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### **CD**ITORIAL

There has been a lot of change here in the past few months at Cyclic Defrost. Dale Harrison, our long time designer, editor and co-founder has sadly resigned. Dale has been a key member of Cyclic Defrost and we are sad to see him depart. Bim Ricketson has taken over as designer and will be introducing his own style over the next few issues. Bim has been involved with Cyclic Defrost since Issue 1 as a writer

and has a background in design and film making. It has been a long time since our last issue so Issue 14 is a bumper double issue. As a result we have a double cover - the front cover by Traianos Pakioufakis from the Meupe label in Perth, and the back cover by the Sydney-based artist James Hancock. There are stacks of interviews with local Australian producers and artists – Toy Death, Steve Law, Scissors For Sparrow, Faux Pas, Moving Ninja, Textile Audio, Cleptoclectics, and a broad overview of the state of improvised music via coverage of the Now Now Festival. From overseas there are interviews with Matmos, Tunng, Jimmy Edgar and supergroup Battles. Legendary Newcastle DJ and producer Mark N delivers an exhaustive rundown on the records that have shaped him in our regular piece, Selects. On top of this are our sleeve design reviews and music reviews. Not only that, you are probably also holding in your hands a copy of the free CD, Emergent, that comes with this issue. Produced in conjunction with the Noise Festival and ABC Radio's Sound Quality, Emergent features music by young Australians 25 years and under - including many of those interviewed in this issue. All this content in the magazine means that there is even more online – more interviews, stacks more reviews and don't forget to keep up to date with all our latest reviews at the Thermostat blog. Between issues it is the place to visit for all the latest content - generally updated daily!

Issue 15 should be out around October.

Sebastian Chan Editor

#### 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

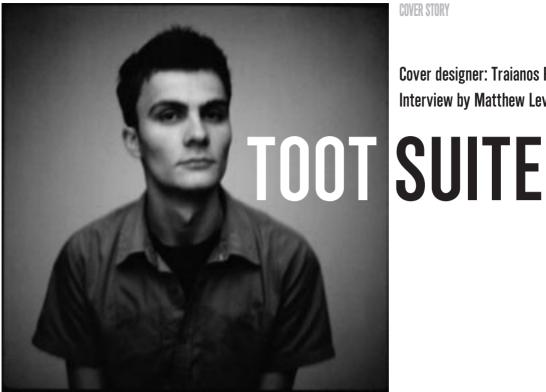
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Cover designer: Traianos Pakioufakis Interview by Matthew Levinson

PERTH IS A LONG WAY FROM ANYWHERE, AS CITIES GO. IT IS SO ISOLATED THAT BANDS SIMPLY DO THEIR OWN THING, OR ELSE THEY UP AND MOVE TO EUROPE. THAT IS THE GENERALLY ACCEPTED TRUTH AT ANY RATE.

> 22-year-old Traianos Pakioufakis, known to his cronies as T-pak, grew up in Edgewater, a safe northern Perth suburb with a beautiful lake. 'Perth is great,' he says. 'The typical complaint is the isolation, which seems to be a big deal for a lot of artists and so they move, but I think it's probably had a reverse affect on me. Nothing's ever going to happen in a small town unless you do it yourself, so leaving to join an already established scene never really made any sense to me. I guess that's why it was natural for me to start a record label and put on shows.'

> Small cities usually mean less hierarchy, less people and more personal connections. You can just try things and make them happen.

Pakioufakis learnt piano and guitar growing up but never really pursued them. At 14, he started making music with his computer and got interested in noise, self-releasing a rash of tapes and CDs to high-school friends, which spun out into the FuckFace CD-R noise label. In 2001, he played his first show and simultaneously stopped making new tracks, instead recording new material to use in an improvised manner on stage. He was soon sharing bills with hardcore bands such as AIDS, and post-rock favourites The Tigers and Adam Said Galore.

Moving on, the nascent record boss started indie electronic label Meupe after discovering Aesoteric, a regular club night at the Velvet Lounge (since that venue shut, Aesoteric has bounced between the Bakery, the Rosemount Hotel and Hyde Park). Dave Miller, one of the guys behind Aesoteric, who recently released a remix EP on Meupe, says he stumbled across the FuckFace website and booked Trajanos and Stina to play the show. Apparently, Pakioufakis played a signature five-minute set of riotous noise and pop that the crowd loved. The label soon became part of the Aesoteric crew. He has since collaborated with Chris Cobilis, Manuel Bonrod and M. Rosner (aka Pablo Dali), and is working on a commission for a dance project choreographed by Sam Fox, titled 'Run'.

Early in 2004, Meupe released Stina's Pocket Songs, a lovely piece of music packed in a basic jewel case with a badge, and enclosed in an envelope of cutely printed tracing paper. Releases from Pimmon, Inchtime, Qua, Lawrence English and Pivot that couple individual design and sound have followed in rapid succession. It is a unique thing to be able to package somewhat difficult music in a manner that instantly disarms listener prejudices.

The packaging and artwork of a release has always won me over in a record store,' says

Clockwise above: portrait of Traianos Trakioufakis by Rob Simeon; Muepe CDR release of Pablo Dali; Inchtime flyer; Aesoteric flyer.



Pakioufakis. 'I think it's especially important for a label such as Meupe to have a strong visual identity so that people appreciate and purchase releases rather than burning or downloading. Not that I think that those things are killing music, but it's nice to have the option of owning a well-designed product you'll happily put on your shelf over an encoded audio file you can't even touch.'

Three-inch CDs, unadorned jewel cases, and other unique uses of packaging tie Meupe into a historical thread of iconic record labels. 'It makes the release collectible and personal, he says, which is important for recordings. It shows that the release hasn't just been put together to generate money but so that it exists as a documentation of sound.

'It should be seen in similar light as a book; you never see a novel or art book hastily put together. Binding and printing plays a huge part in the package especially those that are unique to the format.'

Pakioufakis undertook a photography course that included a basic graphic design component. Now, armed with a Nikon F100 and 35mm film, as well as a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II digital, he's pursuing a minimal aesthetic that ties into a history of design, which stops off in Norway with Kim Hiorthoy's sleeves for Rune Grammofon, and to a lesser extent Reid Miles's work for Blue Note.

'I've always been interested in the printing process, but didn't really think much else about it at the time, until a year or so after [the design course finished] when Aesoteric asked me to do some flyers and posters for their events. From there it's just been word of mouth and I do as much as I can between my full-time job at a photographic studio and running Meupe.

'I'm not usually that specific with graphic inspiration though any minimal design and innovative packaging will do it for me. Right now, I'm a big fan of using lines, dots and black and white photography like Heidi Specker, Lee Friedlander, Irving Penn and Rankin.'





'I TOOK THE INVITATION AS A COMPLIMENT TO PRIOR OUTPUT AND JUST CREATED SOMETHING THAT WAS TYPICALLY IN MY STYLE. ANYTHING ELSE WOULDN'T HAVE SEEMED RIGHT.'



Pakioufakis designed the stark cover of this month's issue of Cyclic Defrost. `The photograph was taken on Murray Street in Perth in winter last year, he says. 'The cover probably indicates my love of simple black and white design and yes, those old ECM sleeves!

'Nowadays people seem to be weary and aware of retouching, but it's played a huge role in photography for many, many years. People seem to forget that there were manual printing techniques used in the darkroom, which enhanced photographs. The fact that we now have more options whilst effectively doing the same thing on a computer screen makes people question a photographer's skill. I really don't know why! We live in a very visual society that relies on post-production, there's no going back.'

Despite the obvious demands of designing a music magazine cover, Pakioufakis felt no great pressure to follow any particular creative direction. Aside from the shape, of course. 'Having the cover of Issue 13 on the back of this issue made me think about it a bit more, in that it's such a cool and colourful design,' he says. `But I decided to run with my original idea, which is super-minimal. I took the invitation as a compliment to prior output and just created something that was typically in my style. Anything else wouldn't have seemed right.'

Clockwise from left: portrait of James Beck; portrait of At Waugh With Gieles.

Interview with James Hancock by Bim Ricketson



### HAND ON HIS ART

You may have seen James Hancock around and not realised who he was. It's quite possible THAT IT WAS HIM RUFFLING THROUGH THE SKIP BIN IN YOUR STREET LAST NIGHT. OR THE ONE ADMIRING A CRUSTY PIECE OF PAPER FISHED FROM THE GUTTER. OR WHILE YOU WERE SKIMMING SECOND HAND RECORDS AT A FLEA MARKET HE COULD HAVE BEEN NEXT TO YOU, HAGGLING FOR AN ANTIQUE BOOK ON MAGIC TRICKS.

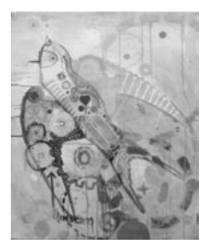
> Hancock's art and design - to him they're inseparable - is built from the layering and recontextualising of everyday objects that the rest of us would either ignore or appreciate but not collect and obsess over. His work is a distinctive collage of fabrics, printing, drawing, painting and found objects. And while he is as at home on his laptop as he is with canvas, all his work maintains a tactile and homespun feel.

Hancock graduated from a degree in Visual Communications six years ago. Soon after he moved into an old bank building in the Sydney's inner-city suburb of Redfern with two friends and together they began the artist-run initiative Space3. He has been involved in a wide range of projects across a number of media - from website design, VJing, album designs, animation, photography and graphic identity, through to his mixed media artworks. The creative and personal relationships formed through the gallery in which he lived has led to a wide network of creative types to collaborate with. As well as just finishing compiling a compendium of Space3 shows into a hardback, he's co-running the Indonesia/Australia art festival gang.

He's a busy guy. But you can be sure he's not

racing between meetings - he's wandering, looking over fences and picking up junk; it's where his all inspiration comes from. 'Everything and anything takes interest, he begins 'It can all be used at some stage. Though I'll also just collect things in my head if I've got a job on. Or if I'm doing a series of works, you can walk around and find colours or shapes or other inspirations in the most random things - the edge of a chair, the lick of paint on the gutter, the shadow on the wall. I don't know, there are so many things to look at. I love getting obsessed about some little piece of crap. One old pencil, a piece of wood, I have a small wooden ball I quite like at the moment. Power tools, pencils, mouse, scissors, speakers, cogs, paint, wood, print. I had this magic trick book from the '20s with beautiful illustrations that looked so weird de-contextualised: guys blowing smoke into their sleeves, or shaking hands in really suss ways.

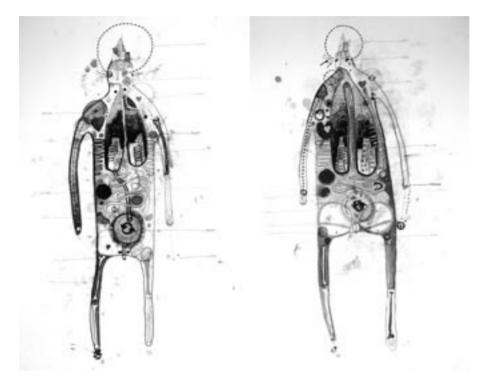
'Collage and cut out has always been important to me as a way of exploring relationships and of building narratives between images and objects. One thing next to another thing can be really amazing. Photos side by side, old bits of paper, plants, it all can be built like blocks into poetic



little moments.' Some objects are easier than others to collect, but there's always a way to make them your own in some way. 'It sucks sometimes when you see something you really want to take home, something you really want to pick up, but it's too big, or it's on someone's house or it's totally festy in the gutter on a rainy day (though I have picked up dodgy wet pieces of paper in the street to cut up later). Sometimes I've gotten around this: I remember there was this billboard on Parramatta Road that I really liked, it was made up of all this old sheet iron and I would have loved to have had it but it was about 30m. x 15m and on someone's shop, so I just started telling people it was mine. Whenever I drove past with someone I'd say that the billboard was mine, so I'd sort of picked it up and collected it. I just didn't have it at home in my pile of stuff to be cut up later on.

Above: detail from 'Artkerchief' illustration for Third Drawer Down: 'Insert' silkscreen, acrylic, photocopies and varnish on canvas, done in Indonesia

## 'SPACE3 BECAME VERY WELL KNOWN AS A PLACE FOR ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND CREATIVES TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE AND EXHIBIT THEIR WORK IN A VERY FREE ENVIRONMENT.'



From top: 'Mechano' poster, photocopied drawing; 'Bule Pramuan' ink, charcoal, pencil on paper, done in Indonesia. Over page: Josh Pyke record sleeve artwork; stills from animated videoclip.

Artists like the Dada reject Kurt Schwitters and hallucinatory painter Francis Bacon are an inspiration as much for their process as their works. 'I really love chaotic artists' mess, their studios, a total involvement in process, he says. 'I love the idea of letting your creativity totally take over your surroundings. 'I love how Kurt Schwitters went crazy on his house: from a collage, he infected the walls, then building structures and sculptures until the whole house becomes the work, the philosophy surrounding a bit of personal madness. And I love the idea of artists like Francis Bacon standing in all this crap of layered images and collected junk and paint, living in it, sleeping in it. Then picking out bits of finished work. It's the ultimate collage process, things actually falling onto each other, paint spilling accidentally but perfectly onto an image. Such great potential for serendipity.'

Living in your studio, which itself is inside a gallery is certainly one way of getting absorbed in the art-making process. And that's how James lived in the Space3 gallery for two years. 'Space3 started in 2000. It became very well known as a place for artists, musicians and creatives to have the opportunity to collaborate and exhibit their work in a very free environment. There have been some pretty massive shows. Futura, for example, packed the place out, purely through word of mouth, there was no promotion at all. He left a huge painted sticker on our fridge which someone reckons is worth a million bucks. I think we left it behind though, so its probably still in there rotting away!

'The early NOWnow improvised jazz nights were really romantic. There wasn't a scene for that at the time so they were really trying things out. I had certainly never experienced anything like it. Now there's quite a scene for it and their festival keeps getting bigger, it's great to see something grow like that. There have been some really intimate shows too; what made them all special was that it was always about showing the work and hanging out. The first show we did because we wanted to have a show of our work and be able to sit around with our friends and new people, have music, have it informal, but all work together.

'After years of threats of re-development we finally got

### 'IT'S REALLY STIMILLATING TO BE AMONGST PILES OF CREATIVITY, IN MUSIC, IN VISUAL, IN WORDS – TO SLEEP AMONGST IT, BUT ALSO HAVING THE SPACE TO BE ABLE TO WALK AWAY FROM IT ALL.'

kicked out of the building after years of successful events and being a major part of the artist-run initiative scene in Sydney. But we were all getting a little frustrated with the reliance on a space - it is so draining to keep a space running, to teach each new artist or performer how to look after the space and inevitably cleaning up after them - so we now operate as a project group. We organise shows and other opportunities for the network of artists we built up over the years. Opportunities such as the visual catalogue we recently put together with the help of funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts.

'The book is there to promote both the history and future of Space3, to allow people to see what happened over the years. So much amazing stuff goes on in little galleries around the world that never gets seen, so with the funding we had we really wanted to document some of our events. I was the main producer, project manager and designer of the book. It was a really stressful project, having to hassle people so much to get the content together and try and get them to understand how amazing the end product was going to be. I lost a lot of sleep over the printing, the amount of money, whether it was going to work, and what all the artists involved in the space were going to think. Having such a massive project in your life for what was probably about one-and-a-half years is pretty intense. At some stages I felt like it all weighed really heavily on my shoulders, but the Space3 crew we've built up is so supportive and that helped so much. We're basically starting off by self-distributing it through local and national bookstores, working up to international. If people want a copy they can go to our website: www.space3.org.

With the close of the building James moved into a more regular living environment - a shared terrace house. This was short lived. 'It drove me mad,' he says, 'There were students and professionals and we all lived separated lives.' There was no daily creative interaction.

He moved next to an unusual shared studio space in nearby Darlington. 'I'm living in an old Presbytery at the moment, he says 'It's interesting; the church we rent from is Melkite (Arabic-speaking Catholic), which means all their hymns are in Arabic, which is pretty beautiful to wake up to on Sundays. And it's pretty nice smelling

- the almond rice and shish kebab smells wafting up on religious holidays. It's great knowing that we are living so close to such a different culture. We probably don't really know what they're doing and I don't reckon they really know what we're doing up here. It's so interesting seeing each other's culture pass by. It's pretty funny too, seeing trains of white HumVees rock up for a wedding, or supercute tiny kids in tuxedos being hassled by big mommas is great. It's all part of the juxtapositions.

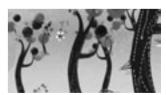
'The presbytery is a bit different to Space3 as it's not so much a public space. Space3 was a gathering point for people; there were always people hanging around chatting. This really bred collaboration and interaction, discussion and growth, both personally and in our work. The presbytery takes this idea and integrates some of the comforts of home.

'It's really important for me to have other creative people around doing other creative things. Different creative people, old "squat space" people, video artists and audio engineers and musicians. Since I work mostly from home, and spend lots of hours in the studio making things, it's great to have other people coming and going, to be able to chat at random hours, to sit amongst their creativity, to have them show me things and to be able to run ideas past them that I'm working on. It's really like a very, very, very free studio, with everyone working on their own projects. It's great also that we sometimes call on each other to help us out with certain parts of our projects; I might get someone to help with some music, or they might need help with some graphic thing. It's a really stimulating environment.

'It's great to be in an interesting physical space too, which enables us to do interesting things like having really big dinners. We just hosted the annual Imperial Slacks (an old artist-run initiative) Xmas cabaret, where a group of us sat around eating and drinking and performing for each other with readings of poetry written when we were four, nipple tassel dances, solo music performances, and aerobics classes. It's really stimulating to be amongst piles of creativity, in music, in visual, in words - to sleep amongst it, but also having the space to be able to walk away from it all, sit outside, talk to someone in their creative space, outside of your head.'

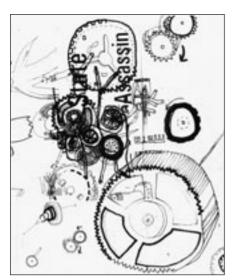


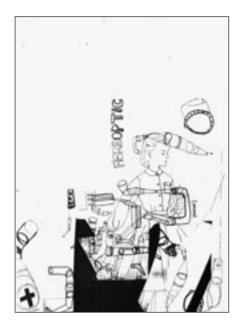






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#### HIS WORK IS A DISTINCTIVE COLLAGE OF FABRICS, PRINTING, DRAWING, PAINTING AND FOUND OBJECTS. AND WHILE HE IS AS AT HOME ON HIS LAPTOP AS HE IS WITH CANVAS, ALL HIS WORK MAINTAINS A TACTILE AND HOMESPUN FEEL.

On another level James has done the same thing with his extended travels overseas. 'It seems every couple of years I get itchy feet, he admits. 'So I've travelled quite a bit. Travelling frees me into new ways of seeing, and it is also is a great way to collect imagery. I usually travel overland, trying not to use planes. It's a romantic way to travel, more process driven, seeing countries change into each other over borders - cultural gradients. The biggest trip I did was overland from Sydney to London, via south east Asia, China, Russia, Scandinavia and Europe.

'Some of the travelling I've done has been a total step away from art and design - complete time off, but I have also worked while I travelled, which has taught me to use whatever material I can find, being inventive with what I have. It means I am actively using and recycling things from my environment - this is important, this constant collection and re-interpretation of objects, from pieces of paper to little plastic cogs. I always have a box of source material to work from. A recent art project involved pulling apart a photocopier to source materials that I layered with drawings of these found objects (like a botanist draws their discoveries as they go, losing drawings along the way amongst rotting plants and animals).

Recently the Gang Festival project has required an extended stay in Indonesia, an opportunity he relished. 'After travelling so much, I really wanted to do some work in another country, to really become part of the culture and not pass through as a tourist. A grant came up from the Australian Indonesian Institute, so we got a team together to apply to do an exchange festival, and we got the funding. We decided to do an exchange where a group of Australians from artist-run initiatives went over to Indonesian artist-run initiatives with a touring show , showcasing work from Sydney artist-run initiatives. Then we would bring back a number of Indonesian artists and a whole lot of Indonesian art work from artist-run initiatives and have shows, discussions and collaborations

'It was a really exciting trip, and it was amazing finding ourselves travelling through the night in bicycle taxis to shows we'd set up, stapling the room sheets together as we went. And trying to get things done, like photocopying, trying to explain double-sided in another language was pretty hard! From a Sydney perspective, it's interesting to pull together all these artist-run initiatives - that usually work independently but all know each other through the network - for the festival. This solidifying of relationships has been a learning curve. For example, dealing with the relaxed and fluid nature of artist-run initiatives - having spaces close as we were organising the festival, moving dates and shows around at the last minute.

'My role in the whole festival is mainly as designer, curator and residency artist. I went to Indonesia with work I curated here with fellow artist Alice McAuliffe. And we both curated shows from Indonesia. I also made some new work while travelling. I expected to find a lot of craft-based, naïve sort of work in Indonesia, but was really surprised to find a very strong contemporary art scene and language. There were great organisations doing amazing project works with the community and also really strong graphic work from individuals.

'In some ways it was interesting to see how free they were allowed to be. In setting up some parts of the Gang Festival in Sydney we've had to consider sometimes pretty crazy public liability and health issues, which can be stifling sometimes. In Indonesia they just do stuff; if you want to set up a shop in your house, go for it; if you want to build a castle in the backyard of your mum's place, no one is going to stop you. That freedom seems to generate great potential for projects and opportunities for artists to take part in the community on a daily basis?

Despite drawings no distinction between his art and design, James admits that some clients are better than others on commissioned design. And some of the best clients of all are musicians. 'They are typically the best type of client because they come from a similar creative head space,' he says. 'So they are genuinely interested in what you are doing as an artist. It is much more of a collaboration, where you are each responding to each other's work to make the whole thing work together. It's also exciting to work with artists whose music you engage with. For example a big recent project was a whole visual package for Josh Pyke (www.joshpyke.com). I did all the illustration for Josh, and designed the CD artwork and

merchandise. These illustrations were also integrated into the video clip for the single "Middle of the Hill".

'The final design involved illustrations of animals where you could see the interior of their bodies. It was a romantic sort of anatomy, where there were too many hearts, buildings infecting the lungs, and heaps of entrails (you'll see these pipes have lingered onto this magazine cover!).

I did these illustrations while on the artist in residence program in Indonesia. I brought ideas and illustration techniques from that artistic experience over into Josh's final designs.

'With Josh's work I started with the lyrics. I got a lot out of them and built up a story that I connected with from them. Then, with the melodies, I took these ideas of stories into a style and context. Because of this dialogue and shared experience, it can be a really natural rewarding process. I have also done some covers for Dsico, which used a process of collage that I was working with at the time. I was loving putting together tiny bits of paper, like little colour chart puzzles, the pieces getting smaller and smaller in repeating pastels.

'I'm constantly seeking new methods of construction. Technique and process are constantly developing. I embrace whatever methods my process takes me to. I am constantly looking and playing with what I find. There are of course consistently relied upon techniques such as collage and drawing, but even the 'core' methods are constantly evolving, one method never stays the same very long.

'I think I find myself in a really great community of people in Sydney. From Space3 and all the artist-run initiative networks. I've been able to have a community of such like-minded yet different people. It's great being in Sydney for that reason, that I know so many people here having spent the better part of 28 years here, that you are in people's heads; it's hard to build that up overseas I've found. But overseas opportunities start to build a bit more also?

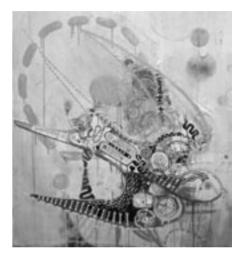
Pressed on what his works might mean, James finds he only discovers meaning as he goes on - it's all about the process. 'Most of the time I'm making things and have no idea why I'm making them, he admits. 'They just happen out of a drive to be creating. But then I look back and see that I really was communicating something I was working out in my head. I look back and can see that I actually knew more about what I was thinking about than I thought at the time. I love this use of creative process to work though thoughts, ideas and emotions. I can see this happening with musicians around me. Building little moods and poems from words and melodies, explaining things to oneself. I seem to be explaining personal confusions - for example working out how the body works, not how it actually works, but how you feel it working. Like the Josh Pyke work with hearts all over the body and intestines in the head. Working out how machines work, how you can construct mood and moment. Note taking, machine design, cogs and interconnectedness, the romance of things, little beauties in moments.'

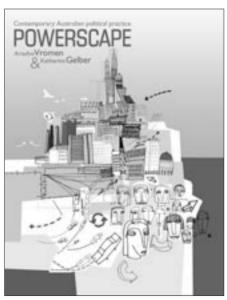
For more on James and samples of his work www.jameshancock.net

'I'M CONSTANTLY SEEKING NEW METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION. TECHNIQUE AND PROCESS ARE CONSTANTLY DEVELOPING. I EMBRACE WHATEVER METHODS MY PROCESS TAKES ME TO.'

#### Clockwise from over page:

'Mechano' posters, photocopied drawings: 'Twist and Shout - silkscreen, acrylic, photocopies and varnish on canvas - as part of a series of work done while in residence in Indonesia; book cover illustration 'Powerscape'









**Tov Death** Interview by Bob Baker Fish

## COIL



IT'S A DELUGE OF COLOUR AND CRAZINESS, A STRANGE, EVIL, ENERGETIC PANTOMIME. THE SOUNDS RICOCHET AROUND THE SMALL, DIMLY-LIT ROOM, IT'S ALL OUITE THIN THOUGH CHAOTIC, FUELLED BY TOO MUCH RED CORDIAL AND A ZANY SENSE OF THE SURREAL.

Toys are stuttering, wailing and exalting strange, nonsensical sentences and it is crazy, beautiful and oh-so-wrong. The performers, Toydeath, are a Sydney-based three-piece who appear even wackier than the sounds, seemingly like action figures themselves, colourfully costumed, with some kind of outer space rocketeer with a strange alien visor, an angelic looking Barbie, and well, I'm really not too sure, some kind of dreadlocked orange doll-like creature that I'm frightened to focus on for any length of time in case flashbacks begin. It's all very peculiar. We're at the Empress Hotel in Melbourne's inner-city suburb of Fitzroy on a warm night in mid-December. Local improvisers Pateras Baxter and Brown have just delivered another consummate set of eclectic improvisation and were preceded by the very dodgy Casionova camping up his technical problems, farm lifestyle and obsession with Casios. But nothing could prepare the audience for Toydeath's onslaught of childish mayhem. And it's so much fun, we're in hysterics, marvelling at the talking Barbies, chattering, flashing Japanese cameras, hulk fists and an over-the-top double-axed toy guitar. Yet

something's wrong. The Barbie spits highpitched, garbled nonsense alongside inane drivel about trips to the mall, whilst the giant hulk fists make a punching sound that ends in a burst of cheap electronic feedback. It seems these toys have been tampered with!

It's the next day, when my head is reeling from inhaling too many solder fumes and from four hours of intense concentration, that I find out how. In my hand, I'm holding a doorbell that I have constructed and soldered myself, learning from scratch about resisters, capacitors and all other electronic jargon. I'm in a class with eight others. Two of them are under the age of six and they've done a better job than I have. My solder is lumpy and erratic and it's taken me double the amount of time to construct as my primary school cohorts. God I hate kids, smugly playing with their buzzers and alarms whilst I struggle on attempting to assemble my Dick Smith kit. It's nearing the end of the first day of a two-day course in electronics for the uninitiated taken by Toydeath member GiJoe's alter-ego Nick Wishart. Grabbing one of the kid's buzzers he looks up at the class smiling. 'Now I want to show you how

to circuit bend, he offers with a sly grin. And it's with this that we are offered the keys to the Toydeath kingdom.

Circuit bending is about short-circuiting electronic instruments. It is predominantly done on small, battery-operated toy instruments to reduce the likelihood of being shocked and is relatively easy for anyone to do. Primarily it involves forming new connections between circuits, rewiring the toy at specific points to cause strange unexpected fluctuations and distortions in the sound. Simple electronic toys can quite easily be transformed into quite complex, chance-based musical instruments, where pitch, tambour and tempo have been altered considerably. In short it can be a world of limitless possibilities.Or not. Finally, long after everyone else, I finish my doorbell. Proudly I plug it into the small testing speakers. Nothing. 'Tomorrow we bend some toys,' offers Wishart, handing us all a toy. Mine is a cute little white guitar with a series of notes down the neck and small buttons that play nursery rhymes.

My doorbell doesn't work. I'm in trouble. 'I think my fascination with toys started



when I was working on a kids theatre show, says Wishart later at a nearby pub where I try to drown my doorbell sorrows. 'We needed a prop for a scene where the animals came out to play as the humans left the house. There was a drumming rabbit, but we needed a guitar for the cat to play. So we went shopping around Canberra and in a toyshop we came across this little guitar called a Microjammer. It was a perfect size but it also had six buttons that had eight bars of heavy metal on each button, and I was so excited and I thought we could make a band out of this?

This was back in 1995, around the time when electronics were becoming cheap enough to go into mass-produced toys. So after learning from a friend how to amplify them, Wishart began collecting toys, and Toydeath officially began. At the time he was already a musician with a history of playing sax. 'I'd had this period where I had been a classical musician,' he begins. 'Then I looked for something more freer and I started getting into more improvised music and eventually got into composing electronic music, into the production side, which I still do.'

At the time Toydeath were content to simply mix the sounds of different toys, which were wacky enough, just adding amplification, though with a very different bent than today. 'The first original thought was to make heavy metal music on toys,' he laughs. 'And our characters then, we all dressed like metal gods, black AC/DC t-shirts, studded belts, really long wigs and masks.'

'A few years later I met Tim from Casionova and he put me on the path of a bit more bending them and letting them go a bit crazy, he reflects. And then the fun began.

The next day we all take our toys apart and marvel at the myriad of wires and bending possibilities. The doorbell failure is in the back of my mind so I make sure to ask Wishart for assistance every step of the way. We are shown some of the choices we have. Pitch bending, placing buttons between resisters to trigger crazy new variants of sound, buttons triggered by light, and my personal favourite: body contact, which you can get if the sound really freaks out whilst you are pressing down your fingers on the circuit board. You actually

THE FIRST ORIGINAL THOUGHT WAS TO MAKE HEAVY METAL MUSIC ON TOYS,' HE LAUGHS. 'AND OUR CHARACTERS THEN, WE ALL DRESSED LIKE METAL GODS, BLACK AC/DC T-SHIRTS, STUDDED BELTS, REALLY LONG WIGS AND MASKS.'

become part of the circuit. All you have to do is attach a wire to the point and connect it to a screw on the outside of the instrument. Then whenever you touch the screw the instrument freaks out. Of course to find these wonderful distortions of sound you need the batteries in and the sound up. And with six different toys on the go we have a table of demented toy melodies, pitching up and down, and freaking out in the way their manufacturers never intended. Throughout this mayhem Wishart is in his element. Every variation in sound



causes a wicked giggle, and though he must have heard it a million times before, you can see the genuine enthusiasm on his face when the circuits begin to bend.

'I see myself as an instrument maker,' he says, 'making new instruments that you can play. Instruments that are also really cute and unique.' As a result Nick does all the circuit bending in Toydeath and also most of the purchasing. 'I can't walk past a two-dollar shop,' he laughs, 'but also Toys R Us and Kmart.' He prefers buying toys new and you get some very strange variants in the two-dollar shops. 'When the Spider-Man movie came out all this imitation Spider-Man stuff came out. I've got this toy, the packaging is called a Spader-Man. The toy is covered in Spider-Man graphics and you press the button and they're farm animals. It's a guitar with a little keyboard and when it's bent its an awesome bass machine?

Despite subverting the intent of the manufacturers, something that may be viewed as a political statement, Toydeath don't view their actions as malicious in any way. In fact, you get the sense that Nick is almost thankful to the toy manufacturers for the sonic possibilities offered to him.

'There was a group with a bigger political agenda who were going around swapping GI Joe voice boxes with Barbie,' he laughs. 'The best thing I ever saw was I was going through Toys R Us and there was a Britney Spears doll and the poor person who put it in the package, their political act was to put her in the package with her skirt lifted up.'

'We're not really trying to say "Fuck you, Mattel", he continues. 'We only use two or three Mattel toys and we have been using Super Talk Barbie. Mattel brought out a Barbie that can talk and it can say 100,000 different sentences. It's quite sophisticated; each sentence can be a combination of four parts. So they go "lets", "do", "on", and "with" and you press a button and it will go, "It will be great to go to the mall on Saturday with Ken and Allen." So there's quite a lot of possibilities all about going to the mall or playing tennis and listening to music and she's bossy too! She's got lots of great ideas about having fun. I guess we are subverting Barbie and there'll be times when we have her blabbing on about inane things and then we punch her with a Hulk fist. But she's broken at the moment.'

And therein lies one of the problems of cheap electronics, with Nick constantly repairing and

replacing his toys. A song called 'Froggy' has recently been retired, as the toy is no longer with us. 'They're pretty robust really,' he reflects. 'But I do a lot of maintenance. But there are songs we can't do that have fallen by the wayside. We throw them in suitcases and travel halfway around the world or they fall and get beaten around on stage and stuff. They are pretty robust though – they have to survive kids:

Toydeath have released two albums. 2001's confusing, chaotic *Pokey as Shake* and 2005's more overtly song based, yet still crazy *Guns Cars & Guitars*. Though the music is only half the Toydeath experience. Live they are a frenzied assault of silliness, colour and chaos.

'It's about creating a whole show,' reveals Wishart. 'Ideally, I'd like to have a month of solid rehearsals and develop a real show. There's a lot more stuff we can do, a bit more chorography and stuff. We really want to keep adding to that.'

'My costume, that's the second show,' he continues. 'My character's GiJoe. For a long time I've been this combat version, camouflage, a helmet and some spiky straps and things. I wanted to have a bit of a change. So we got a costume designer, he was working on Farscape at the time, and we got the helmet from that.

'I'M THE OUTER-SPACE GIJOE. WE'RE TRYING TO DEVELOP TOY-LIKE CHARACTERS THAT PLAY TOYS. THE PINK CHARACTER IS CALLED I' BOORY.'



So now I guess I'm the outer-space GiJoe. We're trying to develop toy-like characters that play toys. The pink character is called L' Booby. We approached this costume designer and gave him a brief and he said "What about a pink gollywogsexdoll?" And Barbie, the other character, she started off as Trailer Trash Barbie. but she's now become Princess Barbie.'

'We have had a few people who have come and gone,' he continues. 'We also have another character, the nurse, so when the Barbie can't do the gig we get the nurse in and when the nurse can't do the gig we get the nun.'

So amidst of a table filled with bits of electronics, wires, and soldering irons I'm feverishly working on my toy. I've gone for a spot of pitch bending, soldered a knob to the circuit board and drilled a hole through the plastic so I can mount it on the outside and adjust it at will. I've also got two body contacts that will surely help me rock out. The problem is that as I attempt to put everything back together it doesn't fit in. Despite my planning my wires are too short, the hole is in the wrong spot and I seem to have ripped the wires out that go to the speaker. Memories of the doorbell come flooding back. As Wishart wanders past I latch on and beg for help. Within five minutes all my problems have been surmounted and I'm plugged into the test speakers and belching out some of the most horrible, high-pitched electronica you've ever heard and following it up with deep slow bottom end. It's 'Mary Had A Little Lamb' pitched low and slow, taking so long to move between notes that it's almost incomprehensible. I am in heaven. I look over and see Wishart grinning proudly at me. I am now a bender.



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Zen Paradox Interview with Steve Law by Andrez Bergen

# UNIVERSAL JUSTI

JUSTICE -

IT SEEMS THAT ERSTWHILE MELBOURNE-BASED CONNOISSEUR KNOB-TWIRLER STEVE LAW LURKING BEHIND THE MACHINES UNDER THE ALIAS OF ZEN PARADOX ISN'T SO DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND AFTER ALL – AND IN FACT HE RESOLVED A SWAG OF RESIDUAL UNDERLYING QUANDARIES DURING THE COURSE OF A RECENT RANT WITH CYCLIC DEFROST.

Do you even vaguely recall what you were doing 12 years ago? In my case I had my head stuck in the quagmire of a post-grad history thesis at Melbourne Uni, trying over those 12 months of 1994 to come to grips with, analyse, compress, chew up and spit out 10,000 words on Britain's industrial music putsch in the '70s. In the time since then I've conducted a wad of interviews with Steve Law, but the first took place that year. It was for a long-defunct little goth/industrial/electro magazine called Dark Angel. As it turned out, my specific history angle came in useful - Law just so happened to have a hankering for industrial bands like Cabaret Voltaire and Throbbing Gristle, the very same guys I'd recently interviewed in the course of researching my thesis.

While fellow Melbourne artist Voiteck Andersen is the will-do enforcer you get to go hassle the party promoter who hasn't paid up, Law is the shy, unassuming guy that Voiteck probably defers to most in the Melbourne scene.

All good yarns begin at some specific point, and the Zen Paradox superhero origin story goes something like this:

Rear-vision mirror yourself to 1983, when a young Steve Law – age 16 – discovered industrial music, Kraftwerk, Brian Eno and John Cage; he bought his first synthesizer (a Realistic/Moog MG-1), and started producing an array of experimental tapes in the confines of a home studio that included two ghettoblasters, a short-

wave radio, and kitchen utensils. After dabbling with an ambient-electro outfit called Guild Of Fire, in 1990 Law helped form the guitar-industrial band Foil and, by 1992 – now more influenced by the sounds of Detroit and acts like Underground Resistance – had kick-started his solo project under the alias Zen Paradox.

'I was reading a book called *Valis*, by Philip K. Dick, at the same time that I was trying to think of a name for my techno project,' Law recalls. 'The term "zen paradox" was frequently used in this novel, and I thought it was appropriate due to the often paradoxical approach I take to making music.'

Law's studio had conveniently developed somewhat over the intervening years. 'At that time I was using a Roland MC-500 as a sequencer, controlling a bunch of MIDI synths – Roland Jupiter 6, Juno 2, JX-8P, D-110, E-mu Emax. I was borrowing things like the TR-808, 303, 202 and 101 until I bought them the following year.'

It was in this upgraded studio set-up that Law produced the baptismal Zen Paradox album *Eternal Brainwave*, which was first released in 1993 through Ollie Olsen's new label Psy-Harmonics, then internationally through Kk subsidiary label Nova Zembla in Belgium. 'I think it still stands up okay,' Law says of that work a dozen years down the line.

1993 was also the first time I caught a Zen Paradox live set. It was a 3PBS benefit gig in



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# 'I THINK THE BIGGEST DEVELOPMENT, NOT NECESSARILY A GOOD ONE, HAS BEEN THE GENTRIFICATION OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC. BACK AT THE BEGINNING OF THE '90S IT WAS SIMPLY "TECHNO" OR ELECTRONIC MUSIC, BUT SINCE THEN A HUGE NUMBER OF SUB-GENRES HAVE DEVELOPED'

May that year, where he played second fiddle to better known acts (at that time) Snog, This Digital Ocean, and Screwtape. To my mind, this diminutive solo artist hiding behind a stack of rack-mounted gear was the definitive highlight of a night in which the music was great, and the amber fluid flowed rather nicely too.

A year later, 1994 was a banner-year for creativity in Melbourne on the technoelectronic front, with people like Voiteck, Arthur Arkin (Hi-Fli), Dave Beattie (Q-Kontrol), Adam Raisbeck (Soulenoid), Derek Shiel and Dan Woodman from TR-Storm (nee-VOID), Scott Armstrong (Guyver III), and the M.P.I. and Lung UPC posses all making their own signature inroads in a constantly morphing scene. '94 was also the year that local label Dorobo released the excellent (if chronically underrated and abysmally titled) Melbourne compilation Trance/Tribal, which featured Paul Schütz, Garry Havrillay, François Tetaz (as Shinjuku Filth), and Snog/Black Lung illumine David Thrussell, with Pieter Bourke, as Soma. The downbeat Zen Paradox inclusion 'Between the Apo Kayan and the Infinite' hinted at a more cerebral artist who was prepared to lock horns with electronica away from the dance floor. Even the title was a little out there. 'The Apo Kayan is a jungle basin on the island of Borneo, Law reports now. 'The "infinite" part of the title was a reference to Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey.' Of course.

In April '94 Steve Law and Voiteck got together for a bit of a live jam at an otherwise forgettable rave party called Mayhem, and their Sonic Voyagers collaborative project was whelped. The outcome? Two studio albums, a couple of memorably searing live reunion jaunts fronting the Zoetrope gigs at the Punters Club a few years later, and a mutual respect that lasts to this day. 'I know that music ... is a necessary form of expression for both of us. I think I have perhaps the most intuitive partnership with Voiteck out of all the people I've collaborated with, assesses Law now. The list of collaborators isn't one to be taken lightly - over the past decade Law has worked with Atom Heart, Speedy J, Monolake, Tetsu Inoue, Bochum Welt and Ollie Olsen.

Whilst many other Melbourne producers of the mid 90s had disappeared or relocated overseas by 2000, Law was still making stuff as Zen Paradox without the archetypal deejay hype or techno live act fanfare – albums like From The Shore Of A Distant Land (1995), Catharsis the following year, and more recently Experiments In Emotion (1998) and Chromium Dance (1999) through his own label Solitary Sound - as well as cutting a diverse swath of material under new aliases like Mutagenic Mind, Mr. Suspicious, Retreat Syndrome, and just plain Steve Law. He was playing live at the big techno parties like Hardware, but his relationship with Belgian

imprint Nova Zembla had ended. 'Unfortunately they were becoming more trance-focused, while my music was going in a totally different direction,' Law reflects.

'[Melbourne] has developed enormously over the past ten years or so, Law assesses of the city's electronic-attuned independent music scene. 'More experimental and improvised music has been flourishing in Melbourne over the past few years, with festivals like Liquid Architecture, What Is Music? and Anthony Pateras and Robin Fox's excellent Articulating Space events - as well as regular nights like Make It Up Club. It's a great city – I'm not sure why, but there has always been a great artistic vibe here?

There have been drawbacks, however. 'Ten years ago there was a ton of techno happening, but very little on the electronic improv/experimental scene. Unfortunately the live techno scene itself is not as healthy as it was. Lately at the bigger parties - and in clubs - things have gotten a lot more commercial, and that doesn't leave much room for live performers who are pushing their own unique sound.' The result has been that, while Steve Law has no problem finding more abstract electro gigs for himself, there's been a dearth of opportunities for Zen Paradox – a situation Voiteck also recently complained about. 'Hopefully it's just a phase, though; these things tend to happen in cycles,' Law adds in his usual optimistic fashion.

#### 'IT'S MIND-BLOWING WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH A COMPUTER THESE DAYS, COMPARED TO A STUDIO FULL OF HARDWARE **BACK IN 1993**



He does, however, perceive another emergent problem. 'I think the biggest development, not necessarily a good one, has been the gentrification of electronic music. Back at the beginning of the '90s it was simply "techno" or electronic music, but since then a huge number of sub-genres have developed, each with their own dedicated following. I think this tends to fragment the scene quite a bit, and unfortunately people have a blinkered approach towards any music outside of the particular sound they're into'. For Steve Law, the biggest change over the past six years has been the studio he works with. 'I'm always learning more about music production, he admits. 'It's mind-blowing what you can do with a computer these days, compared to a studio full of hardware [back in 1993]. I got a laptop a couple of years ago, which has had a huge impact on my music production. Ableton Live has revolutionized my live performance, and it's also a fantastic tool for coming up with new ideas for compositions in the studio. It's also great to be able to use the sounds of the analogue machines and then push them further with computer processing?

The music he listens to has more or less remained consistent, but whereas a decade ago he was tuning in to Nurse With Wound, more recently he's espoused the virtues of Cristian Vogel's latest album Station 55 and his work with Jamie Liddell as Super Collider. In terms of own music, Law is as diverse as ever. Aside from ongoing solo projects, he's a member of the Terminal Quartet (with Ollie Olsen and Andrew Garton) and Black Cab, and occasionally jams with High Pass Filter. 'I've been doing a lot of live improvisation with other musicians in recent times, something that I absolutely love doing. There really is a certain kind of magic.' Back in December Scorn played at the Distorted party in Melbourne, supported by a live act calling itself The Mutagen Server - a newer collaboration project Law shares with Olsen. 'It

was the first time we'd done a one-on-one gig together since the Love Parade in 1993. Ollie and I have been recording a few things together since late last year, and we're hoping to record an album in the near future.

Late last year Law also released the most recent Zen Paradox long player, an album called Numinosum, through new label EEM. It was another esoteric title that Law says refers to Carl Jung, to describe "the heightened state of consciousness as a result of a spiritual experience - the sensation of the unknown and the mysterious," as he puts it. I'm not prepared to argue with that one.

The soundscape therein is another matter – this is a body of work you can hardly call straightdown-the-line techno. 'The album is a pretty diverse exploration of contemporary electronic music,' says Law. 'I think you can still see some elements of Eternal Brainwave in the new album, and it's a pretty good reflection of my approach to techno/IDM, perhaps. I do see each album as a snapshot of where I'm at, at that time. Unfortunately the promotion has been a little slow up to now, so it's really hard to gauge what people think. Hopefully things are going to start moving a bit more this year. Frank G., who runs the label, has limited resources but I know he's passionate about the album...'

While electronic music in general is all too obviously Law's own passion, he readily admits that an oral fixation comes in a close second - and his taste perfectly reflects his audio preferences. 'There's so much amazing food in this world, he raves. 'I like things that have an impact - so bland foods definitely don't do it for me! I'm very partial to a really good vindaloo, but then there's Sichuan hotpot, Cambodian raw beef salad, fish and chips from Huskisson in Jervis Bay (with the wharf in Cooktown coming a close second!), mature, washed-rind cheese, mulligatawny soup, kim chi ... ahh, the choices, the choices?















Scissors for Sparrow Interview with Jon Tihia by Dan Rule

# SPARROWS

THE IDEA OF POP MUSIC DOESN'T EXACTLY HOLD CONNOTATIONS OF ELABORATE MUSICALITY. TO MOST MINDS, POP WALKS HAND-IN-HAND WITH ELEMENTARY INSTRUMENTATION AND RUDIMENTARY COMPOSITION, WITH NOTIONS OF ACHIEVING BEAUTY IN SIMPLICITY; PERFECTION IN IMPERFECTION, IF YOU WILL. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, JON TJHIA'S SCISSORS FOR SPARROW PROJECT REPRESENTS SOMETHING OF A COUP FOR THE POP UNDERGROUND.

A vaguely rotating group of musicians, working under Tjhia's conceptual and compositional guidance, Scissors For Sparrow melds supple, beauteous and endearingly clumsy pop aesthetics with a more experimental, heterogenous and developed sense of musical process. Recording in home-studio environments and playing rare, raw, but rehearsed shows, the project harbours no ambitions of mediocrity. To put simply, Tjhia is a perfectionist - there are no half-measures, no untried ideas - but simultaneously, perfection is hardly the point of his music. His interests lay in searching out and navigating the potential of writing, recording and performing within a progressive pop context - in using an imperfect medium to explore much grander ideas.

Jon Tjhia's new house is a shambles – sparse, relatively furniture-less, but a shambles all the same. We sit on milk crates for our introductory tea and biscuits, we take a tour of the unmown

back lawn, we clear leads, amps and abstract pieces of 'furniture' from what will be our interview setting in the lounge. But it's not that Tjhia's disorganised, there are just some extenuating circumstances. 'I hate moving,' he groans, waving a disconsolate arm in the general direction of the mess. 'There's still a lot to do.'

Nevertheless, he is excited about his new set-up. Having shifted out of Northcote, in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs, Tjhia has migrated two suburbs further out, to quieter, cheaper Preston. 'I'm still largely operating in fear of the neighbours,' he laughs. 'I just met Francis from next door today. She was really nice; she said she loved music and that her daughter plays music, and that I should go for it: "Go play now! Go play loud!"

Indeed, his studio is the only room in the house with some vague sense of order. And talking me through its various equipments, it's clear that Tjhia sees some interesting potential in the space. 'The fireplace actually has a chimney that makes whooshy noises,' he urges. 'Sometimes I think it would be great to make a multi-track album that is completely laden with artefacts, so you can hear when a tape track is being put on half way through a song to record an extra vocal, you can hear a dog barking or something. I think that would be a cool idea. As long as the instruments sound good, then whatever else comes is fine?

It's a statement that's somewhat indicative of Tjhia's approach. While consistently open to new and ever-changing ideas, his music possesses a strong, unyielding sense of purpose. Scan your way through the Scissors For Sparrow's Oh...Hello! EP (released in late 2005) or appearances on Sydney independent label Feral Media comps (Southern Winter) Northern Summer and Plastic Cotton Tree, and you'll find yourself traversing everything from washed out instrumental passages and blocky pop



### 'THE BEST POP MUSIC IS SPARSER THAN IT NEEDS TO BE AND HAS THINGS THAT NO ONE CAN REALLY GO AND DO SPONTANEOUSLY AS A GROUP. IT TAKES A BIT OF CONTROL.'

melodies, to spacious atmospherics and densely layered, textural guitars (not to mention a brief bout of stinging, off-kilter electronic beat craft). Yet, despite Scissors For Sparrow's stylistic divergence, there's barely a tune that feels inappropriate or out of place. And as Tjhia explains, there's a strong reason for this.

'Scissors For Sparrow is quite controlled actually,' he offers as we take our seats back in the lounge, 'because all the other bands I'm in are largely centred around improy, or at least the idea of it; like, things come out of it. Whereas I pretty much don't have any jamming in Scissors For Sparrow.

'I mean, the big idea behind it, I guess, is playing around with sound and getting really excited about sound in the context of loosely termed 'pop music'. I think in that sense, I want to introduce the ideas of some of my more experimental stuff into pop, but because that can go so wrong, it has to be quite tightly controlled. So yeah, there's no jamming and I'm actually a little bit of a tight arse about getting people to play certain things; and if people get a note wrong... I don't mind mess, but mess is not the same as noodling, you know. I don't actually like noodling.'

It's not that Tjhia, a drummer and multiinstrumentalist, is overly fastidious about the project. It's just that, unlike so many other musicians, he has a well-defined set of creative ideas that he's unafraid to articulate. 'I think there are three strains of it,' he states. 'Bringing more experimentalism to pop music, bringing more enjoyment to interesting music, and... um, what the fuck was the third one? Yeah, something like broadening the idea of what can be considered enjoyable,' he laughs.

'Say, I really enjoy the sound of someone getting two clubs and banging on a rubbish bin, but I don't really want to record music like that and put it out, and let people just go "This is just some guy..." I think that you can take stuff that you love – you know, stupid sounds and whatever things you hear – and kind of try to put that into a context which is pop in a looser sense. It doesn't have to be a pop song, but it helps.'

He understands US group Radian to be model proponents of such an approach. 'Have you heard them?' he gasps. 'They're kind of like a very experimental band, who have come form jazz and they're now very weird, kind of pulled-apart, kind of minimal electronic. But they're just amazing... Radian are kind of a really, really experimental band – they're incredibly good at pulling weird sounds form things – but they're also just pop music. They've got little features that you can identify on repeat listens that come around at certain times, and they've got rhythm even though it's not a beat as such. It's textural pop music or something. It's brilliant.'

Forming as a loose, quasi-group in early 2005 – and garnering glowing praise for their genre-bending live sets – Scissors For Sparrow has drawn from a vast collection of floating musicians. While the core line-up consists of Melbourne artist and musician Nadia Combe, Mark Gomes (a.k.a. Barrage), Tania Smith and Daniel McLuskey, additional members have included Jacinta

Plucinski, Danny Jumpertz, Dale Harrison (The Herd) and Sonia Tsai and Mel Ratliff (Sparrow Hill). 'It's so much fun to have up to nine or ten people to play with on stage,' says Tjhia. 'It's kind of like a little community thing – not a community, but like a family thing. The people I like playing with are dorks, like me, who hang around talking about stripy tops,' he laughs. 'I'm really lucky.'

He's not just being polite; Tjhia is fortunate. For such a large group of musicians, Scissors For Sparrow has an unusually singular and vehicular dynamic. To put simply, Tjhia is the man at helm. 'Most of the recording is done either completely by me or ... a couple of the recent ones were done as a band in the studio. But

the actual recording, I've tracked that and removed parts that didn't work, or redone parts, or changed my mind about some notes and got rid of them. So I'm still producing the recordings, and so ultimately, the decisions are mine.'

Yet he's fully aware of his circumstances, and is wary of the potential for their misuse. 'I mean, it sounds really fucked, and I know it sounds really fucked and really selfish,' he says. However, as with everything Tjhia does, there's a well-considered thought process behind the project's make-up. 'The thing is, you can dick around with pop bands and shit,' he says, 'because everyone has these nutty ideas about what music should be, and no-one can agree, and it becomes all about submission. The best pop music is sparser than it needs to be and has things that no one can really go and do spontaneously as a group. It takes a bit of control.

'I try and be as upfront as possible about it. I'm actually going to write a bit of a manifesto, just because people have tried or wanted to do certain things certain ways, and it's not like a don't respect these people's opinions – they're great and they're all fantastic, and that's why I want to play with them – but if you don't agree then it becomes really awkward. It's not about disliking people's ideas, but it's just that they might not be right for what you're actually thinking in your head about what you want to do. But I guess it can be a little bit tricky and, especially because they're all your songs, you feel like you're asking favours from people. I mean, they enjoy it ... well, I hope they enjoy it, but in the end you still feel like it's a favour.'

Tjhia's life has always oriented itself towards music. Growing up in Melbourne's outer east, he took to playing musical instruments at an early age. I started playing when I was in Year One, I think. I really wanted to play piano because everyone else was, it was as simple as that really. And I eventually hated piano, but it was such a good foundation. I took guitar lessons too, for a really short time, then did a whole host of instruments through high school – violin, clarinet, sax, guitar, bass ... Fuck, everything ... trumpet. But I always wanted to play drums'.

It wasn't until late high school that his music started

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finding a more experimental course. I recorded an album when I was in Year 11. I called myself Yoke and the album was called Sofa, and it was basically 25 tracks of whatever I recorded on my PC, which I did after school - I'd do a song every couple of days. It's kind of funny; some of it is really embarrassing, like, I sang, but again it was a really weird thing because it was spastic electronic and kind of really earnest stuff and kind of dorky guitar screw-ups.'

At only 23, Tjhia has been involved in a number of music, sound and multimedia-based projects -he recently worked on sound and music for a narrative digital art installation, 'Underexposed', and editing and postproduction for a short film. Indeed, Tjhia's decidedly prolific in all areas of his life. Aside from working two different jobs - with Mac Help and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image - he is in the middle of a Masters degree in Multimedia at Swinburne University and has just finished a month-long stint working as producer/editor at ABC's DIG Internet Radio. Then, of course, there are his other band projects, experimental duo ii and improv quartet Fibonache.

But considering Tjhia has such a multitude of projects in full swing - breaching all manner of styles and approaches - where does Scissors sit in the scheme of things? Indeed, with it's manically diverse aesthetics and vast hotchpotch of musicians and instruments, is Scissors For Sparrow even viable as a long-term band project?

Tjhia thinks so, but is conscious of the potential need for compromise. 'It's that terrible choice that has to be made between being diverse and being cohesive, he posits. 'It's really hard to think, "Well, can I make a snazzy little pop record, or will I chuck in some of that other stuff?". I'd like to think that we could do more than one thing. It's a shame to see bands who only do rock, or can only rock out ... It's really important to have more than one thing in your imagination - they inform each other. You can try an idea out in a soft way and it might sound shit for the whole song, but it might have sounded really good for these two bars here or something.

'I love doing textural and more ambient stuff,' he continues. 'I guess that stuff's really important to



Gig photographs by Dan Conway

me, but maybe it just needs to be split into different records. It's really hard to play those sorts of things live, because they require more technique. When I pulled together a live band I wanted to start writing songs that - like blocky pop tunes - anyone, almost, can play; so that people who are really dumb at guitar and shit at keyboard, you know, you could write numbers on the keys and they could play them in time and it would be fairly easy. And that was partly because I thought maybe I'd like to travel some day, and it'd be nice to be able to have easy songs to teach people who really don't know much?

That's not to say that Tjhia and his flock of sparrows will settle for mediocrity - far from it. With their debut longplayer in its early stages, and solid label interest from Feral Media, Tjhia and his group are aiming high. 'One of the things we started off saying ages ago was that we weren't going to play crappy shows,' he explains. 'We weren't just going to play around the traps and do tiny shows that nobody comes to, in hopes of paying the right dues and all of that. I think that we want to do really tight, good shows, and we want to do them to people. It doesn't mean we're trying to queue-jump or

anything, but I think that if you put a show together in the right way, you don't have to have any big names. It's a matter of explaining things to people properly. 'We don't want it to be a chore,' he continues. 'Like, it's not, it's fun, and hey, maybe we do want to queue-jump and maybe we're just fucking snobs, but fuck, I'm not going to play at a pub full of old men. Like, what's the point? You'll just wear yourselves out and you won't get excited about playing anymore. We'd like to get some international supports that would let us go on tour, he pauses, glancing towards his cluttered studio. 'None of my stuff is great yet, but I want it to be?

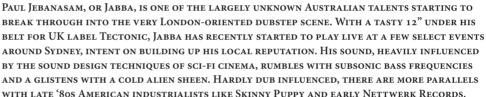
#### POSTSCRIPT:

Tragically, in the time between the story being written and the magazine going to print, Scissors For Sparrow band member Daniel McCluskey passed away. His band-mates pay him this tribute:

'He was the most sincere, humble, funny and perceptive friend, a rare confidant and collaborator. Daniel McCluskey left us on January 20, aged 24. It breaks our hearts: we love him?

Moving Ninja Interview with Paul Jebanasam by Sebastian Chan

### SILENT STEPPA



Like most microscenes in Sydney, it is through the work of a few largely unheralded people that particular musical styles take root and grow. In the early years of the millennium a crew called Garage Pressure started putting on one-off nights and spinning in the back rooms of larger clubs and events. Although beginning playing UK garage they quickly moved into the early precursors to the current dubstep sound, eventually hosting live sets from seminal UK producers Zed Bias, Kode9 and Oris Jay. More importantly though, they were determined to push their sounds to as broad an audience as possible, happily taking up residencies at superclub Home as well as small underground events. It was through Garage Pressure that Jabba started producing. He explains, 'It would have been around three years ago now but it's hard to say really. [Back then] it was more just dark 2-step garage for a long time but without any vocals; just beats and bass lines. Around that time I was introduced to Paul and Fari from Garage Pressure through a mutual friend and started hearing a lot of tracks coming out

of South London that were similar to what I was doing, but more dub oriented. People like El-B, Zed Bias and Hatcha were really inspirational and were pushing a sound I had never heard anywhere else. One of the great things about linking up with Garage Pressure was they were already in touch with a lot of the main producers and labels behind the scene. I was lucky enough to hear tunes that probably weren't going to be released for at least a year and some never. The early Garage Pressure parties were Sydney's answer to [founding London monthly dubstep night] Forward and it was really the only place that you could hear this sound. Farj was producing as well so we worked on a lot of stuff together that could be played at these nights. We'd be in the studio finishing off a track then an hour later, it'd be playing in the club off CDR. For me, the parties were important both to have an outlet and also for people to hear music by a whole community of unreleased artists that was pretty different from the stock breakbeat that was coming out at the time.





'NOWADAYS THOUGH, THE SYDNEY DUBSTEP SCENE IS A STRANGE ONE, I THINK MORE PEOPLE IN THE UK KNOW ABOUT IT THAN PEOPLE HERE.'

'Nowadays though, the Sydney dubstep scene is a strange one, I think more people in the UK know about it than people here to be honest. It definitely has grown though from when (UK producer) Kode 9 played to an almost empty room a few years back. Kode's sets were so skunked out back then, all the stuff out on Tempa [Records] by people like Horsepower and Hatcha went down a lot better at Frigid than at the Garage Pressure night. I think then it was the strong dub influence in a lot of the tracks that helped it crossover, but now the stuff by Vex'd, Pinch and Boxcutter is something all together different. It's easily as heavy as drum'n'bass in its engineering, but the slower tempo means that there is enough space to really explore some interesting sounds. All of those artists have stuff out or coming out on Planet Mu which is great, as its means the sound is really starting to spread further than a lot of people thought it could. It's now not as rare to see "dubstep" on a flyer once in a while and the nights seems to have a regular following. Grime hasn't really had much movement though, its an MC-led thing in my opinion, and without them, it's just not grime . Recently the big contribution to the scene locally has come from Scott (Kodama) and

Eli of Southern Steppa fame and the nights they've been putting on for a while now. It seems as though a whole stack of new people are being introduced to the sound with a really good response even when it has been pure dubstep; tunes that aren't really being played anywhere other than the London's seminal Forward and DMZ nights. Then there is the weekly radio show on FBi 94.5, that has been recently moved to 9pm on Fridays, which is really great. [Perhaps as a result] there is a lot of stuff that's being written now that is really going off on different tangents so it's a perfect place to experiment a bit with the less dancefloor, more minimal sounding tracks?

Garage Pressure also set up a critical website (www. garagepressure.com) not only to promote their events but also to promote their productions and mixes. For Jabba, the hosting of a few tracks on the site ended up in their eventual release on vinyl. Dubstep is one of a few recent styles that has been driven internationally almost exclusively by internet promotion and online media - key websites, message boards and forums, blogs, P2P and streaming radio. Indeed the net has played a role similar to pirate radio in terms of spreading the sound, and in some way acts to 'amplify' the signal of the pirates. Jabba explains, 'The net has been super important, especially now that a lot more people are playing tracks off CDRs. Artists from all over can exchange their music and have their tracks played at events on the other side of the world even before the words "label" or "release" are mentioned. And in terms of my current vinyl releases the net also played a part in that all the tracks were originally hosted on the Garage Pressure website though they had also been circulating for a while on either dubplate or CD. The label that put out the last 12" (Tectonic) I've only spoken to on the phone a few times; it's been all email really. Contracts were sent back and forth and the tracks themselves were transferred via an FTP server. The net has had an impact on pirate radio as well, now that there are people who religiously record the radio streams and then host them on either their own site or a public file hosting sites like YouSendIt. Rinse FM, which operates out of London, is a perfect example of this and has become one of the main stages that a lot of dubstep artists present their music from, and now its starting to happen in other cities as well. People like Joe Nice in New York, DST in Budapest and Conspira in Portugal are now all regularly disseminating recorded sets to anyone with an internet connection [which has massively increased the effective broadcast 'range' of the pirate stations].'

Currently studying film and sound design at College of Fine Arts in Sydney, Jabba has been diversifying his studio work further away from the dancefloor. 'Sound for film offers a really different perspective when dealing with sound. Everything has a lot more gravity than you'd expect at first so even a scene that seems simple can have a huge amount of planning and thought behind it, especially if you're working with a director who has a very particular vision for what he or she wants. At the moment I'm working on the script for a film. Myself and the others involved decided from the very beginning that the music score would be written in unison with all the other initial ideas. That's turning out to be a really epic project which will hopefully involve parts played on a cello and violin alongside some pretty complicated sound designs compared to the work I've done previously. It's offering a whole new way of looking at sound, so I'm just really glad to be involved in it and can't wait to get in the studio with people from a more classically-trained musical background to record the score?

Dubstep, like jungle and drum'n'bass before it, and dub before that, has been a studio culture: producers creating alchemical combinations of sound and rhythm impossible with 'live' musicians, productions that are in turn 'performed' to an audience by the figure of the DJ.

Studio musics have been notoriously difficult to move to a live setting with 'live PAs' being rare events, even rarer are those that end up being more than the producer simply DJing their own tracks end to end. In the last five years though, a lot of development in computer software and hardware has focussed on creating new interfaces for these 'studio' musicians to take their work to a live setting whilst retaining the flexibility of a studio environment. Jabba continues, 'Putting together a live performance has been the real focus recently. I've had to think a bit differently about how the tracks are written. If you stay in [the studio] headspace for too long it's a bit hard to get out of it. With things like automation, it's really easy to do mixdowns of parts that are impossible to pull off live and it ends up being a trade-off between complexity and interactivity during the first few goes at it. For me the process that's involved in trying to section off different parts of a track is similar to the way [computer] code is grouped into functions.

That way you can keep certain parts arranged as tight as you want and others are left open to interactive manipulation . I've been trying to explore [the use of Ableton Live] outside of just sound and synth design so hopefully that'll be up to speed enough to start testing it out soon, [and compositionally] things have opened

up a bit more [on the DJ front], so you can really just do produce what want and DJs will find a way to play it.

I recently finished a track that was in 6/4 that dropped with no intro, and one DJ just faded out the previous track and pressed play on mine to drop it in his set. I was pretty chuffed with that. Dubstep, with its stop/start polyrhythms is a notoriously difficult genre to beat mix though, so I can imagine a lot of DJs who are still learning wouldn't mind having some kind of reference point at the start of a track to help them out.

'The current tracks I've been working on aren't really 12" material and I'm liking that at the moment. I'm writing them as if I'm going to be playing them live rather than them being played by anyone else, though I'll still send mixes over to a few DJs for feedback once in a while . And the possibility of putting something out independently is actually becoming a lot more real feasible now, which gives me more options to do my own thing. I'd like to head to the UK when I've finished studying. That way it can be a bit more of an openended trip but there's a bit more preparation required for something like that. It would be awesome to play at a night like [Brixton's] DMZ night. The sound system alone there is legendary and it's those kinds of artists who are really paving the way forward at the moment

and taking the sound in all different directions. Given the way people are going to look back on those nights though, it's still exciting enough just to have a track played there [from a 12"].'





CA037 WINDUPTOYS 'DOUBLE EXPOSURE' Their debut album featuring 'Switch On' and 'Dub On Mars'.



CA036 VARIOUS ARTISTS 'N VERSION: DUB SELECTIONS' Featuring Dsico - 'Over and Over Dub' and Koshowko - 'Promise'.



#### Fally Pas

### Interview with Tim Shiel by Matthew Levinson OOPS I DID IT AGAIN

'I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I WOULDN'T LOVE TO SEE MY MUSIC ANALYSED. SCRUTINISED AND PUT INTO SOME KIND OF CONTEXT BY THE REALLY INTELLECTUAL MUSIC BLOGGERS" SAYS TIM SHIEL, 'ATHOUGH I SUSPECT I MIGHT BE DISAPPOINTED ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT.

Shiel is in an internet cafe in Salzburg his wife is away on a Sound of Music tour and we are continuing an email dialogue that has been running for months as the couple do the around-the-world circuit.

He employed the name Faux Pas at first for DJing purposes 'No beat mixing, no effects, no nothing, as if I was doing a radio show (which I used to do)' down at the Espy Public Bar in St Kilda on Monday nights. Those sessions were soon followed by the self-released debut EP Faux Feels> in late 2006, and the Entropy Begins At Home> album in January this year that Shiel describes as 'sample-based' music similar to 'Caribou, Minotaur Shock or even Mountains in the Sky'. A week later he got on a plane, leaving Wally de Backer from Gotye to field calls from eager music journalists (the album was playlisted on Triple J, US college radio, and most Australian community stations).

'I listen to so much music and I even make it myself. but I don't feel particularly articulate about it. I'm jealous of the way some bloggers and music critics can so artfully put music into historical or political context, and I feel like as a supposed 'artist' I should be able to have the same level of insight. Arguably I should be even more connected to what I'm doing, more aware of the levels on which it operates or on the context that it depends on, but the fact is I tend to just slam music together almost by accident until I like the way it sounds

'I think comments like 'waiting for baile funk to blow over' [his myspace site is emblazoned with the quote] come out of being frustrated about that, but it probably has something to do with me not being particularly interested in some of the most recent hipster obsessions like grime, baile funk, Baltimore, micro-house, or whatever. I just can't get into a lot of that stuff.'

The buzz created by influential blogs and online magazines, and their huge influence over hipster

audiences everywhere, seems to be making for a more, rather than less, homogeneous international music experience. 'I guess what makes hip circles 'hip' is everyone agrees on what's cool and what isn't, or that at least while there is enough variation in a given hipster population to give the impression of diversity.

'I don't like the idea that obscure music is good because it is obscure. I like discovering new music and I am always looking for things that interest me in ways that I might not have thought of before, but I am definitely not one of these people who thinks that any



when they hear that, but I just see it as another way of adding texture to a mix. If I really like a sample then I am probably going to use it even if the sound quality is poor.

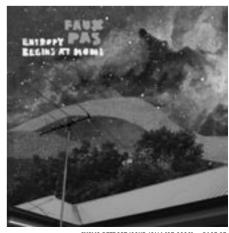
'I don't fetishise sound quality. I appreciate good sound, but I put my music together at home using a computer, a combined sound card and keyboard that cost under \$500, and a pair of speakers that my uncle made himself in the `80s. I don't fetishise lo-fi either, I just get the job done with whatever gear I can afford, which really isn't much.'

#### `WHEN I AM PUTTING TRACKS TOGETHER I'M NOT REALLY THINKING ABOUT AN END RESULT, AND IN PARTICULAR I'M NOT TRYING TO ILLICIT A PARTICULAR FMOTIONAL RESPONSE FROM SOMEONE!

band that more than five other people might have heard of is instantly shit. I wonder if some people listen to obscure or inaccessible music just to be difficult.

'It's a matter of scale though, I suppose, because a lot of my friends would probably categorise me as the person who only listens to weird, obscure shit, and instantly dismisses all popular music, when really I don't think that I am,' he says. `But I still don't like Wolfmother.'

Sound quality is shaping up as a big question mark around the internet only a decade old, at least in mainstream terms the web's instant delivery is changing the way we look at music, taking us further and further away from the hi-fi dreams of the `70s. Shiel is ambivalent: 'Most of my samples come from MP3s I have downloaded, so the source quality varies wildly. Audiophile types always roll their eyes and gasp



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## I WOULD ABSOLUTELY LOVE TO BE IN A REAL BAND. I WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY PATHETIC AND I MAY NOT LAST VERY LONG, BUT I WOULD LOVE TO DO IT.'

His cut-and-paste antecedents, say, the Avalanches, DJ Krush, Coldcut, and Shiel's friend Gotye, invariably dwell on the darker, melancholy end of the aesthetic range, but Faux Pas seems much more optimistic. 'If anything I probably swing further the other way,' Shiel says. 'When I am putting tracks together I'm not really thinking about an end result, and in particular I'm not trying to illicit a particular emotional response from someone. I don't go into a track thinking 'Let's make one about loneliness' or 'I want to make a song that makes people feel contemplative'.

'I don't listen to much downbeat or melancholic music, if any, because I don't really have any use for it. So I guess my stuff is going to end up sounding upbeat and optimistic, because that's the kind of music I listen to and enjoy. I'm also obsessed with rhythm and percussion at the moment, so it's hard to make percussive music that isn't by definition upbeat, or it's hard for me anyway ... Just don't call me a happy person, I'm complex, and brooding!'

Although Shiel has had no formal training in music, he did grow up with

computers. He swears he is not a PC geek, but it does seem to come quite easily, especially when you consider the leap in technical aspects of his production over the relatively short time between last year's EP and this year's album.

'I got into grunge when a lot of my friends did in high school,' he says. 'I learnt how to play guitar by getting a friend to teach me the chords to Nirvana songs. A few years later I completely disowned all of the music I'd been listening to in high school, I burnt Eddie Vedder's effigy and made voodoo dolls for each of the members of Soundgarden.

'I would absolutely love to be in a real band. I would be absolutely pathetic and I may not last very long, but I would love to do it. Playing live music is something that I fantasise a lot about, having never really done it before. I'd love to play drums, even though I am obscenely uncoordinated. And I would love to work together with other people to create something. I haven't been at this particularly long, but I'm getting very tired of working alone.'





Bob Baker Fish explores the 2006 Now Now Festival

## YOUR TIME STARTS NOW

'IT'S ABOUT NOW AND THE FACT THAT NOW IS ONLY GOING TO HAPPEN ONCE, AND IT'S IRREPLACEABLE AND IRRECOVERABLE. OF COURSE THERE'LL BE ANOTHER NOW ALONG SHORTLY, BUT IT WON'T BE THE SAME NOW. IT WON'T BE THIS NOW: THE NOW NOW. THERE IS NO OTHER ACTIVITY THAT IS AS WELL EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH THE RECOGNITION THAT THE PRESENT IS ABSOLUTELY UNIOUE AS PLAYING IS. **DEREK BAILEY, 1930-2005** 



This famous quote appears on the Now Now website and is something of an underlying modus operandi for this annual Sydney festival, a celebration of spontaneous and experimental music. In unfortunate timing, the man who wrote these words and in doing so provided the name for this festival, and over the last 40-odd years had given so much to the exploration and understanding of improvised music, passed away a couple of months before.

This year's festival was cast in the shadow of the great man's death. Though there was little ceremony, an acknowledgement on opening night, and then the music flowed out, unpredictable, frightening, seductive, challenging and frenzied over the following three. There were seven sets each night, encompassing numerous techniques and approaches, drawing upon diverse genres and palettes from participants from around Australia and across the world. It was music that celebrated the now - strange couplings of performers courtesy of organisers Clare Cooper, Clayton Thomas, Jim Denley and Dale Gorfinkel - and an opportunity for artists to be pushed outside their comfort zones, to be challenged by new approaches, to take on unfamiliar roles, to reach instinctively within their technique, to

find something new, something for now.

'Clayton workshops the program for nine months,' offers an exhausted Clare Cooper the day after the festival. 'He'll start with a list of groups that he thinks will be great. And then will send it to me and I'll throw some ideas in.'

There's actually a degree of perversity in the design, with the duo often forcing performers into uncomfortable realms, where they have to move beyond what they have become accustomed to, and hopefully find something new and unexpected. Otherwise it's also Cooper and Thomas, the music fans themselves thinking up dream combinations of artists they believe will complement each other.

'I think with most of the groups in the festival we try to program things that haven't happened before,' she continues. 'Most of the groups it's the first time they've played together and we find you can generally tell in the audience if a group is trying to find their way when on stage.'

And unlike most musical forms, which are more about flourish and polish, presenting a finely honed ensemble, improvised music is as much about floundering as it is about meshing. In fact, listening to artists from disparate worlds attempts to find equal ground can often be more rewarding than a group that hits it off



immediately. And, in this sense, a rehearsal can be a negative for the experience.

This is a point taken up by Melbourne sound artist Phil Samartzis, who performed in an eight-speaker surround sound ensemble with the likes of Joel Stern, Anthony Magen, Lawrence English, Camilla Hannan, Inge Olmheim and Matt Earle. Hidden amongst the audience, each performer had one speaker on which they interacted with the others, much was to be gained by wandering around, and changing perspectives with the sounds, hearing frogs, water, static, high pitches, and birds all come and go from earshot.

'I have great confidence that any musician I perform with knows what they are doing and I am happy to follow their lead,' offers Samartzis. 'I really dislike rehearsal as it negatively affects the way musicians approach improvised performance. The searching and questioning that occurs in an improvised exchange is replaced by the anticipation of events that have been predetermined in the rehearsal. One is active and the other is reactive. Also all the rough edges and awkward moments are of particular interest to me as a listener.'

This particular performance, however, seemed to have few moments of searching and questioning, as many of the performers, who all worked with field recordings of natural and constructed environment, seemed to be very much in their own world, concentrating on their own space. Much like the real world. In fact, thanks to their disparate positioning, it was likely that many of the performers never even heard some of those they were playing with. It did, however, transfer the onus of the interaction to the usually passive listener, providing them with the opportunity to affect their own mix of the performance by moving around the space.

'I'm not sure what it sounded like to the audience but I couldn't hear anything except me, really, as I was sitting on top the speaker,' reflects Melbourne sound artist Anthony Magen. 'It would have been great if the audience wandered around a bit or were right in the middle getting bits and pieces of sound like in a pseudo real world. It fucked with the organised performer audience concept a little too, which I like. I mean, one person asked me to move out of the way at one point not PAGE 28 **CYCLIC DEFROST ISSUE 13 107.20061** 

realising what was happening! It's a good concept that could be refined, I thought, to be quite an interesting architectural performance.'

"The field recording ensemble I felt conveyed a strong sense of spatial relations and natural language,' adds Lawrence English. 'I felt that piece worked well because people had space to let their sounds evolve and there was a common interest in listening, responding and chance interaction.'

It was a performance in which many of the performers had never even met each other prior, a theme that continued to play out over the entirety of the festival. Melbourne contrabass and electronics performer Natasha Anderson and Sydney's voice-based artist Amanda Stewart would have been in this situation had they not opted to meet up the day before to acquaint themselves with each other.

'Well, I'm an uptight, tooth-grinding classical musician really, so yes, I like to rehearse,' offers the Berlin-based Anderson. 'But not necessarily make a game plan, as often you do this and then, from the very first sound, it has to be thrown out, or else suffer a completely constipated horrible 30 minutes in your life. But I do like to play with the other people prior to the gig, to have an idea of how your language interacts with theirs, and also to talk about form and means of formal development, even if you don't actually fix this in a game plan.'

Though they weren't to know this beforehand, they discovered that they shared similar interests and concerns, not least the desire to possess a well-developed understanding of the approaches and ideas of the person they collaborate with.

'When I am working with other improvisers I see our music, first and foremost as a collective act where all the people involved should have equal input into the collaborative process,' adds Stewart. 'I tend to feel very uncomfortable if this does not occur. The first thing, for me, is to try to hear and conceptually appreciate the unique qualities of the people I am working with through listening, thinking, talking and, sometimes, reading.'

Anderson is very clear and somewhat rigorous about her approach when playing with other musicians and

'I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE TO THE AUDIENCE BUT I COULDN'T HEAR ANYTHING EXCEPT ME, REALLY, AS I WAS SITTING ON TOP THE SPEAKER.'

this rigour comes across in her performances. I have consciously worked on developing a bank of gestures and sounds, and means of electronic processing that reflect my interest in a language of playing and performing that originates in my training as a classical musician, but which goes much further into ideas of a kind of framing of sound production in performance,' she offers. I have tried to create a language that shifts quickly between dialectic extremes of frequency and dynamics, the digital and the bodily, and the processed and the instrumental so that often, hopefully, the provenance of sounds becomes unpredictable and confused.'

'This language then becomes the basis for interaction with other players. Of course whether this is "improvising" is highly debatable, but also a question that I'm not that interested in. I wouldn't particularly claim for myself the title of "improviser".'

Their performance on the night was jaw dropping. With Stewart using her voice and Anderson on her amazing contrabass recorder and electronics, it began quite frenzied, exploding into a series of spasmodic squeaks and vocal growls squawks and flourishes. As they continued they went from two separate entities, into one unique organism, as, without utilising any perceptible rhythm, they began finishing each others sentences and morphing sonically together to the point where you couldn't tell where one ended and the other





began. It felt like we were watching some kind of high pitched chemical reaction. 'Well, that's the benchmark,' said Rod Cooper beside me as he stood up to applaud.

'Natasha and Amanda, I feel like it's still stinging my brain,' says Clare Cooper. 'I was saying that to Natasha yesterday. She came up to me and was saying improvisation is so hard. I think you can hear that in that set that there is this difficulty, but also everything they shot out was so sharp and the timing was incredible. They were inhabiting very similar sound worlds - they were like these shards of glass. I hadn't heard Natasha on electronics before and I really enjoyed that.'

'When we did our gig we played totally differently from the way we had the day before,' reflects Stewart. 'In both instances, we worked with no specific predetermined strategies (except for our conversations and agreement on an approximate duration). What emerged was constantly surprising for both of us.'

'When I first worked with Natasha, I saw that she was using these wonderful ideas of working inside and outside her instrument [placing mics in different spaces] and moving between different electro-acoustic and electronic environments [through the additional use of her computer],' she continues. 'It was as if space itself was being stripped away by sound and vice versa. I loved what she was doing and this inspired me. So when we came to play together at the Now Now, I found myself

suddenly making lots of short, abrupt gestures so that this spatial aspect was highlighted. We also explored areas of convergence, so that the listening fields kept shifting. It seemed to me that Natasha had created a new instrument or series of interlinked instruments and it was fascinating to engage with her. It took me to places I hadn't been before. We plan to do more together in the

Anderson also played in one of the more unique ensembles at the festival, eschewing her contrabass and electronics for 'This is not an exhaust pipe', a Rod Cooper-constructed instrument that extends the length of a recorder mouth piece to over two metres to create a deeper, breathier tone. It was part of Rod Cooper's otherworldly music ensemble, a surreal collection of instruments crafted by him and performed by some of the best improvisers in the country. Cooper is a renowned Melbourne musician/ sculptor/composer who constructs his own instruments and regularly performs in subterranean locations around Melbourne. His debut 2005 release on Room40 Friction features many of his self constructed instruments and is an amazing collection of textures and drones, which uses silence and space as a compositional device.

His personnel were as follows: Rory Brown on prepared double bass, in which Cooper assisted with the preparations that work on weight gravity and altered string tensions. He plays it lying down with a unique

amplification set up that highlights really deep tones and shimmering high tones that he pulls out of the metal. Mark Harwood on Mark 2, a Cooper-constructed instrument that is based on thumb pianos, except the percussion are round stainless-steel rods welded to a hollow, stainless-steel sound chamber. Dave Brown on the Mongrel, an industrial lap-steel with three thick piano wires strung across a hollow metal girder. Dale Gorfinkle on micro tonal vibes, a vibraphone he built himself, adding extra bars and using motors which activate the tuned bars, bowing the bars and dampening them with soft objects. Then there's Cooper himself on the Highly Resonant Object. It looks like an industrial strength BBQ with spikes, but it was actually built based on his own body measurements.

'There is a manhole over a bridge in Melbourne, which has the smallest opening,' says Cooper. 'It just fits through. I was doing a lot more urban exploration back then. The HRO is about eight years old and I'm only just learning how to play it. It's my largest portable construction, though I can't take it on a plane. It's a beast. I wanted an instrument that incorporated many sounds into the one complex interface. It's ideal for improv. I have produced countless objects in my life, sculptures, furniture, buildings and paintings. The HRO is something I mark my existence against.' The ensemble opened proceedings on the Saturday night. Whilst the music was surreal, it had links to

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the previous few days but somehow it was also like nothing else. The strange-looking instruments offered a real performative aspect; no one could be sure what was going to happen. Everyone was watching Cooper, yet he was intently watching Brown on the Mongrel, standing almost at attention giving nothing away. Of Brown, Cooper is especially reverential. 'He was a bridge between all of us. Some musicians have that instinct to allow enough space in a complex arrangement, which only comes from years of improvising.

The music was subtle, brooding, and metallic. And Cooper just stood there with his aggressive-looking BBQ producing highly resonant metallic sounds, Natasha Anderson blowing her strange thing that is apparently not an exhaust pipe actually walked off midway, overcome by plastic fumes from the instrument she had only been introduced to two weeks earlier, Brown kept going, and the audience, not unlike the performers, were filled with the confusion and uncertainty about when the set had ended, thanks to Cooper inadvertently putting one of his instruments down on the keyboard behind him, leaving a warm steady tone to continue once the performers seemed to have ceased. It was strange chaotic bliss and one of the highlights of the festival.

'That was amazing because everyone was trying to figure out who was playing and because it was Rod Cooper's ensemble everyone was looking for him to give the signal but it was like he was being reverent or something,' remembers Clare Cooper. 'He was so serious. He was so focused, just staring at his instrument and everyone thought that he was doing it. It was great. Everyone's looking around, Dale folded his arms, and Natasha got up.'

'That was one of the sets that showed some of the problems in improvising but also some of the things that are quite unique,' Clare Cooper continues. 'If there was a composition there for that whole piece and it finished on a very neat stroke of a bow and everyone clapped, it may not have worked so well. I think it really set the tone for the night. No one expected it; no one knew what the hell it was. It just turned up and took over the whole room. If people hadn't applauded it could have gone on for ever.

'Rod's one of the characters. Imagine going to Elvis Costello's Sydney gigs supported by the Rod Cooper ensemble instead of playing with the Sydney symphony. How much better would that have been?'

Another ensemble that defied expectations and challenged the notion of what improvisation could encompass was the Splinter Orchestra, a Sydneybased collection of musicians that numbers 20 performers. They are made up of some of Sydney's best improvisers including Clare Cooper, Jim Denley, and Chris Abrahams. On the last performance on the Friday night, they expanded their ranks by a further 35 introducing the likes of Tony Buck, Lawrence English, Jeff Henderson and Anthea Caddy into the fold. So 55 musicians were seated in the centre of the Petersham RSL at Newtown, around an omni directional microphone, leaving barely enough room for the audience to surround them. Spearheaded by Clayton Thomas, the group was arranged into various sections or sub-groups. Before the performance Clare Cooper could be heard marshalling the troops. 'Who's section C?' she asked. The audience braced themselves for chaos, yet every time they played it was apparently different, working off a new set of directions. Despite the multiple instruments they managed to evolve slowly and subtly with incredible care and beauty, hardly the lumbering sonic beast you'd expect with so many cooks. This night's performance was entitled Stamen and worked from the inside out, the initial group of musicians beginning an improvisation and the outer group slowly picking up where they left off. It



was a composition that only dictated where the sound started and where it moved to, nothing more.

The idea was that the audience surrounded them and felt the music moving towards them.' explains Cooper, who played her distinctive Chinese harp in the ensemble. 'But you weren't to vary. The group that started was electric bass. trumpet, synthesizer, and laptop, and the group outside was Chinese harp, laptop, to Saxe's cello, and singing saw, and we had to somehow keep going what the first group had going. It wasn't supposed to feel like it was happening in stages.'

In an interesting mixture of improvisational approaches, the core group of 20 had been working on the piece for a few weeks, cramped in Cooper's Newtown lounge room, whilst the additional 35 played it for the first time that night. Whilst a large improvisational group is not new, it is for Sydney and presents its own challenges for artists who may be more adept at improvising with smaller numbers.

'It's hard to listen to more than two people at a time when you're improvising and playing, suggests Cooper.



#### **Bob Baker Fish goes SOUNDWALKING** with Anthony Magen

We're standing in front of Petersham RSL at Newtown. It is 1am on a balmy Friday morning in summer. All the performances at the Now Now Festival have finished for the night but a group of about eight of us assemble on the footpath and wait.

'When was the last time you went somewhere just to hear the sounds?' asks Melbourne-based sound artist Anthony Magen. The sound walk is a simple exercise. It is free! It requires no additional paraphernalia other than your ears and some walking shoes. There is only one rule: no communication within the group. Talking or otherwise. This helps to allow the sounds to become the focus. Magen is the facilitator of our sound walk. A chance to walk through the streets of Sydney and experience the diverse sounds it has to offer.

'The group is one unit, he says, and it is best to stick together through visual contact, especially at night as it can be easy to get lost or separated from the group. Whether experienced as private meditation or as collective silence, soundwalks can refresh your ears and reset your sensual awareness to where you are, live or work. As the facilitator of the walk I do reconnaissance before the walk, to determine the route to follow and it will take roughly one hour to complete.' He then proceeds to tell us about World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, an international association of individuals who share a common concern with the state of the world's soundscapes. And then we walked.

There is something incredibly strange and empowering about walking in silence with a group of people, many of whom are strangers, for an hour. Once communication had been removed we were free to tune in our ears on that which we normally block out. As we walked through the abandoned streets it felt like the sounds had been prepared specifically for us. Our collective footfalls; a woman screaming to her husband as she puts her rubbish out, only to stop dead in her tracks as the eight of us silently pass; the whoosh of a bat's wings; possums; crickets; far-away cars; even some bogans cranking out some metal on their car stereos in the parking lot; all felt like they had been placed there specifically for our benefit.

'Sonically there were some fascinating moments, and serendipity is one of the joys of soundwalks,' offers Magen in retrospect, 'when you forfeit control (or the desire to control) to just be present in the moment. Stuff just happens. As the facilitator I can't make things happen, all I can do is guide them along and hope something interesting is going on.'

At one point we walked down a deserted suburban street. On the nature strip sat a large box. Attached, a small handwritten note: 'Free Macintosh Computer'. One by one we all looked in the box. It was empty.

'I don't know if I should say this,' continues Magen, 'but I took a wrong turn at one point and we had been walking about 10 minutes and we're due to have a respite moment. A park with a big old fence appeared and I thought that the size of the trees compared to the surrounding architecture was interesting. It wasn't my plan but I thought we needed to have the first notmoving-but-listening experience, which, from experience, is the most profound (as it brings every sound into clear

Fruit bats, possums, the distant din of traffic were all audible, then these frogs (most likely white-striped marsh frogs) piped up - one in a stormwater drain and the other behind a wall in a pond. They were chatting away, invisible to see but echoing each other in a very beautiful way, creating a frog room stereo field that was good to listen to from a distance or standing in between them. It is a moment when I wished I had binaural recorder going.

'I remember the highlight being those amazing frogs chirping in indeterminate rhythms from beneath the road,' reflects Joel Stern, who programmed the film component of Now Now and was also on the walk. Transfixed by the beauty of the sounds, the two of us held back when the others had moved on, almost unwilling to let go of this incredible sound. Yet when we finally relented, within minutes we were amazed by the next sounds, these semi-industrial buildings that possessed amazing drones and rhythms.

Magen reflects: 'Just the change in sound fields that were constantly shifting I found really beautiful on this occasion; perhaps emphasised by the clean night air and the lack of urban hum that exists during the day. The top of Sydney Park also contrasted so much with the earlier dense suburban streets of St Peters and Newtown, sounds coming from every direction and from variety of distance.'

After an hour of aural feeding it was over. It felt too short. We could have easily walked for hours, devouring the sonic landscape. We all felt a wave of gratitude for Magen for sharing such an amazing experience with us, and also with each other. 'What he is doing is very special,' offers Rod Cooper, who first introduced me to Magen earlier in the night. 'The sound walk is an ancient idea. How powerful is it to walk as a silent group through the urban environment and soak up its sonic offerings? I'm glad he introduced to me the quiet places of Sydney.'

I like sharing the walks with others,' offers Magen. 'To me it's natural. I do them all the time alone so it is fun to share. It is easy to dismiss such a simple act but those that say that to me "I do them all the time" are the ones who generally will get the most out of it. Because focusing on listening and concentrating - it takes some practise. We are good at blocking out sounds and tuning out, but listening can actually be hard too sometimes.'



'You hear everything but to actually focus on sounds my brain can't focus on more than two or three events at one. So when you've got 55 people contributing to a piece and everyone's supposed to be sensitive to every sound, it's pretty difficult. We do these exercises [called] Nemesis: you pick an enemy in the room and you just know that you're not allowed to play when they play; and experiments to make you listen in different ways. I think most of the time its spending time as a large group trying to figure out ways to listen to ourselves differently.'

In a strange twist of fate entirely consistent with the festival's approach Cooper found herself the victim of the perverse sense of humour that characterised some of the programming decisions. Billed to appear alongside percussionist Tony Buck (The Necks) and percussionist Sean Baxter (Bucketrider), it appeared that with just her Chinese harp for protection she would be crushed in an avalanche of percussive testosterone.

'You can't fight testosterone,' she laughs. 'I don't have enough. I guess I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I thought about that set before we played so much and really was thinking I could jump in there with a whole heap of stuff. Tony [Buck] said "How's anyone going to hear you?" and I said "I'm friends with the sound guy I could just turn you down". I gave them a few tastes. You get a few improvised music sets where you can hear people competing with each other. Sometimes that can be good, in some ways it's almost like a sport, but a lot of the time if you hear people trying to one up each other with ideas it ends up being a bit ... I think also having four nights in a row with seven sets every night - what happens before you, before you even get on, the set before you has such an influence on what you do in the next one so you can't really plan your attack.

'They were joking with me about the whole drum sandwich thing and how they'd try not to get over excited,' she continues. 'I felt a little bit worried, but we didn't talk in terms of what we were going to do. I think they were just getting me worked up; thinking that they were just going to drown me out with a beat-off and I told them they can beat off at home. What ended up happening was quite unexpected for me. We know each

other's playing, all three of us have seen each other in very different circumstances and all three expressed we were excited about the group.'

And the anticipation was shared by the audience, though it didn't turn out to be as violent as may have been expected. It turns out that Cooper's textural scrapings on her guzheng were much more gnarly and frightening than anything the two

boys could conjure up. There was much rickety plonking scraping and banging, as the three circled each other, Buck shimmered his bells and Baxter up-ended a trail of sticks over his kit. Cooper then began some repetitive plucking which afforded Buck and Baxter to go to town, call-and-response style, that came off as a junk shop drum'n'bass. Later, Buck pressed his stick down firmly on the skin, stroking it to get a beautiful, warm, bottom-end sound.

Tve never played with two drummers before,' reflects Cooper. 'Quite a few people came up to me and said they were really glad they were put with this person because they were really scared about it and it made something happen that had never before. That's how I felt about this trio. In that way, it is just as exciting for musicians as it is for the audience.'

Yet these kinds of challenges are what makes the Now Now so great. The exchange of ideas and approaches,



# 'I FELT A LITTLE BIT WORRIED... THINKING THAT THEY WERE JUST GOING TO DROWN ME OUT WITH A BEAT-OFF AND I TOLD THEM THEY CAN BEAT OFF AT HOME.'

the failures as much as the successes all contributing to making the Now Now one of the most unique and important music festivals in Australia.

"There's definitely a blurred line, the people playing in the festival don't feel like they're putting on a show, they're here playing because they want to,' says Cooper. "They're excited about playing and collaborating. Jim Denley was saying it's like a special kind of conference. You get together and you workshop, it's like, "Okay, what's happening this year improvising music?" During the festival they spend their days playing with each other. The Melbourne/Sydney thing has broken down with this generation of artists. I think it's so important being so far away; if you live in Berlin, a different person comes through every day. Here, [when] someone comes out they'll try to play every city but often miss out on playing with local musicians. I think local musicians really make the most of each other.

'It's so weird that it's over again,' she continues wistfully. 'A guy came up to me and said " got a festival pass and it's like Christmas for me. I get four nights where I get to listen to the music that I've wanted to listen to all year". It's a bit like a Christmas for all of us too.'



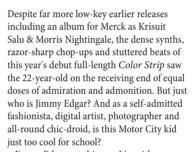
See www.thenownow.net for more info

Interview with Jimmy Edgar by Dan Rule

### SCENE NOT HERD

EVER SINCE SLICING ONTO THE BIG-TIME ELECTRO LANDSCAPE IN 2004 WITH TWIN EPS ACCESS RHYTHM AND BOUNCE, MAKE, MODEL, YOUNG DETROIT RESIDENT JIMMY EDGAR HAS BEEN THE SOURCE OF MUCH DEBATE, AND EVEN MORE RECORD LABEL HYPE. ACCORDING TO WHOM YOU TALKED TO. THE DUAL EPS - RELEASED THROUGH WARP RECORDS - REPRESENTED EITHER A FASCINATING TRIP INTO SCYTHING. REFERENCE-HEAVY TECHNO AND HIPHOP, OR A MERE EXERCISE IN OVER-HYPED, UNIMAGINATIVE PASTICHE.





Jimmy Edgar acts his age. It's neither an insult, nor a compliment; it's just the way it is. Talking over the phone from his Detroit apartment, he employs a deep, detached drawl; he name drops casually; he does his best to obscure an apparent yearning to impress. 'Yeah, I used to play with them when I was younger in Detroit,' he offers indifferently when asked of his teenage shows with native Detroit techno legends Jeff Mills, Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Carl Cox. 'I didn't even know who they were,' he laughs. 'I just played with them, like, "Oh cool". I was so young that I didn't really care, you know. They weren't my heroes at the time.'

His nonchalance can be forgiven. Edgar is young, and has received some heavy plaudits and label attention for a guy so young. Signed to Warp at just 19, he was championed by the underground press as a new leader of the Detroit electronic scene, his self-taught melodic and rhythmical nous, and strange, sex-soaked lyrical direction causing quite



a stir in both underground techno and hiphop circles. But Edgar sees himself as very much detached from any sense of scene or community in Detroit.' It's all kind of mysterious,' he says of his hometown. 'It's pretty separated - it's not like all the Detroit techno dudes are all hanging out at the bar, you know. So no one ever really sees anyone around.' I feel like I was never really part of any scene here in terms of music and stuff,' he explains. 'I don't think there ever really was one, I guess. The raves came around, but I don't really know much about scenes. I guess I never really paid attention, so I guess I could really only relate to the urban style of Detroit and the city and kind of what music came out of here. I mean, a lot of people have an idea of what Detroit is and what it stands for, and they're not necessarily the same thing, which is fine. I mean, I have ideas about what Sydney is like, for instance, and it's probably a lot farther than what it actually is.'

'I FEEL LIKE I WAS NEVER REALLY PART OF ANY SCENE HERE IN TERMS OF MUSIC AND STUFF.'

## 'ALL OF THE INSTRUMENTS WERE PLAYED BY HAND - WHETHER IT WAS CONTROLLERS OR WHATEVER IT WAS - SO IT WAS ALL SORT OF DONE BY A HUMAN, INSTEAD OF A MOUSE,' HE LAUGHS.

Edgar understands much of the city's character as stemming from its expansive suburban sprawl and bleak, decaying urban environments. 'I live sort of right off the red-light district, so I'm kind of in a little bit of the outskirts of Detroit,' he says. 'As far as the city goes, the whole place is kind of really spread out, so it's a little bit weird like that. In some ways Detroit doesn't really directly inspire me too much any more because I'm so kind of inside of it, but it is my environment so I respect that and I think it comes out in my music.'

Music was always a large part of Edgar's life. Growing up under the guidance of a single mother, he was introduced to techno and hiphop at the earliest of ages. 'She was very young when she had me, and you know, really into dance music,' he says. 'She definitely exposed me to hiphop and stuff, you know. She always had the radio on and stuff, so I heard tonnes of old R'n'B and techno and stuff like that.'

Despite his early taste for electronic music, the interest lay dormant throughout his teenage years as he experimented with playing numerous acoustic nstruments. 'I started out playing rhythm, so my background is all in that; playing drums and stuff like that. I did that for 15 years and that kind of led me into making electronic music. I played other instruments, not seriously, but just kind of figured them out and kind of had a mind for music from there.'

Edgar's history goes some way to explain the almost nostalgic early hiphop and techno sensibilities of *Color Strip*; an aesthetic he broaches with an almost innate ease, but an aesthetic for which he has been widely critiqued.

Indeed, while Edgar has managed to harness the washy synths and pronounced beats and basslines of an era past, many have written off his explorations as nothing more that of derivative pastiche. He has other ideas. 'I think it sounds kind of retro because it was just me on retro equipment,' he explains. 'I was just doing my style on dusty old equipment, so I think it just sort of came out that way. It wasn't really intentional, I guess ... I'm not just trying to recreate

the past. I made it mostly while on drugs, so it was kind of about just getting in a different zone and just letting things flow out. I just got sick of orking on computers and really wanted to give it more of a human touch. All of the instruments were played by hand - whether it was controllers or whatever it was - so it was all sort of done by a human, instead of a mouse, he laughs.

Color Strip resonates with human sensibilities, with Edgar creating a sound that's equally raw and precise. Wielding a lithe, razor-sharp sound, the record exhibits a full cache of stuttered beats and basslines, pulsing synths and chopped-up vocals. Tracks like 'Pret'a'porter' and 'I Wanna Be Your STD' burn with crystalline techno energy, while the wildly fractured R'n'B of 'My Beats' and 'LBLB Detroit"ooze sexuality from every bass-heavy pore. Nevertheless, perhaps the record's strongest sonic moment - 'Personal Information' - is it's most unoriginal. The track, with its blocky, segmented beats, handclaps and synthesised bass, feels like little more than a prickly throwback to early Madonna or Nina Cherry.

But this doesn't worry Edgar, who also sees his stylistic direction as an exploration of his own childhood. 'I mean, you've got to remember that I grew up on that stuff, so it's what comes naturally,' he offers. 'My mum was always listening to it when I was young, so it's more about going back to my roots. And I always heard music in my head - actually, this album - I always heard in my head even when I was younger. I remember lots of the parts from then, and it's just sort of flowed out this way. So it's almost like I kind of foretold it before it happened. That's why it's a very personal album and kind of important to me in that way.'

He does have a point. Rather than trying to stake a chic claim on the '80s - a decade he is barely old enough to remember - perhaps Edgar, in all innocence, is merely traversing the domestic musical experience presented to him as a kid. Indeed, maybe he's just acknowledging his mum's good taste. `I don't know man,' he pauses. `I guess so. It's kind of funny because I often wonder what it will be like





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#### 'I LIKE TO KEEP THE CREATIVITY FLOWING IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT THINGS, AND NOT JUST MUSIC. I LIKE TO JUST KEEP MY HANDS IN OTHER THINGS."

in the future when people listen to it, because the time will have already been past. It will be weird for somebody to go like, ``It sounds a bit '80s but it was made in early 2000s, so what the fuck?" I wonder if it will stand the test of time. I guess.'

It seems as though Edgar views his potential future success in the music world as fairly inconsequential. To put it simply - juggling fashion design, graphic design, photography and digital art - he has a lot on his plate. 'I'm concentrating on fashion design right now,' he says offhandedly. 'I actually spent all day today doing a fashion shoot. It was for ID magazine,' he urges. 'I like to keep the creativity flowing in lots of different

things, and not just music. I like to just keep my hands in other things. I treat my music like a graphic design and I treat my fashion design like I treat music. If I get inspiration I'll kind of seek one of those mediums in kind of creating that certain feeling I want.'

And as long as Edgar's still creating that 'certain feeling', it seems he'll be happy enough. 'You know, I've got tonnes of emails like, "Oh, your new album's fucking trash!" and then I've got people who are like, "Oh my God, I love it",' he pauses. 'As long as people either love or hate it, I'm fine with it. If people were just kind of mediocre with it then I'd be really upset.'





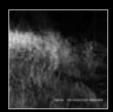
#### **Kerrier District Kerrier District 2**

Luke Vibert alias #1. The second album of his Metro Area inspired 'house' alias. Drawing on disco and '80s funk elements Vibert's take on house is guaranteed to be cheddar free.



#### **Amen Andrews** Amen Andrews Vs. Spac Hand Luke

Luke Vibert alias #2. The return of his jungle-tech-spaz-whathaveyou project. Breakbeats sped up to god knows what BPM, but still retaining that unique Vibert swing and sense of humour.



#### Triosk The Headlight Serenade

Sydney three piece's second album on renowned UK label Leaf. Their use of space and electronics has made made them globally recognised as one of the few genuinely innovative forces in jazz today.

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#### **Battles**

Interview with Battles by Jon Tjiah

### **BROOKLYN BATTLE BOYS**

'The man's voice echoed between the walls of my room. Aw, shit!' The first time I ever heard Battles, in 2004, I'll admit to being a little confused. After all, I had anticipated the moment for months: a fresh collaboration between a handful of respected musicians with cutting-edge instrumental approaches, drawn from the pool of American math-rock and metal.

Several months after I heard the Battles *Mixtape Sampler*, the band brought out their first releases-proper, entering the arena with both *Tras/Fantasy* and *EP C*, on Cold Sweat and Monitor respectively. Soon followed *BEP* on Dim Mak which, combined with *Tras/Fantasy* and *EP C*, would form their debut release on the infamous Warp label.

Comprising Ian Williams (Don Caballero, Storm + Stress), John Stanier (Helmet, Tomahawk, Mark of Cain), Dave Konopka (Lynx) and Tyondai Braxton (an accomplished avant-jazz multi-instrumentalist), Battles was eagerly awaited by trainspotting indie kids, metal heads, and experimental music fans alike. Even so, nobody could have calculated the groups sound from the sum of its parts. A blend of flitting guitar notes, twinkling melodies, ever-complicated loops and the lumbering muscle of Stanier's drumming, the band have already birthed a wholly distinctive sound.

The group formed in Brooklyn, New York, in 2003. Williams had moved there from Chicago fresh from the spectacular demise of Don Caballero, following a serious accident involving their tour van (bombastic drummer Damon Che has since reformed the band of his own accord). He began playing with Ty Braxton (son of legendary avant-garde woodwind player Anthony Braxton), after the latter repeatedly urged him to make a solo record. Thinking they needed something extra, Williams invited Konopka to join them for a show. Stanier's involvement came a little more by chance: 'I ran into Ian, and I was always a big

fan of Ian's work, so I just kind of agreed to check out what he was doing. And that was that. It pretty much completely happened out of nowhere.'

Battles members are typical of many musicians today, balancing time between various projects and locations. Stanier himself spent January of this year in Australia, playing shows as a member of seminal Adelaide band The Mark of Cain. 'The writing process is much different now after we've been a band for three years, and everyone knows each other's style,' he explains. 'We do a lot of writing at home, emailing each other little parts and stuff like that. All of us have, like, three other bands, so we're kind of bouncing ideas back and forth. We didn't really do that before. Before, we just sat in a dingy little basement in Brooklyn, sat there and wrote on real giant paper on the wall, and wrote down every particular little engineered part of a song. 'We're definitely not like a jammy kind of band,' he continues, 'so everything's pretty much pre-written. It's starting to change a little bit. Before it was very, very engineered from the inside out, but now we're more comfortable playing with each other, so it's definitely morphing a little more to just a typical way of writing songs.'

Williams has likewise hinted that, despite the central role of structure in Battles music (from which, he explains, improvisations hang), they are allowing themselves to branch out a little to keep older songs fresh. Those familiar with Ian Williams' guitar work in Don Caballero will remember his penchant for



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### IT'S PRETTY COOL, VERY CHAOTIC, AND WITH ZERO DIRECTIONS IT'S **VERY LOOSE.**'



growling, cyclic figures (around which Che would frenetically whack everything within reach).

It is these which come to the fore in Battles. Some patterns have demanded multiple outings to facilitate fuller exploration of their harmonic content so there are three different versions of `Tras'. For instance, 'Tras' is based around a series of muted power chords and brittle keyboard melodies, shuffling effortlessly through almost four minutes. 'Tras 2', on the other hand, is all swerving forwards-backwards guitar loops, grumbling polyrhythmic synth bass, tambourine shakes, and sparring guitar whimpers unrecognisable from its sibling as it peters into a lone 90 seconds of Stanier's drum pattern. One of the hallmarks of Battles is their ability to multi-task, with both Williams and Braxton turning out crushed-up melodies on both guitars and keyboards (occasionally simultaneously). While tracks like `B+T' trade on lightly overdriven looped harmonics and missed beats, 'Dance' employs squawking, stuttering keyboards on the back of Braxton's beatboxing. Beguiling guitar and keyboard loops shift in and out of time signatures, ably framed by Stanier's drumming.

It used to be even more complicated when the band started playing, they incorporated a small choir of girls. 'That was the very, very original idea from day one, to have that choir,' says Stanier. 'It sort of worked, until we realised ``Wow, that's a lot of people". It's pretty cool, very chaotic, and with zero directions it's very loose.' But while Stanier seems excited by the

'It sort of is an impossible thing to organise that in a constructive way and bring it on tour; it becomes like the Polyphonic Spree. It's hard enough to get everyone at the same time in the same room. For now, its just a

idea, he's well aware of its limitations.

local show and recording phenomenon.

Offstage, Battles have been busy preparing new material, as well as dabbling in other projects. 'I just played on the new Prefuse 73 record,' says Stanier, and Battles as a band have just remixed Four Tet. Every month there's something else.'

Braxton was already a regular collaborator with Prefuse 73, who has paid for Battles to tour with him so the kids who didn't get guitars might see things from a different perspective.



See www.myspace.com/battlestheband for more info

#### **Tunng**

### Interview with Mike Lindsay by Anna Burns

### **FORKED TUNNG**

It's a wet Wednesday morning in ENGLAND AND MIKE LINDSAY HAS GOT UP EARLY TO CHAT ABOUT HIS BAND TUNNG. MIKE HAS FINISHED HIS BREAKFAST OF MELTED CHEESE ON TOAST, TOPPED WITH TOMATO SAUCE, AS IN KETCHUP. HE HUMOURS ME AS I ASK PERHAPS TOO MANY **OUESTIONS ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THIS. YOU** SEE, IT'S MY FAVOURITE QUESTION TO WARM UP A PHONE INTERVIEW; MAKE SURE THE LEVELS ARE WORKING FINE FOR RECORDING AND ALL THAT, BUT I'M ALSO GENUINELY FASCINATED - CHEESE ON TOAST WITH TOMATO SAUCE, INTERESTING, WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT ONE OF THE MAJOR MASTERMINDS BEHIND TUNNG? I'M NOT SURE.

Tunng started about three years ago when Mike Lindsay and Sam Genders met by chance, through a mutual friend. Sam, as singer/songwriter was looking for someone to work with and as chance would have it. Mike is a producer and he was also on the look out for people to work with. It sounds almost like a set up: 'mutual friend took me to see a show of Sam's conversations turned to music and we started playing around in a dark, grey basement studio in Soho'. The songs come together when Mike 'tinkers in the studio'. making beats and pieces, and when 'Sam comes in with lyrics and guitar tinkers and they see what fits. Or sometimes Sam writes the songs, and then brings it to me and I add the finishing touches and bring it together.' They rarely sit down and write together, although that does sometimes happen. The making of Tunng music seems to be a rather relaxed and organic process. The mystical worlds, the tales of murder, robberies and intrigue portrayed in the lyrics of Tunng songs mostly come from Sam's imagination. Who would've thought someone so quiet could come up with songs that are at once so beautiful, but sometimes so dark and twisted. The other remarkable thing about Tunng is these same worlds are also always so charming, sweet, light and picturesque, not dark and depressing, more lighthearted and quaintly innocent.

After a period of all this creating and collecting, they 'sent around a bunch of demos to various record companies' says Mike. 'Static Caravan came back with an enthusiastic response, which gave them more momentum. This is how Mother's Daughter and Other Songs came into being. But how did a basement studio project grow into a five-piece live band that has recorded a couple of live sessions for One World, (the BBC 1 show that's taken over from John Peel), supported some high-profile people, played a stack of their own impressive shows, and landed at SXSW this year? Although they'd never intended to be a band and play live, Mike says they kept getting asked to play live, so eventually what was a studio project took on another dimension. 'We got a band together, spilt some tracks down to make things work, combined more traditional instruments with things like sea shells, bits of wood and

have become a bit of a collective?

After a significant time playing a bunch of live shows they've come back with another album, *Comments of the Inner Chorus*. The experience of performing live has somewhat affected the process of making an album. 'We have less chopped up guitars and that sort of thing, because live they're quite tricky to do,' says Mike. '[But] the studio is one thing and playing live is another and we didn't want to change things too much – we didn't want to be thinking "Oooh we shouldn't do it that way because playing it live might be tricky to play." We just wanted to make a really good record. It's always at the back of your mind that you've got to perform it but ... you've just got to make the best songs and then come to the question of how to translate this into a live performance later.'

Tunng has more than doubled in size – they've gone from a duo to five strong – which, surprisingly, didn't cause too many changes in the production of the new record. [It] was quite similar to the process of *Mother's Daughter*, I still sit in the studio and makes beats and samples and bring everyone in at certain points to add their ingredients to the pot. There are more people involved and there's been an evolution of Tunng but we didn't all sit around and decide to write an album, it happened over the course of the year, much like *Mother's Daughter*, between gigs been doing stuff in the studio.

Some of the samples used on the new album are the 'results of a trip to Belgium with a mini disc where random recording bits and bobs were cut up, other samples are random noises and sounds created on the computer and a few old poetry record samples have been thrown in ... for good measure. It was an obscure old record that in a day gone by had been used for educational purposes in schools, featuring headmasters and headmistresses reading things and talking. I loved their voices, they have such a wonderful texture and parts of this featured heavily on the new album.'

Now back to those casually mentioned BBC Live sessions, in Maida Vale. That's a pretty huge step for any band. Mike agrees it was a kind of 'crazy experience, all that history', but it's also eerily normal. 'The producer



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'RANDOM RECORDING BITS AND **BOBS WERE CUT UP, OTHER** SAMPLES ARE RANDOM NOISES AND SOUNDS CREATED ON THE COMPUTER AND A FEW OLD POETRY RECORD SAMPLES HAVE BEEN THROWN IN ... FOR GOOD MEASURE.'



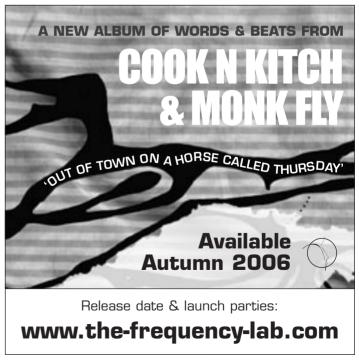
that worked with them has been there 20 years, you spend a few hours recording and then mixing, and after go to pub. It's all very normal until he casually starts rattling off some of the other bands he's had beers with in this same pub put after a similar process!' I've interviewed other bands about recording BBC Live sessions and one of them mentioned a mythical 'menu' of sorts, where you can choose things like the Ringo Starr drum kit seat, for example. But, if that's true, Tunng weren't given the opportunity to order. '[There are] big orchestral rooms, and something like seven different studios but we didn't get the mystical menu,' says Mike, laughing.

Earlier in the year, their remix of Bloc Party's 'Pioneers' caused a fair stir across the world. How did this come about? 'At one stage Wichita (Bloc Party's label) were going to sign us for the US and they asked us to do a cover of 'Pioneers' to be released as a B-side to the single,' Mike explains. The deal with Wichita didn't eventuate and they decided not to release the Tunng cover. 'But we liked it and so thought fuck it, it's a waste to not release it so

we decided to. Apparently Bloc Party have heard it and liked it, which is good because briefly we'd been worried that die hard Bloc Party fans would be offended or something, but they seem to be okav.'

And, finally, the name. The story is short and sweet: one day Mike and Sam were sitting at the pub, writing out words and this just stuck. 'Some people have suggested that it's a little onomatopoeic, like pow or splat; tunng, like a note or something, that's nice. It's also funny, no one can spell it, it seems to scramble in your head ... It's something people can find some deepness in it if they want, Tung (with one less 'n') is also Swedish for heavy you see. They obviously have a sense of humour as their music is anything but heavy, no death metal sounds on this album, no, instead it's all light and thoughtfulness.





### **ABOUT EMERGENT**

Hopefully with your copy of Cyclic Defrost #14 you found a CD titled Emergent. If you didn't, well some cheeky blighter probably scarpered with it. Anyway, Emergent is a compilation made made in conjunction with the Noise Festival and ABC Radio's Sound Quality. The compilation brings together young artists from around Australia who all submitted tracks via the web.

Klara Leander, project manager for Noise, ran two question & answers with Textile Audio and Cleptoclectics. Elsewhere in this issue you can read full interviews with Scissors For Sparrow and Moving Ninja, who are also on the compilation.



## **CLEPTOCLECTICS**

Instrumental hiphop producer Cleptoclectics is 22-year-old Thomas Smith, from Sydney. Tom is currently studying at the University of Technology, Sydney, where he's writing an honours thesis using Gilles Deleuze's ideas on the refrain to conceptualise sampling as a creative process.

Tell us something about where you come from.

I originally come from Canberra, where it was very cold. I gained a taste for gloomy weather ... I could see for miles, and there weren't many people around.

Tell us your three favourite things:

Music, food and interesting people, in no particular order. My needs are fairly basic.

How would you describe your work?

For convenience I usually say something like beats or instrumental hiphop. I prefer sample-based music, but it tends to illicit blank looks; people need a point of reference, so I name stuff like Four Tet, DJ Vadim, DJ Spooky, Prefuse 73, DJ Krush, Madlib, Daedalus, Amon Tobin, Manitoba, etc. Ideally, [I'll] let them listen and make up their own mind about which generic buzzword they'd like to apply.

Who are some people in your life you admire, and why?

Alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman is a hero of mine. I respect his persistence, and that he played in his own way despite intense criticism.

Do you have a creative highlight to date?

Every time I finish a tune I imagine it to be my best work, for about a day ... and when that day has past I don't think I've achieved anything. I'm hoping that will change.

What has been the biggest challenge for you so far? Networking, meeting the right people; I'm not an extrovert.

What's the next thing on the cards for you and your music? Any big plans: exhibitions, gigs, collaborations, exciting things?

Getting a full-length release is my first priority. I've got a small, weird gig coming up for the DKDC performance collective in Sydney. I've been asked to interpret Charles Bernstein's 'logrhythm' poetic format, in the form of nine 30-second sound poems, which I'll bash out on an MPC.

How do you imagine yourself in ten years time, and what challenges do you imagine you'll face along the way?

I try not to be determinist in the way I think about my life. Challenge is inevitable.

Cleptoclectics's' 'Profit Killer' is featured on the CD compilation Emergent - *Sounds From The Petri Dish*, which comes free with Issue 14 of *Cyclic Defrost*.



a volatile mix of experimental sounds



### **TEXTILEAUDIO**





### Sound Quality

TEXTILEAUDIO IS A NEW PROJECT BY ELECTRO MEZZO SOPRANO AND OPERA SINGER EVE KLEIN. KLEIN LECTURES IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC AT MACOUARIE University, Sydney, and is completing A DOCTORAL THESIS IN ELECTRONIC-MULTIMEDIA OPERA.

#### Tell us something about where you come from. I was born in a rather sedate middle class suburb of Seaforth, NSW. Other than that I'm a product of a

rambling university arts degree who messes around with sounds.

#### What do you do for fun?

I have an obsessive sweet (vegan) tooth. I bake enormously decadent cakes, make chocolate truffles and recently I've started creating my own ice-cream. Other than that I'm never separated from my computer!

#### How would you describe your work?

Pretty varied. I'm working on a particular style at the moment that I've described on my website as: "Between ambient electronica and classical music lies TextileAudio. Working with scores, field recordings, and operatic-pop composite vocals to weave rich melodic soundscapes and textures, this music is unashamedly romantic." So perhaps I'm a little obsessed with melody at the moment - that's the vocalist coming through, but I'm also wanting to work with much more noise than is featured in the Emergent compilation track ['Ebbtide'].

#### What has been the biggest challenge for you so far?

Finding the time to develop as an artist, but also finding people to listen to my music who don't think that it's just plain weird.

#### Do you have a creative highlight to date?

My creative highlight so far would be the staging of a short multimedia opera performance I wrote, entitled 'Her Song', in Canada last year as part of a conference event called Techno-Feminisms: New Cultural Mediations. It was an amazing experience, performing in another country, but particularly in that kind of environment. After the performance I was able to take questions and gain feedback from a really diverse and international audience.

#### What's the next thing on the cards for you and your music? Any big plans: exhibitions, gigs, collaborations, exciting things?

I'm writing an electronica opera with projected backdrops, and am hoping it will be ready by mid 2007.

'Ebbtide' is featured on the CD compilation Emergent - Sounds From The Petri Dish which is available for free with Issue 14 of Cyclic Defrost.







#### **Matmos**

# Interview with Drew Daniel and M.C. Schmidt by Dan Rule SIGNAL TO NOISE

DREW DANIEL AND M.C. SCHMIDT – THE ODDBALL SAN FRANCISCAN PAIRING BEHIND THE EXPLORATORY SOUND WORLDS OF MATMOS – HAVE LONG BEEN SOMETHING OF A DRAWCARD IN AN INCREASINGLY CROWDED ELECTRONIC COMMUNITY. OVER ELEVEN YEARS AND FIVE ALBUMS, THEIR MUSIC HAS TRAVERSED HISTORY, HUMAN FUNCTION, HIGH CAMP, HUMOUR AND HYPER-SURREALISM, DELVING INTO SONIC AND CONCEPTUAL DEPTHS PREVIOUSLY UNTOUCHED BY THE ELECTRONIC SCENE'S VAST TENDRILS. DRAWING SOUNDS FROM THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY OF SOURCES, THE PAIR HAVE MANAGED TO CREATE MUSIC AT ITS MOST ABSTRACT, LITHE AND BOUNDLESS.

Drew Daniel is in a good mood today. In fact, it's hard to imagine him otherwise. He's chirpy, talkative and cracks bad jokes. "I not only have Cat Power evenings, but Black Sabbath mornings," he offers simply. "Listening to music, to me, can definitely be about feeling introspective and melancholic at some points, and feeling kind of satanic and powerful at other times," he says, breaking into laughter.

His creative partner Martin C. Schmidt, too, is hardly in a serious frame of mind. "Do you feel satanic and powerful today, Drew?" he jibes.

But Daniel, who along with Schmidt is today chatting from their home in San Francisco, does have a point. That being that for him, the simple emotions and gratifications of listening to music exist on a different plane to that of his own creative processes.

"I'm the same as anyone else as a listener to music," he explains. "But as a creator I don't really see music as my chance to finally express buried emotions."

Instead, he sees his own music as an attempt at changing the terms of reference. "I think there's a lot of emotional impact that comes along as a result of people's associations with sounds, and part of what Matmos is hopefully doing is letting people notice that there can be something fascinating and emotional about the sound of a typewriter or the squeak of a door. It isn't just about a D-minor chord meaning 'cry now'. There's a lot of emotion in everyday life, so making music out of everyday life is taking a gamble on that fact."

His explanation says a lot about Matmos and their approach. Over their eleven years together as an ensemble, the pair have maintained a healthy preoccupation with the notion of paradigm shift; a sensibility that has allowed them to create some of the leftist electronic world's most bold, unique and often absurd sound works.

From the start, their output was recognised as different to what was going on in the UK dominated underground scene. Removed from the synth-heavy aesthetic of the time, the duo set about defying the dance-oriented margins of the time, taking a newly artistic and deconstructive view of sound and music. They released their self-titled debut in 1997 through their own Vague Terrain imprint to a flood of critical praise. Daniel a then Ph.D. student, and Schmidt, a visual artist (he now manages the New Genres department of the San Francisco Art Institute), were doing things differently. The record's aforementioned crustacean neural activity, plus the sound of freshly cut hair and human breath, only seemed to drive home the point.

1998's Quasi-Objects and 1999's West followed, before they released perhaps their most infamous recording, 2001's A Chance to Cut is a Chance to Cure. Composed almost entirely from the recorded sounds of surgery and medical technology, the record set a new precedent sound recontextualisation, with the duo (both, conveniently, the sons of doctors) shaping medical procedures into a remarkably accessible cache of experimental electro tunes. As Schmidt explains, the pair still use some of the 'instrumentation' from the album in live shows these days.

"We do the acupuncture point detector," he says. "In Chinese medicine they use this box that detects your acupuncture meridians under your skin, and it's this thing that you sort of slide around your skin and it goes 'eeeeee' and buzzes when you hit the different points. So I play this thing live, Drew samples it, and we build a song out of that."

Somewhat unsurprisingly, Daniel and Schmidt met in less than conventional circumstances. "When we met music was a point of mutual interest," says Schmidt. "But seriously, I met Drew while he was go-go dancing on a bar and I was putting dollars into his underwear, and when he climbed down off the bar and I was able to actually speak to him, it was one of the first few things we talked about."

"Well, honestly, it wasn't that pure," he laughs. "The guy I was standing with – looking up at Drew in his underwear – said 'Oh, you know he makes really cool electronic music,' and that's not generally something you'd think about someone who's go-go dancing on a bar in front of you. So it gave me a great chat-up line. I was like, 'Soooo, you make music? What kind of music do you make? Blah, blah, blah.' Thank god I could be more specific than 'Do you come here often?"

"So we started talking about this French musique concrete guy, Pierre Henry," he continues. "We had both heard this piece Variations For a Door and a Sigh, which is entirely this music made out of not music; it's made out of an object. So I proceeded to step up, in the pick-up procedure, to 'Would you like to come see me sometime and learn how to use a computer to edit?' This was, like, 1991 so having a computer was a much bigger deal. It's like, how do I pick up boys? I know, I'll buy a computer! This was the only time it worked out, but it worked out really well."

Daniel soon moved to London, and after exchanging tapes through the post for the next couple of years, they eventually reconvened in San Francisco Bay Area, founding Matmos in 1995.

Since that time, and unlike many who inhabit the oft-intellectual world of experimental music, Daniel and Schmidt have managed to retain a sense of humour, understanding their music as a vehicle for playfulness and experimental frivolity as much as the sober, intellectual exploration ideas. Their new record – the

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#### "IT ALWAYS STARTS ORDERLY AND ENDS IN CHAOS, AND.. **EVERY MATMOS SONG IS KIND OF** THE SAME IN THAT SENSE."

follow-up to 2003's mergence of 16th Century medieval music and 19th Century American folk in The Civil War - too, follows these jointly cerebral and comical paths. The Rose has Teeth in the Mouth of a Beast, sees the duo examine the realm of sound portraiture, with their most admired historical figures serving as subjects. The list includes the likes Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Valerie Solanas, Patricia Highsmith, Darby Crash and William S. Burroughs to name a few. But as Daniel explains, the idea originally came, not from their idols, but from an interactive art piece they had worked on previously.

"It actually came from doing portraits of just everyday people," he says. "We did a residency in a museum where the first person to walk in the door each day... I would interview that person about their lives and try and make a song about them that day, and in many cases try and make it with them as an on-the-spot collaboration. It was a really fun process and it kind of got us thinking about treating a life as though it was the subject of a song - structuring a song around someone's life in some way. It got us going."

Yet, Matmos's notion of biography is fairly supple one, as Schmidt explains. "When we did that installation with the people off the street, we tried to do a much more literal biography type thing where it was, like, we would make a part of the song for their childhood and a part for their teenage years and a part for their adult life, and if there were dramatic instances we would have a dramatic instance in the music. And we sort of started off with that idea for the r ecord but ended up more object oriented, which we always seem to wind up doing no matter how hard we try to avoid it."

"So we ended up like, 'Patricia Highsmith, she was super into snails. Snails are like French horns, so we should get French horns, and we should also use snails literally'. It's very much free association and one thing leads to another... We got someone to record and play French horns, and we layered it upon itself and it fed us this sort of film noir kind of mood. Once we heard that we were like 'Aha, it should go in this direction', and it even ended up being a bit of a cliché for Patricia



Highsmith's work. But you know, it was appropriate that we rolled with it."

Their music proved very much suited to the biography process. "I guess one thing that our friend Matthew Herbert said when he was sort of teasing us about our music," says Daniel, "is that it always starts orderly and ends in chaos, and that every Matmos song is kind of the same in that sense."

"I think when you look at lives of the people that we tried to represent, very frequently there was a kind of tragic marker within their life story that ended often with suicide. So these lives actually lent themselvesto us sort of staying exactly in our rut of going from order to chaos - the end of Joe Meek's life, the end of Darby Crash's, the end of Valerie Solanas's life was, you know, street prostitution after her incarceration - and frequently there is this kind of upward and downward arc. And I don't think real lives are generally like that, but some of the people we were writing about were sort of aestheticising their lives to take on that shape. You know, like Joe Meek decided to kill himself on the exact day that was the anniversary of Buddy Holly's death, you know, and there was a very clear kind of aesthetic program that drove him even in his madness. And so, in a way, their lives were already art-like."

Re-enacting and representing moments from their subjects' lives, The Rose sees Matmos pair abstract collage with an often thrilling and evermelodic musicality. While micro recordings of semen oscillates with Antony's whirring vocals in Semen Song for James Bidgood, a heady combination cigarettes burning Daniel's skin and a swathe of fractured beats and bottom-end signal Germs Burn for Darby Crash. Other moments of note are the detective-surf-rock of Solo Buttons for Joe Meek and the melodic plod of Snails and Lasers for Patricia Highsmith. In all, the record proves perhaps their most listenable piece of music thus far - with or without the far-flung contexts.

Daniel attributes this musicality to the record's interplay with genre. "I think it makes a big difference," he says. "It [the record's accessibility] is because there are certain genre exercise pieces, like the Larry Levan track is us trying to do, you know, disco and the Meek track is us trying to do a twangy, sort of 60s, guitar rock instrumental. So there is a kind of genre handhold there."

The Valerie Solanas cut, Tract, is a prime example. "When you think about the pop music of now and where are the women who are completely sexually frank and who don't take any shit, and I thought immediately of somebody like Lil' Kim, you know, or Peaches – people that have a really strong female voice in what's usually tough, booty bass-type music. So that was kind of on my mind when we were assembling the Valeria Solanas track."

But despite this new sense of listenability, Schmidt is realistic. "I think our accessibility is still definitely a relative thing," he laughs.

#### "I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT IT'S CLEAR THAT THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD GOING ON WITH THIS MUSIC."

The album also featured a visual art project, where Schmidt and Daniel commissioned several visual artist to complete accompanying portraits of the subjects. Valerie Solanas again featured prominently. "Jason Mecier did a portrait of Valerie and he built it entirely out of cigarettes and snail shells," explains Daniel. "And it looks like a photograph of her smoking a cigarette, but when you look up close you see that it's entirely made out of snails. Some of the artists work in a similar way to us, so there's quite a tight link."

Nevertheless, Daniel's not entirel convinced of the project's success in terms of its biographical value. "I guess there's always that question of sort of the ethics of representing someone else, and whether you've earned the right to deploy someone else's life for material for your art."

"But you know, we've just got a letter from James Bidgood's manager, because he's still alive now... so when we go to New York hopefully we're going to try and meet him. It'll be really interesting to hear the response of someone to one of these compositions, you know, and I'm kind of keeping my fingers crossed about how that encounter goes."

But as with any form of experimental art media, Matmos's sonic explorations are bound to encounter as many problems as they will accomplishments. And for now, their ambitions are simple. Conceptual preoccupations aside, they would like their music to be interesting whether we realise its source - be it a reproductive tract or otherwise - or not.

"This might sound a little like a cop-out," says Schmidt. "But I certainly hope that the music works with no prior knowledge at all, and that when and if they read the liner notes it opens up further and becomes something more. I mean, I'd like to believe that it's clear that there's something weird going on with this music, you know, when you listen to it with no knowledge. There are all those strange sources of things and we try to make them - you know, some of them at least - not completely modified, crushed and destroyed by computers and effects and so on," he pauses.

"So hopefully an uninformed listener is at least like, 'Why does that sound so strange? What is that weird squishing sound?"



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### Reviewed by Chloe Sasson and Tim Colman **SONAR 2006**

MONDAY 12TH IUNE Arrival in Barcelona World Cup score: Australia 3, Japan 1.

While the number 13 is unlucky for some, Sonar 2006 celebrated its first teenage year in style. This year, the focus was on the multiple facets of black music and an exploration of Japan's rich, yet often unrecognised, musical scene. Spread over eight stages in the shadows and within Barcelona's Museum of Contemporary Art. SonarDay attracts one of the most wonderful crowds you're likely to find at an arts and musical festival. As one local surmised, 'It's the sneakers and sunglasses set from around the world'. It's a mix heavy with trendy Spaniards, the sunburnt English (sans the lager louts), an impressive contingent of Japanese, a sprinkling of Americans; plus a dozen or more so other nations; all with their 20 to 40-year-old delegates mixing together in the latest Adidas, coolest T-shirts, and even a few tutus. As in previous years, Sonar's musical performances were backed by a dizzying plethora of non-musical events; from technologically inspired art, interactive demonstrations, and more traditional exhibitions ...

#### Bizarre Beer Administration: Line up for beer.

Then told to line up for beer ticket. Then go back and line up for beer. Alternatively; line up for beer ticket, then flag down mobile beer pourers in crowd.

#### **JUNE 15 - SONARDAY** Standard IDM Opening: Basscadet

Slotted in as the opening SonarDay act this Spanish laptop DJ paid perfect homage to his UK influences Autechre and Aphex Twin.

#### Gaming Participation: Day of the Figurines

As part of Sonar's exhibition component, this year's exhibitions were based around 'the concept of territory in the modern world'. One of the more intriguing exhibitions came from the UK's Blast Theory collective and their IPerG (Integrated Project on Pervasive Gaming). Set in a fictional town, users adopt a

character who they can move around the town via SMS, and receive messages back regarding their health, whereabouts and state of play in the town. We adopted Kiki.

Message One: Kiki is dropped off at the edge of town. Where would she like to go? GOTO Rat Research Centre.

#### Hype Band of the Festival: The Knife

There's always one band whose name is whispered through festival crowds as THE act to catch. This year it was the Swedish brother and sister duo The Knife, their reputation for dark electro and stunning visuals had The Hall Stage was at capacity and closed to punters within minutes. Opening with throbbing sine-wave pulses and ghostly Bjorkish vocals, The Knife certainly was promising. However, half way into their two-hour set, the duo's electro vibe became more of the same old. No doubt they will be huge, even if their on stage get was reminiscent of our own TISM

#### **IUNE 15 - SONARNIGHT**

#### Alva Noto and Ryuichi Sakamoto at Insen

A walk away from Sonar Day is Barcelona's L'Auditori. Built in the late 1980s as part of Barcelona's 'urbanistic reorganisation strategy, it is the home to many of the city's classical and contemporary musical events. A welcome change from Sonar Day's astro turf and funin-the-sun crowd, Insen provided the perfect setting for Insen's experimental collaboration of electronic and visual artists Carsten Nicolai (Alva Noto) and composer Ryuichi Sakamoto (best known for his work in Japanese techno pop outfit Yellow Magic Orchestra). Set at opposing sides of the stage, Sakamoto's piano work moved from the highly experimental (fingers inside the strings, manipulating metallic strains like an eccentric car mechanic; tuneless childlike thumping of discordant plonks), to classical melodies. Across from him, Nicolai's simple laptop set-up provided equally experimental electronics, from clicks, cuts and fuzzy static to the piano-like mimicry in one of the night's most captivating movements. Rounding out the



visual display from Nicolai. A single fluorescent strip at the back of the stage threw up simple geometric figures, explosions of chainsaw fireworks and classic LED patterns; the mostly yellow on black triggered perfectly by Nicolai to create a visual imagery of the night's performance.

#### **IUNE 16. SONARDAY**

#### Update on Kiki: Still at the edge of town.

Realising that Kiki had not moved in 24 hours, an investigation revealed that none of our SMSs were being received. Kiki is stranded.

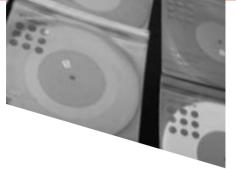
#### Richard Chartier

From the Raster Norten label, Richard Chartier's DJing of minimal ambient drones was barely audible over the boisterous Sonar Dome crowd. It was a problem many Dome performers suffered, including Australia's Inch Time, who performed the previous evening as part of a Static Caravan showcase. Your best bet was to visit the record fair and pick up a copy of Chartier's work from Raster Norten stand. Exceptional packaging!

#### **Exhibition of Destruction:**

#### Once Upon a Time Chernobyl exhibition

An example of Sonar's deeper commitment to art and understanding was the inclusion of the exhausting and quite disturbing exhibition about the Chernobyl disaster. Highlighting the darker and highly destructive side of technology, this extensive display detailed time from the point of the explosion, through the clean up and ugly aftermath, with hundreds of pictures, videos, drawings and excerpts from government memos.



# THE CROWD SLOWLY LEFT, NOT WARMING TO TRACKS TOTALLY DEVOTED TO ECSTASY USE. SHADOW DIDN'T TOTALLY ALIENATE THE CROWD THOUGH, PULLING OUT 'ORGAN DONOR' TOWARDS THE END.

#### Surprise Pop Act: Scissor Sisters

Britain's White Diet pulled out at the last minute and were replaced by an unannounced Scissor Sisters.

Perhaps an odd choice but their Bowie-esque glam went down well with punters in the afternoon sun.

#### JUNE 16. SONARNIGHT DJ Krush

Performing in the massive Sonar Park, Japan's DJ Krush spun an epic instrumental, often cinematic, hiphop set. Despite precise and intricate mixes the downbeat nature was lost on a crowd wanting something more energetic. Perhaps a more intimate SonarDay set would have been more fitting?

#### Chic

As the familiar bassline of the disco classic 'Le Freak' emanated from the Sonar Club, it was surprising to see a full band performing rather than a DJ dropping a crowd favourite. With the only surviving member, Nile Rodgers, leading a massive entourage they ended with a marathon version of 'Good Times', complete with a Sugarhill rap and beatboxing from former Roots member, Rahzel.

#### Jimmy Edgar

Considering his album on Warp was somewhat disappointing, Jimmy Edgar proved to be the surprise of the evening. Performing with a laptop and various gadgets, he ripped through clinical set of Detroitinspired electro. Crisp beats over robotic rhythms.

#### Jeff Mills

As Edgar's last beat sounded, a back curtain fell revealing Detroit icon, Jeff Mills. His first beat dropped with such force the audience was literally thrown back a step. Setting the standard for the next two hours, he expertly mixed a set of relentless four-to-the-floor techno over four decks. A crowd favourite - just trying to exit the venue required deft manoeuvring.

Otto Von Shirach
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As part of the Schematic showcase, Otto Von Shirach took to the stage splendid in fake nose and breasts. In a set of brutal, depraved electro noise he stalked the stage ripping through demented covers of 'I'm Too Sexy' and 'When Doves Cry', even inspiring violent, crazed dance moves from one overexcited punter.

#### DI Shadow

There was a certain buzz around the DJ Shadow show and the 'hyphy' sound with Bay Area MCs Keak Da Sneak, Turf Talk and Nump. Those expecting a laidback trip-hop affair were in for a shock as they ripped through an up-tempo hiphop set featuring hard electronic stabs and R'n'B synths rather than warm jazz samples. It showed too, as the crowd slowly left, not warming to tracks totally devoted to ecstasy use. Shadow didn't totally alienate the crowd though, pulling out 'Organ Donor' towards the end.

#### **JUNE 17. SONARDAY**

#### Update on Kiki: Still at the edge of town

Apparently the town is at war and disease has spread through the population. Kiki is still stranded. It just goes to show that you can't always trust technology.

### Music Without People: Raster Norton in the Essential Room

Set in the MACBA Audiori, record label Raster Norton created a solitary environment where sound was the only focal point. Set up with four surround-sound speakers, visits to the space ended with an audience reduced to total silence as crystal-clear pieces from a number of commissioned artists such as Alva Noto and Richard Chartier were played.

#### Most Irresistible Purchase: Expanding Records

Like a kid in a lolly shop, Sonar's record fair was a dangerous place for buyers on the Australian dollar. Over the 50 stands dedicated to festivals, DJ equipment and vinyl, most of the customers seemed to be the serious European DJs. However, the delicious set of colourful 7"s covering the spectrum of electro, techno

and IDM from the UK's Expanding Records were the outstanding attraction; and two from the set quickly made it into our bags.

### Perfect Stoner Moment: Fat Freddy's Drop (www. fatfreddysdrop.com)

The ever-popular Kiwi reggae band provided the perfect setting for Sonar's final sunset. Playing on the main SonarVillage stage, the Drop's Rasta vibes had the crowd smoking their stash dry in what was a feel good contrast to much of the colder, experimental music of the past three days.

#### **IUNE 17. SONAR NIGHT - RUPTURE OFF SONAR**

An hour's walk to the outskirts of Barcelona, in an industrial wasteland, where heavy metal bars and teenage drinking dens were surrounded by construction sites and scaffolding is where DJ/Rupture chose to throw an off-Sonar party. The hard-to-find warehouse was a door behind a non-descript wall and it cost just one Euro to enter. Inside it was a classic warehouse party, with kids in black, trippy visuals and horrible toilets. There was even homebrewed beer... that tasted like tuna. Along with Rupture, Planet Mu's Shitmat and new Soot Records signing, Filastine, performed, dropping an often overlapping mix of drum'n'bass, hiphop, breakcore, ragga and grime, though it was so packed though it was hard to tell who was doing what ... great fun!

#### Time of filing story: Tuesday 27th June.

World Cup score: Australia 0, Italy 1. The dream is over.





# SELECTS: MARK N

MARK N IS ONE OF THE UNDER-APPRECIATED RENEGADE FIGURES IN AUSTRALIAN ELECTRONIC MUSIC. IMMENSELY HARD-WORKING AND DRIVEN, HE HAS MORE NOTORIETY OVERSEAS THAN LOCALLY, HAVING TOURED EXTENSIVELY THROUGH NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE FIRST WITH HIS NOW DEFUNCT TRIO NASENBLUTEN, AND LATER SOLO AS OVERCAST AND AS A FIERCE DJ. GROWING UP AND RUNNING THINGS FROM NEWCASTLE, A CITY TWO HOURS DRIVE NORTH OF SYDNEY ONCE FAMOUS FOR ITS NOW-CLOSED STEEL WORKS, HE HAS ENORMOUS PRIDE IN HIS ROOTS.

His 'take no shit' attitude and deadpan, selfdeprecating humour have been responsible (together with Aaron Lubinski and Dave Melo) for Nasenbluten's noisy, grating and harsh music, which has been released on labels all over the world, including Industrial Strength. Becoming frustrated with putting music out on other people's labels, Mark set up Bloody Fist Records - a name that still gets him strange cold calls from telemarketers. Bloody Fist steadfastly refused to release music from anyone outside of the Newcastle region. His later solo productions as Overcast are for the most part dark, menacing relentless drum'n'bass, but also explore cut ups and other tempos, whilst his highly technical DJs skills, including wins at the DMC and ITF championships, have irritated many in the local hip hop community who see him,

rightly, as an outsider and a threat. Original Nasenbluten records trade for ridiculous figures on eBay, and every release from his Bloody Fist label is a collectable. Mark ceremonially closed down Bloody Fist on its 10th anniversary and moved interstate. He vows to return to Newcastle to retire, and when he does maybe the Newcastle mayor will present him with the keys to the city.

Mark was given the task of choosing ten records that have defined him over the years. He approached the task with such relish that we've decided to run the whole thing in interests of complete-ness.

Here are his choices in his own words.



#### COLDCUT: Beats + Pieces

(Ahead Of Our Time: UK 1987: CCUT1A/B: 12")

Music by so-called 'non-musicians' was something I became interested in as a direct consequence of growing up throughout the '70s and '80s in the suffocating cock-rock guitar hell of suburban Newcastle. As far as I was concerned, the notion of people making contemporary music without using traditional instruments (especially guitars) was akin to 'thinking outside the square'. Unsurprisingly, collecting records composed of fragmentary portions of pre-existing records became a nerdy obsession of mine, and during this period I was always on a keen lookout for these 'cut up' or 'DJ' records regardless of their origin or quality.

Sample-based records seemed to be in abundance throughout the late '80s, as new production techniques were slowly being discovered, developed, and samplers became more affordable. Even some of the more commercially successful UK sample-house records appealed to me during that time; particularly 'Pump Up The Volume' by M/A/R/R/S and the 'Beat Dis' follow-up 'Megablast' by Bomb The Bass – both which have, in my opinion, dated rather well. The actual story behind 'Pump Up The Volume', the controversy surrounding its release and resulting legal action by Stock, Aitken & Waterman is fascinating enough in itself.

But another thing that seemed peculiar to the '80s was that any hip hop album worth its salt would feature a 'cut-up' track where the artist or crew's DJ would go solo and showcase his cutting and scratching skills. These were always the highlight of hip hop albums for me, and not only would I skip forward to those tracks whenever my attention span had been caught short by the rhyming, but I used to rate hip hop albums on the strength of their cut-up tracks alone. Each time

I ran across new tracks that I liked the sound of, I would listen to them on repeat, paying extremely close attention to the edit points, structure and scratching techniques, scrupulously studying every aspect to death.

One of the first cut-up records that I became *really* excited about was Coldcut's debut 12" 'Say Kids', which sounded exactly like it had been assembled using nothing more than records, turntables, a mixer and four-track tape recorder. The all-encompassing sonic collage, slightly rough edits and primitive scratching gave the track a 'live DJ' feel. Although it came off far more dense and compact than an actual live DJ set – and it wasn't like a regular scratch showcase track on a hip hop album either.

This record consisted of actual slabs of other records - specifically, huge chunks of Kurtis Blow's 'Party Time' - rather than purely manipulated fragments. It would even be fair to say that Coldcut's 'Say Kids' sounded like a tightened-up, thrill-a-minute version of 'The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel'. The simplistic use of multi-track recording had, in effect, stepped up the overall impact and density of the collage, thus restyling the slightly cumbersome and rough 'quick mix' technique that Grandmaster Flash had employed on 'Adventures'. I also found that I much preferred Coldcut's style over Double Dee & Steinski's 'master mix' collage technique that, although remarkably clever, was more about clean and tight tape edits rather than the 'live DJ' feel.

Later on in 1987, Coldcut became affiliated with the UK label Big Life, and they released a cracking 12" by the name of 'Beats + Pieces'. On this single, they had actually taken more of a structured and focused approach, basing the track around a looped drum break with slightly more emphasis on sound manipulation and scratching. The scratching itself is very primitive, old-school, and a little sloppy compared to what was going on in the US and elsewhere in the UK at the time. but it works in the context of this track so damn well. The drum break that 'Beats + Pieces' is based around is the famous first bar of Led Zeppelin's 'When The Levee Breaks', from their fourth album Zoso. I had heard rumours about how these particular drums were originally recorded and I eventually read that they were recorded in a three-storey concrete stairwell.

[Drummer] John Bonham sat at the bottom of the stairwell hammering away in his distinct 'muscular drumming' style and a single microphone captured the performance from above, creating the ultra-heavy, muffled but immense resonance that makes the break so distinct and dynamic even when sped up. Although the Led Zeppelin break formed the backbone of 'Beats + Pieces', Coldcut's original collage technique had not

#### THE SIMPLISTIC USE OF MULTI-TRACK RECORDING HAD... STEPPED UP THE OVERALL IMPACT AND DENSITY OF THE COLLAGE

been entirely discarded - the Zeppelin break regularly gives way throughout the track to extended drop-ins from several other records. At one point a bold eight bar slab of Chubukos' 'House Of Rising Funk' is scratched in twice, then further on through the track four bars of 'Soul, Soul, Soul' by The Wild Magnolias is roughly cut back and forth, extending it into a sixteen-bar chunk.

I still think that the sample and breakbeat selections featured in this track put it a notch above the many other cut-up tracks of the time. Coldcut seemed to take a slightly more cerebral approach - their aim being to continually excite and surprise the listener with a clever cut-and-paste sound collage, rather than boring them with a dull six-minute scratchathon. And by crikey, they nailed it.

Following this, Coldcut went on to put together one of the most legendary and best selling hip hop remixes of all time – the 'Seven Minutes Of Madness' version of Eric B & Rakim's 'Paid In Full'. After hearing their remix, Eric B famously dismissed it as 'girly disco music' but was obviously more than happy to collect the royalties on its sales. Coldcut cheekily replied by re-releasing the seven-minute remix independently on their own label - with Rakim's vocals removed - and calling it 'Not Paid Enough'. (Legend has it that Island Records paid Coldcut a measly one-off fee of £750 for the remix).

In any case, a veritable flood of pedestrian 'girly disco music' then followed from Coldcut as they went on to collaborate with and produce records for both Yazz and Lisa sodding Stansfield, spawning a handful of chartsoiling pop singles throughout '88 and '89. Obviously the record company game was well and truly in full effect by this stage. Nonetheless, back in '87 when Coldcut were apparently looking for a record deal by shopping 'Beats + Pieces' around to several labels, they were told by one label in particular: 'Sorry, but this just isn't music'. The quote immediately became Coldcut's catchphrase - and when 'Beats + Pieces' was finally released the catchphrase appeared on the 12" sleeve, and regularly in large bold type on their record sleeves for a long time thereafter. Even if 'Beats + Pieces' wasn't 'music' - it's still one hell of an incredible six-minute racket almost 20 years on.



#### THE ART OF NOISE: (Who's Afraid Of?) The Art Of Noise!

(Zang Tumb Tuum: UK 1984: ZTT-IQ2: LP)

In late 1984 I was a fresh faced 11-year-old. My parents had just bought me a small AKAI radio/cassette player for my birthday. The radio fascinated me as it had shortwave bands 1 and 2 which meant hours locked in my bedroom twiddling the dial listening to static ridden broadcasts from as far away as Russia and South America.

One rainy Sunday night I was idly twiddling the dial when I decided to see what was on the FM band. As I turned the dial around the 104 mark, a station locked on which seemed to be broadcasting footsteps and thunder. The footsteps were panning from one speaker to the other - FM stereo was incredible the first time I experienced it! I was dead impressed but wondered why a radio station would be broadcasting this. The combination of thunder and panning footsteps was creepy as hell to my 11-year-old ears, but I persevered. After a while came what sounded like church bells and organ music. Following this was a weird loop of a voice saying 'It stopped', accompanied by a strange synthesizer arrangement and what sounded like some sort of wounded monster groaning in pain. At this point I freaked right out and almost switched the radio off, but curiosity won out and I persisted. After a while some strange sounding drums began, underpinning a repeated fragmentary voice sample that I could not understand for the life of me. This was by far and away the weirdest thing I had heard on my radio since my 11th birthday, and I was scared.

As the music faded, the announcer shed some light on what I had just been listening to. It was some weird band I'd never heard of called The Art Of Noise and it

also turned out that the radio station I had locked onto was 2NUR-FM - Newcastle's only community radio station at the time, based at Newcastle University. What I couldn't quite grasp at that tender age was that there were people making music outside of the mainstream stuff that I heard on the AM radio stations. The 'music' I had just experienced was creepy, unsettling and sort of unpleasant - but above all had not resembled anything I had heard on the radio before. As an 11-year-old it really scared me and I distinctly remember having difficulty getting to sleep that night. After a week of trying to forget about it, curiosity got the better of me again and I found myself back at the radio the following Sunday night - unsuccessfully trying to find more of the same.

It wasn't until almost 18 months later, during my first year of high school that I saw a kid who had 'ART OF NOISE' scrawled across his school bag in black texta. I approached him and found out that his name was Anthony, he was two years older than I was and had all The Art Of Noise records including their new album of the time called In Visible Silence. He was miffed that someone else at his school even knew about this music and I told him of my unusual discovery on that rainy Sunday night in late '84.

The next day he brought me a tape copy of the full Who's Afraid album and as soon as I came home that afternoon I played it over and over and over again. It turns out that what I had heard on 2NUR-FM eighteen months prior was in fact the final three tracks of the album in sequence: 'Memento', 'How To Kill' and 'Realisation'. The music didn't exactly creep me out this time around - I was growing up and had begun to gradually learn about, and further investigate, things that were outside of the norm – especially in the music world. I played the cassette Anthony had dubbed for me until it wore out, at which time I also became a rabid collector of Art Of Noise records.

The Who's Afraid album was interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, the entire album heavily relied on the use of the Australian-developed Fairlight CMI. The album was mostly 8-bit sample-based as a result, and some keen trainspotting revealed several sound samples taken from one of the group member's other bands: Yes.

Secondly, the track 'Beatbox' which appeared on the album also existed in an earlier version on The Art Of Noise's first EP entitled Into Battle. Legend has it that because so little was actually known about the members of the group, The Art Of Noise were actually voted 'Best New Black Act' by several US publications following the successful 1984 release of 'Beatbox' as a separate 12" in the USA - not an altogether bad result for five pasty white Londoners

#### 'HOLY FUCKBALLS!! IT'S GOT ART OF NOISE IN HERE!!

The group itself originally consisted of five members, most of whom came together initially to work on Malcolm McLaren's 'Buffalo Gals' in 1982 under the direction of Trevor Horn - who also ran their London based label Zang Tumb Tuum (ZTT). [Music journalist] Paul Morley was also an early member of the group, but had more to do with controlling The Art Of Noise's non-image than anything musical. Their record sleeves were drenched in Morley's cryptic ramblings alongside somewhat drab photography of spanners, statues and whatever else. They steadfastly refused to appear in photographs or on their record sleeves, preferring instead to maintain a degree of anonymity - in effect letting the music speak for itself.

Some time during 1985, three of the band members split from Horn and Morley over creative differences, leaving ZTT and taking The Art Of Noise name with them. Novelty pop singles ensued, including collaborations with Max Headroom, Duane Eddy and Tom frigging Jones. By the time all of this happened I had reluctantly bailed on The Art Of Noise as a band, as I longed for a return to the more experimental sound and amazing presentation of the ZTT releases they produced in cahoots with Horn and Morley years earlier.

Fast-forward to early 2005 - I am tarryhooting around London with an old friend and associate from my Bloody Fist days named Dan. He is working in London as a motorcycle courier risking life, limb and sanity on a day-to-day basis. We are sitting in a Stoke Newington cafe poring over a Rock Landmarks Of London book. Dan is keen to visit some of the important locations where musical history had been made. I was along for the ride with only a mild interest in these so called 'landmarks'. We continually thumbed back and forth through the book, making a list of things we wanted to see and slowly nutting out the order in which we wanted to see them. I turned to the index and cast a lazy eye down the list of As... Almond, Marc / Animals, The / Ant, Adam / Arden, Don / Arriva / Art Of....

'HOLY FUCKBALLS!! It's got Art Of Noise in here!!'

The café went dead silent. Everyone turned to look at me. I felt like a bit of a bell-end but my embarrassment was short lived once I found page 82. There it was

#### I HAD WASTED SO MUCH OF MY LIFE LISTENING TO THE WHO'S AFRAID ALBUM THAT I DESPERATELY WANTED TO KNOCK ON THE DOOR AT SARM WEST AND TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT.



- Sarm West Recording Studios on Basing Street in Notting Hill. I scanned the page and found out that this location was where Trevor Horn ran his ZTT label, and recorded stuff by loads of artists including all the early Art Of Noise material. Suddenly I revised my interest in this whole 'rock landmarks' visitation bollocks. So off we went - visiting The 100 Club which was the hub of the punk scene circa 1976, Gerrard Street near Leicester Square in Chinatown where Led Zeppelin formed, The Samarkand Hotel off Ladbroke Grove where Jimi Hendrix popped his clogs, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's Kings Road Sex clothing store where The Sex Pistols formed - and a bunch of other famous locations along the way. All mildly interesting I suppose, but I knew where I wanted to be.

45 minutes later I was there, standing outside the amazing Sarm West complex on Basing Street just off Portobello Road. The building was originally constructed as a church and looked rather menacing in the day's fading light, what with its security cameras dotted above the windows and doors. Dan waited patiently as I did the whole sad trainspotter photography routine. For me, this building was the place where the most important record in my collection was conceived, produced and recorded 20 or so years earlier. I had wasted so much of my life listening to the Who's Afraid album that I desperately wanted to knock on the door at Sarm West and tell someone about it. However, the fear of being met with a steaming wall of indifference by whoever happened to be there working late was too much for me. Over the years I've never really given a fuck about Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin or The Sex Pistols - but I left Basing Street that evening in silent reverence.

### SEVERED HEADS : Clifford Darling Please Don't Live In The Past

(Ink Records: UK 1985: INK016D: 2xLP)

Near the end of my time at high school I met a dude in my year that had relatively unusual taste in music. After a few conversations with him I discovered that we had a few things in common, including being fans of Severed Heads (although he was more of a fan than I was). Prior to meeting him I had only been familiar with a couple of Severed Heads releases on Volition – *Hot With Fleas*, *Greater Reward* and the like. Being more immersed in hip hop at the time I had a limited appreciation of them but knew that they were Australian, based in Sydney – and had the best band name on the planet. Ever.

After spending a bit of time with this new-found high school friend, he introduced me to a number of Severed Heads' pre-Volition releases including one which

had the most impressive title as far as I was concerned: Clifford Darling Please Don't Live In The Past. This Severed Heads album in particular was not entirely 'musical' – and certainly not 'musical' in the traditional sense – a lot of it seemed to be composed with tape loops and other bits of found sound, some of it quite jarring and uncomfortable to listen to. The experimental pieces on the album were interspersed with pieces that sounded a little more like left-of-centre synth pop. I found out soon enough that the album was a compilation of sorts released by the UK label INK Records in 1985, and consisted of older Severed Heads material from 1979-1983, recorded while [sound artist, later of mid-'90s experimenters Size] Garry Bradbury was still a part of the band.

My friend and I were amazed, amused and inspired by everything this record represented; to our ears this

album was remarkably dense, unpredictable, industrial, sonically unusual and spectacular all at the same time. Even the band name 'Severed Heads' seemed to be a firm 'thumb in the arse' of the 1980s music scene. And why were we so excited? Well, we were young, looking for trouble and surrounded by an endless barrage of boring, predictable 'traditional' pop music - Boom Crash Opera, 1927, Cold Chisel, INXS, Noiseworks, Screaming Jets, Bon Jovi, Motley Crue, Testament, Pseudo Echo, The Doors, Manowar, Bros, Def Leppard, Red Hot Chili Peppers, AC/DC, Megadeth, Metallica, Midnight Oil, Guns 'n Roses and The Angels were the most often scrawled band names found on our school's dunny walls, playground seats, textbooks and classroom desks. (One of the funniest misspellings I remember was when some deadshit had actually scrawled 'The Angles' instead of 'The Angels' on the back of one of the toilet cubicle doors).

Apparently all these bands were to be the 'soundtrack' to our collective youth. Fuck that. I disapproved. In fact, my new friend and I both disapproved. Strongly. We wanted more of a challenging soundtrack ... perhaps something that we would not easily forget. And on a purely personal level, the best possible spanner in the works was perfectly represented (at the time) by hip hop – which to a Newcastle cock rocker's ear was the absolute antichrist of music – drum machines instead of real drums, shouting instead of singing, and record scratching sounds instead of guitars.

I was also on a keen lookout for anything else which made long-haired precious 'muso' types fly into an over the top dignified rage, spewing forth ill-informed tirades in passionate defence of 'real music'. I've always detested 'musicians' and their fucking persistent 'holier than thou' whining about somebody else's form of expression. Back in 1980's Newcastle I was surrounded by many of these people and it wasn't unusual for me to often wake up in a cold sweat - heart beating wildly - having just vividly dreamt of dragging a kicking and screaming 'muso' out of his ivory tower, removing his ponytail with a blunt knife and stuffing it down his fucking throat. On the other hand of course, I was probably just an arrogant and elitist little prick who liked to think of myself as being above my peers because I had now discovered something which no one else could (or wanted to) understand . . . pffft . . . whatever...

What I am 100% sure about is that the Clifford Darling album of early Severed Heads material stood as one of the lonely beacons of intrigue amongst the steaming quagmire of musical dogshit that I found myself wading through during my final days of high school. Clifford even became the proudly touted

### WE KEPT UP WITH ELLARD'S SEVERED HEADS ACTIVITIES BUT BECAME INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED, PARTICULARLY WHEN [THE SEMINAL] 'DEAD EYES OPENED' WAS REMIXED AND REISSUED IN THE MID-'90S. IT HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A HORRIBLY EFFEMINATE LITTLE AFFAIR...



soundtrack to my entire [Higher School Certificate] study sessions. As a whole, the album also opened my ears up to other sonic possibilities beyond the realms of cock rock, unchallenging pop and 'metal up your ass!' - all of which my largely insipid peers seemed enthralled by.

And the high-school friend who introduced me to all this? That was one Aaron Lubinski, with whom I would go on to form Nasenbluten a few years later.

Over the years we both maintained an interest in Severed Heads, particularly the early material that Garry Bradbury was involved in. We also learnt of Tom Ellard's amusing disdain for what he referred to as 'Cliffords'. These were people who apparently only liked the 'early' Severed Heads stuff. That definitely described us and we (somewhat childishly) revelled in it.

We kept up with Ellard's Severed Heads activities but became increasingly disillusioned, particularly when [the seminal] 'Dead Eyes Opened' was remixed and reissued in the mid-'90s. It had been turned into a horribly effeminate little affair with its limp-wristed skipping percussion; all of the gritty elements that made the original 1983 version so quirky and interesting had been well and truly strained out. Even though the remix was not directly Ellard's doing, I guess we were pissed off that a much revered track had been turned into exactly the sort of wimpy unchallenging fruity dance music that we (as Nasenbluten) wanted to pulverise.

After this particular remix of 'Dead Eyes Opened' hit the Australian charts, Severed Heads went on tour around the country. The live act consisted of Tom Ellard and Paul Mac playing keyboards on stage with video accompaniment. They were booked to play with [Melbourne industrial band] Snog at the Newcastle University "Bar On The Hill" on some lost Thursday night in 1994.

Someone at the Newcastle Uni Student Union thought it would be funny to book Nasenbluten as the 'warm up' act. Needless to say we dived at the opportunity to warm up for an act that had meant so much to us during a certain period of our lives (even though we were in the advanced stages of Clifford-style disillusionment). We arrived for sound check sometime late in the afternoon to witness several big heavy-duty road cases full of equipment being hauled backstage and unpacked.

We casually strolled in with a couple of Amiga 600s wrapped in ratty bath towels and plastic shopping bags. Aaron may have even been using a picnic basket as his road case at the time. Our warm up set was booked at 8:30 and we made a point of playing our least palatable and most extreme pieces - to a slightly miffed and largely indifferent crowd of drinkers. Before we did this we made quite a dent in the Severed Heads/Snog 'refreshments rider' which was backstage - much to their chagrin. By the time we finished, all of us were extremely drunk and keen to try and stir up some shit with the headlining visitor and his predictably aloof entourage.

There were a few friends who had come along with us to the show (also proud Cliffords), and one had brought his copy of Clifford Darling Please Don't Live In The Past to try and get Tom to sign it. We knew that Tom probably wouldn't take too kindly to this request and we were keen to see how he would react. After plucking up the courage, we approached Tom with the album and made the request.

Amazingly, Tom regained our instant respect without saying anything. He simply rolled his eyes, snatched up a black marker and wrote on the back of the cover in very small letters: 'I Disapprove' T.Ellard.

HIJACK: Hold No Hostage / Doomsday Of Rap (Music Of Life: UK 1988: NOTE21: 12")

This 12" was probably the be-all and end-all of hip hop for me. The unmistakable sound of late-'80s Britcore. Fast, heavy, uncompromising, didactic and furious. Kamanchi Sly spitting his (rightfully) elitist and perfectly calculated lyrics over fast breakbeats is something that totally mesmerised me when I first heard it, and still gives me goose bumps every time I drop the needle on it. Kamanchi's sharp tirade against the competition is delivered at breakneck speed, and he only comes up for air to make way for the insanely fast and technical cuts of DJs Supreme and Undercover - which are also beautifully executed, amazingly creative and still untouchable to this day.

I was a big fan of Hijack's first single, but this 12" totally nailed things for me - the tempo, attitude and elitism all being turned up a notch since 'Style Wars'. I realised at the time (perhaps stupidly in hindsight) that this record embodied exactly what I wanted and everything I needed from hip hop as a whole - calculated tirades, fast, heavy breakbeats and precision cuts. I didn't give much of a fuck about anything else in hip hop and I still don't - much to the chagrin of the many scene purists.

There were some great records which followed this Hijack 12", but none quite managed to harness the raw power of Kamanchi's delivery and Supreme's production on this specific release. Over the years I remember quite a few people going berserk at Kamanchi Sly's affected American accent, but again this failed to really bother me as his amazing vocal delivery far outweighed any 'faux accent' criticism.

Back in late-'80s Newcastle, word got around my

school that I was into 'that poofter rap shit' and I would occasionally arrive home bruised and bleeding, lock myself in my room and put this record on. Upon listening closely to this record again and further reflecting on those days, I can now confirm that this 12" alone was worth every punch and kick I received.

As the '90s started to wear on, the hip hop records I was hearing had generally relaxed quite a lot – gone were the precision cuts and shouting tirades over up-tempo breakbeats. Instead what graced my ears was an unstoppable wave of wafer thin fragmented drum samples, R'n'B style production with sing-a-long choruses, whole albums about getting stoned and a glut of uncharismatic MCs rhyming so loosely that it sounded like a bunch of half-asleep arseholes reading out their fucking shopping lists. To be fair, there was probably a lot of amazing underground hip hop going on throughout the '90s that I missed out on, and these days I'll occasionally hear a good underground hip hop record that gets me all excited again, but I don't necessarily go looking for them as they seem to be few and far between. A lot of time is instead spent with my collection from the late-'80s period - rediscovering things I had forgotten about or marvelling at some of the primitive production and (still) amazing cuts.

And what of Hijack? It's a great story – it apparently ended in complete bitter acrimony with DJ Supreme parting company from Kamanchi Sly, Undercover and the rest of the crew in 1992 or thereabouts. Amazingly, Kamanchi Sly and Undercover went off and a few years later made a dodgy chart-topping house record that they maliciously released under the name DJ Supreme. Rumour has it that they still haven't spoken to each other since the break up, despite all the retrospective attention Hijack are now receiving. Kamanchi Sly did release a hip hop 12" in 1996 titled 'Death Before Dishonor' under the name Mr Blonde, which tells his side of the break up, and this year DJ Supreme released a DVD called Turntable Trixters which virtually tells the whole story of Hijack from his perspective, despite a lot of unnecessary and annoying commentary by people who obviously had nothing to do with Hijack at the time. Kamanchi Sly is also releasing solo hip hop records again, of varying quality. And while there seems to be a large internet community continually shouting and begging for a Hijack reunion, I for one hope that it never happens. Nothing is ever as good as it used to be. May the legend never be diminished!



THUG: Dad/Thug (Black Eye Records: Australia 1987: BLACK4: 7")

The year is 1987 and Tex Perkins (yes, that Tex Perkins) is obviously bored. Tex has a couple of mates named Peter Read and Lachlan McLeod who are also obviously bored. And probably drunk. Very drunk. Hence, Thug is born and becomes the 'only way to live'.

Most of Thug's recorded output was apparently produced on the cheap and primitive electronic equipment that (as I understand it) one of the band member's flatmates had lying around at the time. Most of the sounds are completely overdriven and the recordings are rough as hell, which adds to their charm. At some stage or other during 1987, Thug's collective boredom and drunkenness culminates in the obtuse electronic pulsating racket entitled 'Dad' - which Sydney's own Red Eye Records sub label Black Eye thankfully immortalised on 7".

What Tex and friends also didn't realise (or care about) at the time, was that this particular two-anda-half odd minutes of idiocy was possibly one of the defining moments in Australian 'dickhead music' history – flattening anything of a similar nature which either preceded or followed it (TISM, Mr. Floppy, Lubricated Goat, Painters & Dockers, etc).

If you listen closely to the first minute of the track you can just make out these lyrics under the crunching rhythmical distortion: He's over there / He's looking good / Do it now / Fuck your dad!

Charming. The remaining ninety seconds of the record continues in the same fashion, but with the shouts and screams of 'Fuck Your Dad!' becoming more and more intense, frenzied and insistent. Then as abruptly as it began, it's over and done with.

As you might expect from this, Thug's live performances were apparently quite the spectacle – gigs would often degenerate into the members belting each other up on stage. Legend also has it that the entire audience at one particular gig were somehow covered completely in flour. A colleague of mine introduced me to this record only recently and upon hearing it for the first time I laughed so hard I think a bit of piss came

When this same colleague unexpectedly bumped into Tex backstage at a gig some years ago, the opportunity to broach the Thug topic was not wasted. Tex apparently downplayed a lot of the Thug material, brushing it off with the comment that a lot of it was just 'unlistenable noise'. Maybe so, but to these ears Thug remains infinitely more interesting than any other Tex Perkins related project – and more genuinely amusing than almost all of the Australian 'dickhead music' which continues to limp around in Thug's wake.

And when [English confrontational noisemakers] Whitehouse released their new album recently, I couldn't help thinking to myself that even those sad old bastards could probably have learnt a thing or two about confrontation from our Tex back in the late '80s.



EUROMASTERS: Alles Naar De Kl--te (Rotterdam Records: Netherlands 1992: ROT009: 12")

I was sick of hip hop by 1992. I hated what it was turning into and everything about it – especially the people who were becoming part of its scene. In hindsight all I really needed was a bit of a break from it, but at the time I desperately wanted to react against it and if there is one record in existence that saved me from becoming a bong smoking, head nodding, hip hop cliche-gurgling deadshit - it was this one.

### **'EVERYTHING IS BULLSHIT' IS THE** ROUGH TRANSLATION OF THE DUTCH TITLE, AND THE SHEER FUCK-OFF-NESS OF THE RECORD REMAINS **UNSURPASSED TO THIS DAY.**

'Everything is bullshit' is the rough translation of the Dutch title, and the sheer fuck-off-ness of the record remains unsurpassed to this day. I had read about this underground 'gabber' scene emerging from Holland in the early '90s, based around the working-class kids in the Dutch industrial city of Rotterdam. It was a while before I heard any of the music though, as the record store I was frequenting in Newcastle at the time refused to stock it. The first time I did hear the music properly was on a pair of crusty headphones at Disco City in Crown St Sydney. I was unemployed at the time and had less than ten bucks in my pocket, so I couldn't afford to buy anything that day. I was gutted. I also remember that [store owner and DJ] Lance famously refused to have those records on the shop sound system as it 'scared the customers'.

Anyway, the week after 'Alles Naar De Kl--te' was released I read a scathing review of it in one of the UK dance music mags - describing it as 'unlistenable 250 BPM noisecore'. Needless to say I was sold on it there and then. I'd never heard electronic music much over 140-150 BPM ... but 250? I thought it was a printing error, but I immediately ordered it from C&C Records in Newcastle and about a month later it arrived.

Shipment days at C&C Records were total chaos. Everyone who bought records in Newcastle - from collectors to bedroom DJs to club DJs - all crammed into C&C Records' 15-square-metre store to listen through and fight over the monthly shipments. On this day when I fought my way to the front and played this record on the shop system it was met with slack-jawed disbelief, screwed up faces and howls of derision. I had found my Mecca. The things people hated about this record were exactly the things I loved about it. It was practically anti-everything I had ever heard, and a big juicy phlegm ball in the eye of any self-gratifying purist.

The record was too fast, too distorted, too 'unlistenable', too harsh, too 'unmusical' and way too much to handle. This record also managed to cover just about everything which was gravely forbidden in the world of electronic music production at the time, being deliciously devoid of any funk element, and

based almost entirely on an insanely overdriven TR-909 and mixer feedback. And it had a load of Dutch gobbledegook shouted throughout. After that day the guys at that store never looked at me the same way. To make matters worse, the cartoon-style cover featured a crude caricature of Rotterdam's famous Euromast driving a tractor along the road away from Amsterdam and towards Rotterdam. In the path of the tractor is a house DJ running for cover, his records spilling out everywhere. Behind the tractor is being towed what appears to be Amsterdam's severed penis and testicles on a trailer.

I later found out that this record was a by-product of the Amsterdam/Rotterdam rivalry that was rearing its head around this time. The difference between the musical scenes was quite apparent, with Rotterdam flexing its heavy industrial sounds in response to Amsterdam's effeminate snooty house scene. In my head something clicked. This record had to be a joke but I didn't give a fuck.

All I knew was that year zero had finally arrived, and with the help of some friends it was time to get Newcastle on the fucking map.



BURZUM: Filosofem (Misanthropy Records: UK 1996: AMAZON009: 2xLP)

In late 1996 I was staying in a small, cramped apartment in Leipzig, in the old East Germany with the two other Nasenbluten guys. We were on a fourmonth European tour and our between-gigs base was in Leipzig, close to where our distributor operated from at the time. It was fucking freezing - one of the coldest European winters on record – and I even remember

it being minus-18 degrees outside at one point. In the small two-room apartment we had a shower, toilet, three beds and a telly. Nothing else. As the apartment was devoid of a fridge, we had to utilize one of the outside-window sills as our makeshift freezer for any food we wanted to store, as well as using it to make our beer cold after lugging cases back from the local supermarket. We were all bored as hell - homesick. skint and pissed off at the waiting time between shows (sometimes two weeks).

I distinctly remember Aaron killing time by creating ridiculous cut-and-paste collages out of all the German junk mail that was pushed through our door - some of which went on to form the sleeve artwork for a couple of our later records. We were so sick of each other's company, living on the smell of an oily rag and not being able to communicate with the landlord or anyone else due to the language barrier. To make matters worse, the telly in our flat was one of the old GDR-issued TV sets that had been in use since before the Berlin Wall had fallen, and it could only receive certain channels broadcasting on the VHF band. One of the only channels we could receive with any English language programming whatsoever was MTV Europe. Then throughout December all three of us became extremely ill with what seemed like an ultra-potent combination of every conceivable flu known to man.

And so there I was on New Year's Eve 1996, laid up in bed, my body aching and head throbbing wildly with some insane East German strain of the flu. The other two guys were well enough to be outside getting drunk and helping the Germans usher in 1997 by throwing fucking big and dangerous firecrackers around in the snow like mad men. I was gaping at MTV in a totally delirious state while trying to ignore my migraine and the absolute chaos erupting outside the apartment window - telling myself that it would all be over soon.

I began drifting in and out of consciousness, and remember coming around at one point and noticing a strained guitar drone emanating from the TV's little speaker, accompanied by shots of what looked like a bleak wintry landscape on the screen. I drifted off again and when I awoke a few minutes later it was still going - in what seemed like a dreamy flu-induced slow motion. This time I stayed conscious long enough to notice the title and artist as it appeared along the bottom of the screen towards the end of the clip – it was 'Dunkelheit' by Burzum - and to my flu-addled mind it sounded

I awoke the next morning and wondered whether I had dreamt it or not. I'm still not sure whether the flu had heightened my perception of the music that night but I wanted to hear 'Dunkelheit' again to satisfy my

curiosity. When I finally arrived home after the tour I tracked down the album *Filosofem*. After getting it home and dropping the needle on the first track 'Dunkelheit', I recognised it straight away. It was a melancholic seven-minute masterpiece that featured droning guitar, slow-motion simplistic drumming, keyboard and the occasional (barely decipherable) vocal. I *still* couldn't understand why it had been on MTV that night but for whatever reason it had been the perfect flu-suffering music. Up until that point I had never been a fan of any metal at all, but this album was something that I could tell had a great affinity with the environment in which it was created – the Scandinavian winter.

A couple of other tracks on the album were in the same vein as 'Dunkelheit', but the remaining tracks took on more of an ambient/minimal dark atmospheric approach. Although some have categorised this album specifically as 'black metal', I found it to be far removed from my perception of 'black metal' as a genre. In any case, I was never a part of the metal scene in any way, shape or form — nor did I know much or even give a shit about it — so soon after buying the *Filosofem* album I learnt quite a few interesting things about Burzum which knocked me for six.

Enquiries revealed that Burzum was apparently a one-man musical tyrant by the name of Varg Vikernes who played all parts and instruments on the Burzum recordings. Filosofem was the last album he recorded before being sent to prison in 1993, and it wasn't released until three years later. He is still serving out a 21-year sentence in a Norwegian prison for arson and murder. He was convicted of burning down several Norwegian churches in the early '90s, and stabbing to death the lead singer, Euronymous, of [another Norwegian black metal band] Mayhem in early 1993. Footage of his court appearances at the time must be seen to be believed - especially his 'cheeky' smile as his sentence is being handed down for Euronymous' murder. Also, when police originally arrested Varg they apparently found 100 kilos of explosives stored at his home - the intended use of which can only be imagined.

Since his imprisonment he has (amazingly) recorded and released two purely electronic 'pagan ambient' albums from his prison cell, the first being *Daudi Baldrs*, which would quite possibly rival any big-budget soundtrack music in substance, feeling and depth alone. After the following album, which was in a similar vein, the prison authorities took his synth away from him and his Burzum project has remained on hold ever since. In 2003, he was granted a short leave from his (at the time) low-security prison and when he failed to

return at the agreed time the police sent out a search party. Rumours have it that they eventually found him in possession of a stolen car and a number of rifles, rounds of ammunition, a GPS unit, bulletproof vests and a false passport. Unsurprisingly, extra time was added to his sentence for that effort.

Varg currently spends his time behind bars reading, writing books and articles, corresponding with fans, postulating on what is wrong with the world and spewing forth his highly dubious opinions on racial purity [and white supremacy] to anyone who will listen - all from his cell in Tromso, Norway. Whatever happens to Varg once he is released from prison is anyone's guess. There are rumours of another Burzum album in the same style as Filosofem, but nothing has been confirmed and, all dodgy political leanings aside, the man is undeniably talented and has made some amazing and beautiful music. Insofar as contemporary music history is concerned however, Burzum will be remembered by those who know of his antics as one bad Norwegian motherfucker who makes Death Row Records' Suge Knight look like an angel.



PANACEA: Tron / Torture (Position Chrome: Germany 1997: CHROME06: 12")

Back in 1997 the drum'n'bass 'techstep' era was in full effect. The manic amen break edits and booming 808 kicks of jungle had been strained out and replaced by a creepy doom atmosphere more aligned with some of techno's scarier elements. The overall sound was cold, clinical and machine-like with obsessively tight percussion almost completely starved of syncopation, save for the occasional understated appearance of

an unchopped break. In fact, most of this musical movement sounded as if it had nothing to do with humans whatsoever – just a bunch of 'emo' machines revelling in their miserable existence.

The UK music press and discerning hipster scum were all up in arms about it and I was fucking loving it as one might expect. I had just been on an extended European tour with Nasenbluten during 1996/97 and had picked up some amazing techstep records, the main one being of course the [seminal] No-U-Turn compilation *Torque*. Other favourites from that era were Stakka, Skynet & Psion's Audio Blueprint work, Dom & Roland and Technical Itch's work on Moving Shadow as well as the rest of the No-U-Turn stuff from that time.

Right at the end of the Nasenbluten tour, we were killing time hanging around at our UK distributor when a box arrived from Germany full of new releases. One of the records was on a label I had never heard of called Chrome and was by an artist I had never heard of called Panacea. According to the distributor this was a German drum'n'bass record that was causing a bit of a ruckus amongst the UK drum'n'bass purists. Any time a purist gets the shits with something you know you should investigate it . . . and so I did.

The track 'Tron' was a monstrous distorted sevenminute drum and noise epic that twisted, turned, ducked and dived in a manner hitherto unheard of. The record seemed to follow a drum'n'bass template, but I was floored by the immense combination of rough percussion and a piercing mid-range bassline, which came across heavier, angrier, darker, denser, juicier and more challenging than any UK drum'n'bass I had ever heard. The record probably had more in common with German industrial hardcore and early DHR [Digital Hardcore] stuff than with any of the UK drum'n'bass at the time. I got the same feeling that I had when I first heard gabber five years earlier - and I immediately wanted more. 'Tron' also received bonus points after I trainspotted a sample of The Mover's 'Nightflight (Non-Stop to Kaos)' track - an early record by the German PCP guys.

When I arrived back in Newcastle I played "Tron" to anybody who would listen, including my flatmate Mick who was also a fan of the uglier techstep side of UK drum'n'bass. He flipped as expected. Mick was also playing various drum'n'bass shows in Sydney and Newcastle at the time, and he started introducing "Tron" into his sets. I hooked up a reliable source for a steady supply of the forthcoming Chrome releases over the following twelve months.

I found that most of the Chrome releases that followed were in the same vein but none quite attained the fierceness and overbearing mid-range damage of 'Tron'.

#### MOST OF THIS MUSICAL MOVEMENT SOUNDED AS IF IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HUMANS WHATSOEVER - JUST A BUNCH OF 'EMO' MACHINES REVELLING IN THEIR MISERABLE FXISTENCE.



X: Dvslexia (X: Australia 1997: X-2:10")

Panacea also released an album on Chrome titled Low Profile Darkness that was probably a defining moment in anti-drum'n'bass. 'Drum and noise' was a much more appropriate description of the album as the percussion at times sounded like people bashing metal garbage lids with truncheons. The reaction from the UK purists was enormous, delicious and thoroughly predictable. My flatmate Mick and I still both enjoyed a lot of the UK drum'n'bass – particularly the colder, scarier more clinical records - but we could also see the bigger picture. Any action (even musical action) has an equal and opposite reaction - and in 1997 Panacea stepped up and proved the theory once again.

One of the funniest things in the drum'n'bass scene is when producers and DJs crap on about 'pushing boundaries'. This became quite an amusing scene cliche at the time and it still is. Mick was booked to play a Sydney drum'n'bass gig towards the end of 1998, and decided to act as the cat amongst the pigeons, putting together a set of his ugliest UK tunes alongside a rather large helping of the German releases. When he had finished his set, one of the self-appointed Sydney drum'n'bass scene 'dons' waddled up in his fucking puffer jacket and asked Mick what he thought he was doing. Mick (being the eternal smartarse) told Mr Don that he had just 'pushed the boundaries'. The Don thought to himself for a moment and then fired back: 'Look mate, I know what 'pushing the boundaries' is and you didn't push 'em - you fucking smashed 'em! We're not here to smash boundaries mate ... that's not what drum'n'bass is about!' When Mick arrived back in Newcastle the next day and informed me of this particular sequence of events we laughed ourselves flat.

Mick was never booked to play in Sydney again. Ever. God bless him

Sometime during the mid- to late-'90s, gabber split off into a bunch of sub-genres - one of them being the amusing microcosm of speedcore. In the same way jungle fetishised the amen break to a certain degree, speedcore fetishised heavily distorted square-wave kick drums at comparatively ludicrous beats-per-minute. To my ears this appeared to be a reaction to the predictable and relatively 'safe' speed of gabber, which had started to slow down to around 180bpm towards the end of the '90s. Not only had gabber slowed down, but it had also become nothing more than another form of polished formulaic dance music - all the early '90s rawness, experimentation, 'loose cannon' antics and aggression had been strained from it as the big wigs of the scene slipped into comfortable formulas, European chart success and fat royalty payments.

Speedcore emerged during this time when a small amount of disgruntled renegade producers, labels and distributors broke away from all the fanfare. These producers wasted no time in removing a lot of the ravey and more accessible elements of gabber, focusing their attention instead on increasing the overall tempo, abrasiveness, brutality, mood and confrontational aspects of the music - all with wildly varying degrees of success. Of course the most difficult thing with the speedcore micro-genre was to always maintain forceful rapid-fire low-frequencies at immense speed - and keep it interesting. (Any dickhead can run their sequencer at 300bpm - but it takes a creative dickhead to justify it).

Usually as the tempos increased, the rapid retriggering of the kick drum prematurely cut off any of the preceding kick drum's decay, thus removing a lot of

the intended force. In effect the kick drums had no time to 'breathe'. A good speedcore record (and there were some) would usually be centred around a distorted kick drum with a good, low-frequency punch and a quick but forceful decay - tight enough to be retriggered at speeds largely in excess of 250bpm and still maintain an unhealthy serve of bottom-end brutality. Not a lot of producers realised this and as a result the production of good speedcore became a black art.

Down here in Australia at the time there were a bunch of us who were active in the speedcore domain. A handful of the Bloody Fist roster were experimenting with extreme bpms as were a few guys in Sydney - namely a pair of German immigrant brothers who went under the name Rage Reset. The thing that set Rage Reset apart from the Bloody Fist guys was that their production was always a cut above. With most of the Bloody Fist stuff we were just taking the piss – exploring, experimenting, being reactionary and putting harebrained theories into action without giving two fucks - but the Rage sound usually came off bolder, more austere, more focused and with much more attention to detail. As a result, their records dated far more gracefully than most of the Bloody Fist stuff from that time.

Rage Reset ran three labels; Rage Records being the main one with UHF and X being the sub-labels. Their main output was on Rage Records, with a few unknown and other guest artists appearing on their UHF imprint. Their X label however, was something special indeed. Overall there were three releases on X - two 10" releases and an 8(!)"- all of them existing in painfully limited pressing quantities. I suppose their idea was to 'hide' behind this label as the releases have very little (if

any) information on them, and shipped in clear plastic sleeves. Although there were a few rumours about who was involved with the third X release, the second one was definitely a Rage Reset record through and through. This record also came and went quietly - nobody in the scene seemed to take much notice, preferring instead to pay attention to some of the more gimmicky and idiotic speedcore records doing the rounds at that time (a few of which Bloody Fist were responsible for). But the first time I heard X-2, I knew that it single-handedly blew every other speedcore record - and our entire back catalogue - out of the water. One track in particular clocked in at 270bpm and made use of an amazing sample that I could only describe as some sort of humungous growling monster - the volume of which strobed between the heavy quickfire kick drums at various points throughout the track. The other thing that set this track apart from many others in its genre was its amazing ebb and flow. Over a four- to five-minute period the mood morphed between creepy, ambient, tense atmospherics and an immensely thunderous and violent 270bpm rage. The balance and impact was perfectly devastating – especially when played on huge rigs with massive subs.

And so, it was time to hang up the boots – Rage Reset had nailed this speedcore bollocks in one fell swoop. X-2 was well produced; extremely heavy, sharply focused and scary as fuck – perfect soundtrack music – and everything 'gabber' could have been but would never be. As far as I was concerned this record was the new yardstick ... nothing I heard after it even came close to its beautiful apocalyptic intensity, and I gradually lost enthusiasm for the speedcore genre as a whole. I still play this record out when time and place permits – and was playing it in Europe as recently as last year when I was touring.

This is probably one of the most underground and slept-on Australian records in *any* genre of electronic music – but it can *still* take heads off almost 10 years after its release. Hell indeed hath no fury like X-2.



DESTINATION: The Trip / Nowhere (Narcotic Network Recordings: Germany 1997: NNR02:12")

Throughout the 1990s there existed a small and legendary dedicated group of German guys who went under the name PCP (Planet Core Productions). They had their own distribution company PCD (Planet Core Distribution) and countless in-house labels, all based in Frankfurt. A large majority of the records on these labels were also produced in-house. Their labels variously covered techno, gabber, industrial hardcore, trance, hip hop, acid, drum'n'bass and whatever else

they thought they could turn their hands to. The main in-house producer was The Mover (Marc Trauner/ Acardipane), and he was later joined by Stickhead (Miroslav Pajic). Although a dab hand at programming many styles, The Mover specialised in what some people termed 'Phuture Techno' or 'Doomcore'. This style was characterised by a dark, melancholic or sometimes menacing atmosphere – often programmed at slower tempos and sometimes having very little in common with other techno music of the time. Original pressings of records by The Mover are well sought after by PCP fanatics worldwide – and rightly so – much of his distinct 'doomcore' style has not been matched since. I became an avid collector of PCP and related records

after hearing The Mover's beautifully miserable Final Sickness LP in 1993/94. There was also an in-house PCD label called Kotzaak which catered for their heavier industrial hardcore output - most of which came courtesy of The Mover's protege, Stickhead. Although mostly known throughout the 90s for his cracking hardcore records, Stickhead (in true Mover style) was also well-versed in the creation of incredibly austere doomcore. A few notable records were recorded and released on several PCD labels under various monikers such as Rat Of Doom, Frozen and Reign. In 1997 PCD started vet another in-house label called Narcotic Network Recordings. There were only to be three releases on this label before PCD dissolved completely in the late '90s. The second release on the label was under the name Destination (another Stickhead alias). This record featured two tracks, the first side being somewhere between illbient, electro and experimental techno and the second side being a remarkably encapsulating beatless 10-minute dirge.

When I initially obtained the record in 1997 it was just another new PCP related release for my collection – I quickly skipped through the A-side before filing the record alongside the others and forgetting about it. A year later a friend and I were having a couple of quiet drinks one night and listening to some PCP records from my collection when I finally paid close attention to what was actually on this record. Side A was quirky and kind of interesting but was easily forgotten. The track 'Nowhere' on side B however, turned out to be one of the most amazingly sombre and morose pieces of music I had ever heard and it immediately put a downer on the entire evening. At the end of the night I apologised to my friend and filed the record away.

I remember from that point on I couldn't bring myself to listen to the entire piece again. Why it was on the B-side of what amounted to an experimental techno record was anybody's guess. This was a serious example of powerful music that dealt with the seldom-

THE TRACK 'NOWHERE'... TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE MOST AMAZINGLY SOMBRE AND MOROSE PIECES OF MUSIC I HAD EVER HEARD AND IT IMMEDIATELY PUT A DOWNER ON THE ENTIRE EVENING.

acknowledged normal human experience of grief, mourning, sadness, bereavement and sorrow. The record was obviously for listening to only in times of quiet contemplation or solitude – and without a fucking dance floor in sight.

And so I left the record alone, as I had no need to go there. That is, until six years later at the beginning of October 2004 when I found an occasion to play it. I had decided to move onto pastures new after spending 31 years in Newcastle. Everything I knew and loved was there but I was about to leave it all, possibly for good – for no other reason than 'life being too short' to stay there any longer. Oh ... and the shitty hot weather. During one of my final evenings in Newcastle I was alone and busy packing everything up in my apartment when I found this record and noticed that the turntables still hadn't been packed away. It was the end of an era in my life and I knew what I had to do.

So I dropped the needle on it and sat there crying like a little girl for fucking ages.

That was the very last record I listened to before bidding Newcastle farewell – and happily, I haven't felt the need to listen to it since.

### **SLEEVE REVIEWS**

#### Interview with Rehecca Paton





#### NOSREP

Iust Don't (S&M) Format: LP Designer: uncredited

BAM! This design takes 'Sit on my face and tell me that you love me' absolutely literally! On the back cover is a zoomedin halftone image of a bald fellow with a kooky, simple line illustration of a strap-on over his face. Despite the explicit nature of that particular image, the humorous treatment and unique illustration style give the artwork an edgy yet warm appeal. The imagery is made more punchy by being entirely black and white, but for a fluoro orange spot colour.

The front cover has two beasties in hoodies, with American college typography brandishing 'Just Don't' (the album title) with the Nike logo on the barking beast and the artist name, NOSREP, on the bugging out beast, (love the anti-capitalist sentiment). The illustrations are reminiscent of Jeremy Pruitt from Think Mule—simple but then becoming delightfully detailed in areas that really matter, such as the inside ear veins, eyeballs and brain-like background pattern.

The two colours are used to great effect. The fluoro is used exclusively for decorative elements such as the brain pattern, the hinges wrapped over the spine and ink spots on the back cover. Black is used for the beasties and the romantically-minded chap on the back... Printed on uncoated stock, the orange fluoro is overprinted by the black ink and the inside of the sleeve is solid fluoro, which makes for a 'tah dah' thrill

when you reach in for the record.

One could be forgiven for thinking it is the cover of a breakcore or glitchy electro record, however, it is actually decimated hip hop, ravaged R&B and crunk rap. The artwork fits but has probably made more than one hardcore fan look when they shouldn't! Irreverent, humorous and highly graphic, this design is truly unique and attempts to be innovative, succinctly—'pulls it off' too.

#### Jackson and His Computer Band

Smash (Warp) Format: LP Designer: Egospray

If they hadn't used coated stock, this cover would be perfectly recyclable because it is completely sans glue, staples or other pulping machine foes. This is not advanced paper mechanics, but simply a huge elliptical sheet that folds down the long bisector and then perpendicularly, the two outer thirds fold inwards to create a luxurious gatefold sleeve.

When folded out, one side acts as an alternative format poster for a multimedia collage of flamingos, gimps, guns and other unrelated miscellany which is made cohesive by the overall aesthetic. This is incredibly appropriate, as it parallels the cut-up, microsampled approach of the music. The other side holds the cover graphics, with the two rounded panels and the two squares of space between them treated as separate

Predominantly greyscale, there are tints of red, pink and brown used sparingly. The front is Jackson in a

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dinner suit and top hat, glaring from a table with a tizzily decorated cake that sports the album name, Smash, written in the icing. The photo has a silent movie aesthetic and although completely static, the temptation to smash the cake and see all the buttery icing erupt, gives it a sinister dynamic. The back has a photo of a beautifully creepy installation of relief paper cut outs, LEDs and some pantyhosed mannequin legs. It seems to allude to Jackson's creative space with a computer, electronic music gear, collaborators and ladiez represented. The two rounded panels are greyscale texture collages that reference electrical diagrams and graffiti. They are low contrast and are pretty much just uninspired graphic wallpapering-a lost opportunity for the inside of the gatefold sleeves.

The type is set in almost exclusively Copperplate Gothic, but for an abysmal typewriter font for the release details and the Warp barcode. It interacts badly with both. Copperplate Gothic is awful to read for more than a few lines—especially if it is a murky brown reversing out of black! The designer decided a tacky drop shadow was the way to get around readability issues for text of any length, but would have been better off changing the colour of the type and adding some extra tracking. The form and extra functionality of the sleeve are clever and the imagery is interesting to ponder over. The typographer, however, should cop a poke in the eye with something spiky, or at least be subjected to type101-for all of our sakes!

#### Désormais

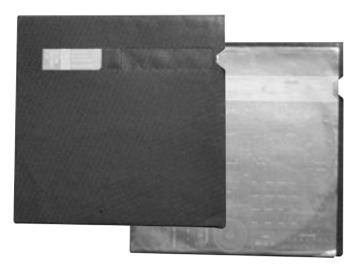
Dead Letters to Lost Friends (intr.version) Format: CD Designer: Desso

Riding on a wave of whimsy, the freeform approach to the graphics and form of this CD is delightful. All the text is pewter and hand lettered in a loopy but legible cursive hand—even on the CD itself. The lettering reverses out of black waves that look as if they were fashioned from cut paper, and are layered upon french grey and russet waves. A proud mariner with full billowed sails glides in from the left side of the cover and the wind that fills them is represented by hand drawn swirls with a flock of terns riding them. The back cover continues with the wave imagery and curly wind representation and the track titles radiate from a solo. soaring tern. The inside cover continues with the wind swirl motif but changes to the russet and pewter of the limited colour palette.

Printed on a strip of matte laminated card, the back cover is machine sewn with pale blue thread at the edge to hold the plain white paper pocket that houses the CD. Not only is this an incredibly utile solution, but it adds a real tactile experience to the package, as it is a true pleasure to feel the stitching break the smoothness of the laminated card. It is a shame that the card chosen is only about 280gsm, (less than a standard business card), as the package lacks robustness and will probably not fare to well.

A sense of adventure is instilled and there is a beautiful interplay between the 'ye olde' motifs and post modern design sentiment. A beautiful album sonically too, instrumental washes are punctuated by electronic sparks and folkish, lilting melodies. The voyage metaphor isn't shoved down one's throat but aptly hints that the music within will take the listener on a beautiful, escapist journey.







#### Broken Hands + Lucky Rabbit

lucky hands (TwoThousandAnd) Format: CD

Designer: MR

This London release manages to give an evocative sense of place, the feel of the music and becomes a treasureable object because of its simple, elegant and unique form. Two sheets of matte board the colour of frosted glass are inoffensively taped from the inside to form the cover. This frames the front and back cover photographs as if being exhibited.

The front cover has a square, movement filled photo of a London park with a frenzy of pigeons taking off. The only warmth in the otherwise desaturated colour palette is a woman in a red coat, ducking from the sudden flight. The back cover has a photo of a brown, depressing apartment complex but in the foreground strands of brightly coloured flags flutter in the wind and contrast the otherwise bleak scene with their mirth. The CD is printed with a photo of crystalline fountains plashing in front of a compressed concrete corporate structure. The drone of everyday scenes is made joyful by playful contrast, much the same way as the music drones and resonates with experimental guitars and fire crackle.

The only type is on the back photograph panel and is all red and set in charming old Avant Garde. Clean and slick, the logo is used as a dinkus and the overall design is used for all of the albums on the label, but for changing the colours and photographs to suit.



#### Inverse Cinematics

Slow Swing E.P. (Pulver) Format: EP Designer: uncredited

With this sober but lavish treasure, the cover is treated as packaging proper. It is a series design, and from the care and expense incurred by the label, one can only conclude that its contents contain something precious and covetable. The package is essentially a cover with an inner sleeve, but it is how they are treated and interact that makes the piece much more than that.

Thick, unbleached, lacquered card forms the cover and is printed with diagonal repetitions of the label name in wee, black, Trade Gothic type to pattern the space. The inside is printed with orthogonal, lined shapes that create dark patches where they overlap. Three unevenly spaced lines are embossed and Pulver is debossed next to a die cut window that reveals the soft blue metallic print of the inner sleeve. A small trapezium shaped die cut sits at the edge of the cover to allow easy removal of the inner sleeve, which has the information and graphics for the album.

The background of the inner sleeve is solid metallic ink, with schematic diagrams of various electronic music gear, from an MPC through to the inputs at the back of an amp. Tone is achieved by using thin lines with various spacing. Clean and stylised, these graphics sedately claim that the broken beat and deep house within is of high quality and to be taken seriously. A white band braces the sleeve aligned with the thumb hole of the jacket, and the information is set within this space in Euromode—almost as if it were as specification sheet for a designer product created by an industrial designer. This treatment interacts and resonates with the slick imagery of the technical equipment; the inner sleeve interacts with and redefines the outer sleeve; and even the graphic device of the instructional diagram approach allows the cover to speak of the product as a desirable 'tool' to have handy.

#### Moderat

Russian Courier (BPitch Control) Format: 12" Designer: Gema

They only made 900 of these covers, and it is damn diligent of the artists involved that they made even that many of the hand screened and painted time suckers! Chances are they got a production line of people together with some German beers and painted and printed the day away, (it's probably apt, as my copy is number 57 and the painting is daubed in the way painting gets after a few).

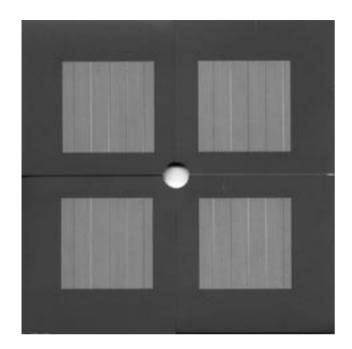
The uncoated card has a highly stylised Germanic flag hanging from two hooks, although one of the cords has snapped, giving the device to apply the print on whatever angle the print template falls. This contains the album details with major headings in a Blackletter typeface and track details in DIN. The proportions of the two typefaces work well together. A medicine bottle frames information about the two collaborating groups' (Modeselektor and Apparat) upcoming releases and logos are incorporated into the print template design as if they were dinkuses. The graphic elements from the cover print and those typefaces are used on the record sticker, which is printed with grey and orange.

The cover print is made with watery ink with large pigments which gives the surface a rough feel but the charcoal colour becomes inky. The reversed out type is then screened over in white gauche with loose trapping to further mute the print appearance. Orange, red, blue and white gauche is dribbled, scraped and blotted on after the print has been made to give the object a real sense of being individually created by someone. It really adds a sense of action and each time the sleeve is encountered, different visions of the people, time and place that it was made sputter through the mind.











#### Various

Room 40 (Wire Magazine release) (Room 40) Format: CD Designer: Rinzen

This mix CD was produced as an exclusive giveaway for the April issue of The Wire magazine, celebrating Room 40's 5th birthday. All 10,000 were lovingly hand folded, and although the paper mechanics may have rued their design decision at the time, it is the simple and clever approach which makes this package such a breath of fresh air.

The design uses one sheet of card, a teal ink and no glue. The card is die cut so that the four panels coming off the central square interlock such that the package seemingly blossoms open, (think of the way you might close the top of a moving box). When closed, there is a circle that goes from the front, right through the centre of the CD to the other side. It begs for finger poking action and leads the user to open the package intuitively.

The front is solid teal but for four panels of thin parallel lines within each square panel, thus the package graphically becomes the Room 40 logo. The CD itself is printed with the same white lines, but for some minimal type with the album details. The track listing is printed on the three inside horizontal panels, with simple, modernist typography. Rather than using different weights, colours or sizes for the hierarchy of type, the information is divided in the three spaces and is completely homogenous.

There is something incredibly satisfying about a design that is so slick and eloquent but doesn't even appear to be trying. Bells and whistles are impressive and fun, but nothing can beat a beautiful concept. Rinzen has done many of the Room 40 designs and also did the cover design for the second issue of Cyclic Defrost. It's definitely worth looking out for other design offerings from Rinzen who is based in Brisbane.

#### Peeping Tom

Peeping Tom (Ipecac Recordings) Format: CD

Designer: Martin Kvamme, Mike Patton and Lady T

The kind of pervert referred to here obviously likes panties of the stinky kind because the graphics for Mike Patton's newest offering are stale and 70s smelly. The concept is cute, if not a little literal—as you pull out the tab on the right side, the CD pops out of the left side, switching the image of the naked woman through the die cut keyhole to that of a creepy male eye. It's a playful device, although it is doubtful that the package would withstand years of listening, as the sliding mechanism seems a little flimsy. Thankfully, the album only warrants a couple of plays before it gets tired, so it's unlikely that this will be a problem for many!

The flatness of the album's sound is echoed by the graphics which allude to the 70s porn aesthetic but have none of the charm. Silhouettes of sexy women undressing are blatantly made with the Adobe Illustrator auto trace tool; cop a bad perspective drop shadow and a red radial gradient. This is the sort of realisation that I would expect from a first semester design student who's just learnt about computer graphics. The gloss finish does nothing to help with the flatness, and further reduces the package's retro impact.

'Peeping Tom' uses a thick, sans serif typeface with a slightly eroded edge which is reminiscent of a poster screen print. Rather than a solid fill, a rising sun is revealed, making the type one of the more interesting and effective elements of the design. Even the liner note typography is nicely handled, revealing the radial gradient from the graphics. This could have been quite a treasure, but missed the mark—possibly due to a 'design by committee' approach where the idea got diluted. Cute but not perve worthy!



### MUSIC REVIEWS

Looking for the new zvdeco bluegrass-micro house crossover reviews? In the interests of avoiding infinite micro-genres we've created our own classification. Here's your guide:

#### 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 elsewise.

#### MIDS

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

#### INWS

**Rumbling and mumbling:** Hiphop, 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:

#### Detritus

Origin (Ad Noiseam)

David Dando-Moore's 2003 debut album as Detritus 'Endogenous' clearly showed the UK-based producer's electro-industrial roots, the contents leaning predominantly towards hard-edged drum and bass, balanced with a sweeping orchestral approach reminiscent of Dead Can Dance's gothic atmospheres. Intended as a statement against "the parodic and saddening low quality of many electro-industrial releases", this follow-up 'Origin' inhabits considerably more downbeat terrain. with Dando-Moore building emotive atmosphere amidst frequently harsh and jarring rhythmic elements. Slow armour-plated tracks such as the forlorn 'Dead Daffodils' certainly manage to conjure lush cinematic atmosphere, the sweep of vaguely Eastern European orchestration counterpointed effectively by sparse, distorted industrial beats. 'Tinsel' meanwhile represents a descent into humming walls of droning electrical substation noise punctuated by menacing electro rhythms that calls to mind Techno Animal and Dalek's explorations into swaggering industrial dub-hop. Chris Downton

#### Dextro

Consequence Music (16K Records)

Consequence Music is Glasgow based Ewan Mackenzie's debut full-length album. He evokes a quietly introspective late-night listening mood, where long tracks lull at a consistently languid BPM. The emphasis on sustained synthetic notes, repeating melody lines and the use of voice as a textural rather than lyrical device draws the listener in to an ethereal realm, providing enough space

and grace to encourage a peaceful drifting off. Yet, his skill as a percussionist is evident here, with gentle, well placed beats providing enough punch to draw attention back to the music. In this sense, it very much ebbs and flows as a sojourn in intensive listening.

Some compare his work to his fellow Scottish counterparts the Boards of Canada, which is not an entirely unfair analogy but I do wonder if it is made more because of a common geography rather than a common sound. His style of composition with a concern towards a gradually evolving sound continuum draws upon the heritage of C20th composers like Steve Reich and Harold Budd but the interwoven melodies and textures on this album make it more of a cinematic experience, a soundscape for a film (or a dream) that exists only in the inner mind's eye. Renae Mason.

#### Directorsound

(Powershovel Audio) A dusty, creaky sound full of melancholic minor keys made by classical guitars, pianos, accordions, mandolins and a

Tales From The Tightrope Vol.1

sparse drum kit is the introduction to this gorgeous album from Directorsound. What sounds like a quartet sitting in a warm room playing these late night paeans to real emotions is in fact the work of one man - Nick Palmer, a literary student who hails from Dorset in the UK.

Evoking the sounds of obvious parallels including Ennio Morricone's quieter moments, Ry Cooder's Paris Texas soundtrack and Calexico circa their Black Light album, Palmer began recording in 2001 on a borrowed quarter inch reel to reel machine at the age of 22. Remarkable really, considering

the maturity and resonance he evokes within these 14 instrumental works. Nothing is overplayed and repeated listens reveal quiet counter melodies and field recordings floating away in the murky background of several of the tunes. The way Palmer is able to bring out such strong emotions via his simple craft and head for minor key melodies make this a nostalgic listen, transporting us to an imagined past, perhaps a 1950's black and white romance film set in the Mediterranean. This is intimate music at it's finest. Lyndon Pike

#### Doddodo

Sample Bitch Story (Adaadat)

Osaka-based noisecore / plunderphonic artist Namin Haku apparently takes her alter-ego name Doddodo from her obsession with dots ('dod' in Japanese) and this eight-track mini-album follows on the heels of a steady stream of ultralimited CDR and cassette releases on underground Japanese labels including Space Moth and G2. Taking equal cues from fellow Japanese experimentalists Boredoms (particularly their 'Chocolate Synthesiser' period) and the lo-fi sample-based barrage of Alec Empire's DHR, 'Sample Bitch Story' actually comes across as far more accessible than its somewhat ferocious title suggests.

While there's certainly the odd concession to all-out sonic violence (witness the fantastically-titled 'Whitehousedisco', which resembles Kid606 going head-to-head with the cast of 'Riverdance'), much of this record appears to poke its tongue knowingly at the established cliches embedded in commercial hiphop. Opening track 'ABCDOsaka' layers buzzing industrial feedback over a crunked-up backdrop of distorted turntablism and wall-of-sound screaming augmented by toy samples, while a stray fragment of Ice Cube even rears its head on 'King Of Tomorrow's eerie fusion of Hammond organ, overdriven synth-bass and relentlessly clanking beats. Like a more hiphopfixated Boredoms locked down with a room full of budget gear - Doddodo brings the noise. Chris Downton

#### **John Harte**

Misono Days (Book/CD - Studio Warp) John Harte is an Australian photographer who lives in Osaka. Since moving there in the 90s he has become intertwined with the Osaka music scene, eventually settling up Cafe Q with his wife Yuka and friend Yoko who is also a contemporary dancer, as well as touring many Western musicians to Osaka. John and Yuka also write music and perform as Pig & Machine, a noisy sample-based

electronic punk duo. Misono Days is a collection of 30 A5 sized postcards in a book that document the last few years of crazy performances and happenings at Cafe Q, with a CD neatly stuck inside the back cover featuring some of the many bands who appear in the photos. John's photography captures the completely otherworld experience of some of these bands and the anarchic and comic atmosphere that permeates the scene. The vivid dayglo colours of some of the photos match the bright noisy hyperactive red cordial music that is on the CD. Splatterings of chipcore, breakcore, noise and gaudy samples frenetically mashed in a way that only Osaka-based musicians seem to be able to do - without seeming concern for the original source material and simultaneously celebrating and parodying melodies and chaotic beats. Amongst the acts featured include the reasonably well-known like Ove-Naxx, Gulpepsh and DoDDoDo through to those you need to hear like Pig & Machine, Zuinosin and the amusing Ichi

Pick up a copy via Amazon Japan before its strictly limited print run disappears. (yes, they will deliver outside of Japan if you can blunder your way through the language issues). Sebastian Chan

Bang Boshi Crew.

#### The Kilimanjaro Darkjazz Ensemble (Planet Mu)

Kilimaniaro Darkiazz Ensemble is a project of Jason Kohnen, a.k.a. Bong-Ra amongst other things, and Gideo Kiers. Bong-Ra's specialty is nasty breakcore - 250bpm broken beats and more bass than any reasonable artist would put on a record. Opening track The Nothing Changes is downbeat ambient jazz given a menacing overtone while follow up Pearls for Swine begins as a lesson in glitchy electronica, before launching into an aural assault verging on noise

terrorism before returning to the sedate

electronica. With this as a beginning my

expectations were confounded: Kohnen

almost seems to want to shake off his

reputation as a man who's listened to

too much hardcore. What works on

these tracks, and indeed what makes

up the majority the album, is the slow, downbeat jazz which at times reaches moments of minimal beauty. In the context of this Kohnen's throwbacks to his alter ego seem out of place, ripping through the atmosphere of that around it. It is the atmospherics that drive this album and it is perhaps not surprising that KDE began life scoring the classics of silent cinema. For all the credit I give to Kohnen, KDE are a genuine ensemble: they have real people playing real instruments, not just a man and his sample archive. This cinematic starting point informs the album, and you can't help but wonder what film they've dreamt that this is scoring. Weaving between dark ambient jazz, electronica and back again, KDE is an album that is perhaps not what you would expect from label such as Planet Mu, more commonly associated with the industrial drum n bass of owner  $\mu$ -ziq but very welcome none the less. Ali Burge

#### Mapstation

Distance Told Me Things To Be Said (~scape/Inertia) Low-key and bereft of virtuoso displays (not that there couldn't be so, given

the presence of Radian drummer

oddly-titled Distance Told Me Things To Be Said—To Rococo Rot member Stefan Schneider's fourth album and ~scape debut—at first seems a less than dynamic outing compared to the Berlin label's previous output, yet its subtle charms insidiously grow with each listen. Mapstation (not a new project, incidentally, as the Düsseldorf resident has been performing under the name since 2000) merges Jamaica and Africa into a nu-dub hybrid, combining the faded aromatic vibe of the former with the hypnotic pulsations of the latter. Nominally referenced by 'Loin d'Afrique,' the fusion is literally realized in 'Constant' where Brandlmayr's thrumming toms merge with the evocative wheeze of Schneider's melodica. Despite an overall unified sound, individual songs differentiate themselves: bulbous synth tones become a tribal anchor for undulating melodies in 'Sororities,' Rhodes chords and synth whooshes slither into view accompanied by Annie Whitehead's trombone bluster in the skanky 'Horns Version,' and Jelinek-styled crackle coats insistent burble in 'The Sinuous Ribbon.' Warm and topographical, the album's sense of place is enhanced by the incorporation of city-based field recordings within 'Listening To Stockholm' and 'Valencia Was Asleep' (harbour creaks and water sounds audible amidst the becalmed electronic wavers in the former, street

Martin Brandlmayr), Mapstation's

#### Secret Mommy

noises in the slumbering latter).

rewarding. Ron Schepper

Sometimes what at first seems too

understated ultimately proves more

VervRec (Power Shovel Audio) Vancouver-based Andy Dixon (aka Secret Mommy) has previously released albums through Orthlong Musork and his own Ache Records label, and this latest effort on Japanese imprint Power Shovel Audio takes its title from the conceptual theme Dixon has developed it around - namely sports and recreational activities. With an approach that mirrors Matthew Herbert's thematic sampling explorations such as Plat Du Jour, Dixon has drawn upon field recordings from a variety of different recreational venues including dojos, weights rooms and even a childrens' daycare centre. Amassing a large sample library that includes tennis balls being struck, ice skaters gliding on a rink and dancers learning to tap, he's then stuck the results through all manner of complicated digital processing and editing, reshaping the sounds of martial artists practicing into spastically-twitching breakbeats and house in a manner that certainly calls to mind Aphex Twin's tweaked-out trickery on more than a few occasions. Perhaps a closer comparison still in terms of similar producers would be The Rip-Off Artist, with the scrunchedup sampling of Dixon attempting to play a trombone for the first time on 'Music Room' particularly calling to mind his pranksterism involving toys and sonically-mutilated instruments. Extremely impressive on its own

#### Sofalofa

Mellifluous (Bathysphere) Inspired by the recent birth of his two children, this debut album as Sofalofa shows Bathysphere Recordings co-founder Chris Cousins' ambient electronic soundscapes imbued with a 'widescreen' sense of wonder that recalls 'Not For Threes'-era Plaid. Anchored thematically around the topics of birth and childhood, tracks such as the gorgeously delicate 'Florence' place minimal IDM rhythms beneath treated samples drawn from such sources as a baby's mobile, resulting in a deep listening experience that's touched by a distinctly personal approach. Cousins' parallel film and theatre soundtrack work also exerts a discernible influence on sweeping cinematic moments here such as 'Heartwarm', which slowly builds treated cello drones over a backdrop of

conceptual level. Chris Downton

a beatless counterpoint to the rhythmic trickery explored elsewhere on this record. Alternately melodic and sweetly contemplative, with the odd tilt towards darkly buzzing electronics (see 'Counterbalance'), 'Mellifluous' certainly lives up to its title, and shows Cousins forging a distinctive mark amongst the increasingly-crowded IDM scene. Fans of the likes of Plaid, Adam Johnson and Proem should definitely give this a listen. Chris Downton

#### Various Artists

History is Bunk Parts 1 & 2 (Hefty/Inertia) Hefty Records are spending much of this year celebrating their 10th birthday, and these two compilations cover much of that history, albeit in a somewhat revised form, as the subtitle would imply. Hefty can be a difficult label to pin down, covering all the bases of Chicago music, from modern jazz to post-rock and "future roots music", a term label boss John Hughes III coined for his 2004 Slicker album We All Have A Plan. In something of a coup, each CD features a remix by a Yellow Magic Orchestra member: on Part 1, Ryuichi Sakamoto turns Telefon Tel Aviv's 'Sound in a Dark Room' into something like minimal dub, while Haruomi Hosono's work on Slicker's 'God Bless This Mess, This Test We Pass' is almost invisible at first — a strangely unradical interpretation of the original, although nicely minimal. Daedelus, on the other hand, is in radical form in his reworking of Savath + Savalas' 'Paths in Soft Focus' doing his stumbling jungle thing - lots of fun. Elsewhere on Part 1, Perth resident Victor Bermon presents 'The Lonely Tired Dance, a track that is very pretty with its guitar chords and subtly clicky sampled percussion, and STS9, Slicker and Retina.IT collaborate with some minimal hip-hop with guitars. Japan's Spanova open Part 2 with the lovely layered vocals on 'Absentminded', which eventually turns into a kind of funky ambient electro. Telefon member JLE

Jelinek is typically minimal in remixing jazz trio Samadha. It is a shame these two comps aren't combined on a double CD, because many listeners will probably find a few tracks they love on both and a few they don't particularly care for. Still, they're both solid compilations from a very fine label. Peter Hollo

#### Various Artists

Idol Tryouts Volume 2 (Ghostly International/Inertia) One of the best compilations so far this year, Idol Tryouts 2 showcases a label at its prime. The Ann Arbor-based Ghostly International label has swiftly become the label to best represent the diversity of North American electronic music - from techno and house to electronically enhanced futuristic hip hop, modern industrial, lush ambient and experimental tones. This label diversity has been helped by an impressive design aesthetic, right from the earliest releases. Idol Tryouts 2 expands the roster further with a retrospective of some previous releases, some ring-ins, and new material. Disc one, subtlted avant-pop, opens with the sweet electropop melodies of Solvent before settling back into the rubbery techno funk of Matthew Dear and later the classic stripped back funk of Dabrye's Magic Says. Some of Ghostly's recent signings have been 'proper' bands and their latest Skeletons & The Girl-Faced Boys is a chaotic jittery freak-out soul fusion jam, and Benoit Pulard's The Depths & The Seashore could have been pulled from 1991 shoegazer indie. Disc two is full of ambient delights - Loscil's subaquatic pulses, Cepia's widescreen haze, Greg Davis's unravelling guitar spindle, Tim Hecker's processed fuzz and feedback are the standouts. Sebastian Chan

#### Various Artists

Min2Max (M nus) Minimal is back. Apparently once again a dance genre in vogue, Richie Hawtin's M\_nus label releases Min2Max. This

compilation, the second on the M\_nus

label, reveals a rather unexpected fullness. Instead of a sparse, cold and mechanical world - the 12 tracks from Hawtin's acolytes are a whole lot more than tics, pops and pulses, subtle texture and variance. Basslines swing and analogue synth tones bubble and shake. Heartthrob's opener is bouncy electro-influenced techno whilst Troy Pierce's GRVL is effectively modulating acid techno and the trance-like end of Loco Dice's Orchidee could be 1992 (and Hawtin's +8 label) all over again - except for the persistent glitch percussion. The standout track is from none other than Wink. His Have To Go Back is all futuristic deep space techno, complete with radar pulses that build into a disorienting maze of reflections. This is music that for the most part could really be anywhere from 15 years to 15 minutes old, and that's a shame because coming from Hawtin's stable I had expected more depth and, to be frank, proper minimalism, Sebastian Chan

Culture, dahling, culture:

#### Badawi

Safe

(Asphodel) Ably abetted by a stellar cast of musicians associated with the New York jazz scene (string players Eyvind Kang, Mark Feldman, Jane Scarpantoni, tuba player Marcus Rojas, guitarist Marc Ribot), the Israel-born composer Reuel 'Raz' Mesinai (aka Badawi) conjures the deep mysteries of the Middle East and Arabia on his second Asphodel full-length Safe. Though his guests predictably dig into the aromatic material with impassioned ferocity, Mesinai's no slouch as a player either, his aggressive piano attack in the feverish 'The Avenging Myth' more than equal to the broil stoked by Feldman and Kang, the 14-minute epic also a showcase for Mesinai's percussive talents (apparently he was introduced to Middle Eastern drumming as a child and spent time in drumming circles with Yemenite and Moroccan Jews, where he learned how to play instruments like the Zarb, the Darabuka, and the Bendir). On 'Sound on its Eccoing,' his flute lines undulate hypnotically over a funereal drone, with Mesinai's dub influences coming to the fore in the echoing string plucks that

drift across the tune's desert expanses like a nomadic tribe. Elsewhere, the exotic hoedown 'I Said Oblivion' affords the violinists an ideal vehicle for trading infectious lines while Shahzad Ismaily's electric bass animatedly rumbles through 'Ocean of Tears (2005 remix).' With Ribot's stirring guitar work a focal point, 'The Bedouin Walks Alone' strongly aligns the Middle Eastern dimension of Mesinai's sound with the ambiance of his adopted New York. Safe impresses as a meticulously crafted and thoroughly accessible presentation of exotic soundscaping. Ron Schepper

#### Diaspora

Let's Hear It For The Vague Blur (Half Theory) Audiovisual duo Lloyd Barrett and Joe Musgrove have conspired here together for a dreamy piece of psychedelic wallpaper. Still images almost smudge into each other, into vague almost perceptible blurs of colour that gently fragment and burst into another ill-defined image just before you think you're staring to get a handle on what you're seeing. All the images are still, garnered from the internet then processed and abstracted into

the aforementioned blurs. The illusion of movement comes from the camera slowly sweeping in a different direction across each image, the superimposing of one image over another. The semi improvised music begins dreamy and ethereal, offering little more the a spaced out bed for the images, thought things becomes a bit more erratic about fifteen minutes in, moving away the sweeping washes of ambience, which although it works is a bit like shooting fish in a barrel. It's when they begin utilising high-pitched drones, heavy reverberant delays, increasingly textural tools and providing plenty of space to the compositions that the relationship between the audio and vision seems to change and become more interrelated. Whether this is intentional or even necessary is another matter, this everevolving montage of colour and lethargic movement is impossible not to get caught up in. Thanks God it only goes for 40 mins, otherwise you could lose yourself for days. Though there are 4 other experimental short films from the Brisbane based Half Theory family. Bob

#### Baker Fish Feu Thérèse

Feu Thérèse (Constellation)

Feu Thérèse threaten to overload the circuits with the bevy of instruments they cram into these equally rabid arrangements. Synthesizers, drums, organs, and harpsichords are but a small sampling of the weapons enlisted, which Jonathan Parant (of Fly Pan Am), Alexandre St-Onge (Shallabi Effect), Luc Paradis, and Stephen De Oliveira channel into structures that are coherent and complete enough that fully formed details are there to be picked out and engaged with. At the same time, though, rather than crafting a unified form by sanding away rough, jagged edges and seeking equilibrium, the conflicting elements of this bands sound remain in close connection with each other on account of their volatile, antagonistic character

On album opener, 'Ferrari En Feu', screeching electronic tones frantically rub up against one another, kindling an array of sparks that continue to burn more fervently until the piece suddenly morphs into an angular post-rock march, replete with monstrous rising guitar lines, lurching drums, and a cluster of digital groans. The next track, 'Mademoiselle Gentleman' is of like mind insofar as the waves of buzzing electronics attempt to establish their own system which itself serves only to incite an uproar of strangled, spiraling guitar patterns. In this way, it is not the unbroken continuity of these pieces, but their dispersion and restlessness that carries them impressively throughout

these some fourty-minutes. Whereas the saxophone swells and eerie harmonies of 'L'homme Avec Coeur Avec Elle' harken back to some of the material found in the earlier efforts from Constellation, 'Ce N'est Pas Les Jardins Du Luxembourg' is a dense hive of tribal drums, clanging chimes, and unruly, insectile squeaks and chirps. Given the number of aberrant, often overlapping, lines that are at play here, either piece could have easily been a mangled, aimless patchwork of passing fancies. That these raucous, flambovant tendencies do not destroy themselves, but actually give rise to a document that is complexly layered, approachable, and adorned with many appealing shades comes as high praise indeed.

#### Francisco Lopez

Untitled #164

(Nsounds) There's an alarming rate with which Francisco Lopez can realise quality materials and have them issued. This year alone the iconic Spaniard has somewhere in the vicinity of 5-7 new releases - all of which document his feverish quest to uncover sound worlds that exist at the very edges of our perception, or equally those we rare have the chance to come in contact with.

#164 is a powerfully dense piece of work spilling out of source materials

when quiet) carry with the a probing quality. This added to the submerged and compressed nature of the bass rumbles creates an effect not unlike being trapped in a submarine being depth charged - the pressures around you shifting as bass bombs erupt with irregular frequency. As this initial phases passes, Lopez unleashes a more full band noise assault with trademarked shifts in volume. In the later part of the composition a wonderfully rich rhythmic texture emerges creating an interesting and in many ways unexpected sense of urgency to the conclusion of the work. A complete sound universe as usual - crafted with care, imagination and a determined rigour to evoke emotion from the most abstract of sources. Lawrence English

collected in Belgium - and whilst

the volume and dynamic of the work

might not be 'dense', the personality

and character of the sounds (even

#### Helios

Eingva (Type)

Caught at the waist, two sweater-clad youths of pasty complexion clasp hands, looking out onto a fallow landscape, dotted by limping clouds. This image which adorns Eingya, the second fledgling from Keith Kenniff under the Helios moniker - who also crafts somber piano vignettes in the guise of Goldmund - proves indicative of the sentimental, though focused palette of textures that are organized into finespun, agreeable skeleton. Stately, almost ceremonious piano chords, sloshy beats, and the winsome puddling of

chimes are couched in steadily swelling drones. It is an arrangement that is deceptively simple, and it is a credit to Keith Kenniff's compositional ability that these pieces, which at the surface seem to be doing very little indeed, are below brimming with slowly evolving detail and blooming melody. Nearing the end of the album, specifically on 'The Toy Garden' and 'Paper Tiger', these hesitant, slowly flourishing textures

are doused in a sleek veneer, and come across as simply spray-on. Kept afloat for minutes on end by the incessant thud of a drum machine and gaseous, long-held organ chords, such songs do not hold up against the majestic sonic cloak of the previous works, and remind only of the cookie-cutter carboard images which might grace the set of a junior school play.

More often than not, though, the dark

froth of piano, guitar, and electronic texture manage to escape this cloying sweetness, 'Halving The Compass', displays a mournful economy with its use of the piano, letting it murmur underneath a ringing guitar motif, and only near the later portion of the piece allowing it to chime in an almost celebratory manner. Other works, namely, 'For Years And Years', are largely beatless, freeflowing streams of crackling, lukewarm analogue synths which carry hanging bass chords in its current, and conjure rather affecting dreamlike moods. In like manner, the slightly doleful, slightly gratified smile that is written across the lazily agile guitar picking of 'Emancipation' lies in a nether-region between sleep and wakefulness. Here and elsewhere, a poised, often richly nuanced environment is presented, rife with nostalgic melodies that glow like white stones underwater. Ron Schepper

#### **International Peoples Gang**

Action Painting

(Em:t)

It's argued by many, that the time for collage as a primary means of expression has passed or at least it's heyday has expired. Interesting then to come across a record like this that brings to mind so many echoes of sound work from the early to mid-nineties [and on a label whose history begins in that period too].

International Peoples Gang create an album of juxtapositions here - most of them melodic and beautiful, never straying into any kind of dangerous or unexplored terrain and quite often stepping foot into areas of deep cliché

As much as there are several musical short comings here, there's almost an interesting reminder of the simple pleasures of 'expected' electronic music, visible DSP and collage that seeks to stir the soul, or at least the ears. For the most part this album does stir something - whether it be memories of a past now almost unattainable or realisations of the simple beauty that can be reached with the most simple of source materials. Lawrence English

and expired musical inspiration ('Stop').

#### John Hegre & Maja Ratkje Ballads

(Dekorder) Far in the artic circle, the Nordic noise and improv scene has produced some impressively divergent sounds over recent years - sounds that reflect very much on the nature of the landscape, the lack or overabundance of light during various parts of the year and other factors orbiting these two issues. Here, Hegre (of Jazzkammer fame) and Ratkje (best known as one half of fe:mail) team up to explore the more gentle and sparse sides of their musical interests.

Thankfully steering clear of the expected turf of outright blasts of noise and sonic debris, the pair realise a wonderfully open and personal vision of what the title 'Ballds' may suggest. Open passages of melodic guitar are washed out, hung and dried, then mixed together via gentle but firm dsp. The results are both highly listenable and remarkably individual. Looping tones interlock in unexpected ways, fragments of kalimba poke through and strummed notes float above gritty handmade percussion. Here lies a wonderful exercise in the finer edge of Nordic noise

#### Kieran Hebden & Steve Reid

music. Lawrence English

The Exchange Sessions (Speak & Spell/Inertia) Hebden is widely regarded for his sweet electronic excursions as Four Tet. Tremendously popular within electronic music circles, his sounds have of twee, a little too sugary and sweet natured to allow you to fully engage. His Late Night Tales mix cd however revealed another side, a young man well versed in the history of Jazz with some great tracks from Joe Henderson and Roland Kirk, And he's drawing upon these traditions with his union with legendary percussionist Steve Reid, a man who's bashed the skins for everyone from Miles Davis, James Brown and Fela Kuti amongst a myriad of others. Whilst Reid's improvised percussion is simultaneously dense with much cymbal work and a steady beat, Hebden

really does shine, offering vague wisps

electronic almost science fiction zings

shudders and modulations, and when

Reid that the sparks really do begin to

fly. Decades of improvised music have

taught us that it's not what your sound

more importantly how you listen to your

collaborator. And in the listening stakes

Hebden really does well, unlike his solo

work he's not hamstrung by melody, he's

willing to let things get uncomfortable

(within limits) and more importantly

is, it's how you play it, and perhaps

he's out the front battling alongside

of sound alongside some blatantly

always teetered on the dangerous side

he is not trying to sync up with Reid's syncopations. Totally improvised without edits or overdubs, yet still divided into three (longish) tracks, at times you suspect he's mentally replacing a frantic freejazz horn sound with frantic freejazz electrics, yet this is still a strange and difficult proposition and he executes it well. Reid's percussion places this union resolutely within a (free) jazz tradition, which actually makes Hebden's work seem incredibly daring, particularly if artists like Kammerflimmer Kollektief, Triosk or Supersilent are new to your lexicon. Ultimately it's a great jam record, listening to these two individuals from separate worlds interact, circling each other in an attempt to find common ground is nothing short of fascinating and at times even exhilarating. Bob **Baker Fish** 

#### Matmos

The Rose Has Teeth In The Mouth Of The Beast (Matador/ Remote Control) Well we know this San Franciscan

electronic duo love to cloak their albums

within large conceptual devices often related explicitly to where they've located their sound palette. Their last album, Civil War was created in part

using civil war memorabilia and imagery. A Chance To Cut Is A Chance To Cure utilised sounds of plastic surgery being conducted.

This album however is a little

different, creating sound portraits of

historical figures they admire. And it's

more like their sonic reimaginings of

the characters world, though they also

acted out specific events in the person's

life and utilised some of the objects

involved as sound sources. Thus we

have this cheeky rickety ragtime piece

for William Burroughs that is brought

to a halt by a gunshot, referencing his

William Tell experiment where he shot

by some strange indescipherable music

his wife in the head. This is followed

concrete sounds wrestled around a typewriter that becomes a percussive Arabic (Master Musicians of Joujouka) influenced hallucinatory stomp, referring to his time in Tangiers. Yet you get the feeling that it all goes much deeper than this. Digitalia and assorted sounds are skittering around wildly and you get the feeling that every sound, the way that it is layered, and even the manner in which it progresses is loaded with multiple meanings. There's a piece for philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in which they've used the sounds of cows eating, manure, roses, teeth and geese, for Darby Crash they've had Drew Daniel crying out in pain as he is burnt by the Germs Don Bolles, and the Kronos Quartet provide mournful strings for Joe Meek. It's an album that can broadly be linked to Mathew Herbert's Plat Du Jour, in its strict adherence to the conceptual idea, often ahead of the musical, yet it's still very musical and if you weren't aware of the

concepts it would hardly matter as the music is beautiful, diverse strange and groundbreaking in its ability traverse genres. So it's kind've ironic in that perhaps their most dense conceptual effort is also their most musically accessible. Bob Baker Fish

#### Pateras, Baxter & Brown

Gauticle

(Synaesthesia) Separately they are three of the best improvising musicians Melbourne has to offer. Together they're a force to

be reckoned with as whilst they each develop their already experimental techniques on their weapons of choice (Pateras prepared piano/Baxter percussion/ Brown prepared guitar), they're simultaneously doing the same with the trio relationship. They're operating in a more textural realm here, where the materiality of the instrument is increasingly important. Where instead of notes, chords and melodies they're working with shadows and tones, with nervous shifts and rising swells of density, delighting in a nervy cluttered funk of purposely disjointed, atonal and

unnerved sound. At times it feels like a field recording. as the disparate parts almost meld into the one organism or imaginary sound source, other times they're like a low rent scratchy Gamelan orchestra, and others they're like exactly what they are - an improvising trio. And this slippage is very prevalent on Gauticle. Working with sounds this unusual (and over the length of time they have been playing together live) they have become increasingly adept at constructing their own unique world, where they are the only ones privy to its nuances and internal logic. Yet strangely enough this is not alienating to the casual listener, but it does require an element of trust. At times things happen suddenly and are rarely telegraphed, where you get the sense that all it took in the

studio was a vague nod or a meeting

of the eyes for the trio to choose their

direction. This kind of unpredictability

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is refreshing on Gauticle provided you're willing to sit back and allow them to dictate. The good news is that this keeps contemporary structures at bay, including the unimaginative plinks and plonks that improvised music often finds itself submerged in. Recorded in London (in a studio Napalm Death recorded in no less) and Vienna, Gauticle feels like it possesses more space than its predecessor 2003's Ataxia, allowing more sparse moments of near silence or minimal activity to exist alongside the chaos and bluster. **Bob Baker Fish** 

#### Reminder

Continuum (Eastern Developments) Having contributed bass magic to releases by Town and Country, Tortoise, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Sam Prekop, and others, Chicago/Thrill Jockey fixture Joshua Mikah Abrams steps out with his own album under the alias Reminder. That Continuum appears on Eastern Developments is telling, not so much because it's Scott Herren's label (Abrams also appeared on Surrounded By Silence) but because its style is so kin to Herren's own. More precisely, Continuum sounds like the kind of down-tempo album a Prefuse-Ammoncontact collaboration might yield, and exudes a smoky vibe reminiscent of Inner Current's delectable offerings. Its faded, home-made feel comes from stitching together dusty jazz samples into fresh instrumental hip-hop head-nod with warm vocals by Tyondai Braxton, Akin, Thaione Davis, and Nicole Mitchell added for extra sweetening. It's not a bass solo showcase either, though Abrams doesn't shy away from putting the instrument out front on the Eastern-flavoured 'New Spells' and 'Telepathic Part 1.' Throughout this sometimes jazz-tinged collection, Abrams concocts a beatbased brew within which thumb pianos, saxophones, clarinets, horns, and cellos swim. A lovely melancholy theme flows through 'Now I Disappear,' making it

perhaps the album's best cut. While not wishing to overemphasize the Prefuse connection, it's hard to overlook when 'Spectral Robbery' could easily be taken for a One Word Extinguisher outtake and 'On Rooftops,' 'Of Light,' and 'Leave What You Came With' all evidence Prefuse-styled beat business and sparkle. That Reminder sounds similar isn't necessarily a bad thing, however; if anything, Herren could learn a thing or two from Abrams about restraint, as Reminder's tracks never buckle under the weight of too many ideas. Ron Schepper

#### RF

Views Of Distant Towns (Plop)

In one of his last poems, Rainer Maria Rilke imagines that nature crafted human love as a way of enjoying its own beauty through the joyous perceptions of the lovers. In this regard, human awareness becomes the wax thumbprint which seals the world and affords it some measure of completion. This is an outlook which proves helpful when approaching the third full-length from multi-instrumentalist, media artist and programmer Ryan Francesconi. Aided by a flock of other musicians, Francesconi adopts an impressionist stance towards this canvas, using a palette of string and horn instruments alongside chirping and gurgling electronics to paint short, decisive brushstrokes that are valued for their individual sonorities as opposed to their relations to one another. The focus of these strokes, moreover, is on vague harmony and rhythm, which develop mood and texture more than anything overtly definitive and concrete. Especially on some of the earlier tracks such as 'Despite The Time' and 'Ladder In Place, Francesconi works with soft, billowing string arrangements, clean, snapping electronics and the vibrato trills of Sonja Drakulich, which sketch indistinct forms that the listener must then blend with their own faculties.

When the sparse, undefined nature

of these works is taken together with the fact that these songs are long and meditative, remaining engaged and attentive throughout these some sixtyfour minutes becomes a trifle difficult. The instrumental pieces in particular stand in something of a peculiar position in that they are too complex and active to suffice as background music, but also too placid, pastoral and, at times, saccharine to command the constant attention they require.

This is not a state of affairs that spills over the entire work, however and, indeed, for the most part, Francesconi succeeds in sketching mature, stirring arrangements that tickle the imagination and encourage a wealth of interpretations. 'A Vacant House' is one such song - a field recording of a family talking and laughing opens the piece and reappears on a handful of occasions to punctuate and unify the song. When the instruments come in, what most amuses is that the muffled guitar melody, murmuring voice of Moira Smiley and somber organ tones serve to only encase and make apparent the rather melancholy near-silence that encloses the young family.

Given that the original inspiration for this work was a book by Haruki Murakami named, The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, this silence or emptiness which underlies all human attempts at fullness or satisfaction is quite understandable. Indeed, this interplay between desire and disappointment is well articulated in several compositions. Songs like 'Messenger With Keepsakes' and 'End Of The Line' are characterized by faint queries of piano, stutter-step programming, and feathery, yawning string and horn sections which are keenly aware of a certain loneliness. When enough of these cues are planted, these understated arrangements prove quite seducing, encouraging the listener to lean in and pick out the many wellshaped, blossoming details which make up this album. Max Schaefer

#### Seaworthy

Distant Hills Burn Bright (Black Lodge Audio) A highly refined sense of texture is partly what makes Seaworthy such a striking ensemble. Though their instrumentation is minimal - guitar, quietly crackling noise and piano are the primary components - the subtle, evershifting terrain that they create is at once intimate and panoramic. Distant Hills Burn Bright is sparse in both mood and atmosphere, but it lets you in. The guitar sound is melancholy and hesitant, full of gaps, and reminiscent of Mick Turner in his more pastoral moods. The curling refrain that runs through almost all eight tracks is like a sentence that never quite completes itself, yet in affect it is far from abstract: each pause and return, pause and return serves as a reminder that someone is playing an instrument, and that the melody is therefore neither arbitrary nor fixed, but a decision made from moment to moment. Each listen to Distant Hills Burn Bright reinforces this sense of immediacy - as if the listener were sitting in upon the process of the music's becoming.

This is not to say that Distant Hills Burn Bright is shambolic or necessarily improvisatory - it is quite a carefully sequenced suite. Framed by a brief snatch of noise (Part 1), the instrumental, lost-highway atmosphere is slowly developed through Parts 2-3 with drones and stark piano, before the disc is neatly cleaved in Part 4 through a series of loops. Sonar-like pulses and high-frequency squeaks turn the sonic geography from something idyllic to something otherwordly, before the guitar (and what sounds like a piano accordion) returns, allowing both forms of landscape to bleed into each other. Resolving itself on a stark piano line, Distant Hills Burn Bright is an extremely well-crafted, very beautiful recording. **Emmy Hennings** 

#### Takagi Masakatsu

Journal For People (Carpark) Originally released in Japan in 2002 on Harumi Hosono's (ex-Yellow Magic Orchestra) Daisyworld label, Takagi Masakatsu's lilting glitch/pop/ambient album Journal For People finally gets wider international release through the Carpark label. Takagi is probably better known as a video artist than as a musician and packaged as a CD/DVD

combo, the DVD showcases Takagi's

core work of the period capturing and

digitally processing poetic sequences and patterns he observes in everyday life -

water, merry-go-rounds, crowds, blurred

firework explosions - the beautiful

from the mundane. Accompanying

shimmering electronic soundtrack,

with tight digital editing synchronised

to the flicker of the vision. On the CD

expand on the soundtrack to the DVD.

Takagi plays quiet contemplative piano

pulses, glitches and tones. Despite the

sometimes hyperactive pace of digital

seeing them synchronised to video edits

on the DVD - this is a lovely meditative

ticks - which make more sense after

are thirteen tracks that mirror and

over backwards drones, electronic

these video works is his melodic.

#### Triosk

The Headlight Serenade (Leaf/Inertia) Sydney group Triosk's third album The Headlight Serenade is far more charged and directed than their previous recordings. Laurence Pike's drums flutter, skitter and skip over Ben Waples warm bass. Adrian Klumpes piano lines casdade and synths drone. With such instrumentation there are immediate lazy comparisons to be made with that other Australian group The Necks, but Triosk are far more lively and their compositions full of energy spilling off a multiple directions. With the organic nature of these tracks aquatic metaphors seems most apt - the muffled piano on Lost Broadcast shimmers like swimming underwater looking upwards at sunlight reflecting through the surface; Laurence Pike's drums pitter patter and sparkle like rain in a sunshower on Intensives Leben. A drone sways and oscillates drunkenly on Headlights. The only oddly placed track is the closer, Fear Survivor, which rudely breaks the mood. This is a remarkable instrumental album and deserves much praise. Sebastian Chan

updated. But he started getting zines in his early teens and was mail-ordering records from Guy Blackman's Chapter Music by the time he turned 14. That explains a lot, because musically he's a long way away from Chapter's usually fantastic, but often earnest fare. This is definitely not earnest! Imagine a capella chanting "Freedom, freedom, freedom, power, power, power" until it sounds like an ejaculatory climax and you can pretty much replicate the experience of this seven inch long player. It's closer to the wonderfully amateur lo-fi exuberance

#### Dijf Sanders

To Be A Bob

that seems to fit somewhere within that home studio crafted glitchy/jazzy/idm/ folktronica world. You know the one, where everything is possible - vet it all devilishly clever logic. This is a guy who Beck plays trumpet, and there's also real Dijf is also tinkering on the piano and he plays it with a noticeable jazz

also a bunch of singing on a few tracks, which seems to come from Dijf himself, drawing upon the gravel of Tom Waits or even countrymen Deus. In fact if Deus were electronic they'd probably be Dijf, sharing a similar dark pop jazz groove. It's a lot of fun, though his skills are hidden so carefully under the songs that it's possible it might just pass you by before you realise you've hit kooky clunky electronic jazz fusion gold.

#### **Bob Baker Fish**

(Fat Cat/Inertia)

Snow On Moss On Stone

#### Drowsy

One has the suspicion upon listening to this new album Snow On Moss On Stone by Finnish artist Drowsy (Mauri Heikkinen), that he inhabits a private world of his own. Much like fellow Fatcat labelmates, Animal Collective, Drowsv exists in a different place to most of us, a place where straw is spun into gold and magic potions are imbibed to create a magical forest of sound. It's cold and dark today, but not where Drowsy exists. Slightly unhinged (think Animal Collective, Gorky's Zygotic Mynci and bonzo British folk such as the Incredible String Band) melodic sounds, all acoustic and rusty, with a gentleness underpinned by a psychedelic edge. Drowsy is an apt name. The album's opener "Bakery" grabs your attention with it's jaunty airs and singalong chorus. By the time we hit the forth tune, "Go Well", with it's xylophones, acoustic plucking and Nick Drake styled vocal, we have moved to another place altogether. Shifting it's moods from happy, melancholic, moody to ethereal and more, Snow On Moss On Stone is a

### than indie-rock. Matt Levinson

(Dub/Creative Vibes) Dijf is a young Belgian electronic producer who is producing kooky music

of mid-'90s riot grrls like Huggy Bear,

despite the results being more radio-play

still sounds like everything else. There's lots of fun, lots of energy and lots of cool jazz moves, all mashed together in the real spirit of fusion, and although electronica has the stranglehold, here's the kicker: Dijf has broken out of the straightjacket. It seems most of these bedroom producers have been blinded by Warp, and are pumping out the same preset sounding crap. Dijf is the antidote, there is a real confidence to his off kilter constructions, vet it's not technical wizardry, rather he conjures up these amazing sound worlds - he makes you believe, then he extricates himself from them with a quirky isn't being played by his computer, the song is king and the song is fucked up. A guy who previously played with double bass. These considerably add to the real world jazz elements, though

sensibility and sense of space. There's

#### Faux Pas

Entropy Begins At Home (Self-released) Last year Tim Shiel self-released a nice little EP called Feels. Since then

rewarding album that keeps you coming

back for more. A folk album proper, it

is a mature sophomore effort from this

Nordic singer songwriter. Lyndon Pike

Strummed, stunned and shunned:

album Sebastain Chan

Bear Pride + Gross Odour (Chapter Music) Coming straight outta the NSW/Victoria border towns of Albury-Wodonga, Alex Vivian has to be the only tape loop producer celebrating bear pride and gross body odours. The art/music/ prankster plays stupid techno as Slam Dunk and used to go under the name Viviano. He likes jockstraps, percussion,

garbage, stale food, fart spray, '90s USA teenage tape labels and old fashioned hamburgers. It comes through. 'Cruising + Body Odour' is John Waters-gonehomo sleaze, zine culture and cut up production. It's stupid, but cool. Young enough to have grown up with the Internet, even in Wodonga (Albury's poor cousin, apparently), Vivian's been nipping out of class for years to keep his blogs and myspaces and livejournals

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he has significantly honed his sound, added denisty, depth and new structure to his recordings. Drawing together very audible influences including Caribou/Manitoba, the DFA stable, and Timbaland, Faux Pas pulls together some very sophisticated moves for a

second release. Each track glistens and bubbles, the picks being the fantastic chugging Dorothy's Finger which climaxes in a cascade of drums. Water Into Wine which recalls the voice and production of New Zealander SID, and the jittery beats and flute-ish Timbalandmeets-Madlib opener Tema De Cristina.

#### Fax

Primario (Static Discos)

Fax (Ruben A Tamayo) may be best known for his work as a DJ/producer of discrete techno and micro-house sets but his latest offering Primario signals

Hot and fun. Sebastian Chan

an alternate sound path. His third full-length album with the Mexican based Static Discos label, rekindles the memories of his early musical influences and the joys of his first principal instrument - the guitar. The opening track, 'Soulsong', is a gentle mix of crunchy minimal beats, samples and lullaby guitar loops. Alex Ayuli (of AR Kane) brings what he has famously coined his 'dreampop' style of

to keep, their soul asleep?" This sets the emotional pace for the rest of the album, which slides and meanders effortlessly on its abstract slow-rocking journey till the end, finishing upbeat with 'Paracaidas' where subtle layers of percussive elements, dubby loops and

lazy bass create an atmospheric space for

resonant guitar melodies to float, verily.

The spirit of his early work remains but

soft, reverberating vocals to the track

as he croons, "does anybody choose

overall Primario represents a deeper engagement. There is a warm sense of intimacy, introspection and maturity throughout. Renae Mason

**Final Fantasy** He Poos Clouds

(Tomlab/Inertia) Owen Pallett made his name in the Toronto music scene doing string

arrangements for bands like The Arcade Fire, but as Final Fantasy his music has never quite had the pomp and earnestness of that brand of indie. On his first album Has A Good Home he made good use of looping pedals, and established a style all his own:; string

arrangements more classical than rock or folk, despite generally having the song and melody structures of indie, and the pieces themselves combining passion and utter silliness in a bewildering fashion. A recent interview in Toronto's Now Magazine cleared things up a little for me: "As far as whether the music I make is gay or queer, yeah, it comes from the fact that I'm gay, but that doesn't mean I'm making music about it." Positioning these works in a queer perspective, in the company of contemporary artists like Matmos and Antony, somehow makes these seemingly awkward lyrics and weird juxtapositions click into place.

This time round the sound pallet is broadened to take in piano and harpsichord, and the arrangements are even more skillful taking cues from the entire history of classical music, baroque to 20th century. There are some utterly beguiling pieces on this record, such as 'If I Were A Carp', which combines looped, reverbed percussive textures with the trademark strings. 'Song Song Song' is perfect pop from a parallel dimension where Sir William Walton and Percy Grainger are megastars. This album has everything a fan of the first could want including all the silliness with themes drawn from epic fantasy and role-playing games, and lyrics at once ridiculous and profound; "Now his massive genitals refuse to co-operate/ And no amount of therapy can hope to save his marriage". A heady mix for sure.

Peter Hollo

Gotve

Like Drawing Blood

(Creative Vibes) Let me be straight up with my biases

here - my previous encounters with Gotye's work are limited to a single track (a remix at that) of the 80's hit song 'I just can't get enough' by Depeche Mode. Now, even Depeche Mode refuse to play

this song live these days but, Gotye's reworking of a simple pop song is something approaching the divine. I'm swooning like a teengirl just thinking about it. I literally can't seem to get enough of this track and it has tainted

my impression of what Gotye's sound

is all about. I prefer to think of Gotye

as, above all, a romantic lyricist with a

synthesiser driven alt-pop sensibility.

So how does 'Like Drawing Blood'

impression? Well, it certainly does not

disappoint. He's simply dreamy when

come off against such a strong first

singing "Love Ain't Fair" on 'Hearts A Mess' or sharing his hopes of a lost lover's impending return in 'Coming Back'. Similarly, 'Night Drive' is another sad song that offers the most warmth in the intimacy it reveals. But here's the twist - Gotye possesses an (unexpectedly) mixed bag of musical tricks up his sleeve. His melancholy moods are disrupted occasionally with a jolt of happiness – like the catchy, swinging homage to Northern Soul in 'Learnalilgivinanlovin'. 'Thanks for Your Time' is playfully sarcastic and 'A Distinctive Sound, is a quirky slice of retro turntabilism reminiscent of Mr Scruff or Kid Koala. With these tracks Gotye demonstrates his versatility but it's going to take me a while to accept the fact that he's not heartbroken all of the time. I will be sobbing at home about it whilst Gotye celebrates the success of his new album, and so he should, this is most promising work. Renae Mason Isan

Plans Drawn In Pencil (Morr/Inertia) In a style not radically different from its past releases, Isan sprinkles fairy

and the mood is as becalmed and the sound as ultra-detailed as one might expect. Antony Ryan and Robin Saville's vignettes teem with sing-song melodies, gently clicking beats that scurry like mice, and warm synth tones that glow like fireflies. In keeping with the album title, the duo's sound exudes a light touch, not to mention a retiring character and sonic quality sometimes reminiscent of Eno (the elegiac synths in 'Corundum' wouldn't sound out of place on Another Green World). Ambient jewels like 'Immoral Architecture' glisten, while the pitter-patter of an old drum machine chugs alongside soft keyboard sparkle in 'Ship.' In another group's hands, 'Roadrunner' might violently roar at breakneck pace; Isan's treatment, not surprisingly, unhurriedly murmurs. The group deviates subtly from the template on a couple of tracks, adding a funk rhythm to 'Amber Button' (what seems a radical gesture in this ultra-controlled context) and a more robust keyboard presence in 'five To Four, ten To Eleven.' Ultimately, critics who dismiss Isan's sound as twee and overly pretty will (dis)like this album as much as any other in the group's discography, while those who deem Isan's material too static will find ample evidence of that quality too. Those more receptive to the group's understated charms, on the other hand, will find the finely-crafted new work on

dust all over Plans Drawn in Pencil

#### Innaway

Ron Schepper

Innaway (Speak n Spell/Inertia)

For lovers of Space Rock and modern psychedelia, all the right elements are here on the debut from Californian 5 piece, Innaway. Shimmering underwater guitar refrains, multi-layered vocal harmonies delivered in a hazey bliss, coupled with steady snare drops (and

a par with its previously-issued material.

drum machines on several tracks).

Imagine if you would, the very fist

Verve album A Storm In Heaven if it

then given a modern production twist, and you're onto a really heady listen that will appeal to the more cerebral sound lovers out there. The tunes here deliver constant surprises, "Tiny Brains", contains a mean fuzz bass and a haunted choral voice crying out underneath the band's vocalist, Iim Schwarz, who's repeating the refrain "losin' my tiny brain in my tiny room" before breaking down into a dub coda. Nice stuff. Elsewhere, we hear blues harps, stretched out instrumental passages and guitar lead breaks that are never showy or annoving.

What makes this album so immediately likeable is the combination of the production (the electronic elements always appear as a real surprise), a vocalist who can actually sing and is never overbearing, and enough psychedelic sounds and structures to encourage repeated spins. To be absolutely fair, this release is best considered "space rock" in spirit, as most of the tunes are around the 3 minute mark and it is a rather short and mellowed affair, but a very strong debut from an interesting outfit. Lyndon Pike

#### Jackie-O-Motherfucker

Flags Of The Sacred Harp (ATP/Inertia)

Jackie-O-Motherfucker's Flags Of The Sacred Harp is a welcoming album; you're drawn into it's mesmerising soundscapes like a tired bushwalker stares at a campfire. Nice One, the album's opener, begins as a dreamy folk ballad, before evolving into a improvised free-for-all that is defined by restraint and a psychedelic spirit, an acoustic cousin of Matmos' YTTE from The Civil War. Country tones and an easy steel-string pace put Rockaway and Hey Mr Sky into Neil Young's orbit. They unfold deceptively simply, and are beautifully recorded in a naturalistic. warts-and-all way that leaves a place for the room and the people in it. But hell, this is no Harvest. There are some wild and crazy moments captured here too, quarter hour jams that exude texture and passion, build then collapse in a tuckered-out heap. At times it's a drifty campfire strum, at others it's a tumbling space rock jam. There is a refreshing experimental edge to the tracks on Flags Of The Sacred Harp. It was (re)mixed by LFO's Mark Bell, and his touches are subtle and important. The solos in Hey Mr Sky, the epic soundscaping of Spirits and the breakdown of Nice One, are all indications that this is a band just as interested in the use of space and recording/mixing, as well as extending the parameters of the listening experience and the limitations of genre. Most songs feature a twin vocal attack, male and female, sung in unison, and the feel of the album is organic and open spaced, more a Southern rural texture than any big city vibe. This Portland, Oregon trio plays real well together, relaxed and disciplined, and here they've been captured like a nature documentary - in the raw, in their natural elements. Daniel Jumpertz

#### **Josephine Foster**

A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing (Locust)

Elegiac and understated, the opening notes of 'An Die Musik' mark a journey back to nineteenth century German folk balladry. Fosters birdlike vocal lines hang exposed and fragile, lightly shaded by sinewy weaves of multi-tracked trumpet, and the odd spell of pastoral flute and rippling percussion. For all that, this piece, as all others in this collection. gradually takes flight of this minimal backing, and traipses through lithe, supple rhythm sections, droning metal hoe-downs, and barbed tonalities. Foster is careful not to treat these German art songs are mere artifacts, though. At the same time, as is most clearly illustrated through Brian Goodman's murky, divebombing guitar chords, rather than simply displaying these songs, there is a desire to transfigure them, but to transfigure them by grasping what is essential to each respectively.

As such, although connected by a certain undertow of archaic elegance. each piece has its own disguises. ploys, and struggles. Works such as 'Verschwiegene Liebe' and 'Wehmut' slowly wake from waltzing piano lines and finger picked guitar to bass clarinet burrs and murmurs, and the bleary noise of a guitar. It is a movement which exhibits the groups ability to deftly incorporate a variety of dialects in such a way that the arrangement seems both eclectic, and yet necessary. Even when moments pick up steam, and grow more raw and resounding, as on the eleven minute 'Auf Einer Burg', when patches of howling guitar, low-pitched drums, and mercurial splashes of soprano sax augment the shimmering chimes and woody guitar line, the underlying shape is never blurred or altogether disfigured, but remains sharp, and caught from a number of different angles. The elastic voice of Foster mirrors this progression, too, shifting from operatic wails, to sudden hiccups, and deep bellows. In so doing, Foster and company do not so much spawn a garish melange of styles as they disclose the depths of these charming songs by revealing how they call for interpretation still. Max Schaefer

#### Leafcutter John

The Forest and The Sea (Staubgold/Fuse) Anyone familiar with Leafcutter John's astounding previous album The Housebound Spirit on Planet Mu will realise how far he's come since his first experimental electronic releases. On this new album, the main body of the album is comprised of morose folk ballads. so authentic they're almost classical. Folk revivalists like Akron/Family are inevitably called to mind, or indeed quieter Radiohead.

There are some utterly beguiling moments on this album, beautiful processed guitar textures, field recordings, cut'n'paste cello. 'Let It Begin' sets the tone, starting acoustic and colla voce, but lone cymbals and low rumbles lead into an extended middle section

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of granular delays and electronic pulses before returning to the song anew. 'Seba', on the other hand, starts with piano and drones under acoustic guitar textures, and seamlessly mutates via some slide guitar into something almost alt-country, vocals underpinned by bass, guitars and very subtle kick/snare. It's the best song on the album, and the sound palette suits it perfectly; when glitchy delays and abstract washes return, it seems totally normal, and the strange spectre of early-to-mid Pink Floyd benignly asserts itself, as it does over a surprising amount of the recent postrock/folk crossover material.

Much of the rest of The Forest and The Sea works in a similar manner and it is fascinating to hear how the disparate elements are integrated. Leafcutter John works in a way not quite like anyone else. Peter Hollo

#### Morpho

Morpho (Dr Jims)

In something of an unexpected left turn Melbourne experimental guitarist Dave Brown (Bucketrider/ Pataeras/Baxter/ Brown), has wrenched the alligator clips and springs off his guitar and decided to rock out. Though it's not in the way you might expect. There are links to his days in the Dumb and The Ugly, with a big booming sound driven by repetitive riffing, though a roll call of the thank you's on the liner notes provide more of an indication of his direction, with everyone from legendary Warner Brothers cartoon composer Carl Stalling, Godzilla, John Barry and Italian prog rock band Goblin all getting a mention. Brown has always been interested in the space between high and low art and with Morpho he's using B movie soundtracks as the springboard. Morpho is a duo with David Waddleton, an artist and former collaborator who's work adorned Brown's first solo record as Candlesnuffer. Waddleton's artwork appears here (and there is a more expensive limited edition of this record

released with a signed print), though

he is very much constructing the music also, the duo previously playing together in Signals in the early eighties. Morpho comes across like a series of rock music cues for film, regularly touching upon elements of late 60's exotica, with theremins, heavily reverbed guitars swirling around strange sounds. samples and compositions that often give the illusion of movement without necessarily providing any. It's very much a loving homage, playing with the spirit if not the instrumentation of some of the

classics like Vampiros Lesbos, Suspiria,

and even the Trip, which gets a roasting

Track titles are as classy as you'd expect:

Mondo Freaky Wonderland and It Looks

Like the Avalanche is Coming. Can't wait

Burning Rubber and Cheap Perfume,

in the liner notes by Philip Brophy.

to see the movie. Bob Baker Fish

#### Patrick Torsson

Statments Of Facts (Powershovel Audio) Patrick Torsson is Swedish, and like fellow musical Swedes, Nicolai Dunger and Andre Hermann Dune, he displays a fragility and warmth that seems to be a common denominator within the Swenska sound experience. These are not big, swelling tunes that demand to be noticed. They are personal, multi layered tunes reminiscent of balladry, longing and observation. Staccato electronics layed under a simple drum pattern with acoustic and reverbed guitars. Back masking, muted keys, harps, low-key production values, and a wavering vocal all encompass the music that Torsson has made on this album.

For the listener, Torsson's vocals and lyrics appear as almost a secondary focus, considered yet another layer in this rich (albeit lo-fi) recording. The album does progress in a subliminal manner, and by track 7, "The Void Within You", you realise that he has introduced sections that are reminiscent of old-school house rhythms and turned the album into something new altogether. His vocal will be unfairly compared to that of Thom

aforementioned Swedes, Dunger and Dune. A rewarding listen for fans of this style of modern pop. Lyndon Pike

Yorke, but it is really more akin to the

#### Pepito

The New World

(Static Discos) The New World is Madrid based electronic pop band Pepito's third album. And it's a light and gentle affair that melds electronic techniques to pop's melodic smoothness. Interestingly it's also their first release that features an even split between English and Spanish vocals. Vocally the duo of Ana Machado and Jose Marquez come across with the same impassioned urgency of Sonic Youth, yet their sound palette owes more to a significantly more electronic Architecture in Helsinki. Though there's a certain earnestness to their approach, a certain twee nature to the

before you realise it was constructed with fractured beats, strange bleeps and shifting frequencies. And it's the vocals that enable such sweet subterfuge, impassioned emotive cries of warmth and assuredness. Bob Baker Fish

electronic sounds they use, yet there's

no cheekiness, if anything it's a sweet sense of nostalgia. The experimentation

is blanketed in such a warm glossy

sound, in such confidence that its

possible to listen to an entire track

#### Sodacake

Do You Read Me (Red Ears Music)

Sodacake are an Australian duo with a penchant for classical and electronic music, and on Everything's Always these two loves are brought together with precision and grace. The most successful tracks on Everything's Always merge the two influences most overtly. A good example is the title track and the album's opener, Do You Read Me, a gentle builder that adds layers and loops in the same way B. Fleischmann does on his recent album The Humbucking Coil. Like that release,

delayed guitar lines bubble away on a

medium-paced atmospheric groove that is seductive and catchy. Cymbalbow is another slow builder, (with the feel of a Hitchcock thriller), while Dogloop successfully combines location-specific environmental sound recordings (birds, wind, trees), deep groaning string pulses and a waves of racev piano motifs. Like Cornelius' Drip, H20 (For Cello & 4 Dripping Taps) has some fun in the water. Oralie is a bold and succinct track, a real grower (over too soon), that combines cut-up spoken word and precise tuned percussion. It's the album's poppiest moment. Sodacake have composed these tracks with a real feel for space and instrumentation. The album is a beautifully recorded and mature release. Everything's Always is probably more a solid collection of tracks than a great album, but it is obvious there is real compositional talent within its ambitious and well-realised sonic confines. Daniel Jumpertz

#### Tooth

Mudlarking

(Soft/Fuse Distribution) Sydney three piece Tooth create the kind of music that you can't believe was constructed by humans. Possessing a confident, almost stately grandeur, their sounds on 2001's Sirens From Here To Titan seemed to exist in the past, the soundtrack to a late fifties "Boys Own" nautical adventure serial. It's scope felt huge, yet it has positively been eclipsed by Mudlarking. This double disc album is an epic, not just because it consists of eighteen tracks, but because of the way Tooth have extended their styles and approach in the interim. It's a strange swirly mass of sound that exists like a giant fun rollicking soundtrack where you can throw around words like, Krautrock, psychedialia, downtempo, prog, and not ever get remotely close to the canvas. It's a hard record to consciously listen to as you keep floating away. Its very groove based and it emphasises that Tooth are operating in a different time zone than the rest of

restraint. At times it verges on fourth world thanks to a few faux world music ingredients, though these are only hints that appear alongside samples or an impossibly funky bass line. It's probably an electronic record yet it's imbued with a vaguely cluttered sense of soul that propels these incredible tunes. It feels like it exists in the past referencing earnestly jammed out 60's psychedelia, yet these are linked into current day beats and sample techniques, which somehow gives it an instant yet ironically somewhat dated credibility. What's more they've teamed up with legendary weirdo experimentalist Daevid Allen, co founder of the Soft Machine and leader of Gong who guests. There is not a single misstep. Each song is an opus. Bob Baker Fish

#### Tunng

Comments of the Inner Chorus (Full Time Hobby/Spunk) Now that the initial impact of their glitch-meets-English folk sound has worn off, Tunng's success is to a large extent dependent on the strength of their songwriting not just their sonic ideas. 'Woodcat' seemed strangely demure as a first single but the refrain got pretty quickly stuck in my head, and it is a decent opener on an album with some even stronger songs. The strongest, such as 'Jenny Again', could easily survive a straight folk performance, but the subtle electronic treatments serve to enhance them. Best of all is Sweet William, another murder ballad with dark cello and diminished chords in the guitar picking; here the innate experimentalism of the folk scene and the concrète and cut'n'paste aspects of electronic influences seem to walk past each other, not entirely interacting until the cello gets caught up beautifully in a glitch delay at the end. 'Engine Room' concludes the album with some more of William Blake's dark satanic mills, and again the folk singalong, the techno thump and the synth pads somehow remain as separate elements at the same time as holding together as a complete

song. Tunng's aesthetic is made perfectly clear in moments like these, and when you go back to the start for the second listen, they've tuned your ears just right.

Peter Hollo

#### Tunns

Mother's Daughter & Other Songs (Feral Media/Static Caravan) Tunng is a collision of worlds. Between folkish singer songwriting and experimental electronica. A duo, they manage to make their music accessible without being cute or folktronica, which is no mean feat. Clearly Tunng have an infinite respect for melody, yet this doesn't outweigh their desire for experimentation. On this, their debut album, repackaged and reissued with a bonus track by local label Feral Media, movies are sampled, breaks cut up, and obscure noises layered around the traps yet then there are these cute plucked acoustic guitars and this violently English crooning folkish vocals that are nothing short of enchanting. The off kilter elements prevent the more melodic songwriter elements from becoming tedious or predictable and some of the more erratic elements are employed specifically in reference to song. In fact the song is very important to Tunng. You can hear vague elements of Icelandic heroes Mum, Nick Drake or even Grandaddy, yet Tunng are very clear, confident and accomplished, not to mention unique in their vision. The opening track on the album is enough to make you sit up and realise that that Tunng are very different. A female vocal cries 'stay,' and is electronically treated and elongated into a strange disjointed wail, whilst some whispering rapping female vocals appear over an acoustic bed of guitar, some jittery percussion and bizarre explosions of fragments of sound. Then after a couple of minutes the smooth vocals kick in. It's very different though also quite brilliant work unlike anything else around. Bob **Baker Fish** 

#### volcano!

Beautiful Seizure
(Leaf/Inertia)

Beautiful Seizure is a most apt title for volcano!'s explosive debut album. It opens with bells, xylophones and gentle strums that are abruptly punctuated by Aaron With's tortured falsetto and soaring psychedelic guitar riffs. Soft interludes are rich with audio artefacts of the music recording process. These imprints of clunks and crunches remind that music is a live experience and that digital mastering can be cold but not necessarily clean. There is a hook of unpredictability established upfront, an aesthetic of carefully orchestrated chaos channelling a raw current of emotion. And while such art/post-rock may risk lending itself a little too easily to pretension rest assured that these guys are never trying to be clever, they simply are.

The subtle diversity of Beautiful Seizure demonstrates not only the bands talent, but also a refusal to be restrained by neat categorisation. Songs like '40,000

Plus Interest' and 'Red & White Bells' are grand epics, homage to Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of The Moon' and Radiohead's 'OK Computer'. There are experimental noise moments like 'Larchmontt's Arrival' or the atmospheric 'Before the Suburbs'. Then there's 'La Lluvia' flowing like a Spanish serenade injected with equal parts suffering and selfloathing. 'Apple or a Gun' fires a catchy two-chord progression reminiscent of contemporaries like Arcade Fire, Franz Ferdinand, Interpol or Spoon. 'Hello Explosion' creeps in unannounced with the dawning realisation that the album is nearly coming to an end. I wake out of the dream with a dandy little song called 'Pulling My Face In And Out Of Distortion, I Blink Too Much. Here With slips into his freak-folk rap voice, further demonstrating his incredible range. He pauses in the chaos for a few gulping breaths, drowning in the musical equivalent of a riptide till it's silent. I'm left with encouraging thoughts - just breathe, don't lose control, and don't ever stop . . . time to hit repeat. Renae Mason

Rumbling and mumbling:

### LOWS

#### Ellen Allien & Apparat

Orchestra of Bubbles
(Bpitch Control)

Orchestra Off Bubbles is life-affirming music in the most wide-eyed of senses. Sweaty, throbbing electro pulses flirt with fat analogue beats, swim through gleaming ambient pools, and ride on the wings of Ellen Allien's sprightly voice. Pieces such as 'Way Out' are essentially about overflow: one's ear is clipped by a bevy of different voices, some restrained and in the background, some flying sharply just over one's head. Similarly, the perambulating atmospheres are rife with numerous cadences and moods. Now and again, the glassy electronics

follow a steady 4/4 structure, shaded by warble-like ringing tones looped to infinity; at other times the squelchy thuds and pops murmur softly just below a dusty ambient glow.

'Retina', in particular, is wound tight like a coiled spring. The aquatic pads and high-necked baseline fall into a repetitive pattern that is infected by a plaintive string refrain. Further songs continue to fashion sleek, robust rhythms that constantly replenish themselves, gorging themselves, as it were, on the ever-changing relationships in which they are thrown. Yet these relationships are not wholly random. Although songs like 'Metric' skirt off

into dance floor realms, the aberrant, flighty nature of the beat programming and the fizzy, hallucinogenic character of the effects bring this otherwise erratic album together and house it under a unified concept. Put simply, the persuasion at play here is that of travel. With this in mind, these songs are fit for moments when the unknown no longer seems daunting, but an invigorating invitation. Max Schaefer

#### Barrington Levy In Dub

The Lost Mixes From King Tubby's Studio (Auralux/MGM)

This is just the kind of mystery in which the golden era of dub thrives. Misinformation, confusion, legendary lost relics and reissues of dubs so rare that unless you were part of a sound system back in the day you probably haven't heard of them. That's all in the liner notes for this unearthed nugget from the late 70's early 80's. No one knows who actually created these dubs. They come from a Jamaican only release of the Big Showdown, which featured totally different tracks from the UK release in 1980. In this sense they're a little rawer, with much more space, aimed squarely at the Jamaican market. Mixed in King Tubby's studio it's assumed by Scientist or Prince Jammy, dancehall vocalist Barrington Levy's vocals appear intermittently, with the emphasis on the bouncing bass lines, punching often heavily reverbed or echoing horns, fuzzed up guitars, a smattering of keys and of course the steady beats. It's sparse hypnotic stuff, it feels gritty, it feels somehow more authentic, which means the liner notes have done their job well. Regardless the music is great, absolutely addictive, and

#### **Bob Baker Fish** Bodycode

The Conservation Of Electric Charge (Spectral)

whoever made it did one hell of a job.

Though now Lisbon, Portugal-based, Alan Abrahams grew up in postApartheid Capetown, South Africa, and the sounds of his homeland profoundly permeate his work to this day. What makes his Portable and now Bodycode music so remarkable, however, is how marvelously Abrahams merges African rhythms, microhouse, trance, and minimal techno. After hitting his stride with the Portable releases Cycling (Background) and Version (~scape), his more insistently danceable Bodycode upholds, if not elevates, that high standard. With the tracks six to eight minutes in length, Abrahams gives the club-oriented material ample opportunity to gather steam, and succeeds brilliantly

at fashioning multi-layered arrangements

that are both rhythmically infectious and

compositionally sophisticated. Bodycode's mesmerizing sound design is showcased in ferociously grooving tracks like 'Nanotechnology,' where panning voices slur the title while whirring percussion patterns stoke furious broils, and 'Equidistant,' where a similarly panning voice becomes merely one transfixing element within a mass of bumping rhythms and mechano chatter. The funky 'I, Data' marries tribal rhythms and acid, with Abrahams adding (presumably) his own robotic monotone. Whether intentional or not, the tune, a dizzying amalgam of voice swirls and entrancing rhythms, pays tribute to Kraftwerk with Bodycode's 'Am I data?' query a seeming riff on the German group's 'Man-Machine' concept. As per African tradition, cuts like 'Local Traffic' build hypnotically through increasingly feverish repetition, while multitudes of percussion, voices, and digital flourishes weave into intricate, trippy mazes in 'Hands Free Computer Interface' and a veritable percussion battalion charges alongside a Doppleresque tonal wave in 'Bounce Back.' While not wholly different from his Portable style, the magnificent Bodycode arguably represents the most perfect realization yet of Abraham's 21stcentury Afro-house (perhaps Afro-trance is a more accurate label) style.

#### Ron Schepper

#### **Booka Shade**

Movements

(Get Physical/Stomp) During the last few years, German electro-house duo Booka Shade have

certainly built upon their burgeoning reputation on several different fronts at once – co-running uber hip label Get

Physical, remixing the likes of The Juan McLean and touring Ibiza alongside Mylo and Royksopp. This second artist album from Booka Shade 'Movements' follows on the heels of their acclaimed

2004 debut 'Memento' and shows the duo pushing their icy, electro-laced productions into some quite diverse

areas ranging from near-IDM listening right through to more dancefloor-fixated explorations. If streamlined moments such as 'Shimmer' and 'Darko' suggest

perhaps a more pared-back, austere but still bassgroove-fixated Tiefschwarz, robotic voices flitting over retro breakers' rhythms, deeper offerings such as the juddering 'Pong Pang' call to mind

more the sorts of minimalist future Detroit territory stalked by Matthew Dear under his recent Audion persona. With some densely metallic Villalobosesque polyrhythms wandering their

way beneath cold sounding analogue

synth blips and moody bass swells, it's

certainly metal machine music indeed.

Excellent stuff from a duo to seriously

watch in 2006. Chris Downton Burial Burial

(Hyperdub)

Kode9's Hyperdub label can seemingly do no wrong. Arriving in the mail in early April was the first full length album release on the label, coming from the rather mysterious figure of Burial. Apparently put together entirely without sequencers and just using the wave editor software Sound Forge it is the missing link between early dubstep and late era garage and the new futuristic

half speed dubstep of labels/production

crews like DMZ. It is records like this

that remind me of the radical potential

of simplicity and making the most of

minimal technology. Featuring a few tracks from the South London Boroughs 12" of last year, the album takes those ideas further ending up sounding as much like early dubstep/2-step producers like El-B as Maurizio and the other early Berlin Basic Channel/Chain Reaction sound. In Burial's beats there is a swing that has disappeared from the newer dubstep sounds, but as they are produced unsequenced they move in and out of time, and they sound muffled and sad. This atmosphere of bleakness and grey skies overshadows the whole album, giving every track a mournful quality - tracks like You Hurt Me should be energetic with bass drops and jittery beats but end up sounding contemplative and melancholic. Most tracks revolve around a simple motif or vocal sample and instead of being packed full of sound they echo with space, emptiness - a simplicity akin to that of early jungle then the result of technological limitations, but now a radical voluntary aesthetic. The hiss and crackle that permeates everything sounds alternately like rain, mist, fog, pirate radio static, tape hiss, and old vinyl all together, adding another layer - much like those first Basic Channel records that really emphasised the sense

#### Deepchild

Lifetime

winter. Sebastian Chan

of loss and lack. This is an amazing

Hemisphere we are far from the

album and even though in the Southern

internalised grey skies 'no futurism' of

London it is perfect for our impending

(Future Classic/Inertia) Rick Bull (aka Deepchild) has spent the last few years moving towards this latest album. He has been DJing eclectic sets embracing funk, soul, and dub, delving deep into the treasures of these styles. At the same time, though, he has travelled to Europe, spent some time in Berlin, and brought back a considerably subtler but also edgier production style that now much better incorporates his funk and soul inspirations. Where on

his earliest work he was clearly coming to terms with his equipment and far ranging ideas (Chocolate Dubs), and then working with his brother, singer Andy B, on his rather syrupy coffee-tableish last album (What's Going Wrong), this new album is far more complete and satisfying.

Opening with a collaboration with Gauche, the album begins in broken beat/vocal territory familiar from his last release. It isn't until really takes off mid way through with Always & Forever, a deep glitched up electro workout. Greifswalder Strasse is mutant chopped up electronic funk whilst No Disgrace, the album's standout track, with Ras Roni on vocals is deep in Rhythm & Sound dub techno territory. Although the influences come through clearly, Lifetime is the most interesting Deepchild album so far and offers some new directions for future developments. Sebastian Chan

#### Matthew Herbert

Scale

(K7/Inertia) Matthew Herbert's fabulous Scale is elevated by two things in particular: his talent for dressing songs in marvellous, full-bodied arrangements (sometimes evoking the rich string sound of '70s Philly soul, but more often the splendor of lush Hollywood scores and Broadway musicals) and, secondly, his full deployment of secret weapon Dani Siciliano (who sings on all but one song, Herbert reserving the piano ballad closer 'Wrong' for his own selfdescribed 'croak'). Of course, this being a Herbert project, it shouldn't surprise that beneath the immaculate veneer lies troubling subject matter (meditations on mortality, global suffering, and the end of the oil age) and unusual sound sources (meteorites, golf swings, cars, breakfast cereal, coffins, petrol pumps, and an RAF Tornado bomber are

releases like 2001's Bodily Functions than experimental excursions like last vear's Plat du Jour and 2002's Radio Boy project The Mechanics of Destruction, Scale presents sumptuous fusions of vocal house, jazz, disco, and soul that strike a convincing balance between intricacy and sensuality.

Whereas Herbert didn't use a single traditional instrument on Plat du Jour, he perpetuates Goodbye Swingtime's opulent sound on Scale with the luxuriant potential of a chamber orchestra fully exploited. It takes mere seconds for the album's smooth vibe to declare itself when Siciliano, Neil Thomas, and Jade Fox member Dave Okumu weave vocals—separate and unison—over a string-kissed groove in 'Something Isn't Right.' A soulful pulse drives the horn-laden 'The Movers and Shakers,' a remarkable example of Herbert's arranging talents, though admittedly there's a good amount of extraneous noise that could've been excluded. On 'Those Feelings,' Herbert bridges the experimental with the accessible more convincingly, the listener less aware of the song's subtle patterning when entranced by Siciliano's silken vocal. Elsewhere, her multi-tracked

chirp enriches a funk groove in 'Moving

Like a Train' and turns torch-like during

the song's enticing "up and down" hook

is captivating, you'll be even more won

over when this remarkable chanteuse

the jittery strut 'Harmonise.' Though

#### am your people" at song's end. Ron Schepper

Iamie Lidell

later croons "You are the world / I

Multiply Additions (Warp/Inertia) Jamie Lidell's Multiply album was one that took a while for me to warm to. Perhaps I had wanted it to be obviously 'experimental', perhaps I wanted a rehash of his antics as Supercollider. The last

thing I had expected was a white soul

Whatever the reason for my tardiness,

that's what it sounded like on the surface.

Motown/Stax tribute album, at least

by the time the heat of summer hit properly and the sun shone down on the garden Multiply became an album that got played a lot and it grew and grew on me. Lidell's lyrics almost defy

their bright summery delivery - it is dark introspective record in bright extroverted clothing - much like Lidell himself one presumes. Anyway, as a filler between the next album or even the long promised 'live' DVD which was initially supposed to come with Multuply, Warp has decided to issue an album of remixes and live recordings - almost, but not quite, track for track. Most remix albums are great for DJs to pick the eyes out of but not much good for the average listener. Multiple Additions succeeds for the most part but still feels disjointed despite high points. The live recordings capture Lidell's amazing live voice and re-arrangements, whilst of the remixes Luke Vibert's slowed down analogue funk remix, Freeform Five's typically floor filling electro-disco version of When I Come Back Around, Four Tet's squiggly Krautrock freakout version of The City and Matthew Herbert's humourous country square-dance reworking of Multiply are probably the best. That said, if you didn't dig Multiply

#### Georgia Anne Muldrow

then there is nothing here to convince

you otherwise. Sebastian Chan

Worthnothings EP (Stones Throw/Creative Vibes) New Stones Throw signing Georgia Anne Muldrow's debut EP, apparently released to prime fans for a forthcoming album, leaves me with more questions than answers. It could have been so different if the EP had arrived sans vocals. I would have filed it with all the other Madlib records - voice stripped away this does that slowed down techno breakbeat thing Otis Jackson Jr has his signature on; a fluctuating canvas somewhere between Domu and Theo Parrish, at hip hop tempo - but the collected evidence says the entire project was put together by 22 year old Muldrow; vocals, background vocals

and the beats. If so, this is a hell of a debut. Dipping, then steeply ascending, Muldrow's sharp voice boastfully soars from one song to another. At times, her voice is exuberant like Biork, elsewhere it has the caramelised warmth of Erykah Badu. The flighty vamps rarely give much of her lyrical concerns away, though where they do peek out it is generally disconcerting. Witness the suicidal consideration of standout 'Nothingness'. For such a warm record little is easy about 'Worthnothings,' an EP whose very title suggests an internal dialogue rarely covered on the soulobsessed Stones Throw, Matt Levinson

#### Root 70

Heaps Dub (Nonplace/Inertia)

New Zealand-born jazz musician

Hayden Chisholm has played as part of

Burnt Friedman's live formations and

recorded with him for several years

now. Now Chisholm's Cologne-based jazz quartet reconstructs and re-records, Havden's favourite Friedman selections. Taken from Nu Dub Players, Flanger and solo albums from the last five years the re-interpretations traverse dub, latin and jazz originals - each taken off in new directions by the quartet. What makes Friedman one of my favourite artists is his combination of deadpan humour (carried in musical ideas, track titles and pseudonyms) and his aesthetic journey which has seen him explore the notion of a digital band for the past decade or more. Chisholm's reinterpretations return the source material to its 'artificial real' roots - 'real jazz' interpretations of sample arrangements, samples that themselves were employed to reinterpret 'real' genres. The highly accomplished quartet of Chisholm, Nils Wogram, Jochen Rueckert and Matt Penmann recorded these tracks live with Burnt Friedman then doing the final mix and edits, drawing each track to exactly 5 minutes long each. Saxophone, clarinet, trombone, double bass and light touch drum work combine with Friedman's subtle post-production effects, revealing

among the 723 objects sampled, not

to mention the 177 phone messages

worked into 'Just Once'). But the

the strength of Friedman (and Atom Heart's) original compositions even when freed from their digital roots. Sebastian Chan

#### Senor Coconut and his Orchestra

Yellow Fever (Essay/Creative Vibes) If you've ever trawled through op shop record bins and bought something because the cover looks wrong you

understand Senor Coconut, Occasionally your find is pure kitsch gold and Senor Coconut seeks to provide this every time. His approach owes a lot to the golden age of the cover version, the reinterpretation, the Switched on Moog, the Baja Marimba Band (to whom he owes a lot). and the countless orchestral renditions of pop standards. In a strange confusing turn German Atom Heart best known for his work in Flanger with Burnt Friedman moved to Chile and adopted the uber kitsch Senor Coconut persona for an album of Samba, Latino, Mambo infused Kraftwerk covers, cheekily revealing the song writing behind the technological fetishism of the German electronic pop icons. Of course the irony is that he did this using electronic cut and paste techniques himself, but that's fine, there's plenty of humour and irony flowing through Senor Coconut's milky veins. And now he's turned his attention to Japanese electro synth pop band the Yellow Magic Orchestra. He's even managed to rope three of them in to provide vocals and piano. And you'd be

surprised how well their synth pop tunes

numbers. On Behind the Mask he's done

transform into faux Latino big band

away with the vocoder and replaced

it with the sexily accented Venezuelan

Argenis Brito adopting big band swagger

above sharp stabbing horns, marimbas

and vibraphones, which is great because

humour however, Atom is hard at work,

now you can actually understand the

carefully constructing these amazing

tunes, crafting imaginary genres that

sound like they've existed for years.

He's also handed off a bunch of short

lyrics. Beneath the kitsch and the

interludes between tracks to a some of his friends like Mouse on Mars, Burnt, Towa Tei and Schneider TM who do some explicitly electronic cut and paste, perhaps emphasising once and for all: This is not real. But who wants real when you're having this much fun? Bob **Baker Fish** 

#### Sinner DC

Mount Age (Ai)

Mount Age, Sinner DC's second album and first for Ai Records, merges the sleek propulsion of Kompakt techno with Ghostly's stylistic finesse. While the Geneva-based trio's sound is as polished as its Ai counterparts, Sinner DC (Julien Amey, Steve Mamie, Manuel Bravo) opts for an atmospheric shoegaze-techno hybrid that distances it from its label kin. In 'On & On' and 'Lady March,' the group anchors songs with dub-techno beats, then builds multiple layers of blurry monotone vocals (sometimes vocodered), shuddering guitars, and wavering horn melodies overtop until tracks become dense masses of pumping electro-intensity. Representative of the trio's style, the spectral opener 'Everything Is Sand' drapes aquatic piano chords, nosedive guitar swoops, and monotone murmurs over languid techno beats, while breathy vocals in the hypnotically looping 'Wintertown' exude a David Gilmour-like softness. Deviating from the predominating style, 'Afterland' merges Gas-styled orchestral ambient and Kraftwerk beats, after which

#### Symbolic Fantasm

Schepper

Find Me A Pen That Works (Independent) Sydney-based hiphop outfit Symbolic Fantasm apparently first started writing

'Babycat' breaks from the aggressive

attack with a submersive foray that

(Bernhard Pucher), Mount Age is a

catalogue addition nevertheless. Ron

glimmers with crystalline sparkle. Like

last year's Built In Anger by Confutatis

departure of sorts for Ai yet a distinctive

music together during high school, and this debut self-released album represents the culmination of more than seven years of determined perseverance. Comprised of sixteen tracks, Find Me A Pen certainly takes in some labyrinthine territory over its entire span, and producer EOS lays on a dense and foreboding blend of samples and beats that acts as a suitably cinematic counterpoint to Orbit and Snail's tensionstricken lyrical imagery. With a swirling, unpredictable sonic

palette that calls to mind the likes of Anticon's Odd Nosdam or Music vs. Physics, to name a local comparison point, Find Me A Pen is certainly an impressive debut offering, but the dense and unrelenting nature of the verbal delivery may be the one thing here that puts some listeners off. With Orbit's tension-packed, on edge verbal style sitting more or less in the same gear right throughout this album, Snail's contrasting tones frequently offer a welcome respite of sorts, coming across as more smooth and considerably less booming. Despite these points, Find Me A Pen certainly represents a very promising debut. Chris Downton

#### Time

Litterture (Dirty Laboratory) Time is a 21-year-old Denver based MC. He's got a lot to say and he crams an almost endless torrent of words on the 14 densely packed tracks here. Musically it's pretty stripped back, gentle melodic loops, often classical, something soundscapey or equally diverse hemmed in by basic drum machine beats. This minimal aesthetic pushes Time's rhymes and vocals firmly up front and lyrically if there were any other elements it would be overwhelming. It's almost like the music has parted to allow him space to move. And Time is a mile a minute: each verse seems to be an opportunity

to cram in as many words as possible. In

this sense there are some real links with

Canadian crooner Josh Martinez, yet the

lo fi aesthetic is reminiscent with sped

up early Buck 65 or Sage Francis. Yet where Sage's flow is violently dynamic, Time tends to keep the delivery pretty constant. Large and fast. His rhymes are like gymnastics, extraordinary feats of verbal endurance, and it works albeit breathlessly. His interest seems to be not breathing, long streams of content, vet still retaining comprehensibility. You'd

#### think he'd be more than at home in the Anticon stable. Particularly in terms of content, capitalism, the state of hip hop, television, white trash stories, destructive relationships painted very real and incredibly vivid. Bob Baker Fish

If you're expecting straight up electro

#### Winduptoys

Double Exposure (Clan Analogue/Creative Vibes)

dub, you're in the wrong place because local duo Winduptoys love to tangent, to establish their heavily reverbed beats and skittering electronics and then disappear into some strange electronic sound scape territory. Of course they eventually return to the groove, and when they do it's with a euphoric intensity. Maybe it's because they are proudly adverse to midi and soft synths, the textures of these electronics, seem somewhat grander, crunchier, squelchier, more tactile than everything else around. These are synthesized and electronic sounds that you can taste. And its clear that a lot of care has gone into crafting these larger than life bubbles, skips, basslines, these strange synthesized fragments of sound that somehow remain chilled out, yet quite busy careering energetically around the space. In fact it's quite dense, a cavalcade of electronics falling onto a smooth groove and those repetitive bangin' beats. Yet there's also plenty of live instruments incorporating flutes. Glockenspiel, and tablas. They cover Oublic Image Ltd's 'The Suit', providing perhaps one of the most hypnotically violent moments on Double Exposure and also team up with Psyburbia and Koshowko. It's a dense

hypnotic world, part experimental, part

#### Various Artists

Clan Analogue In Version: Dub Selections (Clan Analogue / Creative Vibes) It's been awhile since Clan Analogue turned their attentions to dub, since the release of the 'Jaunt' compilations at the end of the nineties, in fact. This latest compilation release operates in a manner similar to Clan's recent 'Doppler Shift' electro collection; rather than claiming to present a 'definitive' examination of dub, it casts its net around the individual takes on the form being explored by the collective's members. While there's a steady focus throughout on the defining elements of dub - cavernous bass, heavy drums and echo-delay, the tracklisting overseen by executive producer Scott McPhee (Nerve Agent / X-Ray Sound System) takes in diverse terrain. Dsico offers one of this compilation's few vocal moments as well as a previously-unseen glimpse of his dub-selector skills with the woozily laconic 'Over And Out Dub', while conversely, Koshowko set the controls for the crashing heart of the echo-chamber on 'Promise', stretching vocoders out over a treacherouslyshifting rhythmic backdrop that sits somewhere between broken IDM and pulsating dub. It's also worth moving swiftly for the limited extra CD, as it nicely caps off an already impressive compilation. Chris Downton

#### Various Artists

Sacred Symbols of Mu (Planet Mu/Inertia) Originally intended to mark the label's 100th release, Sacred Symbols of Mu has suffered a similar fate to the much delayed Planet Mu DVD. Now fully complete, mastered and pressed, this label overview compilation demonstrates just what has changed at Planet Mu in the three years since Children of Mu, and what hasn't. There are of course tracks from label stalwarts like owner Mu-ziq, as well as Venetian Snares, Luke Vibert, Shitmat, Leafcutter John and Dykehouse. However it is the

new breed of Mu artists that makes this budget priced double CD set really shine. New signing Tom Burbank contributes 'Gnats' and in doing so marks himself out as a very promising talent. Pinch has produced another standout track in 'Punisher', having wowed the world with the Oawwali 12" earlier in the year. What is most striking about this compilation is how consistent and whole everything seems; Sacred Symbols of Mu really does form as good a manifesto for a label as you could possibly hope for. With this release, Planet Mu really show the breadth and depth of their roster, and can legitimately claim to (still) be one of the leading lights of the electronic underground. Ali Burge

Up The Anti mixed by Mr. Trick &

#### Various Artists

Waxfactor (Needlework) UK-based listeners and the internet radio-savvy may have already come across Mr. Trick and Waxfactor's Rhythm Incursions radio show on London's Resonance FM, which for two years has seen the duo throwing anything from glitch remixes of Usher to The Bug's violent dancehell into their unpredictable live mixes. Billing their show as 'picking up where hiphop stops', this second in a series of mix CDs reflecting the content and style of the show follows on the heels of recent guest mixes for both Ninia Tunes' Solid Steel and XFM. With the duo apparently reaching a point where they felt it was time to unleash their 'definitive' mix, 'Up The Anti' represents the fruits of an entire year of work by Mr. Trick & Waxfactor and shows them throwing a headspinning 130 tracks into a one hour long party mix session (with absolutely no track information to tell you what's coming next).

In this case, Mr. Trick & Waxfactor have fashioned a heaving, multivaried mashup mix that rolls with the force of an earthmover through alternating hiphop, dub and dancehall styles and is sure to delight heads enamoured with Solid Steel or DJ Rupture's sweeping mix sessions. In fact, there's so damn much going on in this mix (at one point, virtually every classic sampled hiphop callout seems to rear its head) I was hard-pressed to spot individual tracks, apart from suitably dub-heavy dancehall reworkings of Missy Elliot

and Method Man's 'Release Yo' Delf'. Above all, the focus here is upon maintaining a room-shaking level of bass-heavy groove - something that 'Up The Anti' accomplishes with perhaps more style and substance than any other mix session of its type I've encountered during the last year. Chris Downton

Silence and the absence of it:

#### **Tim Coster**

Landing (Half Theory)

On Landing Tim Coster works with ambient drones, with indiscernible fluttering sounds and gentle barely perceptible fluctuating melodies, offering a simultaneous feeling of stasis and progression. Apparently garnered from processed field recordings, processed instrumentation and electronics, it's an exercise in patience and subtlety, in the delicate integration of material almost under earshot. It's all quite low key, the warmth of the drones anchoring the pieces as multiple sound sources converge and entwine together to form one rich tapestry of sound. It's really quite beautiful and subtle work with mannered and soothing tones that still manage to retain an experimental edge. Bob Baker Fish

#### Greg Davis & Sebastien Roux

Paquet Surprise (Carpark)

American Greg Davis and Frenchman Sebastien Roux have thrown everything but the kitchen sink in together and crafted a quite beautiful, occasionally off kilter suite of glitch folk bastard electro acoustic pop oddities that if they could assume human form you'd want to hug them. Most prominent on their list of ingredients are acoustic guitars,

which weave bend and exist under and around all manner of electronic and electric instruments. They are songs, but the structures have been lovingly distended and experimented upon, where the internal logic of the sounds informs what happens next rather than any notion of form or expectation. And this freedom makes for some really interesting and agreeable compositional decisions. And though initially it may seem to the contrary, it really has been carefully and quite subtly crafted as it can not be possible to layer this amount of disparate sounds and textures together even if you are some sort of slacker Brian Wilsonesque slacker genius -which no doubt these guys are. So alongside the odd moments of difficult music concrete weirdness you have the whispering vocals over gentle acoustic guitar. Yet before long their mischievous nature takes hold again and you're back in the realm of gentle furtive spurts of electrics. Bob Baker Fish

#### Ferran Fages & Will Guthrie

Cinabri

(Absurd/Antboy)

Melbourne experimental percussionist Will Guthrie has increasingly moved beyond the kit, redefining the concept of percussion with all manner of objects and junk, even a strange purpose built percussion machine by local instrument maker Rod Cooper. Guthrie's motto seems to be if you can hit it, scratch it, rub it, or indeed make any external sound with it then its percussion. And it's an incredibly freeing notion that has allowed Guthrie to truly extend his already extended technique. He uses contact mic's to amplify these sounds and on this collaboration with Ferran Fages, it's difficult to determine where he begins and Fage's acoustic turntable begins. It's quite a dense textural metallic suite, filled with odd bottom end thumps and thuds alongside roaring droning pitches and fluttering squeaks. Recorded in two sittings in Paris and Barcelona and assembled later by Guthrie at his base in Nantes France. it's a dense at times difficult and quite performative take on music concrete traditions. At times it feels like the duo have stumbled onto an old rusted decayed engine and are attempting to fire it up as the machinery protests on being wakened from its slumber, whilst on others there is an almost obscene close mic'd feeling of skittery perversion.

#### **Bob Baker Fish**

Chad Hoefler Ouiet Glow (Lotuspike Records) Ohio-based ambient producer Chad Hoefler's debut album 'Twilight In The Offing' was released last year on Californian ambient label Hypnos to significant critical acclaim, and this follow-up on Pennsylvania-based imprint Lotuspike seems certain to develop his reputation further. As its title suggests, 'Quiet Glow' is thematically centred around light moving over objects and through space, and perhaps one of the biggest (and probably intentional) ironies is that it's one of the best albums to listen to in near-complete darkness I've heard in some time. Opening track 'Incipience Electric' counterbalances blissful ringing

harmonic tones, insect-like buzzes and

sense of underlying menace generated

through the use of yawning bass chords

washing ambient pads with a veiled

that never quite recedes, imbuing much of the material with an intangibly dark edge that prevents proceedings from drifting into 'lava lamp' ambience. 'Radiant Blue' meanwhile introduces sparse metallic-sounding percussive tones and dubbed-out echoes into an ebbing backdrop of ambient warmth in a manner that beautifully contrasts delicate and harsh elements and also betrays Hoefler's classical training. A strong second album from Hoefler. topped off with a typically meticulous mixing job by US ambient/space music figurehead Robert Rich. Chris Downton

#### Hi God People Shortwave Children

(Shame File) Melbourne's Hi God People are something of an enigmatic quartet, having floated about the edges of the garden state's psych, experimental and indie scenes for a handful of years. Sure, the group's members have been involved in other more journalised projects (such as Panel of Judges, Snawklor, Spill label), but as Hi God People, their music has been hard to come by in great volume. Luckily, then, for Shortwave Children

– part 6 in Shame File's Terra Australia Incognita MP3 EP series. The disc. which features four tracks, was compiled in typical HGP style - over two hours of material (recorded at Melbourne's 3CR radio station, and live at the Rob Roy) was edited down to a mere 22 minutes. What made the cut is a mixture of cavernous, echoing chimes, clanks and scrapes; muffled communal utterances; skeletal guitar fragments and dark drones. The editing is seamless; perhaps a task more easily managed in the context of such disjunctive music, but done well nonetheless. Mood-wise, the music rarely strays

from a curious darkness, but it's not to be confused with gloom. This is a record you could spend a night in with - if only it lasted longer! - and though it's ever-meandering, it moves on when it has to. The best thing about it is its

playfulness - you can't help thinking

you're missing out on some fantastical visual theatre, too. Nobody could accuse it of being at all 'poppy', but Shortwave Children is catchy in its own way; a well-crafted document of an intriguingly unconventional outfit. Jon Tihia

#### Hurra Caine Landcrash

Movino (No Ground r)

Hurra Caine Landcrash is an intriguing work from the always-interesting experimental UK label No Ground R. The solo work of Dan Hopkins and recorded between 2002 and 2004, it

seems to exist somewhere in the

netherworld between ambient music and bedroom experimentation. It's charm is that it never really explicitly defines itself and you're just left with its gentle low key warmth and a lack of certainty of how, or even if the parts fit together. There are moments of inspired idiosyncratic genre bending, such as Seminar 4, which seems to want to be

an ambient guitar scape, yet an insistent

electronic almost house pulse forms and

disparate sounds begin to collide. It's quite simply constructed yet its desire to move between ill-defined genres results in a number of expectations to form, and then be reassessed as they are consistently thwarted by strange new unexpected and unusual elements. It's quite inspired vet still emotionally affecting; and whilst Hopkins compositional decisions and intent remain somewhat of a mystery, its impact does not. Bob Baker Fish

#### Loscil

Plume

(Kranky/Inertia) The material on Loscil's 2002 release

Submers seems to quite literally originate from the ocean's depths, the listener made to feel as if the recording's blurred transmissions are being picked up by sonar from some mysterious and long-undiscovered location. A similar submersive quality infuses 2004's First Narrows and re-emerges on Plume too,

specifically on tracks like 'Motoc' and

gleam of Josh Lindstrom's vibes and xylophone, for example, and the delicate glow of Jason Zumpano's Rhodes piano) have brought the material up to the open air, rendering it less hermetic and more expansive. With its gentle stream of aquatic pitter-patter, 'Chinook,' for instance, unspools in characteristic Loscil manner but, the moment Lindstrom's vibes appear, the piece is not only warmed but invigorated by his humanizing presence; believe it or not, there's even a slightly funky feel to the rhythm, maybe the first time the words 'Loscil' and 'funky' have appeared in the same sentence.

In general, though, the fourth full-

length from Vancouver-based sound

'Steam,' yet the newly-added sounds (the

artist Scott Morgan doesn't depart radically from the established Loscil sound—it's still serene ('Halcyon' pushing it to its meditative extreme) and there's still a sense of carefully-calibrated flow and development. As he did with the material on First Narrows, Morgan creates loose structures for Plume over which live players improvise but. unlike before, he largely refrains from editing the live passes. Consequently, the material flows more naturally and registers as a collection of live as opposed to constructed takes. Among the guests, Krista Marshall drapes Ebow guitar across the softly churning 'Rorschach' while Stephan Wood does the same in 'Zephyr' and 'Charlie'. The latter is especially lovely, particularly when Wood's No Pussyfooting-styled Frippertronics bleed across Lindstrom's glimmering vibes patterns. Ron Schepper

#### DI Olive

Sleep (Room40)

It's rare that you'll come across music explicitly designed not to be listened to. Yet Sleep is much more about what it can do for you than how it sounds or the techniques Olive puts into practice. Sleep is a sleeping pill, constructed in the aftermath of September 11 and

given to his friends in New York on cdr to help them sleep. Or perhaps more importantly to help them when they woke up and couldn't get back to sleep Its genesis however goes back further to the late nineties when the New York based Olive was Diing ambient sets at sleeping parties, where people would bring a bunch of food, sleeping bags and just crash out listening to ambient tunes all night. And it's a very peaceful outing, an ethereal wash of ambient atmospheres poking gently around. It's not particularly musical, freed from melodies, chord progressions or beats, and the sounds seem to be moving without developing per se, despite possessing the illusion that we're getting somewhere albeit slowly via a series of suites. Only one track clocking in at 48 minutes, it's virtually impossible to listen to the whole track, even when you're not in bed. Doctors should be prescribing this disc to insomniacs. Sleep actually predates Buoy, another sleeping pill issued by Olive on Room40 a couple of years back, and is actually more subtle, more stripped back and in a sense more effective. Sleeping with sleep is incredible, its ability to lull you back into slumber via its warmth and patience once you have woken is unparalleled. This is a very

#### Pure

Home Is Where My Harddisk Is Vol.2 (Feld Records)

special work. Bob Baker Fish

Frankfurt-based experimental label Feld is responsible for this record by techno-exile-turned-digital-sound-artist Pure, featuring two live sets recorded 9 days – and an ocean – apart. The first was put to tape (or, more likely, disk) in Brussels, while the second was captured in Winnipeg, and each differs widely from the other. The Brussels set (recorded at the Argos Festival, October 2004) is 26:13 of digital squips, whirrs and hums, interspersed with brief glimpses of its classical-choral source material. For the most part it's a good listen, though some of it hints

earlier on in the piece, where one feels as though Pure is merely finding his feet. Once he does, however, the results are beautiful. For example, around the 20 minute mark, a lone female singer moonlights for a moment before being ushered offstage, leaving a rambling bed of gently humming snap/crackle/pop. Over this emerges a razor-esque sound which eventually cuts the piece down again. This harsh harmonic ambience is as effective as similar moments heard in the work of Terre Thaemlitz, though more patiently administered. Track two, from the Send + Receive Festival in Winnipeg, more plainly recalls Pure's

excellent 2003 release Noonbugs in its crisper, smoother, white-noise-happy sound. This piece flows more serenely from idea to idea, with a much more subtle approach to tweaks. From its hazy beginnings, it draws back to a clean set of light bleeps, before rising again to a spacious sampled-voice crescendo. Then, beneath this, shifts build until the ambience is again replaced by rough twists, eventually dying in a brilliant digital hiss. For its consistency alone, it's

the better of the two pieces. The notion of a live recording of completely computer generated/ processed music may seem irrelevant, but it does place the audience immediately into the scope of the work. And with this live audience in mind, it's certainly an engaging, absorbing experience. Jon Tihia

Chris Raneir The Universe Is A Long Time (Independent) Australian based South African Chris Raneir offers a gentle though quite a varied range of textural guitar work on The Universe is a Long Time. Incredibly adept at establishing a mood, Ranier unlike many experimental guitarist/ composers is willing to move beyond the drones, beyond the digital manipulation and work with the resonances of notes, which occur regularly throughout this album, in sparse two or three note runs. It's this refusal to pigeonhole his

technique that makes The Universe is a Long Time so interesting and evocative, where you can move beyond the approach and focus on the emotion resonating through his gentle tinkering. **Bob Baker Fish** 

#### Scott Sinclair & Clinton Green

With Doors Open (Half Theory)

An improvised guitar collaboration between Brisbane based Scott Sinclair and Melbourne's Clinton Green (Undecisive God), the recordings on this CDR were crafted over a threeyear period and utilise a number of interesting approaches. These range from the abrasive though strangely

rhythmic and quite powerful Tamas, which at 1.30 sounds like the arrival of impending doom, to the more textural splinters, scuffing and jagged stabs of sound of Medi Hiss, that no longer seem remotely related to guitar, melding the difficult textures with a slight ambient atmosphere. These pieces have been compiled and remixed from hours of recordings and nowhere is this more evident than the title track, which clocks in at eight minutes, beginning subtly before building with a searing power. Often working together they sound like a single sound source, a searing ambient drone, where they dip and surge ahead as one, their sounds interweaving, before breaking away to give detail to the work. One moment they'd happily sit alongside Caspar Brotzman, the next Derek Bailey and later Thurston Moore or even the drones of If Thousands, such is diversity of terrain covered. Bob Baker Fish Keith Fullerton Whitman

Track 4 (2 Way Superimposed) (Room40) He's recently left our shores but US experimental artist Keith Fullerton Whitman's Track 4 (2 Way Superimposed) will have you begging for his return. A single track clocking in at just over twenty one minutes, he operates predominantly in the bottom end of the frequency spectrum, offering an incredible feeling of serenity and warmth. The easiest link would be some of the gentler moments of his recent Lisbon effort on the Kranky label, vet it's also a very different creature. There doesn't seem to be any easily identifiable trajectory per se, yet the piece does move, albeit under the radar. With washes of atmospheric tones wrapped around some repetitious digital hicupping, it shouldn't work, but there's a certain peaceful assuredness that carries it through. Released to coincide with his earlier April tour this is a ridiculously limited release. Bob

**Baker Fish** Various Artists Incidental amplifications (Room40) In a welcome challenge to muzak, happy inoffensive classic hits, and music designed to make you purchase, Brisbane based Room 40 offer sounds to occupy the spaces for shopping. In July and August 2005 Brisbane based sound artist Lawrence English curated a spatial sound installation in various malls and shopping centres across Brisbane. Putting a call out to experimental musicians, this disc is a documentation of some of the more interesting submissions that greeted shoppers. Whilst some bigger names such as Chris Watson and Terre Thaemlitz offer submissions, it's the locals such as Camilla Hannan who provides some of her factory sounds from her lyrical More Songs About Factories (Cajid) release, Joe Musgrove (Botborg) who gets high pitched and Thembi Soddell who flirts with silence and doom ridden textural noise who provide some of

the more interesting efforts to fill the

consumerist void. So whilst it doesn't

make you want to buy shoes Aaron

Ximm's sales pitch will confuse with

its multiple indecipherable vocals and

M Roesner's wonderfully crafted field

recordings would've no doubt wrenched

shoppers from their feeding frenzy and

had them scratching their heads with

confusion Bob Baker Fish

at aimless manipulation - particularly PAGE 78 CYCLIC DEFROST ISSUE 13/14 [07.2006]

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