instead choosing to drift through unwavering levels of volume and activity; in this case, longer doesn't necessarily mean more interesting. Simply put: beautifully packaged?—undoubtedly; sonically essential?—frankly, no, at least not to these ears. **Ron Schepper**

Chris Abrahams

Thrown

(Room40/Couchblip)

Technically formidable and conceptually refined, Chris Abrahams pays homage to the piano by drawing it into tightly articulated and highly personalized forms. Known for his contributions to the efforts of avant-jazz trio The Necks, *Thrown* is Abraham's fourth solo document. His music has the tautness and formality of modern composition, but its configuration of texture and colouration is immediate and propelled by an urgency in the playing. Opening on 'Bellicose', amidst the groaning rumble of a dying generator, the higher registers of the piano are tweaked such that they mirror the lamenting hoot of owls at dusk. As in most of this work's compositions, there's a spacious and solitary feel, as Abrahams brings grainy fumes of texture and delicate skeins of melodic contour into soft focus, before nestling them slowly back into silence. Other pieces such as 'Coins In Vinegar' toss and turn in a bed of pity, sometimes-frenetic flutes and the pensive clatter of electric debris. While the album ages, the lonely owl hoot of Abraham's prepared piano becomes more scattered and the detuned, microtonal blurring add to the intensity of decay. The dishevelled mood coupled with the piano's gradual retreat from its original nesting position touches upon the absence of anything which might hold a person in place. Before long, these previously drone-based works find distinctly

coming up

SUN NOV 6

Comatone (Live)

Marquis

Ali Reza

SUN NOV 13

Pivot (Live)

Greenland Sharks

(Live, Canada)

SUN NOV 20

Moving Ninja (Live)

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Bec Paton

regulars:

sub bass snarl

sir robbo

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quirkier, darker forms that threaten to fall in upon themselves, each figure inaugurating a downward spiral into lower registers and more somber environments. **Max Schaefer**

Ernie Althoff

Five Installations: Dark By 6

(Antboy)

A composer, performer, instrument builder and artist, Ernie Althoff has been operating in Melbourne since the mid-'70s where he developed an interest in chance-based composition and the construction of musical instruments. He also improvises regularly with the likes of Robbie Avenaim and Eamon Sprod and his recent performance earlier in the year at the What Is Music Festival in a duo with Tony Buck, utilizing only a few ping-pong balls in aapots and pans, emphasised the rarely espoused relationship between humour and sound art. His third solo cd, released on Will Guthrie's Antboy label provides photographic and auditory evidence of five installations he helmed between 2000 and 2003 at various galleries around Melbourne. Consistently Althoff utilized and recontextualised familiar objects such as desert bowls, dishes, rocks, coins, marbles, ploythene bags, Eucalyptus pods, even turntables, assembling them

around the space in strange almost ritualistic patterns. The noise making components were mostly percussive, repetitive textural rumblings, metal striking metal, clanging bells, an ongoing chance based symphony of sound. The final piece, entitled 'Dummy Run', however, involves the actual live performance of percussion devices and home made instruments by various audience members. Given the context, this is the least lulling of the pieces, though there is a perception of ongoing action via the steady rumbling of human voices. Whilst it's difficult, perhaps unfair to separate these pieces from the spaces within each was constructed, many of them do strangely enough possess a certain unexpected musicality, which is oddly enough quite meditative. **Bob Baker Fish**

Loren Chasse

The Air In The Sand

(Naturestrip)

Loren Chasse is a member of the Jewelled Antler Collective, and his solo work on *The Air in The Sand* is nothing short of extraordinary. Via a series of sweeping atmospheres, and brooding at times almost melodic deep tones, Chasse edits together densely layered field recordings to conjure up nostalgic feelings of a windswept oceans and cold barren beaches without ever

explicitly referencing either. With shifting, gradually building drones and white noise arranged carefully in swells between cicadas and other less identifiable sounds, Chasses excels in harnessing the rich vibrancy of his outdoor recordings, his recording techniques expertly distilling the life of his found sounds. It's an incredibly evocative listen that is subtly worked and brimming with hidden surprises. A welcome reminder of the immense grandeur of nature and the myriad of possibilities in harnessing it for sonic possibilities, *The Air in the Sand* is an incredible life affirming experimental work from impressive Melbourne label Naturestrip. **Bob Baker Fish**

M.Rösner

Alluvial

(Room40/Couchblip)

The idea of abstract electronics usually conjures up notions of extremity and bodes for a difficult listening experience, though Western Australian Matt Rösner's debut release for Lawrence English's excellent Room40 label is anything but. Rösner possesses a unique ability to marry experimentation and listenability, creating a gorgeous subdued mood on *Alluvial*, a calm and quite gentle series of sound scapes that are imbued with a restrained sense of excitement, thanks to the strange



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palette and the knowledge that anything is possible. With much of his material coming from organic instruments such as guitar, percussion and analogue electronics, Rösner then processes these materials digitally, utilizing small fragments of his sounds and rearranging them into more gentle electronic configurations. There is a warmth to his sounds that belies the degree of processing and despite their careful arrangement, the structures are such that it is difficult to consciously determine exactly how he's put things together. Many of the pieces seem to be flowing along gently almost of their own accord as Rösner allows these amazing sound pieces to seductively wash over the listener. There are links to the delicacies of Susumu Yokota, though similarly subdued, Rösner is coming from a more experimental, less dance orientated approach and consequently the pieces feel much stronger and more evocative. Experimental music has never been so seductive and soothing, *Alluvial* is definitely something special. **Bob Baker Fish**

Nachts Plank

Septs Vents

(Lampse/Couchblip)

Septs Vents is a work of distances. Lee Noris (aka Nacht Plank and also Metamatics when more upbeat) amplifies and manipulates common source materials such as gritty rocks, the splash of feet through mud, cluttered leaves and the breaking of branches, but abstracts from each sound its traditional connotations in order that one may direct one's attention on the features 'objectively' constituting the phenomenon. There is a hermetic mood and sense of remoteness from the world drifting about each composition. The way the stammer of crickets and rattle of bushes is familiar yet foreign in its presentation. A seamless crackle and hum carry far off into the sky, fostering the impression that one could simply reach out and touch some far-off bell-like tone, flickering in the distance. Elsewhere, stochastic shards of

radio static are coupled with the white hot effervescence of condensed energy in an abstracted waltz of broken drones and warm, diffused modulations. In such moments, Noris snuggles very high frequencies with those of the lower end and proves himself a deft sculptor of both, starting, stopping or cutting up the former while enabling the latter to diffuse into a gleaming haze. For all that, he doesn't venture so far away from his source materials as to become overtly calculated, allowing the ether the odd moment to sing without any composerly interference. **Max Schaefer**

Rod Cooper

Friction

(Room40/Couchblip)

Melbourne's Rod Cooper builds and plays his own instruments, drawing upon his background in sculpting and metal work to turn theory into reality. He is also quite fond of performing in underground caverns and storm water drains in the search of new and interesting acoustics to combine with his incredible creations. *Friction*, his debut solo release, is a culmination of over ten years of practice. Unfortunately there are no pictures of the instruments he constructed for this work, though it's probably better to focus solely on the music. Whilst there's plenty of metal clanging, scraping and drones there are also some gentle Zen-like moments of quite contemplation, demonstrating not only a compositional flair (despite the fact that many of the pieces were most likely improvised) but also the intent to use silence, texture and the acoustic space as a compositional tool. An intriguing and challenging work.

Bob Baker Fish

Will Guthrie

Spear

(Antboy)

Australian percussionist now living in France, Will Guthrie has moved well beyond the kit, (though he isn't afraid to return occasionally) and into the outer realms of experimentation. Using home made instruments, junk, strange objects and electronics, his live shows are incredibly entertaining as he scrambles around, creating new unexpected sounds out of the most unlikely sources, his approach rarely having much to do with traditional percussion. *Spear*, a four and a half minute piece on cdr was composed in Nantes France in February 2005 using sounds of radio frequencies recorded in London combined with a live solo performance in Bologna, which were then reworked in the studio. Though he also recorded and re-recorded through different speakers, somewhat diffusing some of the sound in the process without the aid of effects processing. He also

utilized motors, an oscillator, cymbals, feedback and found objects recorded onto Walkman and mini disc. So whilst his live shows may be quite dynamic, Guthrie is increasingly interested in crafting and manipulating his sounds in postproduction. The sounds on split vision, varying dramatically in texture and clarity and are really like nothing else around, with layers of increasingly degraded sound career around wildly. In fact it's actually quite nice to have some kind've lo fi abstract electronics without the aid of laptops. It's quite busy with dull rumblings, sharp rupturing and some high pitches and despite it's technique it's quite loose and feels somewhat improvised. Yet despite its rough assemblage and sharp bursts of disparate sounds, it also possesses a unique and quite unexpected ability to dissolve, almost surreptitiously into new and quite distinctive sound worlds. **Bob Baker Fish**



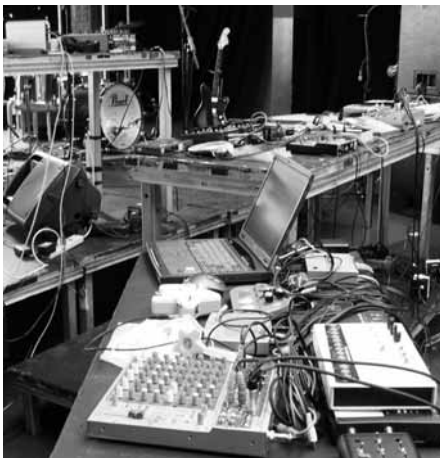
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LIVE REVIEWS



MUTEK

Montréal, 31 May – 5 June, 2005
Event review by Eve Klein

Every festival has a flavour, and Mutek 2005, the 6th annual offering of experimental electronica(rt) is no exception. This year Mutek traced a path through noise-drone-art experimentation into minimal techno, Latin chill and fringe dance before flirting with pop for its finale. However, Mutek aspires to be more than just another electronic music festival and while the name suggests a marriage of music and technology, this relationship unsettles conventions associated with either concept.

Opening with the first Ex-Centris program, Mutek showcased audio-visual interplay as a key ingredient and direction in Montreal's digital art scene. Beginning with Montreal collective nAnalogue, and followed by internationals tINYLITTLEeLEMENTS (Sebastian Meissner/Random_Inc with graphic artist Lia) and Biosphere (paired with multimedia artist Egbert Mittelstädt), Ex-Centris promised to be something beyond a normal teaming of laptop performer and VJ. The venue is a cinema with traditional stage-screen directed seating, but despite some lush and transcendent sonic environments provided by all artists, the staging of Ex-Centris 1 lacked interactivity. Audience engagement was regulated and formalised by the seating. Combined with extended repetition of visual themes this regulation

located the experience of Ex-Centris primarily in the audience members' own minds – in my case I felt like I was meandering through an engagement with the works and a series of disconnected daydreams.

More successful audio-visual integration was to be found in the asKaa program located in the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal. Positioned between two mammoth projection canvases, performers worked from the floor in the centre of the space and built a tapestry of sound and images around themselves, with the audience positioned haphazardly between. The culmination of the five-part program were performances by Montreal “plurimedia cell” Skoltz_Kolgen (Dominique Skoltz + Herman W. Kolgen) and Taylor Deupree with both sets building delicate minimal environments. Sound sources “performed” in the works reflected this fragility and Skoltz appeared to be using a thin, bulbous glass vase with a contact microphone attached, which she would tap to produce unnaturally amplified booms coinciding with bursts of light. Deupree, meanwhile, sampled a small toy music box at the beginning of his performance that was then used as a theme throughout. Lying back on the floor, these sounds, like the tendrils of the floral-silhouettes in motion on the canvases around me were penetrating, and I left asKaa feeling deeply moved.

Running throughout the festival, Le Placard housed other major installation works adjunct to Mutek. Staalplaat Soundsystem's Yokomono project mischievously mixed sounds emitted from FM signals sent randomly to transistor radios via toy trucks spinning on records while the Le Placard concept aimed at providing its own mini-festival of live performance to audiences listening on headphones. Lying around computer terminals, cables and mats, Le Placard offered a huge variation of performance styles including a dark solo offering from Tim Hecker and noise influenced atmospheric progressions from Tomas Phillips.

Noise as a compositional tool was prevalent, and opened the Expérience section of the festival with a performance from the duo Minibloc. Minibloc were simultaneously serious and playful building sound loops, glitches, noise, delays and feedback by running various sounds sources through a mixer. In the early afternoon this kind of sound-play was intriguing but it was just a taste of what was to finish the second day of the festival – a set from Franz Pommasl and Moscow-based Alexei Borisov. They pushed the limits of cable noise, distortion and feedback working their mixers like instruments.



Pommasl had rigged up a mixer full of leads, creating popping rhythms from the noise of jacks being inserted into and out of the desk. Pommasl then scraped cables over all available surfaces, licking the tips to change electrical resistance and at one point running out towards the audience swinging power-chords and leads about his head.

Pommasl's set contrasted radically with John Duncan's preceding set. Insisting upon silence from an impetuous audience around the bar, Duncan's set quietly

crept in through eight carefully arranged loud-speakers. Sonic precision was central in building the temper of this work: a finally quietened audience were sprawled on the floor as deep droning distortion circled about hypnotically.

Direwires, a relatively new artist from Ontario, signalled a shift in the festival mood. Opening the upstairs Noctourne program on day three, Direwires introduced melodic ambience. Coupled with vivid projections of flowers and other flora, this set had an earthy grounding feel to it, setting a groove that slowly progressed into dancing across the rest of the evening.

As part of the Latin American program on the afternoon of Mutek's fourth day, Daniëto and Emisor's opening sets were interesting arrangements of low-key pop-influenced grooves, idm beats and many characteristically Latin elements. Robert Mendoza's addition of retro synth sonorities unravelled any lingering pretensions a listener might have been clinging to from earlier in the festival by building a euphoria that transported this writer through the evening.

That night at the club event, Monolake vs nAnalog's very solid dance foundation didn't prompt the packed floor into motion until it was almost at its conclusion. Lucien-N-Luciano was set to perform with headliner Ricardo Villalobos, who had missed his plane, and rumour spread that Villalobos was carrying most of gear Luciano needed to play. Using this intrigue to his advantage, Luciano performed solo, building a tight, sinister, bass-influenced drum machine and laptop set. Villalobos' absence proved the making of a truly great club evening. Uwe Schmidt donned his Atom Heart alias to make up the shortfall and was joined by Vicente Sanfuentes, a Roland TR-808 & TB-303, an Akai MPC3000 and a Korg sampler-sequencer. The audience was treated to an evolving improvisation of drum patterns flirting with techno before settling into a distinctly acid voyage.

Mutek's final day was very much about winding down. Along with the Duepree/ Skoltz_Kolgen asKaa finale most of the day was spent recovering outdoors in the sunshine at the Pknic Electronik. Luciano turned up as a surprise element, joining Serafin, Stephen Beaupre and Pier Bucci. With the sun set, the Mutek faithful moved back to the official Finale, which was uneventful with the exception of Pheek vs Off the Sky (or Jean-Patrice Rémillard vs Jason Corder), who's light-hearted and tight laptop collaboration interlaced minimal beat textures to good effect. Particularly disappointing was Soulphiction's paring with vocalist Suzana Rozkosny. Rozkosny is a vocalist of prowess, but considerable competition between her r'n'b influenced vocals and Soulphiction's shadowy-retro techno resulted in a performance that didn't mesh.

Mutek 2005 was an engaging journey and a good introduction to Montreal's active electronic music and digital arts culture. Its variation and scope was impressive reflecting the festival's deliberate atmospheric crafting. However, as a female participant there was a glaring scarcity of female performers despite numerous women working behind the scenes in the Mutek organising body. Given that Mutek has adopted an international outlook, this lack (in terms of visibility and selection) hints at trends of superficial style rather than communal exploration.

For a q&a with festival director Alain Mongeau, visit www.cyclicdefrost.com.

Sonar

Barcelona, June 16–18, 2005

Event review by Sebastian Chan and Dale Harrison

Each year Sonar gets bigger and bigger, a seemingly unstoppable force despite the overall global downturn in electronic and dance music. This year, for the first time, all three daytime Sonar sessions sold out, as well as the two night-time parties.

Sonar By Day is a more experimental fare crossing many genres and sound styles, and with the sell out crowds across the three days, the limitations of the wonderful venue – the CCCB and MACBA, Barcelona's contemporary art museums – become apparent. By the end of the long day when the main acts start to play it is a mad rush through squashes of fashionable Spanish mullets (yes, boys AND girls), and oiled “shirts-off” types to get in to the comparably tiny indoor spaces to catch Mouse On Mars, Herbert's cooking show, Hood and To Rococo Rot. For reasons that still seem hard to comprehend, the expansive outdoor area always seems to be the preserve of less well-known, but much more pop-oriented acts. The timing of the bigger acts could have also been better managed – with crushes happening at bottlenecks throughout the venue as people struggled to get from one area to the next. By mid afternoon on the first day we were both confined to the record fair (where we were presenting a Cyclic Defrost stand) with little ability to get out and about (at least not without a fight).

Nevertheless, Sonar By Day is the only place that I know in the world where a buffed, cheesy house head might confront their narrow musical preferences by being subjected to art-rock experimentalists Radian, the symphonic capabilities of Danish ten piece Efterklang, or any of a wealth of other acts. After a decade of events it seems the some of the locals still haven't worked out that it's an experimental

festival, as they light their hash and wait for the kick drum to hit 4 beats to a bar. But bless them for coming, for without them it would be a sparsely populated field of sunburnt geezers gabbing on about whether minimalist techno ever really went away.

The picks for me this year were the quite awesome Brazilian showcase featuring the 23-year-old producer/DJ/percussionist M Takara and ex-Chicago trumpet player Rob Mazurek playing with Hurtmold – a simmering, bubbling brew of mutant jazz, electronics and funk; and the open-air stadium-style dub house of Djosos Krotic, who managed to craft some intricate delay textures akin to Rhythm & Sound, pulling it off live much better than on their recent debut album. Also worth mentioning were Hot Chip who were fun in an almost Thunderbirds-ish way, and Battles – who tore up one of the inside spaces with a display that could only be compared to a frenzied but controlled vivisection of the assembled audience, with guitars suffusing for scalpels.

Sonar By Night started forays into the sit-down Opera House-style venue of the l'Auditori in 2003 when Herbert's Big Band played to standing ovations. This year Sonar married three artists – dj/Rupture, Dose One and Richie Hawtin – with the Barcelona Symphony (OBC). What could have been an amazing performance was let down by ridiculously short performance times. Rupture added concrete-style sounds using turntables and machines to two modern pieces by Webern that added up to about eight minutes, Dose One performed an ode about luck and car crashes to his now-wheelchair-bound band member Dax Pierson which lasted all of five minutes, and Richie Hawtin, who drew whoops from the party-focused crowd, twiddled and bleeped for perhaps 15 minutes. And then that was it. The second half consisted of the OBC performing short contemporary works by Takemitsu and others whilst some dull video pieces played on giant video

screen. Not the most promising of starts. With the premise of the evening being the formation of pathways between so-called high and low culture – it was disappointing to have had the conversations cut so short – neither party barely had time to introduce themselves. Of the three guests dj/Rupture looked the most comfortable and at ease with the situation and it showed in his performance – his stabs of raw sound both complementing and challenging the orchestra. As for the other performers, Doseone relied on too many props and a wordy display that was either dreadfully opaque or confoundingly simple in its construction (I'm still not sure which) and Richie Hawtin, who had brought along a 16 channel desk, seemed to be only using two faders and a couple of EQ pots.

We then headed to the press party, this year held in an enormous former warehouse, now a club complex called Razzamatazz. Opening with Diplo spinning a mix of baile funk from Rio, dancehall, grime and '80s electro, even a few jaded journos started to wiggle and move (well, one of them did – the other one was trying to work out whether he's called Diplo because his brains are in his ass). Cut Chemist followed in what was to be a slightly messy rehearsal for his set two nights later. Having come directly from the sit down show via perhaps the most rubber-band-like calamari tapas ever tasted, this considerably perked our collective moods.

The "real" Sonar By Night is like a Utopia party multiplied in size by a factor of ten, and with considerably better music. Spread across three enormous spaces, the smallest of which is about twice the size of the Hordern, it is a daunting and potentially alienating experience. At the same time, the right acts and moving into the middle of the dancing horde can transform it into a wonderful experience.

Like previous years, the hip-hop-styled room suffered from too much shouty rapping – an indication that many artists find it difficult to adjust to the size and scale of the event and resort to the "loud is better" principal. You would think that De La Soul would have worked at this scale before, but their show was appalling, riddled with feedback and not even saved by a guest spot from Kanye West. Let's just agree they might have been legends, but now they are rubbish. The considerably hyped M.I.A. and locals Solo Los Solo suffered from similar shouty problems, with vocals taking on an acute harshness at points. Though Solo Los Solo were confronted by a half empty room, it was a treat to see some of Spain's most stalwart rappers on a big stage – especially when they were joined by Tremendo (it got Dale excited at least). M.I.A. had the lily white section of the crowd getting their groove on en masse in a politically concerned manner, but struggled

when playing tracks other than her singles. The contrast to all this bluster was the impeccable-sounding live set from Cut Chemist, who ironed out his technical issues from the night before early in his set, closing with cheeky live crowd sampling, then burning to CD and cutting up the resulting track on a CDJ unit – a definite crowd pleaser.

In the other room, LCD Soundsystem, with full band in tow, delivered a tight and supremely upbeat show with everything about 20 per cent faster than on record, rocking out and sounding like they should live up to the hype. Miss Kitten turned the main room into a rave before finishing with some Tangerine Dream-esque ambient voice experiments. Then Luke Vibert came on and changed the mood, struggling to retain the momentum and energy of the room even with some lush Detroit classics.

Outdoors, it was all minimal techno elevated to stadium proportions with Richie Hawtin's Minus imprint providing nearly five hours of pounding kicks, hi-hats and the occasional bleep – happily proving that ten thousand pilled up punters don't need hands in the air pianos and cheesy synth lines to "go mental". They just need four kick beats to the bar.

In a year that Sonar might have quite feasibly declined given the continuing shifts in music, it seemed stronger than ever, and just as diverse.

LIQUID ARCHITECTURE 6

(Melbourne, 1 – 7 July 2005)

Event review by Bob Baker Fish

It's indicative of Liquid Architecture's somewhat different focus that a free artist talk from US turntablist DJ Olive could be one of the highlights of this six-night festival that celebrates intriguing and experimental approaches in working with sound and image. Olive is a true experimentalist, with theoretical constructs informing his practice in noise, ambient, and beat-orientated work, and his reflections upon twenty years spinning discs across the globe were fascinating. Perhaps the most interesting and pertinent idea for Liquid Architecture was his suggestion that the environment in which a performance is experienced irrevocably influences an audience's perception of it. 'You don't go to a Japanese garden, look at a tree, and ask yourself "What does this mean to me?", so why do it with music or art?' he wonders.

However, when you traverse the three flights of stairs to the Public Office and are confronted with a dark room, punters crossed-legged on the floor and a performer

hunched over a laptop on a raised stage behind a mammoth table, these questions begin to arise despite the best intentions. The set-up was quasi religious; these sonic high priests would preach their messages of treated field recordings and digitalia from the raised pulpit. And for laptop performers it's always been a bind: in our visual and performance saturated world, the mundane vision of someone earnestly clicking a mouse far outweighs their sonic dexterity or imagination. Whilst Victoria's SEO utilised volume and density to create an impact, Somaya Langley worked with warm, evocative, atmospheric washes, and Dave Nason and Kim Bounds added some interesting visual patterns, almost contextualising their feedback noise, much of it proved difficult to engage with. Raysles (Curse Ov Dialect) and Shoushi offered something different and welcome: hip-hop laptop, with toy planes and much Raysles-inspired weirdness over shifting textures of sound, whilst German TBA began quite baroque and difficult before settling into a more dancefloor-friendly set.

The highlights however, were the artists who dared to be different. Perhaps because he didn't feel the need to preach, Robin Fox positioned himself in the corner of the room, offering a challenging digital symphony with the incredible cathode ray visuals that can be seen on his excellent *Backscatter* DVD again providing a context for his sonic dementia. Lucas Abela screamed, murmured and hummed into a slab of glass that, manipulated by a belt of effects, produced a cacophony of noise and was the most inspiring, incredible, weird and hilarious set of the night.

A few nights later and we're at RMIT University for the Abject Leader's night of experimental short films from the UK, USA and Australia. 'There's a fine line between pleasure and pain' laughs curator Joel Stern, and the extremity of these films bore this statement out. The first feature, Paul Shartis' 1968 nausea inducing *T.O.U.C.H.I.N.G* featured a mix of a man with scissors around his tongue in positive, negative and different colours, whilst the word 'destroy' repeated ad nauseum on the soundtrack. Weird. The most punishing, the *Lead Shoes* 17 minutes of chaotic, incomprehensible surrealism from 1949, whilst Robert Breers' 1978 stream of consciousness animation *Lmno* was nothing short of incredible.

SLEEVE REVIEWS

with Alex Crowfoot



Various Artists

Spire: Live in Geneva Cathedral

(Touch 2005)

Format: 2 x CD in folder with booklet

Designer: Jon Wozencroft

It's been a while since we featured any of Mr Wozencroft's work and he is still ploughing his unique furrow beautifully. There are some great details on this double CD of live recordings of organ music old and new, which included performances by Charles Matthews, Phillip Davidson, BJ Nilsen, Phillip Jeck and Christian Fennesz. The two CDs and booklet come in a printed card folder, and one of those details is that the outside is uncoated, the inside is smooth and coated. Another is that the dot on the 'i' in Spire has been replaced with an asterisk. The front cover features not only the title but the track listing which is, like the rest of the type, all in the same face (Clarendon?). I like the way he sidesteps anything obviously related to a cathedral and the cover photo appears to be just a meadow and some trees hiding a house, until you notice a few gravestones peeking over the grass. On the back, some apparently unrelated winter woodlands, a beautiful shot. Open the folder to find two images on the flap. The upper is of sheep grazing in a field that's laced with scores of their tracks worn into the grass. Below it, a very low-light shot of an extremely crowded graveyard. Inside a pouch opposite we have the colour booklet, printed on a stiff uncoated stock, and two CDs in simple blank white slip sleeves. On the booklet cover, nine sheep



on a sunny winter's day, most alert and looking into the camera. I got the 'sheep' idea but it took a few seconds before 'flock' and its more positive connotations came to mind; I started looking a little closer, and thinking about the Christian church's vernacular... Those sheep tracks in the field... The back of the booklet shows cars speeding towards an urban underpass. Taken from the concrete bridge, at the bottom of the frame is the bridge railing, densely packed with layers of scribbled graffiti, which gives an apparently grey and bleak image a rich and human dimension. The only decipherable words are two instances of the name Diana. 'Diana' and a tunnel... Inside, a written overview of the concert and its intellectual basis, handily also translated into French if you want to improve yours. Two more images, or rather one, mirrored: reflections in a river. The CDs feature more textural images, combining purple and green duotones respectively with the blank silver of the CD to full effect. Once again Wozencroft uses his straightforward photography to tantalise and invite engagement. The passive viewer will see some nice pictures. Others will find the rewards of a rare metaphorical richness, and more than a few questions.

Stina

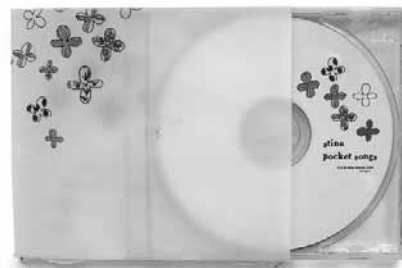
Pocket Songs

(Meupe, 2004)

Format: CD

Designer: Rachael Kuan

Pocket Songs came out last year but has only just come into my possession. Sweet and simple this one. Hand-drawn flower-like shapes of varying sizes are printed in black on tracing paper, scattered from the top left, over the top and onto the back. The front cover, however, is blank apart from these few flowers, so you can just make out the CD and some printed shapes. Pull out the clear, blank jewel case and it's revealed that these shapes are green and black flowers on the CD, plus the artist name and title in a black higgledy-piggledy serif typeface that could be hand-drawn, all on a solid white base. That's pretty much it there, so back to the slip cover. The top of this cover acts like the traditional spine at the side, with artist name and title again in the same style. On the back, more flowers as I mentioned, with track listing and credits in the same typeface. Copyright info and Meupe



info appears in Helvetica. The Meupe logo, a simple line drawing of a bird perched on a twig, sits well with the style of the flowers. All of this is in black. There are some exceptional additional details however. At the bottom of the cover, holding it together is a much more elegant solution than glue. A narrow piece of cream silk ribbon weaves in and out of 6 holes to form 3 "stitches" At each end of this, a little green cotton sews the ribbon to the tracing paper. I presume the green was chosen to match the green flowers on the CD. A lovely piece of work.

Streaky Jake

What's Wrong? Nothing

(Self released, 2005)

Format: CD

Designer: Uncredited

This release arrived at *Cyclic* unmarked, so I sadly have no information on it. And neither does Google, which is kind of nice. Beautifully played acoustic songs of love and regret tell 'the story of Jake and Mary' with traces of folk, blues, country and rock. It's free of affectation all round, including production. The songs are simply dusted with occasional distorted electric guitar and basic but effective percussion. Jake's half-buried voice is an arresting mix of plaintive and forceful, and it doesn't matter that you often



can't hear the lyrics. The songs aren't really earwigs but there's something about it that keeps me coming back. It can't be long before he's signed up. I just hope they don't change much – just bring up some of the harmonics in the mix and master it. A simple standard jewel case with solid plastic tray that ends up sublime. Carved into the front cover with a knife is a simple drawing of a guy playing an acoustic guitar. The "sleeve" behind it is a blank piece of white paper, which serves to make it visible. On the back of this paper is the track listing, hand written in pencil. The artist and album title are written on the spine in the same hand. The back cover is white paper also. But here's the best bit. A drawing is also scratched into the back of the case. It's covered with rain, with an umbrella about half way up, blowing away to the right. Which is already damn good. Then you notice this little hand that could almost be a raindrop splash at bottom left, just poking into the picture, vainly reaching up toward the umbrella.



Alpen

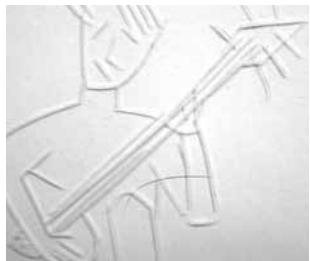
Overdub

(Feral Media, 2005)

Format: CD

Designer: Sopp Collective

Talk about dedication to the craft. Apparently Sopp Collective made models and cast plaster shapes to make what looks like a cold netherworld, perhaps inspired by the snow and ice of the Alps. Everything here except the track listing and credits is a plaster cast, photographed against white. No vectors and no 3D rendering. On the front cover the word Alpen is written in a classic serif like Century Schoolbook except for the 'A' which is more ornate – a nice touch. It looks like kerning was a very physical, involving chopping off some serif. This sits behind two succulent plants, which look quite extraordinary and provide the cover with depth. The back cover of



Above left: Detail of Streaky Jake's *What's Wrong? Nothing*

Above right: detail of Alpen's *Overdub*



this digipak sees the album name, *Overdub*, in the same face except, again, for one letter. Two ice insects crawl over it as a single snowy bloom sprouts from the bottom of the page. The only other things on the back are the track listing and bar code: no logos or credits to clutter the vision. Typography is kept simple, all using American Typewriter. Track times are slightly scattered and seem to echo the shape of the flower. Inside, on the left you'll find more frozen succulents and a beakless bird, perhaps an owl, caught landing on a log. On the right, the metallic gold CD has the name and title in white American Typewriter, and tiny type with the catalogue code, a message that CD copying hurts artists and small labels (onyx) and a URL. Lift out the CD and you will finally reveal the credits, in the same typeface again, against a white flower. I love the way they've let the imagery sing by minimising type. But the type that there is doesn't feel 100% resolved with the imagery; they don't quite settle in together somehow. That really is splitting hairs though, it's an outstanding job for an outstanding album.

Alex will return next issue with a few more sensual reasons not to succumb to the dreaded MP3 demon.

colour images can be found at
www.cyclicdefrost.com



Interview with Laurence Pike
Intro by Sebastian Chan

SELECTS: LAURENCE PIKE

LAURENCE IS THE HUMAN RHYTHM MACHINE BEHIND TWO OF THE SYDNEY ELECTRONIC HYBRID BANDS OF THE MOMENT, PIVOT AND TRIOSK. ON STAGE HE TRANSFORMS INTO AN OCTOPUS, ARMS FLAILING AND CONJURING UP INTRICATE DRUM PATTERNS THAT ON RECORD SOUND LIKE THE RESULT OF INTENSIVE MACHINE PROGRAMMING. THIS ISSUE'S SELECTS IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT IN THAT LAURENCE HAS SELECTED HIS MUSICAL CHOICES ON THE BASIS OF THE DRUMMERS INVOLVED AND THE INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION FOR HIS OWN MOVE INTO DRUMMING.

Red Hot Chili Peppers

Blood Sugar Sex Magik
(1991)

Drummer: Chad Smith

When I was 12 this album came out and became the benchmark for every aspiring high school musician. You were nothing if you couldn't play all the songs from this album on your respective instrument. As well as being one of my favourite albums, the drumming on this is superb. Chad Smith has such a huge sound and absolutely kills the material. It was really inspiring for me: great songs that were really challenging to play, syncopated feels and ideas that I had never heard in this context. I remember making a garage recording at the time with some older guys who were great players and could nail all the guitar and bass parts, and we managed to convince our friends that it was a demo of the band rehearsing the album, which pleased me no end. Later that year my first band entered a local school band comp and won, bringing the house down with our version of 'Give It Away'. Happy times.



John Coltrane

A Love Supreme
(1964)

Drummer: Elvin Jones

As far as the possibilities of the drum kit go, it was more often than not jazz musicians and improvisers who were on the forefront of the instrument, which is probably one of the reasons I became interested in jazz around the age of 14. An older friend recommended this album as a good place to start listening to jazz, not realising he was well and truly throwing me into the deep end. Aside from this album being one of Coltrane's masterpieces, Elvin Jones's playing exemplifies what it means to play music with passion, which was definitely what struck me the most. Around the same time I saw a great live concert video of Coltrane's group playing an outdoor festival in Europe, where it was obviously quite cold, and Elvin has steam rising off him like a smoke stack. I remember thinking 'Damn! That's what it's about' we're not here to get a fucking sun tan.

The White Stripes

White Blood Cells
(2001)

Drummer: Meg White

Some might say a strange choice, as Meg White is hardly renowned for her drumming prowess. Aside from loving this for the unstoppable charisma of Jack White, I love that Meg plays only for the song, partly because she doesn't know how to do anything else. It's so simplistic and, as a result, some of the purest drumming you'll ever hear. When I heard this album it confirmed a lot of things I had been thinking about; mainly that music, and in particular playing the drums, should be about communication and the intangible, rather than technique and concepts. Meg hits the drums with the innocence of a 12 year old, which is, musically, something I want to be able to do again more than anything – to unlearn everything and start over, so I can just put my head down and go.

Tortoise

Millions Now Living Will Never Die
(1996)

Drummer: John Herndon

This was one of those life-changing albums for me. I was just out of high school and studying at the Conservatorium of Music, and had realised that playing jazz was not necessarily what I wanted to do. Tortoise totally blew me away, and made me aware that it was possible to make music that incorporated elements of all the music that I loved, as long as it was genuine and seamless. The art of combining studio and electronic production as a key element of music making was also really eye-opening for me, and has obviously influenced my bands. Drummer John Herndon in particular became a big influence. I met him in 2001 when they toured Sydney, and told him that he was as big an influence on me as some of the greats like Elvin Jones and Tony Williams (it seemed to freak him out). He did a cartoon for me inside the booklet of my copy of *Standards* that I will always cherish.

Showa 44

Showa 44

(2005)

Drummer: Simon Barker

Although this album was only released a couple of months ago, I wanted to include it if only to mention one of my musical mentors, Simon Barker. Aside from being a master improviser, I don't think I know anyone more dedicated to exploring the art of drumming than Simon, and I'm lucky to have so many opportunities to see him perform in Sydney every year. It's easy to look to classic albums for influence, but nothing matches being able to see someone do their thing in the flesh from week to week and then talk to them about it afterwards at the bar. Simon can create a million sounds on the drum kit, and to me he's a true innovator in this regard but, best of all, he only ever sounds like himself no matter what he is playing. He is the Zen master.



“MUSIC, IN PARTICULAR PLAYING THE DRUMS, SHOULD BE ABOUT COMMUNICATION AND THE INTANGIBLE, RATHER THAN TECHNIQUE AND CONCEPTS.

Miles Davis

My Funny Valentine/Four and More: The Complete Concert

(1964)

Drummer: Tony Williams

It's impossible to pick a Miles Davis album that hasn't been an influence, especially when they feature either Tony Williams or Jack DeJohnette on the drums. But I'll pick this one because to me this is what a jazz group should sound like. In many ways, Tony Williams redefines the role of the drums in group improvisation on this record alone, and he does it all at the age of 19. I remember getting this album in high school, and when I found out Tony was 19 when they recorded this, I decided that I should give up the drums if I couldn't play as well by the time I was 19. Obviously I didn't make myself stick to that ... The part I love the most about Tony's playing is that you continually discover new things. No matter how well you think you know a particular drum fill or solo (because you've heard the record a billion times) when you focus in on what he's doing, you realise it's something else completely, as if each time you play the album he's inside your stereo replaying his part anew for you.

Aphex Twin

Richard D James

(1996)

Drummer: Richard James

This album was a revelation for me when I was 17 or 18. It was like nothing I had heard before. I had become interested in electronic music and the *Richard D James* really opened up my mind to applying ideas from electronic music to the drum kit. I think Autechre's *LP5*, Flanger's *Templates* and Squarepusher's *Feed Me Weird Things* all came out that year as well, and messed me up for the same reason. I have since lost a good deal of respect for Aphex Twin, but this one will always be a winner.

The Necks

Aether

(2001)

Drummer: Tony Buck

Not sure where to start with Tony Buck, or The Necks for that matter. They are one of the most original bands Australia has ever produced, and one of my favourite groups. I chose *Aether* because it's an especially bold album, and really beautiful. Although, now that I think of it, the first time I heard Tony was on the 1993 album by his band Peril. My brother Riff and I were really into that album when I was 14; I remember wearing the cassette out. To me, Tony's playing is an astounding combination of invention, focus and stamina. Every time you see him play, he pulls out another sound from his bag that you'd never imagined possible. It's fantastic to have the chance to see him perform so often despite the fact that he now lives overseas. I am a huge fan of his solo drum performances as well; they're mind blowing. I recently recorded a nine-minute solo drum performance for an upcoming 10" release, and I spent the entire nine minutes shitting myself with embarrassment at the thought that Tony may hear it one day.

The Police

Regatta De Blanc

(1979)

Drummer: Stewart Copeland

As well as this being one of my all time favourite albums and bands, Stewart Copeland's drumming has been a big influence on me since I was young. Copeland has that rare ability to play whatever and as much as he wants without it ever getting in the way of the song (despite what Sting said...) I guess I would hope that I can get to that stage as well, although you may need to talk to my bandmates about this, they might side with Sting. For those of you unfamiliar with the intense rivalry between Sting and Stewart, it was well known that Copeland's drum kit got bigger each tour so he could hide behind his cymbals and not have to look at the singer. He also had four letter words written on his tom tom skins that he would direct at Sting every time he hit them. Yes, he is the ultimate in cocky late '70s technical stadium-rock drumming: boundless energy, ideas and bravado. There's plenty of drum highlights on this album, like the use of two hi-hats on 'Walking On the Moon' or the drum fills in the outro of 'No Time This Time.' I also have a lot of respect for someone that spent a good part of the early '80s wearing tennis shorts on stage ... hot.

The Beatles

Abbey Road

(1969)

Drummer: Ringo Starr

Unlike a lot of people, I never grew up listening to The Beatles as, culturally, the '60s seemed to more or less bypass my parents, so I was a bit of a late bloomer when it came to their music. Ringo Starr has been given a really bad rap over the years; in my opinion he is the original bad-ass of rock drumming. Take this or any of their albums, and you'll always find that he delivers just what's needed for the song, which is no small feat when you consider the quality of his bandmates. I can't say anything about The Beatles that hasn't already been covered, but I think that his drum sound, approach and personality were an integral part of what made this band such a phenomenon, and that's sometimes overlooked. I have always loved the way he'll pull out the clunkiest fill in the middle of a chorus or halfway through a verse, and his one and only drum solo on 'The End' is a classic.

Laurence is currently in Europe on tour with Flanger. Meanwhile you can content yourself with his work on Pivot's new album *Make Me Love You* (Sensory Projects/Inertia)



Hermitude

Tales of the Drift

"An astounding achievement that should make some serious dents in the world if there was any justice" - 3D World

"Luke Dubs' keyboard playing is nigh on perfect and Elgusto's programming and sampling is a treat for the ears" - The Brag

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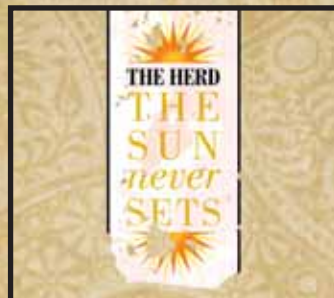
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