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CYCLIC DEFROST MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 18. Probably our best yet – and the articles within are supplemented by a huge amount of web-only content that just wouldn't fit in the print layout. About half of you will find a free compilation CD in the centrefold courtesy of legendary Melbourne experimental label Extreme.

Several themes kept recurring as the magazine came together. In fascinating feature interviews with Burial, Odd Nosdam and Clinton Green, and a special Cyclic Selects from Seaworthy's Cameron Webb, the artists return again and again to the artefacts of production and memory, the historical detritus. In a music world hung up on sounding "just right" in the club, it's reassuring to hear.

The idea of snarling traffic jams might send (the currently dubstep-obsessed producer) Mark Pritchard on a creative jag, but this issue's extended profile of the UK-born but Sydney based beat maker shows making music needn't be about sticking to the middle of the road.

It's restless creativity that drives Francis Plagne, Danny Jumpertz from Feral Media, Aaron Martin, Ivens and the Nam Shub of Enki too. Several of this issue's pages were laid out on laptop, as designer Susa Dold worked her way by train from Hamburg to Kiel, Germany. And our guest cover designer is Cailan Burns, a long time traveller, designer, and music maker with Pretty Boy Crossover.

The federal election will have been won (and lost) by the time this ends up in your hands. So put on your Extreme sampler, sit back in your comfiest chair and read about some of our favourite music makers. Better yet, get out and hear them.

Sebastian Chan and Matthew Levinson
Editors

ERRATA FOR ISSUE 17
Issue 17 stated that Jeremy Dower was employed by Animal Logic. After the interview took place he departed from Animal Logic. Friendswithyou is not based in Tokyo, they are from Miami; and Pictoplasma is in Berlin.

CONTENTS

BINGO BABES AND LOVE HEARTS

"I HAD TOO MUCH TO DREAM LAST NIGHT," SAYS THE FURRY BLUE CREATURE, ONE HAND OVER HIS RIGHT EYE, WARM RED LOVE-HEART SHAPED TEARS ESCAPING HIS LEFT.

Another cheeky character has keyboard teeth and plays in a fun band while a loveable monster grins widely and shows you his clawed paws. Welcome to the magical realm created by Cailan Burns, illustrator, space traveler, one half of the musical duo Pretty Boy Crossover, and our special guest cover designer, as he helps summon up the joy of the new season.

"The cover is about impermanence and spring," he says. "Seasons come and go, people too. I like the way that flowers are so fleeting, the smell and colour existing for such a short time. We all get too hung up on attachments. Things like flowers and the beauty of spring remind me how you can't hang onto anything. It's all in flux, so just enjoy the moment. Don't stop the love, let it pour out!"

His characters show no signs of emotional inhibition. They are vivid, free-flowing with an almost anthropomorphic life. They are scarlet visions of the kinds of wisdoms that dot childhood imaginations. For this reason, I wonder what Cailan's own childhood dreams and ambitions were like? Do they reflect the current patterns that flow through his art?

"When I was a kid, strangely enough, I really wanted to be a stunt man. I had this book called *Bring On The Stuntman* - I thought it was so cool. I used to do all kinds of stupid things involving jumping off stuff or over stuff. Then I got hurt and totally wimped out and stuck to drawing. After that I was fixated on horror movies and wanted to be a make-up effects artist. I have to admit, I wish I had followed that one. What a great job that would be."

Cailan's early childhood was diverse, growing up in places like Alice Springs where his memories are populated with family day trips, camping, swimming in waterholes, climbing things and bush walking in a desert paradise. But it wasn't to last forever as his family soon left for the culture shock of Washington DC.

"It was such a different world. Luckily we lived near a creek so I could continue exploring rather than vegetating on the couch," he says. Other sources of curiosity beyond nature adventures started to have an influence: "I guess like most kids of the '80s I was into all the pop culture of the time. Music-wise everything from breakdance to hair metal. Art-wise I was in love with Japanese cartoons like *Astro Boy*, *Star Blazers* and *Robotech*. I was also really into Dungeons and Dragons art and especially Iron Maiden album covers. I just loved how they scared me as well as inspired me to draw and paint better."

With that background in horror and heavy metal, are Cailan's psychedelic characters ever frightening to kids, I wonder.

"I haven't really shown my work to that many children, but I have been told by friends that have children that they really like them. I don't think they are too scary, maybe more weird than anything. Kids like weird. I did. I loved *Mad* and *Cracked* comics when I was young. I still remember the first time I saw a Robert Crumb comic. Now that scared me!"

Even as adults there are some things that induce fear, partially because of the mystery that obscures a clear perspective of the bigger picture. I ask Cailan whether these kinds of unknown quantities influence his work and he responds with a unique insight on death: "I lost my mother when I was 25. I had such a strange time back then dealing with it. It really did my head in. I realised that up until then I had been in a dream. Life was non-threatening, then I saw how fleeting it all is and how 'now' is the only time there is. I like reading about different cultural views on death, things like suffering, karma, rebirth and impermanence. I have always been into this sort of thing.

"While I was living in Japan I started to draw a lot of hearts in my work. It started to become a sort of motif, the eternal heartbeat maybe. Or the eternal heart of the universe or something. I like to use the shape of the heart in many ways, as a character's face or body, as a pattern on clothing or exploding from their heads like a fountain. Hearts can be cold and warm, jumping out of your body or broken. They are a nice subject matter."

What other things inspire Cailan?

"Everything and nothing. I often come up with ideas for art or music whilst grokking over the sound of an insect or listening to rain on the roof. There is inspiration all around at all times, inside and outside. We can't escape it."

Now there have been rumours that Cailan did, once upon a time, try his hand at 'conceptual art', before settling on character design. It's necessary to get to the bottom of this for the the idea is, after all, rather exciting. Imagine what kind of power his work could yield in a three-dimensional space? Floor to ceiling psychedelic swirls? Robotic characters that respond to human presence or touch? Better still, what would they sound like in 5.1 surround? Sadly enough, it seems that the whispers aren't really true. Cailan describes his time at art school in Adelaide, as rich with experimentation, a true process of becoming.

"It was a lot of fun and I met so many interesting people. I went there straight from school, which was crazy because I went to such a bogan school. It was a real eye opener. I felt I had finally found my place in the world. I fit in so easily and it was refreshing that no one cared about how you dressed, what you were into or what music you liked. It totally changed me as a person.

"At art-school you end up trying so many things: sculpture, photography, print making, video art... until you find your place. Everyone was starting to get more into conceptual art and making things like installations and stuff. I dabbled a little but realised that I loved drawing and painting. I perhaps realised I even wanted to be an illustrator which was kind of a dirty word in the visual arts area." In fact, it wasn't until Cailan left university that he really followed this path.

"After I left, I started to get back into drawing characters and illustrations. I was really getting into movies like *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*. I was listening to music by Aphex Twin and Autechre, as well as getting into psychedelic '60s music and art. This began to reflect in my own work."

Cailan describes his style as a blend of "psychedelic muppets" and "*Where the Wild Things Are* kind of monsters." He has a design process with a difference: "I like to start my characters from the eyes out. I'm not sure why, it just seems to be a good place to begin from. The eyes are important for conveying the feeling of the character so they sort of blossom out from that point. Some ideas come to me in dreams, or when I stare at odd things. You know when you see a face in a carpet or a blotch on a wall. Other ideas I guess are me responding to some other artists work, like visual sampling."

Sometimes it all boils down to random interventions that force a change in approach or thinking, like the time Cailan's computer died, returning him to his foundation practice of working with paper. He recalls, "Before I first went to live in Japan in 2003, I was really getting into making art on the computer. The day before I arrived in Japan my laptop broke. When I got to Osaka, it wouldn't turn on. I didn't how to speak much Japanese and I didn't know where to go to fix it. So I bought a sketchbook and some paints and basically got back into drawing and sketching again. It was such a blessing it happened. I had forgotten how much I liked to paint and draw. I now use the computer more for collaging and composing the pieces that I scan. It is still part of the work but I try to keep the hand drawn and painted feel."

Running in parallel to all this activity is

"FLOWERS ARE SO FLEETING, THE SMELL AND COLOUR EXISTING FOR SUCH A SHORT TIME. THINGS LIKE FLOWERS AND THE BEAUTY OF SPRING REMIND ME HOW YOU CAN'T HANG ONTO ANYTHING. IT'S ALL IN FLUX, SO JUST ENJOY THE MOMENT."

"I LIKE TO START MY CHARACTERS FROM THE EYES OUT. I'M NOT SURE WHY, IT JUST SEEMS TO BE A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN FROM."

his musical collaboration with Jason Sweeney in Pretty Boy Crossover, otherwise known as 'PBXO'. Cailan describes the music they make as "filmic and dreamy" - "Sometimes we are a little pop and other times more moody and ambient. Not sure where we fit in. It is always changing but we are bedroom shoegazers at heart."

They've been busy releasing albums since their first offering *System Soundtracks 01* was met with critical acclaim in 1998. Their follow up albums built on this success and it just keeps flowing. This year they have been busy with their latest release, *Different Handwriting*. Despite what the title may suggest, it really is in keeping with the gentle stream of sparse minimal beats and densely compressed Joy Division-like guitar fuzz that has helped to define their sound for some time. What we hear more of is lyrical content that craftily complements the aesthetic borne of their fortuitous meeting of minds and sensibilities.

"I actually met Jason Sweeney through a mutual friend," remarks Cailan. "I did some artwork for a friend who was putting on a performance or play of sorts. Jason was one of the writers of one of the pieces. I remember we were talking about music and he said he had a sampler. I was so impressed. Not long after, Jason came to my house one day and we switched on the keyboards, fired up the four track and 606 and made some music. That became our first collaboration and we havn't stopped since."

Fresh from a tour to support the new album, they show no signs of slowing down and Cailan and Jason are discussing ideas for new musical collaborations.

"I have this idea to have a limit on what our palette for sound can be" says Cailan. "I am thinking of sampling all sounds from an old film and making every song and beat and noise only from this movie. It will be nice to have a limit set on us to see what we can do without so many options."

Did you know Cailan also has a quirky side-project, a relic from his days in Japan?

"I really want to finish all the music I made in Japan," he explains. "It's called 'Mystery Twin' and it is basically me and some old synths, egg shakers, flea market keyboards, a guitar and my computer. Sometimes my wife Yoshie will sing in Japanese on a track or two. She sang in English at first but her flow in Japanese was just so much more interesting. She picked up on a different timing in the song and made the songs sound cool. I hope I can finish it soon. I feel like it is something I need to put out there as my diary on living in Japan."

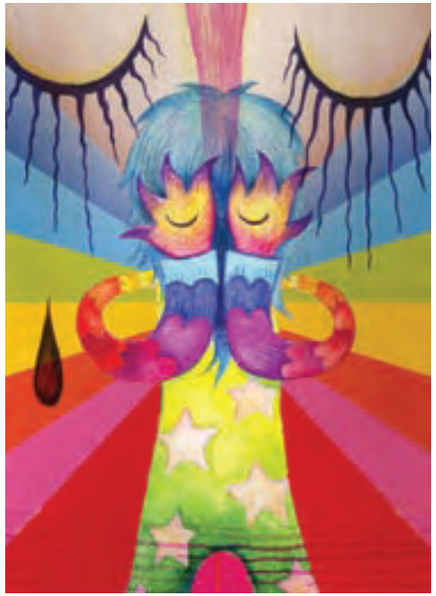
"Art-wise I have a sketchbook of loads of ideas for paintings. So I will have to kick my butt into gear and get busy on them. I am also working on some wooden 'baboushka dolls' for an exhibition in Germany. Also, I recently joined an arts group called the Jacky Winter Group. It's a bunch of awesome illustrators from all over Australia brought together by a designer and friend Jeremy Wortsman. He is promoting us to the world and hopefully lots of cool projects will come our way!"

"I would love to make a kids' book in the future, and learn how to play keyboard and guitar better, speak Japanese better, and also figure out what life is all about. This world is such a weird place. It's 2007 and we all still can't get along. I thought we were going to be driving flying cars and all wearing matching jumpsuits. Damn!" All the big things then. One thing is for sure, he's not in a hurry to quit Pretty Boy Crossover. "I find it easy to work with Jason. I guess we complement each other's style. I hope we make music together for as long as we can.

"Bingo hall tour 2047." Now that sounds like something we'd be into, right?

Find Cailan Burns at: jackywinter.com and myspace.com/toomuchtodream

"ALL PICTURES, OTHER THAN THE RUSSIAN DOLLS, ARE HAND-PAINTED ON PAPER. I THEN SCAN THE IMAGES AND COLLAGE THEM WITH BACKGROUNDS I HAVE PAINTED OR APPROPRIATED FROM BOOKS, PHOTOS, OR ANYTHING THAT HAS A PATTERN OR TEXTURE."



ANTIPODEAN EXTREMITIES

AT THE END OF THE 1980s, I REMEMBER AS A BLACK CLAD TEENAGER FLICKING THROUGH THE 'EXPERIMENTAL' CD RACKS AT SYDNEY'S RED EYE RECORDS AND COMING ACROSS THESE RELEASES WITH A DISTINCTIVE RED BAND ACROSS THEM – THE DESIGN SIGNATURE OF MELBOURNE'S EXTREME RECORDS.

Like many others, this was my first introduction to Bryn Jones' experiments as Muslimgauze, and later Merzbow. As the '90s wore on, various Extreme releases crept their way into my collection – Stefan Tischler, David Thrusell's Soma project, C-Schulz and Shinjuku Thief, amongst others. In 2000, the label released a 50 CD box set called the *Merzbox* and then in 2003 the label disappeared as a result of distribution problems. Then one day in 2006, a package of new Extreme releases landed in the Cyclic Defrost letterbox for review, Extreme was back, with a shifted focus to concentrate more on releases by local Australian artists.

Extreme's Roger Richards explains: "I love the creativity, energy and commitment that is shining through in Australian music at this time. My hiatus from new releases gave me time to step back, see what was happening elsewhere and jump back in with the knowledge that what is happening here is special. The music industry isn't making it easier yet these musicians are prepared to go out on a limb to offer their true musical expression to the world. Of course, Extreme needs to go out on a limb too and I embrace getting outside of my comfort zone. I could suggest this is madness in this current sales climate but the effort is definitely starting to pay off and the music is fantastic!

"Australian music often flies in the face of fashion, offering something truly amazing and inspiring. Perhaps this is partly due to our isolation but I would suggest that it is something inherent in our culture, that we are prepared to take a chance and stay true to our vision. What I have seen change is the global influence on music and the fragmentation of styles that have emerged. [Throughout the 1980s] Australian groups like SPK, Foetus (Jim Thirlwell) and Severed Heads were a major influence on alternative music, however, it is more likely nowadays that a dance act, ostensibly more commercial, will fly the flag for 'alternative' Australian music and whilst I certainly acknowledge the great rock music that Australia has produced, it would never be on Extreme."

The history of Extreme begins in the fertile 1980s. "The label was started by Ulex Xane in 1984 as a cassette label releasing industrial and power electronics. Ulex was active in the international underground tape network, releasing and distributing music from Australia and overseas, and I became involved when I saw a flyer in a record store. Having just arrived in Melbourne, I was excited to see that someone was making this kind of music available. At the time there was a lot of great independent rock music and the new music scene in Melbourne included the likes of Ollie Olsen and John Murphy, some of whose releases were put out on cassette. Not long after I met with Ulex, I started helping out with mailing out cassettes and organising gigs. It was after a festival in 1987 that Ulex decided he wanted to scale back from the label side of things and concentrate more on his own music.

"AUSTRALIAN MUSIC OFTEN FLIES IN THE FACE OF FASHION."

Extreme's rise to broad international prominence came through some of the earliest international releases from Merzbow and Muslimgauze. "With Bryn Jones and Muslimgauze, it was a case of already distributing his records. We had been doing so for some years, since 1985, and having this relationship meant we were both wanting to see an album (or six) released. I went to meet Bryn in Manchester in 1990 after we had already agreed to release *Intifaxa* (1990), and we decided to take it further. The recording contract resulted in *United States of Islam* (1991), *Infidel* (1994), and *Zul'm* (1992) . . . In the case of Masami Akita, I had been a big fan of Merzbow since the early '80s. I bought his debut LP *Material Action 2* of 1983. I first started reissuing some of his cassette albums on Extreme and we have been friends since then. Thus when I finally decided it was time for Extreme to release an LP (rather than cassette), it had to be with Merzbow. At the time, he had an ongoing collaboration with S.B.O.T.H.I. a project of Achim Wollschied, a sound artist. This project was initiated by Jonathan Walker to produce a single to be published in *Art Australia*. But since I knew Jonathan, it was the perfect opportunity to extend this collaboration. The record was the first and last vinyl LP on Extreme."

"The *Merzbox* is an entirely different story. It all started as part of a plan to celebrate 10 years of Extreme and grew from there. I already had so many cassette releases from Merzbow that I had already reissued or wanted to reissue so I suggested this project to Masami. He explained he had the same feeling about a lot of his earlier music and also that there were some amazing albums as yet unreleased. The total quickly grew to 50 and we had to stop it there! We spent many more months working out what those 50 CDs would be. Of course, now I was bitten by the idea of a boxed set, I figured it had to have a book, artwork, CD-Rom, t-shirt, special packaging and of course a commemorative 'merzdallion'. The whole project took four years and involved a core team of seven people, along with all of the people who would visit on weekends and help pack the *Merzbox* full of goodies!"

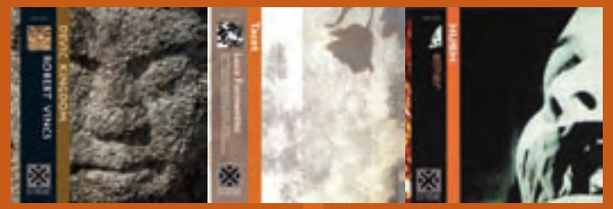
Labels like Extreme emerged at specific time between formats – at the time in the changeover period between vinyl, cassettes and CDs. This time around, in the format shift between CDs and digital files, there is a much more complex process of disintermediation to be grappled with. The disintermediation of music made possible by digital distribution effectively offers to connect artist to listener, and other listeners to each other – bypassing the traditional gatekeepers and intermediaries – record labels, their distributors, and the music press. Of course, it isn't that simple. Rapidly falling prices of music production equipment has resulted in a glut of music which conversely increases the need for new intermediaries, which is where the rise of online recommender services, online social networks, and niche blogs are replacing the old world of print media, face to face record stores, and traditional distribution. Likewise, as the biggest bands make the final transition into 'brands' and their releases become 'advertising' for their expensive live shows, the impact upon niche music scenes in which 'live' performances are rare and releases act as social documents, is unknown.

"AT THE TIME THERE WAS A LOT OF GREAT INDEPENDENT ROCK MUSIC AND THE NEW MUSIC SCENE IN MELBOURNE INCLUDED THE LIKES OF OLLIE OLSEN AND JOHN MURPHY."

"I think the emergence of digital has had the initial affect of reducing sales of CDs for Extreme's more unknown artists. I don't think this is simply a digital phenomenon, it's also to do with the multiplication of labels and, of course, the ease at which music can be produced nowadays on computers. With quantity and availability, free music and downloads, the market has become saturated and the music listener has too much information to sift through to find the new music. This has certainly caused Extreme to think long and hard about marketing, with a far more focused approach as a consequence. It has also provided a further incentive to challenge me about what Extreme will look like in five to 10 years time. I am pleased to see the sound quality of MP3s improving and I envisage that one day digital downloads will sound better than CDs or LPs! I would hope that a label like Extreme could emerge in this context. It's an interesting question. I would suggest that it might be the consequence of a new style of music being picked up and brought to the world's attention through both alternative and mainstream media. I don't believe the cost of marketing through traditional means, such as advertising, would be justified. What is the experimental music of today often diffuses into the mainstream of tomorrow and where this new style starts is often from an experimental musician and label."

"WHAT IS THE EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC OF TODAY OFTEN DIFFUSES INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF TOMORROW AND WHERE THIS NEW STYLE STARTS IS OFTEN FROM AN EXPERIMENTAL MUSICIAN AND LABEL."

EXTREME SAMPLER CD CONTENTS



TERMINAL SOUND SYSTEM

Melbourne-based Terminal Sound System is a combination of pure fun and experimentation. Skye Klein, one half of doom noise metal duo Halo, makes music to realise in some kind of 'real' form the music he hears in his head. Quite simply, he enjoys making music that he wants to listen to. Skye invites you to listen to his music as well.

'Gridlike' – from the album XCD-057 *Compressor* Extreme

MR GEOFFREY & JD FRANZKE

Melbourne visual artist and DJ, Mr Geoffrey, has been DJing for 22 years on radio, in bars, clubs and operating theatres. His unique DJ talents have taken him to venues across the globe, from Paris to Shanghai, and back again to Melbourne. JD Franzke is a Melbourne based sound designer who has been DJing for over 10 years whilst amassing an extensive field recording library and creating soundscapes for all of Melbourne's major theatre companies. The underlying principle in his work is that sound lives in both the dramatic action as well as being a scenic element, that he is creating 'text' and driving narrative with sound, that sound is truly placing the scene. As such it is 'telling' – a kinesthetic intelligence in complete alliance with performance.

'Ode to Marceau' – from the forthcoming album *Flemish Miming Disaster* on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – XLTD-006 *Get a Room* and XCS-006 *be comin'*.

ETHER

Ether hail from Salt Lake City, a fascinating place where polygamy, socialism and separatism happily coexist. Since 1994, ether has established itself as a unique group that dares to break musical and cultural taboos. The resurrection of rock music is upon us! 'The Body Refuses No Bullet' – from the forthcoming album on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – XCD-054 *Hush* and XCD-050 *Music for Air Raids*.

ROBERT VINCS

Australian musician Robert Vincs' performance practice spans a diversity of contexts that include improvised and jazz based music, cross-media performance, experimental and popular music as well as being an early exponent of the Fairlight CMI. Saxophonist Vincs continues to combine his research and his musical performance toward finding 'freedom' in the music.

'Avatar' – from the album XCD-059 *Devic Kingdom* on Extreme

LUCA FORMENTINI

Formentini, born in 1968 in Brescia, northern Italy, is a distinctive guitar player, decidedly more interested in the evocative potential of sound rather than the virtuosity of playing. He often refers to the guitar as "a tool" that he uses to create a raw sound which is later processed via many electronic treatments. His predominant use of fretless guitar is not just for the different sound but mostly because of the different expressive potential.

'Touch a Line' – from the forthcoming album on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – XCD-060 *Tacet*.

MAJU

Sakana Hosomi started Maju in 1997 with several artists who shared his vision. Since 2003, the group has taken the form of a duo of Hosomi and Masaki Narita. Hosomi, a Hokkaido native, commenced his career in 1984 as a professional keyboardist, and has collaborated with over 100 artists. Hosomi continues to pursue his own modes of expression, with a vision to develop the progressive rock idea of "music to stimulate imagery."

'Meguro' – from the forthcoming album XCD-064 *Maju-5* on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – *Maju-1, Maju-2, Maju-3* and *Maju-4*.

MARC HANNAFORD

At just 24, Marc Hannaford is part of Australia's vibrant improvised music, multimedia and jazz scenes. Jazz musician and educator Paul McNamara described Marc as, "An important voice on the Australian scene." The pianist is regarded as one of Australia's most prominent and inventive musicians.

'What Was That?' – from the album XCD-061 *The Garden of Forking Paths* on Extreme.

THE ANTRIPODEAN COLLECTIVE

Paul Grabowsky plays piano with a real passion and a delicate and responsive ear. He gives his energy selflessly to the band and the result is often transcendental. Scott Tinkler is the only trumpeter that, if you close your eyes, will make you think that Miles Davis has somehow been reinvented and is performing in front of you. Philip Rex has already been given the weighty title of one of the most brilliant double bassists to come out of Australia, by critics and audiences alike. Rex has a natural instinct for improvisation and melody combines with his strength of groove and sheer strength of sound. John Rodgers' compositional and improvisational talent and outstanding violin playing has earned him the role as Associate Artistic Director in the Australian Art Orchestra. Rodgers has an immense talent and a distinctive improvisational language that will add strongly to the quintet. Ken Edie is a true 'multi-task' drummer.

'The Massacre of Egos' – from the forthcoming album on Extreme.

SCOTT TINKLER

Scott Tinkler has a rare talent, which marks him as one of the world's most distinctive trumpet voices, and the praise heaped upon him is deserved.

'Slam it Down Fast to be a Solo Man' – from the album XCD-058 *Backwards* on Extreme

JOHN RODGERS & KEN EDIE

Early in his career, John Rodgers was faced with the tough question of whether to pursue a career as a concert violinist, most likely with the prestigious Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, or to take his chances in the music world. John said no to security and comfort and chose adventure and struggle in Brisbane. The overarching reason being he didn't want to play dead people's music. Edie simultaneously provides a solid rhythmic foundation and an amazing improvisatory counterpoint, making him one of the top jazz improvising drummers in Australia.
'Junk' – from the forthcoming album on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – XLTD-007 *A Rose is a Rose…*

DARIO BUCCINO

Dario Buccino is a Milan-based composer, musician and vocalist, who has been developing the HN System since 1991. This 'bodycentric' system of executive techniques, notation and composition is aimed at controlling the experiential intensity of the executive act of the interpreter and of the receptive act of the listener.

'Ero gia' a me n.44 - III' – from the forthcoming CD and DVD *Corpo Nostro* on Extreme.

CLAUDIO PARODI

Italian Claudio Parodi received classical training from the age of three and began playing jazz at 25. His instruments of choice are piano, Turkish clarinet, cheap electronics and tape. Parodi joined the improvisers' scene in 1991 after meeting Barre Phillips; this meeting opened a world of possibilities and opportunities.

'A Ritual which is Incomprehensible (excerpt Track 3)' – from the forthcoming album XCD-062 *A Ritual which is Incomprehensible (to the Smile of Pauline Oliveros)* on Extreme. Also available on Extreme – XLTD-006 *Horizontal Mover (homage to Alvin Lucier)*.

BREATHE OUT

MELBOURNE'S MC IVENS FIRST EMERGED FROM BURN CITY'S HIP-HOP SCENE A FEW YEARS BACK AS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE AWAKENINGS CREW. IVENS' LIVE PERFORMANCES RESEMBLE THE INTENSE ATMOSPHERE OF A HARDCORE GIG MORE THAN YOUR USUAL HIP-HOP THROWDOWN, WITH IVENS DELIVERING HIS SHARP-FOCUSED DYSTOPIAN LYRICAL FLOW TO AUDIENCES AT POINT-BLANK RANGE.

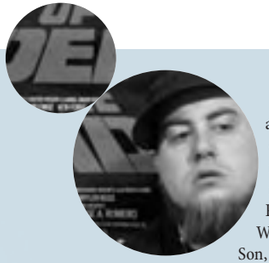
Otherwise known as David Coen, Ivens founded Awakenings Crew alongside Hykoo, Nick Sweepah, Chasm, Aux-One, Osinaka and Grizzly Baddums. He's still best known by his work with the crew, but that's changing, with the recent release of his debut solo album, *Sounds To Expire To,* on his own Eco.Tone label. It's a record that sits sonically separate from much of the hip-hop currently being explored by Australian acts. Coen's original motivations for pursuing music came via distinctly different influences from your usual b-boy, although he has certainly been a fan of hip-hop from an impressionable age. Exposure to punk and hardcore bands, via his older sister, triggered the development of a committed DIY attitude that Coen sees as resonating throughout the music that he makes, and surfaces as a punk aesthetic that is an important part of his personality.

While much of the hip-hop currently being produced in this country could be characterised by catchy instrumental hooks, the production on *Sounds To Expire To* is notable for its brooding starkness, beautifully offsetting Ivens' lucid and confrontational lyrical imagery. Production duties are handled by Awakenings Crew associate Plutonic Lab, repaying the favour for Ivens' regular guest appearances on Muph & Plutonic tracks. The stripped-back, relentless gathering of buzzing synths and jagged drum breaks on such tension-fuelled offerings such as 'One Last Trip' and the fearsome 'Well Oiled Machine', suggests a closer kinship with the steel-plated industrial hip-hop explored by Godflesh and Techno Animal. Indeed, the reverb-drenched roars on 'Well Oiled Machine' come courtesy of guest hardcore vocalist Joel White from Melbourne's Hit List. "I really like a lot of industrial music, as does Plutonic," says Coen.

Perhaps the sound is not so surprising, given Ivens' refusal to become easily pigeon-holed; we're talking about a guy who's previously shared the stage with Grey Daturas and Mountains In The Sky, as well as the slightly more predictable Boom Bip and Saul Williams. "I don't think it was ever a conscious decision to 'stray away from the pack,'" Coen explains, "when you are into so many styles of music, it's only natural that you're going to try other ideas and methods in order to create the right atmosphere for a song. That isn't always found on a record, sometimes that needs to be built from scratch. Don't get me wrong – I still love sample-based hip-hop when it's done right, with so many ways to flip a sample, it spins me out that some producers are happy with their beats sounding exactly the same as a hundred others. With such influences, you're bound to get a record that sounds a little 'un-contemporary', but that's cool with me." The early lessons learnt from his hardcore roots are something that Coen is keen to emphasise. "I grew up listening to punk music. Such music helped to shape what I am today, there is definitely a strong presence of that in my music."

> "I DON'T THINK IT WAS EVER A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO 'STRAY AWAY FROM THE PACK,' WHEN YOU ARE INTO SO MANY STYLES OF MUSIC, IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOU'RE GOING TO TRY OTHER IDEAS AND METHODS IN ORDER TO CREATE THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE FOR A SONG.."

While much of *Sounds To Expire To* practically seethes with an intense atmosphere, his choice of collaborators will be immediately familiar to Australian hip-hop fans. Last year's DMC champ DJ Perplex rubs shoulders with Def Wish Cast's Murda 1, Fame, 13th Son, Brass and Nick Sweepah over the album's 'blink-and-you'll-miss-it' 37-minute length. When I caught up with the self-confessed 'reclusive cigarette smoking, horror movie watching 23-year-old rapper with a penchant for the strange, esoteric and the slightly left of centre', I ask him whether filmic sources end up exerting an influence on the darker, apocalyptic corners of his music. "I get a lot of inspiration from film, such as concepts and imagery. If I had to pick four directors, I'd choose Roman Polanski, Dario Argento, Stanley Kubrick and Alfred Hitchcock, for their ability to create intense and believable atmospheres that are hard to shake from the mind. Polanski should get an award for his dream sequences alone."



Given that *Sounds To Expire To* represents over a year's work in the studio, I was curious to find out what sorts of factors lead to such an extended gestation period, as well as his reasons for reconvening with Plutonic Lab. "We were on the same page from the get-go. Plutonic and Muph were doing their records, and I was at art school," he explains, "these things were taking up most of our time, but it all came together in the end. Originally, the album started out as an EP between Nick Sweepah and myself, under the name Living Dead Dudes. We had a couple of songs done, but it was never completed. Plutonic Lab and I ended up using bits and pieces of that as a guide for my own record. The main thing was to make a record that we were proud of, we are really happy with it; standouts for me are 'Well-Oiled Machine', 'Brood of Five' and 'The Grudge.'"

When I ask Coen about his current status in Awakenings Crew, he gives the impression that his primary focus has shifted towards his own solo activities. "Awakenings Crew started as a group of friends who all made music for similar reasons. It's a little different now, we are all busy with our own musical endeavours. I'm just trying to get the Eco. Tone stuff into gear, it started out as a label to release *Sounds To Expire To*, and an umbrella for all of my other musical activities. There are now a few people on the label – The Creep Team, Ourobonic Plague, Swerve and Kolide – all of them close friends of mine, I'm not a businessman yet!"

Ivens recently launched *Sounds To Expire To*, and I enquire if he has had many opportunities to perform the album live, if it has been a challenge to translate the tracks to a live setting. "It's not that difficult to translate the songs from the record to the stage, it's just something you have to do. We'll be doing shows all over the place, along with DJ Snesmega. I'm surprised I can do the songs live with the amount of cigarettes I smoke! I've started doing breathing exercises before shows. That helps a lot with delivery."

> "I'M SURPRISED I CAN DO THE SONGS LIVE WITH THE AMOUNT OF CIGARETTES I SMOKE!"

Sounds To Expire To is available now through Eco.Tone/Obese.

FREE WHEELIN' FRANCIS

BEFORE I SPOKE TO FRANCIS PLAGNE ON THE PHONE, I RODE THE BUS WITH MY HEADPHONES FIRMLY IN PLACE, THE VOLUME UP HIGH. FOR THE DURATION OF MY TRIP, I MADE IT NEARLY ALL OF THE WAY THROUGH FRANCIS PLAGNE, HIS SECOND ALBUM, WATCHING OUT THE WINDOW THE ENTIRE WAY HOME.

After spending much time with this record, it seemed the perfect way to hear it, the strange and visual evocations of different places, and the variety of different spaces that shift throughout its 91 minutes. There are claustrophobic spaces, and wide-open vistas conjured through the use of field recordings. *Francis Plagne* is like looking out the window of a bus as the scenery unfolds. It's easy to attach metaphors to his sprawling work, but it's bewildering to discern exactly where Francis is coming from, probably because he's coming from everywhere at once. You could say it's a schizophrenic musical identity, but I'd say it's really just glee and enthusiasm that drive it all.

"I suppose initially it just comes from having an interest in lots of different things. Everything I did on this record was just something I was peculiar about in its own form, field recordings, songs, or whatever. There was a point where I just decided to stick it all together; there is something a lot more schizophrenic about this new album, or at least more self-consciously so. With the first one, I just made a whole bunch of concrete and a whole bunch of songs, but with this one, it ended up that there was a lot more obvious interplay between the two things."

So, he's young – twenty years old. Francis started playing guitar early on and started recording "garbage" onto four-track when he was about thirteen. He's currently studying for an Art History degree in Melbourne, making music in the same bedroom as he always has, at the same time. He's got different toys now, and way more of them. There are plenty of instruments and sounds at his fingertips, but far more to grasp onto in terms of music that has come before. I'm unsure if it's necessarily a youthful willingness to try and take past music and further it, or destroy it (or both), but Francis is certainly eager to do so.

"I suppose all music, whether popular or experimental, is based on interpretations; no one ever makes some outrageous new discovery, or at least very rarely. With the way that I work, which is lots of different styles mixed together, it becomes obvious that it's me picking and choosing from what I'm interested in, and then having a go. One of the things I really like about recording at home, with limited means and playing everything myself is that I can try and rip off something. I could do a direct rip off of some big '60s band, and it will sound like a hermetic interpretation of a '60s big band. Really it's just me trying to do the same thing but I just can't, because of the means that I have at my disposal."

"I think a lot of what goes on musically today, in popular music or indie music or whatever, there's an overly-knowing appropriation of different styles without personality attached to it, that happens a lot. But when someone can actually use influence to make something interesting and worthwhile – that's where music is for me, I guess." His music is dense, that's for sure. For all the field recordings and abstract sound pieces that stitch *Francis Plagne* together, it's clear a lot of work has gone into creating these spaces, allowing the 'song' based moments room to breath, or room to suffocate. The album is positively littered with pop gems; I visualise Francis struggling to walk along underneath an armful of different musical odds and ends, some falling off along the way.

It's a gleeful act of appropriation, but with such a unique spin on music, it's hard to label it as merely that. *Francis Plagne* is forward thinking in its take on the notion of music being everywhere, if you just listen, in the streets, your house, and the park. *Francis Plagne* is everywhere and everything ; it's cluttered, but sounds purposefully this way. The title of the track 'A Chance Exposure To A Distant Rumbling' reflects one of Francis' chief aims; random moments in sound coming together all in one place, creating spaces, letting songs form beneath and between their folds. It's an act of cutting and pasting, a monumental process of trial and error, considering just how many sounds make up his opaque pieces.

"This time, a lot of the things that weren't songs, I worked a lot with editing improvisations. It was a case of making an hours worth of stuff and then cutting it into small pieces and sticking it all together. It is intentionally dense; I wanted it to be as dense as possible while still being listenable." This begs the question; just how one would decide where to put all these things? It seems like a nightmare in terms of editing, because in a sense, many of these sounds don't match up, they don't fit together conventionally. Foreign sounds meet the all too familiar, open spaces are met with the claustrophobic, pop meets noise. Working from home allows Francis to indulge his perfectionism, even if his perfection is littered and rambling.

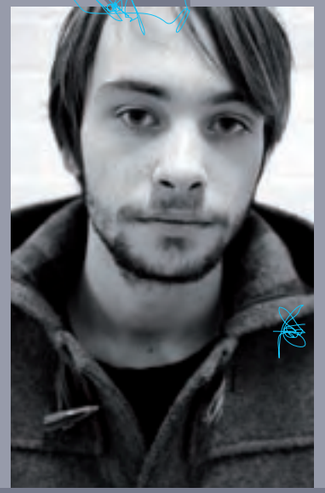
"On the first album, it follows a pattern of five minutes worth of pop every ten minutes or something – it's pretty predicable – especially when I realize how it sounds after I step away from the whole process. There are moments where I use that same sort of pattern on the new one. I like the idea of having a juxtaposition of ten minutes of abstract stuff then the song comes in out of nowhere, like the first pieces of the record. I like the sound of one song stopping and another starting straight away, like on a proper pop record. I was trying to play around with that on this album, just trying to think of good ways of leading into what is a song and what's not a song; rather that just having a sharp cut or fade."

Most of the record is field-recordings; plenty of cars passing by, but most importantly a tonne of different spaces and textures. It's an extremely visual sort of sound; there are hundreds of different rooms and spaces within what is basically one continuous sound piece. Most of all, it's a warm record, thanks to the Casio keyboards and organs; the sound of cartoons in the morning, the warm buzz of the afternoon sun. "Part of that, is that when I am recording at home, I end up with a lot of background sound and I don't really make any attempt to get rid of that. I like the openness of sounds with a resonance like they were recorded in a big room with an open window. I usually try and bring across some sort of feel of space in the way I record things. It's not a conventional studio technique; someone that knows about that sort of thing would probably just say I had really bad miking! I do it on purpose, or at least that's what I tell them. I really like that once you start getting some feeling of space the sounds aren't abstract any more. It's tied to some visual thought, the listener could maybe imagine what the room looks like."

"I THINK A LOT OF WHAT GOES ON MUSICALLY TODAY, IN POPULAR MUSIC OR INDIE MUSIC OR WHATEVER, THERE'S AN OVERLY-KNOWING APPROPRIATION OF DIFFERENT STYLES WITHOUT PERSONALITY ATTACHED."

"WHEN I AM RECORDING AT HOME, I END UP WITH A LOT OF BACKGROUND SOUND AND I DON'T REALLY MAKE ANY ATTEMPT TO GET RID OF THAT."

Straddling pop and textural styles of music leaves Francis in a funny place, if he were to locate himself in a scene or collective, working in Australia. Francis feels partially at home, in terms of an 'experimental' scene in Melbourne; but there's a humourous and irreverent spirit running beneath all the musique concrete that keeps his stuff from sounding stagnant. Half way through 'Replace U With An A' comes an absurd little voice – put on by Francis – denoting a healthy spirit of humour that runs through his music and the way he works. "I think a lot of my friends in Melbourne are related to the 'proper' experimental scene – I mean, they don't sing songs. I know that I have high standards to try and meet, as far as the experimental stuff goes, but a lot of the time it could just be me doing this lazy thing that is interesting because of the context. I have friends that write pop songs as well, so I feel as if I have influences from both 'scenes', although in Melbourne it's just one big soup pretty much."



"For me, a lot of things that I like in music I find really funny, as well as substantial. My music isn't sort of dour or anything; there are musical jokes, in a sense, running through my work. For instance, my range does not go as high as I sing, so it's funny to have this squeaky little bit sometimes." His take on music is a palpably fresh one, as I talk to Francis (softly spoken, slightly sarcastic) over the phone. He's self-aware but not over-confident. His perceptions on making things new are certainly inspiring and his ideas seem to culminate with little concern for style or genre.

Free Wheelin' Francis is relaxed, and why wouldn't he be with such an enormous world of music at his disposal? "Styles and genre are helpful in figuring out how music works. I think a lot of people pick some sort of stylistic thing and try and work within it; I don't really have any interest in that at all. I just take whatever and then do whatever I want to do with it."

Francis Plagne is out now through Mistletone/Synaesthesia.

SECRET HISTORY

"ELLITT JUST DIDN'T WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH ANYONE ABOUT HIS MUSIC, NOT EVEN STOCKHAUSEN!"

SHAME FILE MUSIC'S LATEST RELEASE, *ARTEFACTS OF AUSTRALIAN EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC: 1930 – 1973*, IS A VIVID, DYNAMIC AND VIRTUALLY UNHEARD STORY OF AUSTRALIAN EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC. MELBOURNE-BASED LABEL HEAD, CLINTON GREEN, SPENT THREE YEARS EXCAVATING, RESEARCHING AND COMPILING THE RELEASE, BRINGING AN ANTIPODEAN PERSPECTIVE TO THE DOCUMENTATION OF EARLY ELECTRONIC MUSIC.

Compilations that archive historical movements in experimental music can be difficult listening, even to listeners used to extremes of approach and technique. *Artefacts* does not suffer such a fate, instead, it brings to light a story so important that Green assumed it must have already been told: "The CD developed out of my own curiosity about the history of experimental music in Australia. It's something I was interested in as a musician, and as a fan. Initially I went out there looking for something that I thought would already exist; recordings that had already been released. It just wasn't there, and I was astounded. *Artefacts* just developed from there, I thought, 'Well, if I've got this interest, then there must be other people out there who would be interested.' The thing with a lot of these pieces is that they have never been available, even on vinyl; many of them were just never released. I was quite shocked, because if you believed what was out there on CDs, and you believed in what you read, experimental music in Australia started in about 1976, and there was nothing before that. I just couldn't believe that."

"I was initially unsure that there was even a story there to be told. When I started unearthing the music, the pieces of the puzzle started to fall into place. I also wondered if there were any lines of history there, of influence throughout the Australian experimental music community from a chronological perspective. It happened really organically, the way that it has fitted together. Ideas coalesced and different streams in the story solidified. I'm quite pleased with the result; it's not too clunky, it's not forced. I think that it's probably just the amount of time that was spent slowly doing it." As a listening experience, *Artefacts* segues together remarkably well, exhibiting the dynamic swing usually reserved for single-artist albums recorded in more recent times.

It's refreshing to see the question of musical lineage raised in an Australian context, and be able to find some home-grown foundations. Typically, when the question 'what came before?' is put forward, my initial reaction would be to look overseas for a precursor. In a peculiar reversal of perceived spheres of influence in experimental music, Stockhausen was one very few to recognise the groundbreaking nature of the collage work that Jack Ellitt had created during the 1930s. An excerpt from Ellitt's 'Journey #1' opens *Artefacts*—its breathtaking collision of cut-up sounds, including the portentous sound of a booing crowd, perfectly demonstrates the fierce exploratory overtones of the collection. "Jack Ellitt's music has been a real startling find, he's basically unknown to most people. Very few artists were doing anything like this in the 1930s; it's quite a startling bit of history on an international scale. Ellitt recorded directly onto film stock, because tape was so rudimentary at that stage. Tape recorders were basically impossible to edit or do any sort of decent long length recording on. 'Journey #1' has an incredible amount of editing going on, there were a few other people who were doing a similar sound collage at that stage, but nothing as way out as this recording.

"Stockhausen was one of the few people who knew of Jack Ellitt and what he had achieved in this early period. Stockhausen knew that Ellitt was an important guy, and made contact with him. For various reasons, Ellitt just didn't want to communicate with anyone about his music, not even Stockhausen! The full story is unclear, but it seems as if this was a facet of his personality—Ellitt did get a bad reaction in London during the 1930s to some of his ideas, he really took that to heart, becoming almost paranoid about what people would think. He continued to compose on his old Revox tape machine right up until the end of his life; I have recordings from the '80s and '90s, he did them just for his own private enjoyment and didn't seek to have them published. Which is a shame, as he was obviously a real pioneer, not just in Australia, but internationally and no one knew about him while he was alive."

That's maybe part of the reason why experimental music in Australia has had such a torturous route to any sort of recognition or critical acclaim outside of a small number of devotees. Is it because a lot of the people involved are not ruthless self-promoters, or that they don't play these games? "That covers a large range of practitioners in the area—they are not self-promoting types, they are just in it to make the music as an intellectual or creative process. Many musicians are very much focussed on their art, and their processes, to the exclusion of everything else. This can be quite an isolating experience, even though the experimental music community in Australia is pretty strong these days. It's because of the inevitable lack of receptiveness in Australia to anything left of centre, as far as art and music is concerned—I think it's hard for artists to feel like what they are doing is worthwhile, there can be a lot of self-doubt. Even though you are really into what you are doing, that self-doubt pops up, in part because of a dominant culture that doesn't value this kind of thing. That makes the self-promotion even harder. There are a lot of stories like Jack Ellitt's on *Artefacts*, people who did things privately, or numerous others who went overseas to do their art and music, and received a better reception."

Arranged chronologically, the first three tracks on *Artefacts* are Ellitt's, from the early 1930s, a discordant Percy Grainger drone-scape from 1951, and the Melbourne Dada Group's 'Wubbo Music' from 1952 (featuring a young Barry Humphries interjecting random slogans, whilst pounding on a piano). The mid-1960s onwards is much better represented: it's almost as if this release could have been entitled 'Artefacts of Australian Experimental Music 1965 onwards, plus a little bit more. You could assume that this is an artefact of Green's sampling—leads followed, what was unearthed and what made it into the light of day: "That's right, this is by no means a complete representation. With uncovering these old recordings, which are often held by family members of people who have passed on, it's essential to make a really gentle approach, because people get worried that they're going to get ripped off, or that their loved one is going to be misrepresented. Sometimes they don't really understand the enormous cultural worth of these archival recordings, most of which have never been made public before.

"The thing about recording technology is important as well. In the '60s, recording technology generally started to become a little bit more available. Prior to that, it was really rare for anyone to be able to record something. Jack Ellitt was at the BBC working in film during the 1930s, so he had access to that technology. Percy Grainger was independently wealthy; he used a machine that recorded to a 78, it made something like acetate, which could then be used for a primitive form of multi-tracking. Grainger had these special machines made by an engineer, to try and achieve his theory of free music. The piece on *Artefacts* is a brief recording; it's real experimental music, literally speaking, experimenting with different machines that can achieve different musical effects before computers were being used. You could say that Grainger should have been working in the nascent computer

PREVIOUS PAGE: STILL FROM A SHORT FILM BY ARTHUR AND CORINNE CANTRILL. COURTESY CLINTON GREEN AND ARTHUR CANTRILL; ARTHUR CANTRILL 1 (66 OR 67) - COURTESY CLINTON GREEN AND ARTHUR CANTRILL. **ABOVE:** ELLITT CONTINUED TO WORK ON HIS SOUND COMPOSITIONS UNTIL LATER IN LIFE. COURTESY OF CLINTON GREEN, ARTHUR CANTRILL & ROGER HORROCKS; PANEL DISCUSSION FROM THE MELBOURNE LEG OF LIQUID ARCHITECTURE. L-R PAULINE OLIVEROS, WARREN BURT, CLINTON GREEN, RAINER LINZ, ROBIN FOX.
PIC BY SHANNON O'NEILL

technology scene, but he went up this other path, in some ways you could say that it was a spectacular failure. Grainger was very much an out-there sort of guy in many ways, people questioned his sanity and he was a social pariah in Australia for years, because of some of his ideas. It's only now that a few people are revisiting what he was doing at this time with his free music machines."

Artefacts most certainly does not demand to be listened to with a lab coat on, or anything so serious as an elitist attitude. "No, hopefully not! It's supposed to be an enjoyable listening experience; I definitely put it together with that in mind. When I started this project, I hadn't heard of hardly any of these guys, so it was like an education for me as well. I see *Artefacts* bridging the gap between being an academic study of Australian experimental music and for the listener who is simply interested in this kind of thing. I think that academic process-based music is very insular in Australia. I don't know why actually, as it doesn't seem to happen overseas. Maybe it's because there's a bigger range of institutions and people involved in Europe and the US, whereas it's very small here. I think we also look to each other for support as well, maybe a bit too much to the exclusion of people outside. I think that there is a real divide in Australia between process-based, theory-based experimental music and the kind off radical fringes of mainstream music. Like post-punk and noisy independent stuff, there's a real gulf there. I've found that quite fascinating for a number of years.

"As someone who has moved in both scenes, and knowing people on both sides, a lot of the time musicians are doing very similar things and they have never heard of each other. I was talking to Warren Burt about Ollie Olsen; I've read all these histories written by academics about Australian experimental music in the '70s and '80s, and there's no mention of people like Ollie Olsen. So what's going on there? Am I missing something? Warren said he actually lived around the corner from Ollie Olsen for a number of years, but he has never actually heard any of his music. I'll have to ask Ollie if he's ever heard Warren Burt's music, there's something going on there. Warren's probably a special case, because I don't think he's interested in mainstream music at all, he is very much in the process. My theory is that the mainstream fringes are more interested in the results gained by using experimental means, rather than the process being king. It's slowly changing, there's more interaction between those two scenes. But this frustrates me, as I don't see that there is a great gulf between them."

Clinton inaugurated Shame File Music mainly as an outlet for his own "doing weird things with guitar" music, and also to release some compilations. The label's focus moved from punk to post-punk and then into experimental music as his interests branched out into previously unexplored areas. "I've always been interested in how ideas develop, and how music develops and what came before. To me, the idea of Syd Clayton playing a xylophone with knitting needles for nine hours, based on rolling a dice, that's certainly extreme to me!" The experimental music community, both in Australia and overseas, can be grateful that Clinton has painstakingly researched and dissected a previously unexcavated musical midden to bring such startling artefacts to light.

Artefacts of Australian Experimental Music: 1930 – 1973 is available from Shame File Music (www.shamefilemusic.com).

"I'VE READ ALL THESE HISTORIES WRITTEN BY ACADEMICS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC IN THE '70S AND '80S, AND THERE'S NO MENTION OF PEOPLE LIKE OLLIE OLSEN."

PHIL THOMPSON / NAM SHUB OF ENKI

BY DAN CAMERON

SEVERAL KINDS OF MONSTER

THE NAM SHUB OF ENKI, ACCORDING TO NEAL STEPHENSON'S POST-CYBERPUNK NOVEL *SNOW CRASH*, WAS A LINGUISTIC VIRUS ENGINEERED BY A SUMERIAN GOD. DESIGNED TO OVERCOME THE INNATE MONOSYLLABIC HUMAN LANGUAGE, EXPLOITED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS AS A TOOL OF CONTROL, THE VIRUS GRANTED INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM BY NECESSITATING THE USE OF ACQUIRED LANGUAGES. BRISBANE'S NAM SHUB OF ENKI IS PHIL THOMSON, A RAVE MENTALIST TRADING IN SONIC CHAOS. HIS COMPOSITIONS DRAG AUDIENCES OFF THE BEATEN TRACK OF DANCE MUSIC AND HAVE THEM REACHING FOR THE HEAVENS WHILST GUT-CHURNING BASS DRAGS THEM IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

Al Ferguson, Thomson's collaborator in the formative days of Nam Shub of Enki chose the distinctive moniker. Diverting from a live free-for-all band called Adam and the Ambience, the duo amassed a sonic arsenal, borrowing hardware from friends in the punk and rave scenes, and acquiring their own collection of synths. "We had a couple of Korg Mono/Polys, power Mono/Polys," he laughs, miming playing both at once, "the 909, heaps of drum machines, WX11 (wind MIDI controller), Pearl Syncussion, (Roland) SH9, the Arp. Al bought 15Mb of memory for the Amiga for $500. Second hand! It was a bargain. We started recording stuff into the computer and cutting it all up; it was pretty primitive."

Devoted to partying, but cynical of the sound that came to dominate electronic music events in the nineties, Thomson's mission became the creation of viscous beats that avoided genre-bound ruts. "A lot of people rave on about how good the early rave scene was, but it was mainly the drugs. A lot of the music was pretty shit. I'd always end up in the chillout room – and they'd be playing good music in there; Future Sound of London, Detroit electro, acid stuff."

"I was in Goa in 1991 when I first got into electronic dance music. I was in a punk rock band that turned into a distorted noise band, then I went to India," Thomson says, though he's quick to differentiate his experience from the clichés of the psychedelic movement that came to be associated with Goa. "It has that whole bullshit, spiritual heartbeat sort of shit. I love repetitive music, but there's something about it that really drives me to hate that, or any sort of music that becomes a formula. Even dubstep, all this music I listen to now, once everyone does the same thing, it just becomes Goa trance. I guess trance was the first thing I heard that just became totally shit within a month, or less…"

With Brisbane and its adjacent coasts providing verdant territory for outdoor parties, Nam Shub's loopy electronica was in demand. Honed across dozens of dance floors over two years, the sound of their first and only album as a duo, 1998's *Consciousness Encoder*, evaded straight doof with mental breakbeat, nauseating synth lines and an ever-ready dose of industrial noise. By 2001's *Fuck Piece*, Thomson was a solo operator, keeping the Nam Shub moniker as Ferguson moved south and further into the visual arts.

Thomson already had a long association with Brisbane's only alternative radio station, 4ZZZ. With a tumultuous history bedded in Queensland's conservative Bjelke-Petersen premiership, the anarchic station has long been a hub for underground musicians, promoters and shit stirrers.

Nam Shub was soon performing frequently with 4ZZZ promoter and DJ Sam Kretschmann and industrial performance art duo Kunt, whose bump-and-angle-grind stage shows he often soundtracked. "We all loved being at outdoor parties, but we hated the music. That's why we were doing our own parties, warehouse parties. Through that I met Tara and Laura (Kunt). After a couple of years it was Kunt, Sam and myself playing frequently together. Sam would be playing crazy '60s music, then Kunt would come out and do all this grinding noise stuff. I'd wind up all the noise and play heavy industrial music of varying speeds."

At a launch for outlandish Brisbane electrotrash group Team Plastique, Nam Shub, Sam and Kunt had to fit all their sets into one 40-minute support slot. Their response was the only realistic option: forming a band. "As soon as we walked off stage, people were offering us gigs," laughs Thomson. Monster Zoku Onsomb was born. Phil took on the persona of Kiki iLL, the beat reanimator, Sam became Miss Penelope Leisure, purveyor of refined retrotronica. Since then, Kunt has departed for adventures abroad and other members have been drafted in; lubricious ringmaster Senor Tasty Taste, bass-driven booty shaker Sharkie Bubba and visual maestro Fluff Daddy.

Their show is the antithesis of the laptop electronicist. Kiki iLL operates a Macbook, but the resemblance ends there. MZO is a visual extravaganza, a vaguely retro horrorshow—Dario Argento directing a Mexican remake of *Twin Peaks* with a score by Alec Empire and the Tijuana Brass. Occasionally, Kiki emerges from behind his console, or mounts it, shrieking like a banshee into a heavily effected microphone.

"AS SOON AS WE WALKED OFF STAGE, PEOPLE WERE OFFERING US GIGS."

MZO landed support slots for twisted musicians like TISM and Tipper, and were equally at home leading up to both. The early MZO material stemmed from Kunt performances and contained a strong dose of sample-reliant parody. Prince's 'Controversy, for example, was flipped into 'Kuntroversy' in the Queensland hinterland. "Living up on Mt Nebo, my studio was overlooking fucking rainforest. It was a wall of synths, leads running everywhere, onto the ground, out the door where we'd have more stuff hooked up. We'd just get really stoned, blaring this distorted, nasty shit straight into the rainforest."

While it can't quite do justice to their technicolour live show, MZO's triumphantly raucous 2006 album *Attack!* hints at the musical depravity of Kiki iLL and his collaborators' undead cocktail parties. Cute, eerie and disorienting, its key ingredients are "a myriad of sci-fi gadgetry and a bottle of tequila." The CD also includes their limited run sample-heavy debut EP in a bonus section, along with thirsty vampires and pickled heads in the ecstatic video for "Valentines".

Replace MZO's lovable element with pure darkness, and you have Nam Shub of Enki's latest album, *Destroy Everything*. It opens with a deceptively lulling ballad, voiced by Snog's David Thrussell, that descends into a madness of wobbling bass and diced profanity. Nam Shub also mortally chops vocals from Finnish hip hop stars Notkea Rotta and collaborates with kindred spirit Luke Kenny, better known as Melbourne metal artist Bezerker. Thomson's other musical identities, the grime-influenced Croxton PK Raver and head-nodding glitch-hopper Key Phresch emerge in spirit if not name.

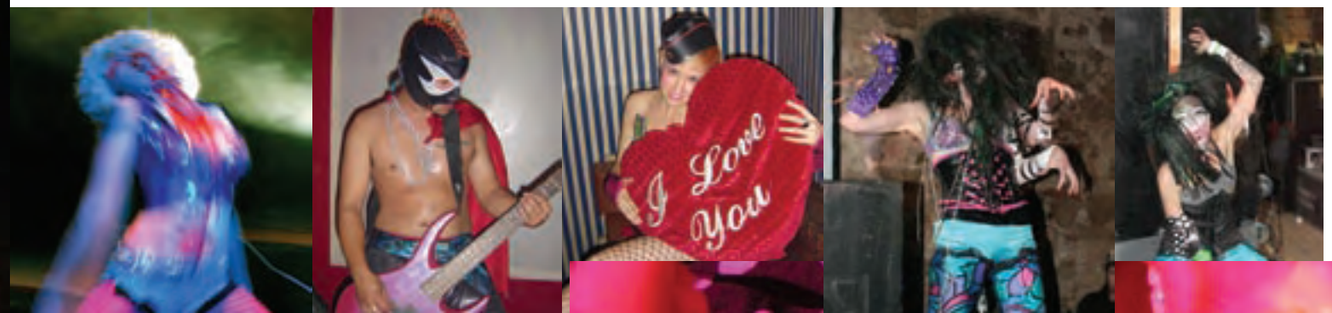
With his allergic reaction to genre stagnation, Thomson was wary when Nam Shub and MZO were booked for several breakcore parties during their 2006 European tour. Though a strong proponent of jackhammer, hyperdrive breaks, he's not eager to be lumped in the breakcore basket. "When we first played overseas, everyone was talking 'breakcore and breakcore and that's so fucking hardcore breakcore'. It all sounded the same to me. I was flabbergasted how boring it was. Then, the last tour we did, we played a lot of breakcore parties, but they were really into such a diverse sound. We were playing, then Patric C, then there'd be Sickboy, then Luke Vibert. Such a broad spectrum of music, but all essentially fucking high energy. They really book interesting parties. The genre I was afraid it was going to turn into, avoided itself, but it's still got that awful name."

He'd prefer to be associated with electro, but thinks his own work isn't cerebral enough to sit alongside most of the genre. "The essential core of electronic music is electro. The breakdance hip-hop is the purest form; that stuff to me is the smoothest shit ever." Of course, electro isn't what it used to be. "It's done an R&B! I work in a record shop, so I'm used to people asking for electro. I'm not going to go and get them a Kraftwerk CD or an early Anthony Rother CD, or Drexciya or something. I'm going to Ed Banger or whatever," he laments. "It's the whole drug culture. No one gives a fuck what the music is. If I'm on drugs, and the music's shit, it accentuates it. I can't just be happy. It drives me a bit mental."

"IT WAS A WALL OF SYNTHS, LEADS RUNNING EVERYWHERE, ONTO THE GROUND, OUT THE DOOR WHERE WE'D HAVE MORE STUFF HOOKED UP. WE'D JUST GET REALLY STONED, BLARING THIS DISTORTED, NASTY SHIT STRAIGHT INTO THE RAINFOREST."

Refusing to get comfortable with one sound, and not ready to give up his rave-driving agenda any time soon, Thomson continues to develop the Nam Shub sound. "There's more programming. It's not so minimal, it's more driving underneath. It's got a drum and bass attitude with an electro soul." He plays a new tune, a diptych of 'Spiders' and 'Ravens' destined for a forthcoming twelve-inch release. It opens with an arachnid techno crunch and a trembling bassline, then after a foreboding breakdown and a "forever build-up", it explodes into a chaotic swirl of cascading screams. "All written on Crete, the most beautiful place on Earth," notes Thomson with a chuckle. It has already slaughtered dance floors in Brisbane, and he clearly relishes the prospect of unleashing it again soon in his campaign against discotheque boredom. Ravers, consider yourselves warned!

The Nam Shub of Enki's *Destroy Everything* is out now on Creative Space through Psyharmonics. Monster Zoku Onsomb's *Attack!* is out now on Rats Milk Records through Psyharmonics.



A NUMBER OF NAMES

MARK PRITCHARD HAS RELEASED MUSIC UNDER A PLETHORA OF ALIASES. FROM LINK AND RELOAD, AND PROJECTS WITH TOM MIDDLETON INCLUDING GLOBAL COMMUNICATION AND JEDI KNIGHTS, TO VARIOUS DRUM'N'BASS COLLABORATIONS, AND MORE RECENTLY HARMONIC 33, HARMONIC 313 AND TROUBLE MAN, MANY OF HIS ALTER-EGOS HAVE PLAYED KEY ROLES IN THE GROWTH OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC. MOST WERE RELEASED ON PRITCHARD AND MIDDLETON'S SEMINAL EVOLUTION AND UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE LABELS (WHOSE RELEASES ARE FINALLY BEING REMASTERED AND RE-RELEASED BOTH ON VINYL AND DIGITALLY), WHICH ALSO RELEASED EARLY RECORDS FROM MATTHEW HERBERT AND OTHERS.

Photograph: James Brickwood

I sit with Mark Pritchard on his balcony in Darlinghurst, in the house that he shares with Sydney DJ, Lorna Clarkson. For his part, Mark seems comfortable in Sydney, enjoying the lifestyle and encouraging local musical talent. An altogether enthusiastic person, for whom music is clearly all-consuming, he recounts his musical beginnings in Yeovil, Somerset.

"I was lucky that my parents were really into music," he says, "and they encouraged me to learn instruments. When I was really young they bought me a junior kid's drum kit, although I reckon I must've been eight to 10, and then they get fed up of hearing that noise and it disappeared. I think my dad always wanted to play guitar, so they encouraged me to learn it, and I did that from maybe 11 to 16. When I was at school, the first thing I got into would've been the Specials and Two Tone. I had friends with older brothers who were into good music, and they were passing it on. *This Is England*, the film that's just come out on Warp, reminded me a lot of growing up.

"Then later, at 14 or 15, I started getting into indie music. The Smiths broke up when I was at the end of school, so I was too young to see them. But I was into them. The Cure, My Bloody Valentine, Sonic Youth, Swans, the Cocteau Twins, Pixies – that era was really great. It then morphed into the dance thing: Meat Beat Manifesto was one of the first things I heard, and even people like the Shamen whose early stuff was with a full band. That's when I first heard dance music, 'cause I grew up in the country; there were free parties but I was too young to go to them. The only electronic dance music I'd hear in the local pubs was really bad pop music, so I was really put off by it. I liked some electronic music, like Kraftwerk, but I didn't really get turned onto the dance stuff until I left school and was able to travel.

"I was trying to put bands together at school, but it was hard to find drummers who would want to come and practise every week, so that's what led me to buy equipment originally. I didn't even know what these things did, but I thought, 'If I buy a drum machine, then I don't need the drummer!' I bought a sampler, and I didn't really know exactly what it would do – I thought it'd do something, but it did something really different. That's what led me, at the same time, to clubs where people were playing Chicago and New York house, and Detroit techno.

"I suppose a lot of the electronic music I'd heard [before] had been really poppy and cheesy, and when I heard that new stuff I couldn't believe it. So I used to go clubbing a lot – as soon as one of us could drive, we'd go to Bournemouth and Bristol. We'd go like twice a week, Thursday night or Wednesday night, and then we'd go Friday or Saturday. Bournemouth was a really weird place, because it has a lot of retired people down there, but it had some really good DJs, two guys called North and South, one of whom still DJs house sort of stuff, but they basically were playing all the music that I then latched on to – Derrick May tracks alongside Steve Poindexter, alongside New York house – you'd get a mixture of all of it. I was hooked.

"Bristol I'd go to more for gigs. It was the nearest place to go and see bands like the Sugarcubes; it had a good club scene, and it really developed. Once Bristol started getting into the drum'n'bass thing it was a great place to go. The mix of cultures there really helped – you've got more reggae sound systems; that's where the whole thing kicked off."

Inspired by all this music, Pritchard began making tunes himself in earnest.

"One of my friends had an 808 and another was a hip hop DJ, so he had loads of samples and breaks. We formed a group was called Shaft and our first EP came out on a label called Bassic Records from Leeds. They started out around the same time as Warp, but they only put out a few releases – one by one of the guys from LFO and one by a group called Ital Rockers, a mad reggae-ish bleep anthem. I was about 16 or 17, and we got ourselves a record deal – basically we drove to Leeds to see this label, and they said, 'Yeah,' and we couldn't believe it. We went back via Sheffield to see Warp, but we were waiting for ages and they didn't see us; they said, 'OK, come back in an hour,' so we waited in the car park for an hour, came back, and they were like 'Oh no, the guy's gone.' It was a pretty long drive in my first car, a Ford Escort.

"WE WENT BACK VIA SHEFFIELD TO SEE WARP, BUT WE WERE WAITING FOR AGES AND THEY DIDN'T SEE US... IT WAS A PRETTY LONG DRIVE IN MY FIRST CAR, A FORD ESCORT."

"From there, we did our first white label ourselves – my friend's dad gave us the money to press it up. We had this cheesy rave hit – just accidental – that we stuck on because we were worried we might not sell enough copies to pay my friend's dad back. We thought it might sell a few copies, and then it became this huge track, which was pretty bizarre.

"I was already starting to write the early Evolution releases, working on my own, and that was about the same time I met Tom [Middleton]. A friend of mine used to put on club nights, and me and my friends used to DJ at them. Tom had just moved up from Cornwall and was really worried there'd be no good music, and I was playing all the music that he was into.

"I went back to his place, and he was going, 'Oh yeah, this is some stuff by my friend, Aphex Twin' – he had like 50 cassettes of Aphex Twin stuff, and he was playing me this music. I was like, 'What the hell is going on?' It was all that early stuff, 'Analogue Bubblebath' and so on. There's still stuff I remember Tom playing to me that hasn't come out.

"So I heard this music, and that was unbelievable. I wanted to set up a label anyway, and Tom and I started to get to know each other more, started writing tracks together, and that's when we set up Evolution."

Pritchard had by now started making music as Reload, equally inspired by industrial music, techno, and sci-fi soundtracks. Middleton contributed touches, and those tracks were designated with 'E621' (the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate).

Many of us know Pritchard and Middleton primarily from their stunning ambient releases as Global Communication. Their *76:14* album was preceded by an album of "retranslations" of material by shoegazer band Chapterhouse, commissioned after band-member Andy Sherriff found the *Ob-Selon Mi-Nos* 12", an Evolution release under the name Mystic Institute, with a Global Communication track that later appeared on *76:14*.

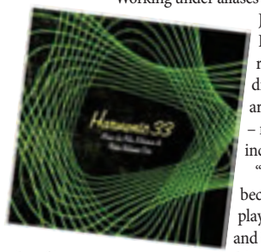
"He said, 'I don't want you to do remixes, just take elements and then make new tracks out of those,' so we got 20 DATs full of all these parts. We took elements and slowed them down and added other elements from the songs, and it just worked really well.

"We got signed to the same label, Dedicated, and they really loved the album and wanted us to do our first album. I suppose the Reload album was pretty much led by me – it was always my project – but Tom came in on some tracks. The whole concept behind Global Communication was Tom's original idea, but we ended up writing all of it together, mainly because I had the studio and I was working all the time. I'd always leaned towards sadder and darker kind of music, and Tom was always more accessible and melodic, so even though to me it's a lot lighter than something would listen to, the reason it works is that there is some tension in there. With ambient music you always have to be

careful that it doesn't become new-age, wafty music you'd hear in Byron Bay or something. My favourite ambient music's got that tension, like Brian Eno, David Sylvian, and Vangelis. At that time I didn't have everything of Brian Eno, but I was really into David Sylvian."

Pritchard and Middleton's more dancefloor-oriented work as Jedi Knights is also pretty well known.

"Jedi Knights was a reaction to the fact that at the time, all the things we really liked about club music around '94 to '95, apart from maybe drum'n'bass, all the techno and house had got really serious and very soulless, with no funk in it any more. So the Jedi Knights album, the artwork and the vibe of it was very much tongue in cheek – 'Where's the funk gone? Where's the sci-fi?' - Richie Hawtin started to do those bangin' acid tunes, which I really liked – he was the first person to do acid but do it really hard. But out of that spawned all this European hard techno and acid music that just had no funk, and I just wasn't playing that stuff any more. From then, until about '97, I played more drum'n'bass than anything else."



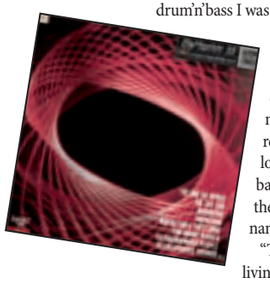
Working under aliases such as Chaos & Julia Set (with Dom Fripp), Pritchard released some crucial drum'n'bass releases around this period – most on long-gone 12 inch singles.

"I started making it because I was basically playing that stuff out, and it inspired the Reload thing. Basically people were asking me what kind of music I was into, and I'd say jungle (or jungle techno at that point), and people used to just laugh at me – all the people that knew the Reload and Global Communication stuff used to think I was joking. But for me, by the time it got to '92-'93, techno was basically just gone. The original Detroit stuff was amazing, but by then the exciting music was the drum'n'bass stuff.

"WITH AMBIENT MUSIC YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BE CAREFUL THAT IT DOESN'T BECOME NEW-AGE, WAFTY MUSIC YOU'D HEAR IN BYRON BAY OR SOMETHING."

"Early drum'n'bass goes right back to guys like Shut Up & Dance – they were sampling Detroit techno and putting breaks over it. It sort of all came from that – chopping up drum breaks and doing incredible things with them. I mean, a lot of people talk about someone like Squarepusher, that early drill'n'bass music, as taking early jungle and then going more crazy on the edits, but if you listen to those original tunes, people were doing unbelievable things, especially when you heard it back in '92 – they were doing all sorts of crazy edits, chopping things into hundreds of bits, pitching the snares up and down, and they were doing it on their Amigas. It had a little bit more naïveté back then, and it was a bit looser because the equipment they had was a bit more primitive, but I always find that really weird, because there's a whole culture of people trying to recreate that now, and they are doing it in this crazy intricate way.

"But that was more the music I was into, I mean it's crazy music, it still blows me away when I listen to it now. When I was moving to Australia and I was going through all my records to try and have a sensible clear-out, and when I went through the drum'n'bass I was really surprised at how little I could get rid of. I've shipped everything, basically.



Pritchard and Middleton put out seven releases of their own material on Evolution, and then relaunched the label with the same logo as Universal Language, "to basically release friends" – among them Matthew Herbert, under the name Wishmountain.

"Tom knew Matt because he was living in Exeter, and he was making this music where he was just recording anything and making tracks from any object, which we thought was really interesting. The first thing we released from him was two tracks on the Warp compilation [1995's *Theory of Evolution,* which collected early Evolution material along with some newer tracks], and then we did two 12 inch singles. By then he was starting to get a lot of attention, and we didn't want to be a big business label, so when he started to blow up and people were offering him things, and we told him to just go and do whatever he wanted to do.

"We were just rubbish businesspeople really. We thought blindly that we'd just keep on putting out good music and it'd be alright. We didn't realise that basically the 12s that sold quite well, like the Jedi Knights album, for example, were just funding all these things.

We had a couple of guys helping us, but the Jedi Knights thing just let it roll for a while, and then all of a sudden, when we were stuck in other projects, we were getting into really bad debt. We ended up losing a lot of money on the label, shit-loads of money. A really good distribution company merged, so our sales dropped by half overnight, and we were still employing the people to run the label. Instead of saying, 'Let's just stop it now,' we kept going and going, losing more money as it went on.

"Luckily we both got record deals and that cleared the debt. I got a nice advance, and the money went into my account, and then right out again. So I've not been rushing to have a label again. I've relaunched the Evolution thing because there've been bootlegs, so I wanted to just do 1000 or 1500, as long as it breaks even, just so that people don't have to pay £50 or £100 on eBay. It just keeps the music alive, and already people have picked it up who are younger, and they've been really into it –those first releases were '91, '92. It's nice to have remastered them too, because the first releases weren't really pressed that well."

Perhaps more than Luke Vibert or Mike Paradinas, Pritchard's many aliases, both collaborative and solo, seem to have their own character. Pritchard is now working on a new Reload album, although to the consternation of certain fans, other projects keep getting in the way.

"I've got lots of tracks done for that album, but the album I'm doing for Warp at the moment has had to take lead, because I've got more of that done and I want to get it out. It's Harmonic 313 this time; instead of having to come up with another name, I just put a '1' in there. I thought it makes it easier, because I've got too many names as it is.

"There will be some more Harmonic 33 stuff [with Dave Brinkworth, who earlier collaborated on drum'n'bass releases as Use of Weapons]. There are basically three sides to that project. Harmonic 33 was originally very independent sounding hip-hop mixed with sci-fi, very sample-based, but playing stuff alongside it to make it sound like a sample, so you don't know whether it is or not. And then the album we did for Warp was basically me and Dave trying to make the sort of stuff that I would dig for – sample library type music – but with no samples.

"We were thinking of doing some library music, but we we were liking the tracks so much, and if you release a library album, the tracks don't ever get used – they go into a library, and if you want to use them, you have to license them back. So we really wanted these tracks to come out, and I'd given these tracks to Steve [Beckett] at Warp, and that's why the Reload album's taking so long. One day he said to me, 'So what've you been doing with those library type tracks?' and I said that I'd been working on them but didn't want to release them as a library album, so he said, 'Well why don't we put them out then?'

"So that jumped the queue and now the Harmonic 313's jumped the queue. The Reload thing's still there, but it's next on the list, basically.

"Harmonic 313 is more electronic sounding, very Detroit-inspired – growing up in the '80s – and sort of a Jay Dee thing. Still very electronic, but trying to get the grooves of hip-hop, and, at the moment, not that many samples. The other Harmonic stuff is very organic - some people think, 'Oh Mark's now doing *this*' – like they love the first hip-hoppy stuff but they didn't really like the Warp album, and when I do the new album they'll be, 'Why's he doing this really techno stuff?' But there will be another library album, and so on – I like doing all of them. Harmonic 313 just came on strong all of a sudden – I wrote quite a few tracks that had heavy bass-lines, a bit of grime, a bit of dubstep, a bit of Detroit techno, a bit of hip-hop – all these things I'm trying to pull into it – and it just seemed to write itself, very naturally. There's some echoes of like '93, '92 electronica – and I offered them to Warp first because I felt I had to, because I still hadn't done the Reload album."

"Over the last seven or eight years I've been doing stuff in that vein, like early Detroit sounding mixed with industrial. I might do an EP that has that sound, but I really want this album to have that brief of the first album:

I want it to turn into something that doesn't sound like anything else. At the moment it's not got even any drums in it –the stuff that was inspiring me to do that album was basically avant-garde classical music and sci-fi films. I didn't really know these composers, I'd just heard the music through films, and then eventually I started to learn about Ligeti, Stockhausen, Penderecki, those type of people, and also sci-fi film sound design. But at the time I was going to drum'n'bass clubs, so that's why it had this kind of fast energy to it. This time round I'm not really sure what I'll do with the drums, haven't really worked that out yet.

"I'm trying to write in a different way; I'm not using plugins, I'm not using timing reference on the computer, I'm not looping things or playing stuff in through MIDI, I'm just trying to use the computer like a tape machine, playing stuff into it to not sound like anything else that's going on. Playing old synths in, manipulating them, so things happen unexpectedly. It's like 50 per cent dark and heavy, industrial sounding, and then 50 per cent sad. There will probably be some acoustic instruments in there – strings? – and this 'waterphone'. Just using all sorts of mad instruments, mixing it with electronics, trying some tape looping to recreate the [musique] concrète thing. I just want it to turn into whatever it turns into.

"One track I've pretty much finished has Beans on it, so people were like, 'Oh no, is it hip-hop?' but it's him doing spoken word, which is what he started out doing – in return for me doing a couple of beats for him. It's like *Andromeda Strain* kind of electronics. Really, really heavy. I just played it to him, and he was like, 'OK I'm ready,' and did it perfectly on the first take. He'd written the piece about eight years before and never found a way of using it. As the track ended, the last words came in, and he'd only heard it once."

In 2002, Pritchard was put forward by Tony Nwachukwu (Attica Blues) as a possible participant for the Red Bull Music Academy. Without any expectations, he took part in 2002's Academy in Sao Paolo and was blown away. He has since become more involved, and in 2004 participated in the Rome Academy, where he met Lorna. They spent some time in England together, and then came to Australia.

"I'd finished a few projects at the time and was due a break, so it was just perfect timing that I just came here for a month and it became four months. It seemed like a mad thing to do – what was I doing moving to Australia, moving all my stuff? But at the same time it was like, if I come here for a year and everything goes wrong, or I don't like it, I've still been here for a year. And I haven't regretted it even slightly. The only time I regret it is when I see a flyer for a thing in London I want to go to. But I've been back a couple of times this year, so every time I do some DJing but I try and keep nights free so I can go to FWD>> or something.

"There's this funny Melbourne/Sydney thing. People always say Melbourne's better, why did you move to Sydney, you'd be much better off down there. But so far, I've liked the nights in Sydney – I haven't had a good DJ experience in Melbourne particularly (although I have to big up Joe Seven, John Cammo and Ransom, and Jerry Poon). But the people in Sydney – especially at the nights I've been going to like Void, Submerged at the Abercrombie and the Frigid nights – the people that go to those nights really love the music and can't wait to hear it. There might only be 80 people, but those people are there because they want to be there, they've been waiting for it all week.

"The first time I played at Submerged, it was free entry on a Thursday night, there were maybe 50 to 80 people, and I played for an hour, and I think that was the first night I played here where I felt I was actually playing music to people. I was thinking, well, I'd rather do that than try and play to some people who want something that I haven't got, and I'm working my ass off and end up going home really pissed off. When I first got here I was being put in places where people maybe knew what I'd done in the past, and maybe thought I'd do something that would fit with what other people were doing, but I don't really do that, so it's quite tricky. So now there are enough things happening, I'm starting to get more DJ work for the sort of stuff I want to be doing."

Not content to simply reside in Australia, make music and DJ at clubs, Pritchard, along with Lorna, has adapted a London club night called CDR to nurture upcoming Sydney electronic music talent.

"It's a really nice idea – if you're making music, it's really valuable to hear it on a system, and also it builds a little community vibe, you've got all these people hooking up, meeting people. Also, people were always encouraged to send ideas, so if you've got some vibe you're working on, just send it through and we'll play it.

"The club scene in general's no longer geared towards trusting a group of people who can introduce you to some music you maybe don't know. It's changed over the last few years so people want familiar things, they don't want to be challenged, so we hope CDR will be somewhere for producers to go and check out new things. It's on a small scale but it's growing. I try and get people out there who are a bit jaded, people who maybe used to DJ but don't really any more, a bit older, so there's a whole time of life to go through, but I think they should go out and check out one of these nights.

"That's why I like playing dubstep out – it reminds me of drum'n'bass. When drum'n'bass kicked in, it was referencing such a massive, wide range of music, so when you heard d'n'b early on, you'd hear raga, techno, house and ambient influences, soundtrack samples, all these different weird mixes. Then it became a big formula, with your Good Looking, your Metalheadz and so on.

"With the dubstep thing at the moment, you can go and hear lots of different things. Some people might play more of the atmospheric Burial type stuff, some more of the Planet µ, slightly harder-edged stuff, and then they'll play more the Tempa sound, someone like Skream who's quite hype, energy type music, some of it's on the house tip, so you'll get all these different things on the one night. That's why I've gotten so excited about it.

"People were moaning a bit late last year that it's starting to sound formulaic, but if you listen, enough people are doing it now that I'm always finding stuff that's inspiring. And it's still in a place where, hopefully, they'll learn from where drum'n'bass went wrong – split off so you go and hear someone who just plays 'that sound' for the whole night and it's just boring. So when I went to FWD>> it was just great, 'cause you've got NType, who's just really good interesting music that's quite hype, and then you've got Kode9 who's really deep... and people will drop other things in, like you might hear some old-school drum'n'bass at the start of a night, and someone will do a dub set, and somebody might do an early dubstep set, playing old tunes. People aren't afraid to drop some of those early tunes in, they're not like, 'I've gotta have the latest thing.' So everybody seems to have a pretty good outlook on it, and I'm hoping it'll keep morphing and changing."

So are we going to hear some new tunes from Mark on the dubstep tip?

"Yeah, I've got quite a few tracks on the go. I shouldn't be making any 'cause I should be finishing off these albums, but I've got a few labels interested and I've played a few ideas to people, so I'm hopefully going to do something for Planet µ, and hopefully for Deep Medi – Mala's label – and Tempa. I've been working on tracks for a while, but when I put something out, it's gotta have my take. I want to push it to do things I do in my own production, like messing with the timing a little bit, trying to get more of an unusual kind of Jay Dee timing on the drums rather than being just quantised, and using old synths a little bit as well.

"There's a track coming out on a Planet µ comp, mixed by Hatcha [*10 Tons Heavy*, out now], which I played to Mike [Paradinas, who runs the label] about a year ago and he said he wanted to put out on Planet µ as a 12 inch. I said I'd need to finish it off, but then it was on the hard drive he gave to Hatcha to do the mix, and Hatcha liked it and put it in there. I was a bit annoyed at Mike for doing that on the one hand, 'cause I sort of just whacked it down on headphones, I hadn't even sorted the timing out, it was all played in live a lot of it, but it's now on the mix in a really lo-fi demo form."

And that would be it, except that Mark Pritchard is such a hugely generous and enthusiastic soul that we retired after the interview to his studio, where he showed off his many vintage analogue synthesisers, the aforementioned waterphone, with which you can make extraordinarily spooky sounds, and then took me on a tour of his recent music and a vast collection of dubstep recently digitised from vinyl. It's clear that the vagaries of geographical location could never dampen Pritchard's creative spirit, nor his desire to share wonders with others.

Mark Pritchard's back catalogue is available from Inertia, the *Evolution* reissues are available from online vendors including Boomkat.

"THE CLUB SCENE IN GENERAL'S NO LONGER GEARED TOWARDS TRUSTING A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME MUSIC YOU MAYBE DON'T KNOW. IT'S CHANGED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS SO PEOPLE WANT FAMILIAR THINGS, THEY DON'T WANT TO BE CHALLENGED."

STORM THE STUDIO: FERAL MEDIA

DANNY JUMPERTZ'S STUDIO IS NO REGULAR STUDIO, AND DON'T GO LOOKING FOR THE PHONE NUMBER TO BOOK IT FOR YOUR NEXT RECORDING BECAUSE IT'S NOT THAT KIND OF PLACE. IT'S A PLACE WHERE ARTISTS ON HIS FERAL MEDIA LABEL GO TO REHEARSE AND RECORD, WHERE SONGS GET MIXED, AND SOMETIMES WHERE MUSIC FANS IN THE KNOW CONGREGATE FOR INTIMATE SECRET GIGS OF VISITING ELECTRONIC ARTISTS.

On this particular day, it's also a place where there's evidence of visiting kids running through the studio to get to the pool just outside the glass door, and a step-ladder leading to a pair of congas so the same kids can get musical when the moment takes them. Not only is this Camperdown warehouse the headquarters of Feral Media, which Danny co-runs with his wife Caroline Chisholm, but it's also their home.

"It's a flexible space," says Danny from behind his mixer and computer. "We've had some good little social evenings where people just get together and talk about music. If various artists were in town they could perform here because all the gear was quick to set up and play. That's worked really well and we've done a couple of launches in here as well. Plankton played in here when they were launching *Insomnia*, and also Barrage. Actually, when I was first making tentative steps to do my own stuff, I played upstairs to a whole bunch of friends." He also says that the space has worked really well as the administrative headquarters of Feral Media too, "just for doing little working bees like putting together CDs and things like that. It's good to have a functional space for sewing the labels and stuffing the CDs and all that sort of stuff. There always a real variety of activities happening from here. Yeah, it's great."

A long table with a Mac and a mixer is the focus of the large rectangular room. A drum kit and a row of guitars sit behind Danny atop a Persian rug. Another Persian rug is draped on the wall behind the drums and red paper Chinese lanterns dangle from the roof beams. Amps and other larger bits of gear are scattered around the room with patches of floorboards gleaming in between. The walls are lined with boxes of leads, stationary, Feral Media merch' stands, recording toys and Danny and Caroline's CD collection (including Rolling Stones albums signed by Mick Jagger himself).

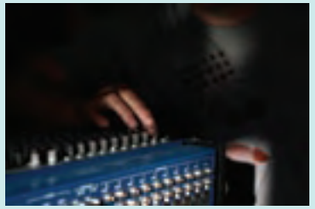
"The studio's got to be a welcoming space. I like things in balance and in harmony and it's a reasonably large space so it can easily get very cluttered if you just keep on piling stuff in here. I change it all the time. I move things around and it's sometimes in those moving around phases that you're disengaged from 'in-front-of-the-computer' mode. You get off your backside and realise how a space can be changed or moved or set up a bit differently to make it more productive."

Always having the room set up and ready to use is important to Danny. "It's good to have a short space of time from having an idea to being in record mode. If you can get to that stage in under 30 seconds you're on your way, I reckon. If you have to unpack everything and set it up then sometimes the vibe is just completely gone. That's the advantage of having space. You can have shit out for a long time and set up like it is now. We could have a jam now and have something down in 15 minutes."

When used for recording the space is very much about capturing the moment. Being one large room, it's impossible to separate each instrument during the recording process so instead the focus in on getting a good take of the entire band and then working with all of those elements in post-production, much more like in a live recording. "I think you just need to try and capture what's happening in the room accurately. In a space like this with a three-piece band everyone would be playing together and everything is spilling into everything else anyway. I'm not one for great sonic isolation – you'll hear the drums in the guitar amp and all that sort of stuff. The main things to consider would be: is the take good and are they playing well? You're better off having people playing well and capturing it on whatever is available rather than having a pristine recording of something that hasn't got any soul."

This has always been Danny's goal and the basic need to capture a moment with whatever setup is available has lead to his current studio environment. "We'd very rarely go into a recording studio," he says of the various projects he's been involved with lately. "This studio was just a resource we could provide to get records out cheaply without having to spend too much in the recording phase."

Danny first got into recording with analogue gear as a teenager after attending an audio engineering school and then getting a job at a local radio station. It was his later investigations into recording through Plankton, after studying digital recording at Southern Cross University, that have landed him where he is now. "I recorded the Plankton album and mixed it. That was probably the start of this as a home base recording set up. We did most of the recording in rehearsal studios and this would've been between 2001 and 2002 and it was at this point that digital technology was cheap enough and laptops were reliable enough to take into rehearsal studios and just start recording in that way. All the mixing I did was at home and then when we moved



to Sydney (from Melbourne) I continued that but had a much bigger space so I started doing some tracking as well, not just mixing – although it's probably better as a mixing space than a recording space. It's a fantastic room but without an isolated control room. When you're doing tracking with the band you're in the same space as them and actually that's really fun. You can't monitor things really well as they're being recorded but as long as the levels are ok. You're in amongst it so that's really good."

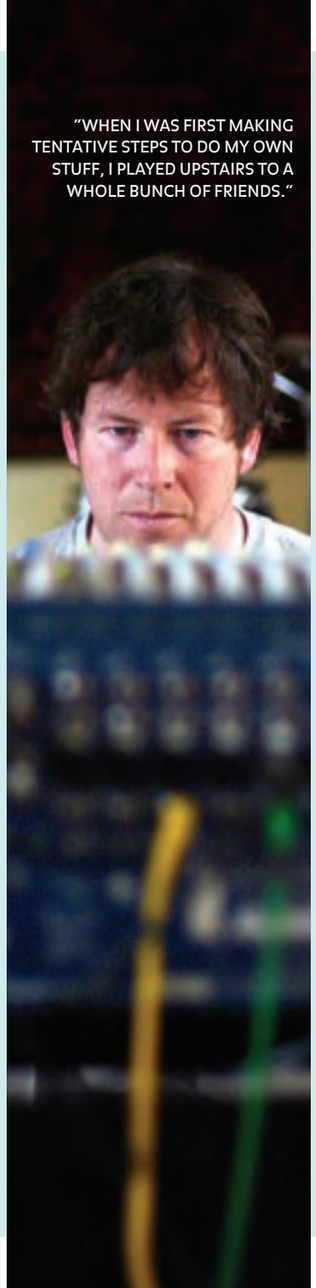
The studio is constantly evolving in small ways but Danny claims to be over the initial "gear-buying frenzy" citing that it's important to get the basics right.. "I think one of the most important things you can have in a studio is reasonable monitors because they basically are the screen through which you see everything. These speakers, Genelec 1029As, probably cost just as much as the software interface. They are near field monitors, small monitors, but they're really clear and give you an accurate picture. There are two of them and a sub underneath. Together they provide a really balanced picture of what you're doing and I think that's the most important thing. Also it's good to get a good pair of headphones. When you're mixing in a small room you can get quite an accurate picture from a good pair of earphones. Not so much in the bottom end, but you can still get a good balance." A less typical item he uses in his studio are PA speakers, the kind you'd see at a small gig. "They're handy with mixing too because it gives you a different sonic picture than a good clear near-field monitor would. It sounds more like it would at a live venue or a gig and you can get a good snapshot of whether a track is working by switching between the monitors."

In looking over the equipment his eyes next land on his mixer. "A good mixing desk is really essential. A lot of people who do home recording with computer sound cards that don't have good mixers hit a lot of problems with getting the right signal to level into the computer. It's just a good way of combining all the different sources when recording and also when you're listening back. Depending on how you set it up, and that's the beauty of a mixer, it's very flexible."

Danny's studio tour continues through smaller pieces of equipment: "I suppose the other bits and pieces which I use a lot are the tape delay units, the space echo machines, and they're just basically effects devices you use to just colour and change the sound, providing different types of modulated effects like chorus, delays, echoes, EQing, pre-amping, overdrive and all that sort of stuff. I use them on everything to colour things. I plug in guitar, drums, vocals, a lot of guitars actually, but I'll also create something on the computer, like in Ableton Live and then output it into the soundcard of the computer, into the delay unit or for reverb and then bring it back, then get rid of the original unaffected track and just use the affected track."

"Mics are always the next step. I don't have tonnes of good mics but I've got enough to get a rhythm section of a band sounding good. This is an unusual mic that I bought," he says, pointing to a large mic with a 'droid

"WHEN I WAS FIRST MAKING TENTATIVE STEPS TO DO MY OWN STUFF, I PLAYED UPSTAIRS TO A WHOLE BUNCH OF FRIENDS."



head' shape. "It's like a stereo PZM mic and it's mainly used for location sound recordings and stuff like that. People often attach them to cameras to provide a very neutral and natural flat sound. The good thing about them is that they're very good with bottom-end response, they work differently to a dynamic or condenser mic, they're a lot more robust and the stereo imaging is very good, it's very natural. They're really good with things which are loud so you can put it really close to the kit and it doesn't distort. I've used that setup to basically record the whole kit. Just one stereo mic on the kit and it gives you a really good cohesive picture."

It just goes to show that in setting up his studio Danny hasn't followed any how-to books but rather has gone with what he feels is right. "That's what I've got and that's the way I've used it (the PZM mic) and it's worked well so I just keep on using it, but I haven't ever seen anyone else even use one of these sort of mics in the studio."

Working with available resources is a common theme throughout the studio. "The space really dictated what we could do in here." Before being a studio the space was the warehouse lounge room, but its size made it the best choice of room to turn into a home studio. "We put in that wall in which is dividing the studio from the kitchen and lounge room space, and put that door in with double glazed glass. We got in a guy who had set up recording studios in England and was actually working at 301 as an acoustic consultant. He said 'This is what I would do: you're not gonna get this place completely sound-proofed without spending shitloads but these are the things I would do'" Danny and Caroline took his advice and put in double glazed doors and windows, double doors and redid the ceiling. "If we were doing a lot of music in here it would just go straight up into the bedrooms. A friend put a ceiling in but with little supports which were separate from the roof above. Having that space there is sort of a buffer to the laneway. It's pretty well acoustically isolated and it was also fine for, y'know, we could make a noise in here and it was reasonably quiet without too much sound leaking out."

What's most important to the recordings which come out of the Feral Media Studio is not the gear but Danny's approach to recording music. "Obviously, sometimes not having some gear can hold you back and for a while there I couldn't really do professional recordings because I didn't have the right gear but once you've got it you just need to sit down and use it and use it well. I suppose you also need to have a good clear idea of what you want to get down and just be ruthless with the stuff that you do. Really, don't become too attached to things in early stages because if they're not working sometimes you just need to move on or do something quite drastic to make it work. That's more about where your head's at rather than what sort of gear you've got. If you've got a good take in the can then you're more than halfway there. The energy of the take is what's going to make it stand out in the big bad world. Capture something that's just got some kind of vitality because that's so often what is missing from recordings."

FERAL HQ HALL OF FAME

RECORDING:
ALPEN * CLAIRAUDIENCE * PLANKTON * SCISSORS FOR SPARROW * UNDERLAPPER

POST-PRODUCTION:
BARRAGE * THE RICH * DAVID ELIOTT INCIGNERI * MINIMUM CHIPS * SBS WHATEVER SESSIONS * SPARROW HILL * THE EMERGENCY

SECRET GIGS:
DAVE MILLER * DEADBEAT/SCOTT MONTEITH * HRVATSKI/KEITH FULLERTON WHITMAN

SIREN SOUNDS

THE BASS ALREADY SOUNDS AS IF IT WAS COMING FROM ELSEWHERE. HUGE BUT MUFFLED, SPREAD OUT AT THE VERY BOTTOM OF THE FREQUENCY AS IF IT WERE BLEEDING THROUGH FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF A WALL. DISTANCE. AND THEN THE VOCAL KICKS IN, WRITHING AGAINST THE SYNCOPATION OF THE DRUMS TO ITS OWN RHYTHM. THERE'S NO PLACING IT.

Erase that. Let's make it *vocals*, plural, because there's no way we can talk about this music in terms of a singer, a person, a whole. It's a plethora of voices wrapped around nothing but itself, a kind of architecture and a schizophrenia at once, pitches shifting, layers in the mix held out like staircases that disappear as soon as you put a foot down. *Holding you / Let it be alone / Let be alone / Let it be alone* – the invocation rings out three times, a trinity, and that might be what it says, or it might not, it's hard to tell. Whatever, it's the loneliest prayer in the world, a call-and-response with nowhere to go, no one to sing out to but itself, selves. Not male, not female, and certainly not human, but instead, the remnants of tuning rapidly through stations up and down the dial, brief snatches of voice released into the atmosphere. Forming a cloud above the city, a shimmering, spectral haze.

Welcome to 'Archangel', the second track on the second Burial album, *Untrue*. It's a pop song that hasn't been invented yet.

Delighted giggles. "What I wanted is to get people singing: girls singing and pitching them down, so its sounds more like a boy singing, and then guys singing, and pitching them up, trying to get them a little more female. You get this weird middle ground and I'm into that."

Burial is talking down the telephone line, a disembodied voice on the other side of the world. It's a lovely voice, actually. Softly spoken, South London accent, hugely expressive. Pauses, inflections. The more important the topic at hand the softer the voice gets, causing you to lean in, or jam the phone closer up against your ear.

"I like a speed in the tunes halfway between a sway and a pulse," he says, describing the new record, "and there's something about that speed, with a vocal where you can't tell if it's a boy or a girl, where it's more like a ghost singing on your behalf. Or like a voice that's trying to tell you something. Where the source of the song is hidden – I feel a bit stupid saying this but I think it sounds sexy, basically. That's what I'm trying to say."

Untrue is a record with desire streaked across it, and at times an almost unbearable yearning, but neither the desire nor its object is ever fixed, not for a moment. It's this that makes the record both beautiful and hugely disconcerting, for desire here is not a place of safety, not a retreat into or towards a recognisable human body, let alone a female one. *Untrue* is post-human, disorientating.

"Sometimes there's a main vocal and then another layer where the singing is totally out of reach. It's like an air duct in the tune. There's all this sound, so no matter how deep down you look into the tune there's singing at every level, until it's too dark to hear it.

"There's a Playstation game called *Forbidden Siren*," he continues, "I'm always well moody at it for thinking of that name first, because I can't use it! Well, I can," – you can almost hear him smiling – "I think I might just use it anyway, but it doesn't sound so good, 'cos I blatantly stole it off of a game. I love that phrase because a siren is this thing – I thought it was just a siren on a police car or whatever, but I found out – it's like a girl singing, but far away. You just hear it carried on the air and you're drawn towards it. I fucking love that. I don't want a singer, you know, I don't want a vocalist. I actually want it to sound like I've got one of these things singing in my tunes: a siren, or something not human that I've got chained up in the yard. And that might sound pretentious as fuck, but I don't mean it to be. To have that kind of longing to be taken away, or like something from the past… Something more scary, outside of yourself, that's trying to draw you away from the world."

Away from the world. It's something that Burial knows about, living in what he describes as "exile". He's distanced himself from congratulations and acclaim, from the pressure of having released an album last year, his first, which comprehensively punched through any walls that were left between South London's tight dubstep community and the rest of the globe, hopping locations and infecting listeners and already lauded as one of the albums of the decade. Most of all, he has distanced himself from recognisability – there are still only a small handful of people that know who he is. He's still living in South London, sitting on the rooftop of his building with its view across the city.

"If I had my way I'd never cross the river," he says. "London's weird, it's home, but sometimes you're walking along and it's deserted. You can turn a corner and there's no one. Sometimes you're in a place where it's not even designed for people: you'll be standing in the middle of a fucking motorway and there's not even a pavement, and then you get across and there's a fence that you can't get past. You'll find yourself in a weird car park with no cars in it, where there's no way out, nothing. It's odd."

Some might see Burial himself as odd, for refusing to inhabit, to *embody*, his underground fame, as if the evasion were disingenuous, part of some clever plot. The contemporary world is so hooked on the pleasures of profiling and the pursuit of obsessively documenting oneself – the more instant, the better – that to *not* do so strikes many as suspicious, untrustworthy. If you've done nothing wrong you should have nothing to hide, goes the mantra, nothing to be afraid of. But hiddenness and disappearance can have their own liberations.

"I'm just not that kind of person, I wish I was, but I'm not somebody who can step up," he explains. Burial's absence is, of course, part of what makes his music so potent. People across the world connected with last year's (self?)-titled album precisely *because* the spaces called up by the music were so very architectural; evacuated of human presence. *Burial* was an intoxicatingly dark, sparse record, the subaqueous bass at its core like the pulse of buildings past midnight, or perhaps their echo, heard as you passed through the gap between one tower and the next.

"I'm sort of nocturnal," Burial admits. "Often I'll make tunes, and then I'll go out, or I'll think of somewhere that I can walk to, maybe at 3am, and then I don't listen to the tune again. Sometimes I'll walk around and dream up a tune, and go back and make it, late at night. It's not about 'testing' to make sure that technically it's good, because my tunes aren't technically good. But when you're playing a tune at night and just driving around empty streets, going around London, if your tune sounds right – " he breaks off, dovetailing into the next thought. "They're quite specifically for London, but it's really buzzing for me if I hear about someone in another part of the world that's into them, it's nice to hear."

There were faint glimmers of comfort inside of *Burial*, particularly in the hiss and crackle that was traced through every track, but frankly, it was a terrifying album, its perspective so deep that it felt like looking into an abyss. "You'll be walking around somewhere indoors, uninhabited,"

"SOMETIMES PEOPLE GO OUT TO FORGET – MOST TIMES YOU'RE HAPPY, DEVIL MAY CARE – BUT SOMETIMES YOU GO OUT BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT ALL YOUR LIFE ON YOUR MIND."

he describes, calling up architecture, "and I love the sound of that, the sound of your trainers on the floor in an old hospital, that kind of squeak. Or some dark place that'll have a lift shaft that you don't want to go anywhere near, but you drop something down in the dark and you get this weird echo that goes far away from you. You get this evil sense of space when there's no one there, and I'd do anything to get that in my tunes."

There would have been an understandable logic in continuing down this dark sonic path, in paring back even further, almost to nothing. "The record I was going to release was going to be totally dark – I was going to go all out and make the darkest record ever, because I was feeling like that" he offers. "But then I realised that the last thing you do when you're feeling like that is to make a dark record. You make something to cheer yourself up."

Untrue was put together in only two weeks. "I was just like 'Fuck it, I'm going to do these tunes in ten minutes,' and then I'd spend a bit more time on the details. It just happened really fast. Basically I felt a kind of pressure around me, and I just wanted to make something that was like – I don't know what that word is – naïve? Back to how it was when I first started making tunes, and the only people I could play them to were my brothers and my mum. I'll save the really – not the ambitious stuff, but the stuff where I'll spend ages on it – I'll save that stuff for later." Though he has assiduously avoided reading his own reviews, he knows that some listeners will be expecting a record that is "maybe more sophisticated or technical. I'm aware of what that music is, but I can't make it yet."

Untrue takes the glimmers that speckled *Burial* and enlarges them into a glow, one that dissipates and then returns, track after track. The pitch-shifts on 'Endorphin' and 'Etched Headplate' – where vocals are stretched into wordless, luminescent textures – are like the wash of lights across an evening cityscape. If the key element of *Burial* was concrete, then *Untrue* is halogen, gaseous.

"In this new one I was obsessed with making it glow a bit more, and having these little clips of vocals, and tiny moments of warmth for a split-second, and then it would go, it would fade out.

"I love that kind of thing where you're out in the cold and you almost want to be kept out in the cold," he says, speaking in a hush now. "You don't want to be let back in. Sometimes when you're in the cold you'll get this kind of shiver go through you? Like something nonhuman tries to comfort you…

"The tunes are personal, but I want them to mean something to someone, not just someone into it in a social kind of way. I'm not really into that. I know what it is to make tunes that a bunch of lads can tear around town to in a car, but for this one I didn't want to make that. I wanted to make something that was kind of half-boy, half-girl. That's part of underground music just as much as a heavy bassline."

The voices on *Untrue* aren't sweet; they have little, if any, of the orgasmic drive – upwards, upwards, upwards – of 2step or jungle vocals. They dive and twist, winding through pitches with massive anxiety, with lingering sadness. Emotion and production are locked together: you can hear the blips and gaps between samples, the voices unable to animate themselves, to achieve release from the tune.

"I do fuck with the pitches," he explains, "but I don't understand things being in key. That's why I like that air-duct noise, like a presence in the air. A kind of rush, like the ghost of a sound. I take all my keys from that note, almost like a banshee, like you were hearing a strange, wounded animal cry. The sounds are more a part of that, like when someone calls you in the middle of the night and your ringtone sounds scary for a second. I like those kinds of noises that make you feel odd. You leave yourself when you hear them."

"Odd" is a key sensation in the Burial project. This is music perpetually in search of a centre that never was, and perhaps never could be; a mourning for both self and collective identity. It is not music that is in flight from the technologically mediated human being, but rather, music that (re)remembers the rave, in particular, as a site of technology (within the overlooked warehouse, or the field at the edge of the motorway) where a *new* kind of self might have been made, filtered through the sound system, dissolved and reconstructed within the mass; shifting, euphoric, temporary. Perhaps even more so than its predecessor, the glow of *Untrue* is the afterglow of rave's history.

"I was brought up with a lot of rave tunes and hardcore tunes," Burial remembers, "and people telling me stories, like folklore. When I was really little, older people would be telling me stories about where they'd been, playing tunes. They'd been to these clubs and they'd drive through the night to get to these parties. But I wouldn't know anything about it, because I'm too young to have ever gone to anything like that. It was almost this euphoric thing back then, but I find it really sad to listen to now." It's hard, here on the flat page, to capture the tone of his voice as he goes on, but there's a breathlessness to it that holds the faintest trace of urgency. Reverence. Longing. "I love those hardcore and rave tunes because they sound deep, hopeful, for the times, and the people. Something big like 'Papua New Guinea' by Future Sound Of London, 'We are E', or old Prodigy tunes. Anything from that time, old hardcore tunes and jungle tunes. It's unbelievable, that glow in the tunes, it almost breaks your heart. I've been around people when a tune has been put on and they've just broken down and cried. They're reminded of a time. I feel like that when I hear tunes like 'The Chopper' by DJ Hype, or 'Angel' by Goldie, Danny Breaks, Ed Rush tunes. I think the hope you have when you're young is destined to die, but I don't want to believe that."

Hope, of course, is never passive, never simply about looking back. Hope is not a longing for a past that never was. It's a way of imagining a future that will be inscribed by the past, a way of making history, of continuing it. Hope is the opposite of nostalgia.

"I see so much hope in those tunes, even the darkest of those tunes, jungle tunes and all that. In the UK - 'cos that's all I know – those tunes tried to unite people. I want to let those people know that they didn't fail. Because to some people, those tunes mean everything. I almost feel that if ravers who are a bit older could hear a bit of that in my tunes, I could die happy."

'*Dream life*', wobbles a vocal line on 'Raver', *Untrue*'s closing track, '*When the world seemed/Easy*'. At least, that's what I hear. "My dream would be to make a record where you thought you heard the lyrics, but the next time you heard it, it didn't say that at all."

Songs that are out of reach, or that never quite were; dreams of perfection; form part of Burial's hearing. Loss activates the imagination. "I liked the days when you'd hear a record and you didn't even know who made it. There'd be nothing written on the white label. It might sound like Source Direct, but I'd never know. I'd stay up all night listening to the pirate stations, hoping that they'd tell me what that tune was three hours before, and they never did. And maybe you never heard it again. Or maybe you tried to record it and the tape went wrong, and it's gone. The atmosphere in those songs; it was a miracle that you ever got to hear them."

Fittingly then, the musical elements of *Untrue* are always receding, or moving off-centre; always in danger of being erased. Part of *Burial*'s radicalism – particularly within the field of dubstep, where the crisp beat rules – was the way in which the rhythms were eroded by crackle – rain, fire, vinyl hiss and static. It felt like the record was breaking down from the inside, like maybe the more times you played it the more decayed it would become, until it was reduced to mere stutters, ticks. *Untrue* keeps the crackle, but it uses those maddening, dizzying vocal layers as a way of destabilising everything else. "I half-liked *Untrue* [as a title] because it sounded like some old UK garage tune, but also it's like when someone's not acting like themselves. They're off-key, something's wrong, an atmosphere has entered the room."

The new record tilts between strangeness and a kind of desolate safety, if the latter is not a contradiction in terms. Perhaps vulnerability is the word. It's the comfort of leaving comfort behind, of feeling sad and alone in the city, passing doorways and overhearing other people's stereo systems, on the periphery of shared living. Burial's music presupposes this atomised, drifting audience, scattered through the streets.

"I think that whatever time you have when you're out, you can have a mad time trying to get back home, walking across the city late. Or in a mini-cab, watching your city go past the windows, and you're feeling jumpy, like the music's still in your bloodstream. I want to make music for that time.

"I love those old Sam Cooke tunes," he says later. "He'll be singing a happy song about having a party, but something in his voice gives away that he's not happy at all, he's sad. He's singing about the last party. If I made my dream album it would be the kind of tunes that you'd put on if you were having the last party on earth."

Enervated divas and crooners, the trace of soul music's celebration but also its melancholy; the sassy sheen of contemporary r'n'b scratched over and submerged – these things form *Untrue*'s uneven pulse. Listen to 'Homeless', where snatches of the phrase 'Oh Lord' reverberate into the deep like a drowned choir. The embrace of this music, the emotion of it, is brave. Doubly brave because the embrace does not offer a sense of belonging or return; Burial's music has no oneness, so sense of shelter or security. What it offers is doubt, and that doubt is radical, propulsive, a way to keep living. Doubt is counter-posed to brooding; doubt is open where brooding turns back in on itself. This music has many points of entry, it fizzes and floats and escapes, with no centre to organise itself around, nothing to act as an anchor.

"I understand that vibe, of wanting to make that darkside stuff, something malevolent." says Burial, gently. "That violent, brooding thing, I know it; I grew up on those tunes, and someday I'll make a whole album of them. But I just think it would be nice to do something that was not like that. To do something where the threat was always there, but it's the last thing you want to think about.

"Sometimes you'll go to a club, and before you go in you can hear it through the walls, and you put real life away from you. But I've seen people where they'll be upset, or there's a girl crying next to the bar – they're twisted up about something but it's almost like they make that decision to walk back inside. There are things going on there, and you can get to that sometimes in the music. It's not just about some massive drop in the tune, or some massive bassline that comes in, it's something else… Sometimes people go out to forget – most times you're happy, devil may care – but sometimes you go out because you've got all your life on your mind."

Burial's *Untrue* is available from Hyperdub/Shogun.

"I SEE SO MUCH HOPE IN EVEN THE DARKEST OF THOSE TUNES. IN THE UK - 'COS THAT'S ALL I KNOW – THOSE TUNES TRIED TO UNITE PEOPLE. I WANT TO LET THOSE PEOPLE KNOW THAT THEY DIDN'T FAIL. BECAUSE TO SOME PEOPLE, THOSE TUNES MEAN EVERYTHING."

A TANGLED TALE

LAST YEAR, A RECLUSIVE YOUNG KANSAS MUSICIAN RECORDED AN ALBUM WITH A PECULIAR CREATIVE MOTIF AND WEATHERED, FRAGILE INSTRUMENTAL BEAUTY. IT WAS CALLED ALMOND AND IT WAS RELEASED ON SYDNEY LABEL PRESERVATION. IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST STUNNING DEBUTS OF THE YEAR; TINGED WITH ARTEFACTS, EMOTIONS, POLITICS AND MEMORIES, INSTRUMENTS, OBJECTS AND TALKING TOYS. BUT WHERE ALMOND PREDOMINANTLY DEALT WITH TIMES PAST, MARTIN'S REMARKABLE SECOND ALBUM RIVER WATER—RELEASED THIS OCTOBER, AGAIN THROUGH PRESERVATION—IMMERSES ITSELF IN A STARK, INTROSPECTIVE AND ACHINGLY BEAUTIFUL PRESENT.

Aaron Martin's sparsely looped arrangements inhabit a strikingly disparate space; where a distinct production and compositional sensibility is pressed against a vast, echoing vision of a decaying American Midwest; where the rendering of vivid emotions and recollections weren't limited to words. Aaron Martin lived a solitary childhood, there were no long-time school friends, no lasting sense of familiarity. Born in Denver, Colorado, he spent his pre and early teen years crisscrossing the Mid-Atlantic, South and Midwestern states—from Colorado to Pennsylvania, from Pennsylvania to Florida, from Florida back to Pennsylvania, and finally, from Pennsylvania to Kansas.

And it wouldn't be unfair to assume that such a dislocated early life had lasting effects on the 25-year-old. "I tend to shy away from people," he offers simply, speaking from his current home outside of Topeka, Kansas. "Even as a kid, I liked to keep to myself, and only had a few close friends. Since my family moved so much, it was hard to make connections with people… We were never in one location for very long." That's not to say that there weren't good times for the young Martin, namely his family's second stint in Pennsylvania. "It was probably the most social period of my life," he says. "We lived there for about five years, so I was able to make some friends and really settle in to one location. We had a couple acres of land, so I spent a lot of time outside with my friends, climbing trees, riding motorcycles, jumping off of the roof onto a trampoline. We just went wild and had fun. There was an exuberance to those few years that I had never experienced. A lot of the memories that I draw from for my music stem from my years in Pennsylvania. When I moved away from there to Kansas, when I was thirteen, it was a difficult transition, my personality shifted; I turned inward."

Personal reminiscence plays a huge part in Martin's unique strain of music making. Using a loose tangle of instrumentation (cello, ukulele, organ, mandolin, recorder, glockenspiel, various guitars, whistles and percussion), a looping pedal and an expansive cache of various other 'materials' (CD cleaner, ice bag, shampoo bottle, camera, alphabet school bus, bowed light fixture, comb, pocket watch and laughing turtle, to name a few on Almond), Martin's austere instrumental arrangements weave a dichotomous but nonetheless evocative web of hints, traces and artefacts from his past and present. "Memory plays an important role in my music," he explains. "I am drawn to the idea of capturing feelings evoked by events in my life that have had a strong impact on me. Obviously, many of those experiences occurred during my childhood."

The effect, so stunningly articulated on his debut record Almond, is both naïve and considered—clearly emotive and immediate in its creative foundation, but undeniably philosophical and measured in its compositional approach and qualities. "Music is a way for me to make observations about what I have experienced," explains Martin. "Each piece is tinged with emotion and often paired with layers of thoughts that I have gathered. This is the approach that I feel is most natural for me. It is very personal, which has advantages and disadvantages. It makes me vulnerable, but also allows me to express myself in an unadorned way."

Martin has a largely intuitive musical history. Having never really listened to music as a child, his interest was sparked when a school friend invited him to play the guitar

"PLAYING MUSIC BECAME A NATURAL EXTENSION OF MY PERSONALITY. I DIDN'T HAVE A STRONG CONNECTION TO PARTICULAR ARTISTS OR SONGS… I JUST DEVELOPED THIS REAL DESIRE TO CREATE MUSIC."

as an accompaniment to his drumming. Suffice to say, it was something of an epiphany for the 11-year-old. "I finally decided to give it a try," he recalls fondly. "From then on playing music became a natural extension of my personality. I didn't have a strong connection to particular artists or songs…I just developed this real desire to create music, rather than to listen to it."

After dabbling in guitar and drums throughout his mid-teen years—"just for fun," as he puts it—Martin's musical bearings really began to take shape when he started learning the cello at 17. "For some reason, I had it in my mind for a long time that I wanted to play cello," Martin remembers. "I had never played one before, and didn't even know how to read music, but I decided to rent one from a local music store.

I was determined to learn how to play, even though cello is a difficult instrument, and most 'classically trained' musicians start at a much younger age."He became obsessed with chamber music and began frenetically consuming the works of minimalist Estonian composer Arvo Pärt and the playing of British cellist Jacqueline du Pré; artists whom he still credits as having an impact on his artistic vision. Quite incredibly, within six months of starting lessons, Martin was playing in a local youth orchestra. Even more remarkable was the fact that after just another year, he was accepted into college as a cello performance major. "It was a crazy process," laughs Martin. "Being thrown into a formal music setting was overwhelming at times. I learned rapidly, but also felt confined by spending the bulk of my time interpreting music."

While studying cello proved an intellectual challenge, Martin found creative solace in toying with the idea of writing his own compositions. His impetus to really apply himself to this process came with a friend's short film project, which was in need a score. "I bought a used four-track, I really enjoyed that process, and ended up recording music for several more of his films. At that point, my music began to really take shape. I used every instrument and object that I had access to. Eventually, I bought a digital recorder, which I still use, and I recorded five CDs of music before Almond, which I gave out to a few friends and family. I never expected anything I recorded to be released in an official way. I

bought a looper pedal about a year and a half ago simply as a way to play live," he continues. "Repetition had played a major role in the music that I recorded before I started to use loops, so the pedal became the perfect tool for me."

Martin, who was living above a retirement facility for Vietnam veterans at the time, began piecing together the compositions that were to become Almond. The strange surroundings played quite a part in the record's direction. "It was a strange environment to live in," says Martin. "Most of the residents had severe psychological problems, and I had some odd experiences there, which greatly affected the music I recorded. While I think of the album as the summation of years of memories, it also captured a moment in my life when I felt most uncertain. I wasn't comfortable with where I was living, and was in an awkward transition after graduating from college. Each piece of music is a thought I was lost in."

Such tensions are clearly evident in Almond's lilting, American folk-inflected compositions. While Martin's arrangements revolve around elegant central instrumental motifs—such as the whispered interplay between ukulele, banjo and cello on 'The Ducks Are Just Sleeping' and the stunning layers of organ, percussion and strings on 'Canopy'. A darker stream of scurrying, rumbling and scratching undertones permeate the yearning minor-key melodies of tracks like 'Kentucky' and 'Bare Hands'. It's something that Martin sees as crucial to his music. "It's important for me to shade the music with layers of meaning," he explains. "It's not enough to record something beautiful. Every element present is there for a reason, and has been carefully considered. I'm interested in creating music that has both clarity and complexity…so that, even though the parts are often stripped down to their bare minimum, there are shards of meaning that spring up all over the place. Sometimes they butt up against each other, and sometimes they work alongside each other."

One of the record's most interesting applications of this idea is in its use of children's toys. Indeed, the aforementioned 'Canopy' and 'The Ducks Are Just Sleeping' offset their ornate melodics with garishly distorted loops of children's toys—a talking school bus and a laughing turtle, to be precise. But while somewhat discordant, the toys add another evocative layer to the songs' individual aural narratives. For Martin, the toys represent just another interesting piece of instrumentation. "I use toys just like I would any other texture," he says matter-of-factly. "They can add richness and spontaneity to music, but I think they require special consideration, so that they don't come off as being used flippantly,

or give the music too much of a cartoonish quality. It's always intriguing to take elements that seem outlandish, and to put them into a meaningful musical context. There is normally a psychological component to what I add to a piece, in terms of implying meaning."

A particularly telling track is 'Water Damage', where a swelling chorus of ukuleles, plucked strings, tambourines and spindly keys underscores a spoken-word sample of a television program, with a group of late middle-aged men shooting the breeze about American values, turkey hunting and animation whilst waiting for a bite out on Lake Michigan. It's a fascinating document, which offers an equally endearing and troubling portrait of contemporary America. Martin, however, is cautious about imposing any kind of definitive meaning on such tracks. "Most of the pieces on Almond are making some type of statement," he posits. "I wouldn't say that it's my role to dictate how people should interpret

those statements, but from time to time I make cultural observations."

"It's never my intention to take cheap shots, or even to make statements about America that have one clear-cut meaning," he continues. "'Water Damage' has an interesting history; the original version used a different sample, which I wasn't able to use for legal reasons, so at the last minute I had to try to figure out how to make the piece work without it… Luckily, I remembered that I had another sample on my pedal that I thought might work, and it ended up complimenting the piece perfectly. Both versions of 'Water Damage' point to an element of American culture that is simultaneously amusing and disturbing. For some reason, I am oddly attracted to the contradictory nature of that."

Martin's new record occupies a very different space, both in terms of its conceptual orientation and musical application. Where Almond peppered its instrumental motifs with scattered array of aural flotsam and jetsam, River Water sees Martin give his instrumental layers more room to breathe and develop. The results are stunning, with Martin's austere cello and banjo arrangements resonating with a far deeper, more harrowing, sense of emotional candour and nuance. "I wanted to explore how a mood shifts," he offers. "This is a complicated endeavour, and one that I was unable to examine with Almond, because the way I recorded it inhibited my ability to create transitions. So, with River Water, elements are often set in place, then dragged under, while others

remain, or a whole new set of ideas emerges, causing gradual or more drastic shifts in mood. It's an album about transition, about a constant effort to get to the core of things, both emotionally and musically."

Indeed, while Almond often inhabited an observational and artefactual realm, as Martin explains, his new work delves toward a more densely speculative and internal sensibility. "River Water is predominantly introspective," he pauses. "Almond had glimpses of this, but also dealt with broader

"IT WOULD BE LIKE HAVING MULTIPLE WRITERS CONTRIBUTE CONTENT TO A POEM. EVEN IF THE END RESULT WAS MORE REFINED, THE VISION WOULD BE DILUTED."

issues and observations. Memory still plays a key role in the music—and most likely will continue to—but this album is more about processing memory in the moment of remembering, in an attempt to bring some type of clarity to the current state of things, rather than actually transporting oneself back to an event in the past."

Having moved out of his apartment above the retirement facility after completing Almond, Martin recorded River Water in a room of an old house that he, his father and younger brother were renovating. Although tracked sporadically between November 2006 and July of this year, the recording and thought process behind the record was far more focused and economical than its predecessor. "I used the same equipment that I used for Almond," says Martin. "Everything was recorded in long

takes without using a computer or any effects other than loops. But there are a couple key differences between how the two albums were recorded. Almond was a document of pieces that I had been playing live, and I wanted to capture the music in that context. Because of that, I was limited to using loops exclusively and in a very specific way. Also, all of the pieces existed before they were recorded. I felt like locking myself into working that way would be too restrictive."

"For River Water, I wanted the freedom to create a variety of shapes or structures, rather than being confined to one general arc. In addition to that, with the exception of a few pieces, I created the music as I was recording it, which I much prefer as a method of recording. I think it really freed me up to hone my sense of structure," he continues. "I am unendingly striving to express myself in a very concentrated way, where all of the elements in place are essential, and the result is both something concise and complex."

It's a just summation; while Martin's compositions prove increasingly spare in terms of instrumentation, materials and motif, River Water's thematic and emotive undercurrent is densely psychological and evocative in effect. It's an incredible combination, from the echoing percussion and tender ukulele and cello interplay of opener 'Alison' and the stark, toll-like mandolin and menacing string section of 'Sisters', to the yearning banjo melody and abstracted vocal layering of 'Cord Blood' and the wondrously childlike recorder chorus of 'Burning Honey'. The haunting strings of 'Tire Swing' and vocal-stained desperation of 'Trees and Smoke' that add an overwhelming sense of vulnerability to the record, while the subtle underscore of field recordings on 'The Shape of Leaves' and 'Tar Paper' encroach on a powerful place-based dynamic, as if echoing with the heat and humidity of the Midwestern summer.

For Martin, the album's effectiveness rests in his increasing musical responsiveness to his own material—in allowing the songs to 'tell' him what they need instrumentally and to interpret their signals in a sensitive way. "I just wanted the musicianship to be as focused as the conceptual elements at play," he says. "It's hard for me to describe the evolution of instrumentation for particular recordings, because every piece uses a different set of materials unique to the logic of its structure. I did want to explore sounds that I hear day-to-day by working in some field recordings, which show up on 'The Shape of Leaves' and 'Tar Paper'. It's important for me to investigate my environment, and try to come to terms with it, as well as understand how it shapes my general mood."

And as he explains, this environment was far from stable. "This past year was a transitional period for me. After moving out of the retirement home, I spent a lot of time working with my dad on the house where I live now. It seemed like an endless process. During this time, my older brother moved into a different house, and so did my parents. So, we were all uprooted at once, and trying to get our footing again. When we finally got settled in, our basement completely flooded. So, part of the turbulence present in the album is due to those circumstances. Also, going from not thinking that any of my music would ever be released, to getting a number of musical opportunities was another transition, which caused a general feeling of excitement and disorientation. I think more than any specific event, though, River Water is a product of a general search for clarity—trying to come to terms with memory and the state of existing as a human being in order to move forward in a meaningful way."

And as Martin explains, this way forward is one to be taken alone. "It would be strange for me to want to bring in other musicians," he says, "it would be like having multiple writers contribute content to a poem. Even if the end result was more refined, the vision would be diluted." But for the unassuming Martin, just the fact that his unique musical vision even has an audience is beyond his comprehension. "I don't think I've quite adjusted to the idea of having listeners, even in a limited capacity," he laughs. "I'm just happy that people have the opportunity to hear it."

River Water is available through Preservation/Inertia.

TRUTH OR DARE

"I REALLY LIKE MUSIC THAT DRAGS YOU IN," SAYS MELBOURNE PRODUCER, ALEX GILLETT. HIS SELF-TITLED (AND SELF-RELEASED) DEBUT AS BOY IS FICTION WAS CERTAINLY THAT. AND, THANKS TO A REISSUE ON THE UK'S LIST RECORDS, THE DIGITAL BEATS AND SOFT BELLS LOOK SET TO ENTICE A WHOLE NEW AUDIENCE.

"It's nice when music takes you somewhere else, so I try to build in atmosphere and influence the mood as much as possible," says Gillett, who released eponymous record in 2006. There is a slow evolution of the sound over the record, and the attention to detail hints at the album's painstaking construction over a three-year period.

"It was a pretty drawn out process, to be honest. Not through lack of inspiration, but probably more from a confidence point of view. I knew I wanted to make a record but I was overwhelmed at the thought of doing it on my own. In the back of my mind I knew that I just had to put my head down, but there were a lot of unknowns for me. At one point, I was a feeling the pressure, so I emailed a musician/producer that I'd met at a gig one night to pick his brain. He'd made a couple of records I loved, so I figured it was worth a shot. I got some really good advice and encouragement, which was a huge help, and I think it motivated me to finish what I'd started."

"The whole process took about three years, but there was a really steep learning curve in this period. Towards the end, I spent a lot of time in headphones adjusting things, which I think is one of the downfalls with digital recording, at least for me anyway. When you're not paying for studio time, you can make as many changes, and save multiple versions of a track. It can all get a bit confusing and is almost a hindrance in settling on the final mix, I just had to make the call at the end of the day and work on the tracks that I chose for the album. I actually became pretty reclusive trying to finish it off but I was determined. I think next time around, at least from a production point of view, I won't have as many doubts and hopefully not as many late nights!"

Picking up guitar as a teenager, Gillett was lucky to have a teacher with a recording studio: "I spent some time there and he was really encouraging both creatively and technically. I

was really into some of the industrial bands at the time and I loved the layering and fusion of digital and organic sounds so I borrowed a four track from a friend and began to make my own tracks on cassette tapes."

The experience of playing in bands didn't produce the results that Gillett was looking for, but when he acquired a Mac for his graphic design course it opened up opportunities to experiment with computer music production.

"My parents have been really encouraging with my music. One year, for my birthday, they bought me a little Yamaha keyboard (which I still have in my studio). I started recording my ideas, laying up tracks and building sound scapes; it opened up a whole new world for me. I began playing and recording different instruments on a regular basis and during that time I wrote a couple of scores for interactive CDs for uni. That was the first time anything I'd written was published. It's funny listening to them now, but it made me realise that I wanted to pursue music both from a creative and production perspective. I've gradually built up a small studio that I spend way too much time in, but I love it—even if it frustrates the people around me!"

"With the Boy Is Fiction record, I tried to make an album that can be listened to from start to finish as a whole piece, with changes in mood and tone. It's pretty dark in parts, but I was conscious of that and made an effort to have some contrast. I spent quite some time getting it mastered and stitching certain tracks together so the rollovers were seamless and in turn create the experience of a journey. Not everyone is going to listen to the record from start to finish, so the tracks had to work on their own as well. The record was a pretty personal thing for me and probably a fairly accurate reflection of my feelings at the time."

"A lot of my ideas come from memories and experiences—some good, some bad. I was always going to release something in one way or another, but I wasn't overly keen to advertise myself. I kind of like the anonymity of music, it's something to hide behind... if that makes sense. Obviously, if you are playing live, you're out there amongst it, but not so much when you are actually writing the material. That's really what Boy Is Fiction is about for me; I enjoyed making the record as much as I did getting handed the master disks."

Whilst Gillett considers a live incarnation of Boy Is Fiction, he is continuing to work on new material. "The later tracks on the record were a lot darker and I guess, to a degree, more industrial sounding. I really want to explore that sound more, which is evident in aspects of the new material that I am working on. Some of the tracks that didn't make it onto the album get pretty full on; I still think that they have merit, but they just didn't fit into the mood of the first record. I might revisit them sometime down the track."

STOP THE TAPE

RELATIVE TO HIS EXTRAORDINARY SONIC ACHIEVEMENTS, DAVID P. MADSON IS ONE OF THE TRULY UNSUNG AUTEURS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL UNDERGROUND. WORKING UNDER THE CREATIVE GUISE OF ODD NOSDAM, HIS GRIT-SCARRED, ANALOGUE AND ARTEFACT-HEAVY PRODUCTION AESTHETIC HAS UNDERSCORED SOME OF EXPERIMENTAL HIP-HOP'S MOST SIGNIFICANT AND PROGRESSIVE MOMENTS. BUT HIS OFTEN COMPLEX AND ABRASIVE SOLO MATERIAL HAS LARGELY SLIPPED UNDER THE RADAR. A PRODUCT OF DICTAPHONE FIELD-RECORDINGS, ROUGH-CUT SAMPLES, DIGITAL STATIC AND 8-TRACK TAPE-HISS, HIS WORK IS THE STUFF OF CAPTURING, DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONTEXTUALISING AURAL ARTEFACT, OF ALLOWING THE MACHINATIONS, MECHANISMS AND MISTAKES OF RECORDING PROCESS TO LEAVE THEIR VERY TACTILE MARK ON THE FINAL CUT. BUT ACCORDING TO MADSON – WHO RELEASED FOURTH OFFICIAL SOLO RECORD LEVEL LIVE WIRES THIS AUGUST – HIS TAKE ON SOUND-COLLAGE IS UNASSUMING AND UNPLANNED AT BEST. QUITE SIMPLY, IT IS ABOUT CAPTURING MOMENTS OF CHANCE – ABOUT HARNESSING FEELING, HAPPENSTANCE AND FLASHES OF MEMORY – NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.

A gunshot fires off into darkness. Another, a third, a fourth, a fifth. They explode and echo and split hot night air.

A woman screams. There's the sound of panicked foot-traffic, of a struggle, of shouting and breaking bottles. She screams again. It is frantic, distressing; too close and too real.

A car alarm shatters the clamour; its shrill oscillations soar and swirl through the terrified human noise.

David Madson's Dictaphone is shaking. He's holding it as tight as he can – hands and fingers clamped – but it's still trembling, wavering, brushing against the windowsill, which he is crouched beneath in his front room. It is President's Day, February 2005, on the corner of East 28th and 11th Avenue in East Oakland, and it is all right there on the track; like a frightened memory, a nightmarish recollection, a harrowing evidentiary document.

The woman is sobbing now. A car tears off into the shattered night. A melody rises – clear, resonant and stark. Keyboards fade in, their simple minor-key phrases pealing and shimmering against the blood-washed remnants of the street-scene below. Drums tumble onto the track, as do guitars and vocals, mounting in layer and texture. Mike Patton's distinctive voice can be heard amongst the din. It is like a beautiful, tragic funeral march.

11th Ave Freakout – the epic, three-part oeuvre that spans both 2005's *Burner* and this year's *Level Live Wires* – speaks volumes about Madson's musical orientation and approach. Built around a crude Dictaphone recording of a gang shooting outside his former East Oakland apartment, *Freakout* embodies a documentarian spirit as much as it does an expressive one. It also exemplifies why Madson's opaque, drone-heavy hip-hop ambience and smog-stained aural collage should be considered from farther afield than mere musical craft.

"I'm not just trying to make a cool record," says Madson, speaking over the phone from the more placid environs of his current home in West Berkeley. "A photograph is exactly what it is. The things on *Burner* and *Level Live Wires* are things that I can't force. I can't

like conjure that stuff up. It's like hopefully I'm there at that moment, you know."

Best known as one third of the legendary, but now-defunct cLOUDDEAD (along with MCs Doseone and Why?) and as a key player in perhaps the most iconoclastic hip-hop crew of the last decade – the San Francisco Bay Area's Anticon collective – Madson has collaborated with and remixed some of the most celebrated artists in progressive music (he was the first ever producer to be invited to remix the legendary Boards of Canada). But the 31-year-old Cincinnati-raised producer, isn't about to stake a claim.

Indeed, for him, music is very much about coincidence, and not just in relation to field-recordings. "It's the same when you're coming up with a sample," he says. "It's like I'll go to a thrift store and every now and then I'll just find something."

"A perfect example is the *Killtone* tracks," he continues, referring to a shimmering, two-part opus on *Level Live Wires*. "They've got that harp sample that everyone seems to grab onto and notice, but that was just a classic example of chance, you know. I went to a thrift store, like I always do, and found this record from the '70s that was just all harp music. It was a private press record, put out here in Berkeley – who knows how rare it is, it's not really what I think about – but when I saw the record, I knew straight away that it was going to have something special on it. So I just ran home with this record and put the needle down and heard these beautiful harps, and it was just a total accident man."

Adding to the inadvertent nature of the recording was the fact that in the process of sampling the record, his equipment glitched. "My SP actually kind of malfunctioned and I just came up with this weird loop that didn't actually make sense to me, but just blew me away immediately. That was what became the *Killtone*."

Madson is a rarity in the context of an international music community increasingly obsessed with computer-aided production precision. For him, the key to his craft is allowing the material and the equipment to define its own direction. Indeed, according to Mason, a musician should simply leave themselves open to the potentialities. "I find that as long as I don't try and think about it too much and just go with it, that's when it all happens," he says.

"I know a lot of people who make music, but I know very few people who seem to just let things happen naturally. They're always too premeditated, like, 'We're going for this' or 'We're going for that'. I don't know man, I'm definitely not afraid of showing my ass. Like, if stuff is sloppy or maybe the bass isn't hitting as hard or something… You know, my own stuff, it doesn't hit as hard in clubs, the bass is muddy, maybe there's too much mid-range harshness here, you know, but that's just the way it comes out. That's what the equipment and moment allows for, and I try not to think about it too much."

> "A PHOTOGRAPH IS EXACTLY WHAT IT IS. THE THINGS ON BURNER AND LEVEL LIVE WIRES ARE THINGS THAT I CAN'T FORCE. I CAN'T LIKE CONJURE THAT STUFF UP."

His visual art – which litters each of his album sleeves – comes from a similar place. "I still draw a lot today," he says. "I just sit there and fill a page with just everything – it gets kind of out of hand; I'm kind of compulsive. But yeah, for me I see it as kind of the same as my music because I use ink – these basic ballpoint pens – so every mark counts and every mark is there for everyone to witness. There are some things that I won't like at all, but it's like 'How can I get around this?' because this line or this mark is always going to be there…I kind of take the same approach with my music."

Growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio, Madson's creative explorations began in visual realm. It wasn't until his mid-teens – buoyed by his discovery of Prince Paul and Maseo's crazily layered, psyche-collage on De La Soul's *3 Feet High and Rising* – that he started experimenting with music making in any meaningful way. With only a Sega Genesis in hand, he began to make his own noise-heavy loops and mash-ups, and by the time he had enrolled at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, he had already accumulated piles and piles of cassette tapes filled with muddy, scratchy, static-riddled collage.

He wasn't alone, coming across two kindred spirits in Adam Drucker (Doseone) and Yoni Wolf (Why?). Within months, they were laying down what would become the now legendary self-titled cLOUDDEAD debut.

Released through Mush in 2001, it paired Madson's dense sound-worlds with Drucker's hyper-intellectual ramblings and Wolf's odd, asymmetrical wordplay, and immediately gained them the attention of the international underground. The trio soon upped stumps and headed for the San Francisco Bay Area, where they joined a fellow expatriate Midwesterner Jeffery Logan (aka Jel) and helped found Anticon.

While cLOUDDEAD continued to garner acclaim – recording a BBC Peel Session in late-2001 and releasing numerous singles – and the Anticon label gained increasing publicity, Madson quietly set about releasing his own series of records. His official debut album, 2001's *Plan 9: Meat Your Hypnotist*, utilised the most skeletal of set-ups (a Dr Sample, a cassette deck and a Tascam 8-track to be precise) to weave a 55-track tapestry rough-edged ambience, tape-hiss, record noise and rumbling beats. Second LP *No More Wig for Ohio* followed in 2003 amongst several side-projects and EPs. But by the time cLOUDDEAD released their second and final album *Ten* in 2004, things had a taken a turn for Madson.

While he was more prolific than ever creatively, Madson's living arrangements in East Oakland were beginning to take their toll. By the time the sinister street-scenes, Dictaphone-recorded shootings and sludge-droned atmospheres of 2005's *Burner*, it was obvious he was going through some challenging times.

"I was living in this kind of fucked-up part of Oakland," he sighs. "I was there for maybe like three years, maybe even almost four. It was too long, man. I was there way too long… There's that picture of a car exploding on the back cover of the new record. Yeah, well, that was taken from the front window of my old house in Oakland – a car freaking blowing up – and that's just typical shit of that area."

"I was in this really screwed-up relationship with this girl, and there was a lot of manipulation and mind-games going on. So I guess *Burner* was what kind of came out of that; there was a lot of chaos in my life and I was just trying to figure things out. That's why on that record there's a lot of gunshots and a lot of sort of nasty sounds and distortion and stuff, that may not actually be very pleasing to the ear."

In this sense, environment plays a huge role in Madson's work. "Your environment, the people you surround yourself with, it just affects every thing," he says. "The stuff I make is very personal and is very much a reflection of where I'm at in my head at the time."

And this couldn't be more obvious in the differences between *Burner* and *Level Live Wires*. While *Burner* echoed with menacing abrasiveness and brooding, densely claustrophobic atmospheres, *Level Live Wires* record glows with a wondrous sense of space, beauty and hope.

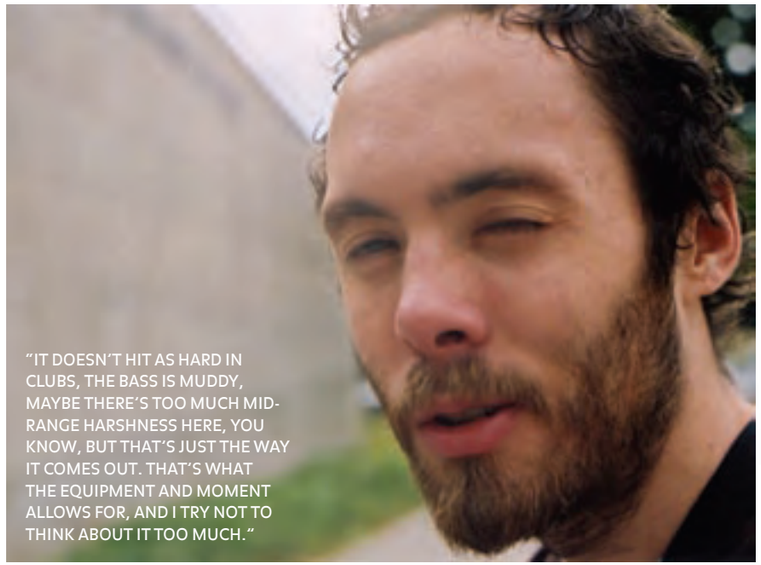
"With *Level Live Wires*, I moved to Berkeley – I've been here in Berkeley for almost three years now – and you know," he says. "I live in a cottage, which is pretty much surrounded by a garden and other people's backyards, so it's a completely different environment."

"You know, I'm not hearing gunshots outside my house anymore," he offers laughingly. "Now I'm hearing birds chirping and humming birds and just the general sounds of West Berkeley, and it's nowhere near as crazy as where I was."

With vocal contributions from Hood's Chris Adams, TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe and WHY?'s Yoni Wolf, *Level Live Wires* lilts between crackling analogue atmosphere, warm drones and glimmering instrumental melody, with cuts like the aforementioned *Killtone*, My Bloody Valentine-esque *Fat Hooks* and dubbed-up psychedelia *Up in Flames* dance atop the darker textures of *Freakout 3* and *Burner*. Despite the records thematic undulations, it feels more stylistically thorough and consistent than pervious efforts, his signature bed of sonic artefacts strewn throughout.

As ever, his beloved SP-1200 sampler played a prominent role in the final process-exposing aesthetic. "It just has such a unique personality or something," he offers. "It's glitchy and it's weird and it's moody and all these things, and it has its own life or something."

"It was especially important on *Level Live Wires*, because I'll find a sound on a record – and it'll just be some tiny little thing, like a tone or something that I'll really be into – and I'll sample it with my SP-1200, run it through my equipment, compress it heavily, EQ it a lot, and really bring out. You know there might be just some little nuance in the sound that I'm really attracted to, so I'll really try to dig it out."



> "IT DOESN'T HIT AS HARD IN CLUBS, THE BASS IS MUDDY, MAYBE THERE'S TOO MUCH MID-RANGE HARSHNESS HERE, YOU KNOW, BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT COMES OUT. THAT'S WHAT THE EQUIPMENT AND MOMENT ALLOWS FOR, AND I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT TOO MUCH."

"In the process of doing that, especially because of the SP's low bit rate, I'll end up bringing out all the other kind of crap around it. You know, I'll end up with this mess of 50 different sounds. I didn't really notice how saturated the record was with pops and hiss and stuff until I'd completely finished recording it. I never notice while I'm doing it. Months after I'm done I'll listen to it back and be like, 'Goddam, I can't believe how noisy and dirty this stuff is.' I just love it."

Madson sees it as something of a generational aesthetic, tied to the cassette. "I just love the nature of tape," he says. "I kind of grew up with that medium and it's ingrained in me… I'm 31 years old, so I guess I grew up copying tapes of a tapes, and recording music off the radio onto tape, and copying records onto tape, and I just love what happens to properties and qualities of the sound."

"Like, I used to collect hip-hop tapes, you know, and I have this huge collection. And half of them are just trashed; you put it in and you can't even hear the music anymore because the tape is so warped, or it's been eaten too many times. Those are the kind of things that used to really irritate me, but now it's kind of fascinating, like, just the nature of that medium and what happens over time.

"You know, I kind of feel sorry for kids who are growing up with MP3s."

But amongst the mistakes, the happenstance, the tape warps and glitches inherent in his work, there is a distinct clarity to Madson's creative vision. And light or dark, it's something that he wants to share. "I want to get some chills and I want the stuff to speak to me," he says. "Usually I don't understand it, but if I trust my instincts and I trust in what I'm feeling, maybe someone else will feel that too."

"I'm always trying to be open to those times where something presents itself," he pauses. "It's like, hopefully I'm open to capture it, like the shutter of a camera."

"To take a really good photograph, you have to have that eye, but also it's a bunch of luck. You have to click that shutter just at that moment.

Level Live Wires is out through Anticon/Stomp.

SLEEVE REVIEWS
WITH BEC PATON

Artist: Skipping Girl Vinegar
Title: *One Chance*
Label: Self Released
Format: CD
Designer: Moski Creative

It's an idea that's been done to death; making a CD look like a lil' record. In fact, wasn't there a line of seven inch look-alike blanks by a major brand kicking around the traps at some point? (they probably still are—people like that, it's cute…) In fact, that's why this beauty has been included—it's ridiculously cute with its, 'Hands up! if you like old-fashioned stuff that harks back to your childhood?' approach.

Not only does it look like a seven inch piece of wax, but it's one borrowed from the audio section of the library, complete with the golden card pocket, date stamps, scrawl and barcode. The only elements that could have enhanced the package would have been if the corners of the sleeve were a bit dog-eared and if it included a bit of smello-vision—the scent of books, quietness and potential, (AKA library whiff).

The typography is all fairly realistic, with a sans serif typeface for the barcode and stickers, and a condensed slab serif that alludes to a typewriter font for the date stamps and album information. The modern slab font appears as the library object's listing on the card. Here's where it gets a little bewildering. The designer has bothered to get the band members to write their names and sign in different pens, then has scanned these in beautifully for the borrowers' section. And all the other elements are realistic, except for the lack of a true typewriter font. The type is lovely but it's strange to be consistently realistic with the aesthetic and then break with the approach for such a dominant element. It's a minor distraction, however, from an otherwise tightly executed package.

Dewey want to listen? Yup! (So sorry!)

Artist: Rank Sinatra
Title: *Pack Rat*
Label: Hirntrust Grind Media
Format: Single-sided 10"
Designer: iOSHii

A brutal cacophony of shapes clatter across the sleeve and then for the violence… SMASH! The skull splits open, bone shrapnel rains down and blood spatters everywhere, with the thick globulus flesh pieces landing last. It's breakcore, baby, and it might just give you a headache! (I would love it if that were the concept but I'm not sure—probably reading too much into it).

This graphic avoids being clichéd by being incredibly stylised. The exaggerated perspective and the way the skull is framed adds to the sense of menace. This also makes the image seemingly swim forward and the placement of he graphic relative to the label's window makes it seem as if the head as been blown open by a massive bullet. Almost beautiful ribbons of blood frame the gothic grunge typeface and all the elements work to pull your eye right to the Rank Sinatra, making a reader-unfriendly font much more amiable.

The negative spaces have just as interesting shapes as the positive spaces. Apart from this being damn eye-catching, it makes the whole thing seem even more contrast-y than already achieved by the unbleached sleeve and inky black screen print. It's a beautiful black and the paint used has an irresistible tactile quality with it's powdery texture.

The back of the cover has tight typography that jams with the image in such a satisfying way. They're thoughtful too, letting you know that you were right—it is meant to be played at 33rpm. Ha! In your face! Eat lead!

Artist: Aesop Rock
Title: *The Next Best Thing: a short story about the creative process*
Label: Def Jux
Format: 7"
Designer: Jeremy Fish

"Welcome to The Next Best Thing storybook and long playing record. Aesop Rock will tell you [a] story and you can read along in your book. You will know when it is time to turn the page when you hear the chimes…"

This is easily the most awesome children's 'read-along' I've ever seen but it definitely ain't for the kidlets. Hanging out with each other and whining about how making art's such a bitch, Aesop and Mr Fish decided to collaborate and axe the creative block, (to leave). Aesop made some music with words for the storybook—the pages of which you turn when the little bell rings. It's highly interactive and sets up an interesting relationship between the author and artist. One of the joys of this piece is working out where the joins are.

There are three characters portrayed in the illustrations. The main man is a skull who does a mean inverse Macbeth scene. He is creative and smart enough to have an aerosol penis so as to repel clip-on ties, and is way too odd, surrealistic and forlorn to be scary in any way. There's a hamster-head who seems to be skull's best mate. This fellow is versatile enough to play the role of a lightbulb-hamster-head, mashed-potato-hamster-head, zipped-illustration-hamster-head and Yorick. The third character is a worker ant and seems to represent the depressive artist qualities. I doubt any of these characters are literally the two makers but allude to traits they have in common with each other.

The quality of the production is impeccable. Thick, laminated card gatefolds to enclose the book and the endpapers have been patterned with a spot ink and lacquer. Even the record itself is one of the best seven inch pressings I've ever experienced and is a double sided picture disc too.

So dope. This is 'the whole package.'

Artist: Acrosome, Life:::Runs:::Red, Terrorfakt
Title: *For a Master, Hexadecimal Bad Mood, Spineless*
Label: Industrial Movement
Format: 12" series
Designer: Kristel

Each twelve inch single sports an industrial image, which is a pretty obvious option for hard tech sounds, however, the series is impressively clean, cold and efficient and it works. Uncoated and unbleached card is printed with black ink and mops it up so it's drawn right into the paper and so appears to be anti-coloured rather than black.

Mnml, stylised::tightly-laid-out typography is always so impressive and can make a pretty good design jump a level or two. It's also great to see a design get really graphic and these images kill it on that front with an optically exciting line treatment to the high contrast photographs. It creates a cool moiré effect and somehow makes the metal items cropped tightly in the images seem more stealing and steel-like.

The white acetate effectively desaturates the cover art further but in terms of usability, is such a terrible choice. When are you going to select this record? Most likely at a dark, crazy warehouse party where it's hard to see the grooves at the best of times and if there is light, the reflections could make things interesting for cuing. Either way, these guys may get played less simply because they're difficult to DJ with.

Still, it's a really effective series design and there's something very satisfying about skilled and resolved design layout.

SELECTS:
CAMERON WEBB / SEAWORTHY

Cameron Webb spends a lot of time in isolated wetland environments; he's an ecological researcher. Cameron's also a musician, and, as you can probably imagine, these locations have inspired much of his music. Field recordings form the basis for textural drones and rhythms from which guitar loops and percussion can be blended; the experiences also form much of the inspiration for Seaworthy (augmented live by Sam Shinazzi and Greg Bird), musically, and into the aesthetic representation of the music in terms of live visual projections and packaging of limited edition CD-Rs and lathe-cut seven inch singles.

Minimal and melodic soundscapes constructed from looped guitar, warm drones, piano, electronics and field recordings have been Seaworthy's hallmark since appearing in 2000. The band recorded for a number of Australian and international labels, and, last year, signed to US label 12k for the release of Map In Hand, an album that melds 'indie' and 'post rock' elements with processed musical and field recordings.

Cameron chose the following releases because they made a significant and/or ongoing influence on his music listening, music making and music packaging.

Songs of the Humpback Whale (Flexi disc with National Geographic, 1979)

Our family had a subscription to *National Geographic* and, as well as the piles of yellow spined magazines spread throughout most rooms of our small house, I can still distinctly remember the fantastic fold out cross section illustrations and photos of volcanoes, planets and oceans. However, nothing quite matched my fascination with the pull out flexidisc that accompanied an article on humpback whales. The flexidisc as a physical object itself was intriguing enough, but the recordings of the humpback whale songs were what really caught my attention.

I was completely mesmerised by these sounds that were unlike any piece of music or any actual sound I'd ever heard. It was years before I understood what echo and melody were, all I knew then was that these sounds could well have been some kind of alien communication and hours on end were spent laying on the floor next to our giant record player, headphones on and trying to somehow translate these sounds. I've recently realised how significant this novelty plastic thing may have had on my love for field recordings and if perhaps I'd continued with my marine sciences degree I may have ended up chasing whales across the Pacific rather than insects and frogs through wetlands.

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds - *The First Born is Dead* (Mute, 1985)

Throughout high school, my music listening (and pretty much everyone I knew) was shackled to commercial FM radio and augmented with a few rock/punk bands (that funnily enough never appeared in the local Kmart music department) appearing on soundtracks to the latest surf video. These were days before email and music blogs. This wasn't a far flung country town, just the western suburbs of Sydney where The Cure, Pink Floyd and Talking Heads were all seen as alternative acts and INXS ruled the school.

As I started late night work at the local multinational burger chain, I was introduced to the wonders of Rage. Arriving home well after midnight on a Friday night, I'd often sit up until near dawn watching clip after clip of bands I'd never heard of and certainly had never surfaced on any radio station I regularly listened to. Then one night I saw the last half of a video I would later learn was 'Tupelo' by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. I don't think a video since has had such an impact on me. Sure, the Gondrys of the world can make some clever clips but nothing was quite as magnetic as Nick wailing away in front of a storm filled projection in the background. I think I was equally terrified as I was transfixed. What was this? It actually took about six to eight months before I found out who this guy was and tracked down the record (cassette actually).

I think *The Boatman's Call*, *Tender Prey* and *The Good Son* are all much better albums and while *The First Born Is Dead* may be far from my favourite album as a whole, the tension, drama, devastation, desperation, misery and sonic intensity of the seven or so minutes of 'Tupelo' still hold as much impact now as they did more than 15 years ago when I first heard them.

"FOR SEAWORTHY RECORDINGS I GENERALLY WORK WITH WHAT I'VE GOT AND WHAT I'VE GOT IS GENERALLY CHEAP EQUIPMENT. THE FIRST SEAWORTHY ALBUM, IT'S HUMBLING WHEN TWO SAINTS MEET, WAS RECORDED FOR ABOUT $20, THE COST OF FOUR AUDIO CASSETTES AND A ONE-DAY HIRE OF A REAL TIME CD BURNER."

Dirty Three - *Dirty Three* (Torn & Frayed, 1994)

If push came to shove, I'd probably say *Ocean Songs* is my favourite album by Dirty Three, but this self titled release was where it all started for me and it still remains an incredibly exciting (and almost sexy) album. It is the unexpected that I love on this album. To describe it as an album of instrumental music made by violin, guitar and drums may given a misleading indication of gentle meditative pieces rather than the moments of boisterous feedback drenched rock within. Most importantly, I've never really thought of this an instrumental album, the term seems to imply something more than just the human voice is missing and the absence of vocals never crossed my mind when I heard this album for the first time. I wasn't waiting for the vocals to start, I wasn't wishing for a lyrical companion to the music. The album was what it was, a collection of amazing music and I consider 'Indian Love Song', 'Better Go Home Now', 'Kim's Dirt' and 'Everything's Fucked' some of the most beautiful pieces of music I've ever heard.

There is an obvious link between Mick Turner's guitar playing in Dirty Three, and his looped guitar pieces present on his three solo albums, and Seaworthy's soundscapes. There is no denying Turner's influence and I've made no secret of this fact. There was, and still is, something fascinating about watching and listening to Turner play guitar that I find addictive. I've never had the opportunity to meet him but he always appears shy and often shuffles around towards the side of stage, just out of range of a flailing Ellis but while that shyness could often be interpreted as mild disinterest, I always read it as focused contemplation with the loosely woven melodies he produces as much a counterpoint to Ellis's violin as simply backing.

Dirty Three are a good example of how the music I make in Seaworthy pulls together the tiniest of details or elements from my favourite artists to create, hopefully, a distinctive Seaworthy sound. Turner's guitar playing is probably the most obvious reference point of any other artist but within Dirty Three his contribution could be considered more subtle than Ellis or White's and the subtle elements of artists of albums are often the elements I try to dissect and magnify for inclusion in Seaworthy.

Low - *Secret Name* (Kranky, 1999)

I'd been introduced to Low via friends overseas who shared a love of the atmospheric (and not so atmospheric) sounds of 4AD. I'd started becoming a little obsessed with Red House Painters and His Name Is Alive and word started leaking through about this slowcore band. I think the 1996 album *When The Curtain Hits The Cast* was one of the first albums I actually bought via an overseas mailorder as I couldn't even track it down locally at the time. Funnily enough, I rarely got past the first few tracks on that album, probably because I was swamping myself with new music while my addition to music consumption was really hitting a peak. I loved the sound of Low but it wasn't until I heard *Secret Name* that the band was indelibly stencilled on my soul.

This album is pretty much perfect as far as I'm concerned. I guess like all my favourite albums, it is difficult to distil the exact reasons why I keep returning to them and why they never seem to overstay their welcome. Together with Things We Lost in the *Fire*, *Secret Name* is part of the great double shot from the Low canon that, in my opinion, will never be matched by subsequent output from the band.

Mimi Parker's vocals on 'Weight of Water' make me want to cry. They have a subtle quivering quality to them that relays to me more emotion than the more obvious tear inducing triggers of melody or lyrics. The uncluttered arrangement that combines the distant harmonies of Sparkhawk with a swell of strings adds to the emotional reach of Parkers' vocals.

It is fair to say that the sounds used to construct many of Seaworthy's pieces can be tracked back to the introductions and underlaying drones of many tracks here. The dark rumbling echos of 'Home', the rough texture of erratic buzzes and hums of guitars spinning in backwards loops and undulating swells in 'Don't Understand' and the vinyl crackles in 'I Remember' that disguise organ drones as drowned mechanical pulses from a stranded submarine have all inspired Seaworthy at one time or another. While Sparkhawk's and Parker's vocals are at the forefront of this album, for me it is the guitar sounds (or at least the 'types' of sounds made by the guitars) on this album that make it one of the most influential albums shaping Seaworthy's sound.

Empress - *Empress 7" EP* (555 Recordings, 1998) / Hood - *The Year of Occasional Lull 7"* (Rocket Racer, 1998)

Through the record label, Steady Cam, that I set up with a friend at the beginning of 1998, I'd started establishing a number of connections with other small labels specialising in seven inch vinyl releases - mostly indie pop stuff. One of my favourite releases (coincidently from one of my favourite bands) was *The Year of Occasional Lull by Hood*. Released on San Francisco label Rocket Racer, the seven inch single comes packaged in a folded piece of old pianola roll with minimal information stamped onto the sleeve. The release really sparked

my interest in packaging ideas and led to many years of searching out interesting papers and materials (not to mention paper cuts and RSI) constructing sleeves for various Steady Cam and Seaworthy releases.

There was always a strong international trade in singles between a wide range of labels but one day a fairly nondescript single arrived in the mail. No picture sleeve and no details, just a seven inch single slipped into a grey cardboard jacket held together with green tape. What was on this single was about six tracks from UK band Empress featuring Nicola Hodgkinson (a one time Hood member) and Christopher Coyle. The music was heartbreaking. Hesitant, sparse instrumentation with Hodgkinson's fragile vocals filled with shy sweet melancholy. The music sounded like it had been recorded on a dusty old reel-to-reel player and combined with the crackle of my ancient record player added even more romance to the collection of short mysterious pieces.

At the time, there was a lot of fuss made about the whole lo-fi/isolationist movement but much of it just sounded like badly recorded indie rock to me. But recordings by bands like Hood and particularly Empress showed how working within the confines of limited resources could make something from what may otherwise be considered flawed recording techniques.

I'm increasingly aware of my attraction to intrinsically flawed pieces of art. Qualities that may be considered inferior, errors, glitches or simply symptomatic of under resourced artists hold great fascination for me. There is no doubt that there is a time and place for super shiny big budget production. In fact, I'm sure that some of the records I'd considered relatively low budget recordings have in fact had bucketloads of cash invested in mastering and other post production black magic to achieve the final sound.

For Seaworthy recordings I generally work with what I've got and what I've got is generally cheap equipment. The first Seaworthy album, *It's Humbling When Two Saints Meet*, was recorded for about $20, the cost of four audio cassettes and a one-day hire of a real time CD burner. A friend did some mastering on the final product but everything was recorded to 4-track. Same situation for *Map in Hand* that was recorded almost entirely to 4-track and an old reel-to-reel machine with some cheap microphones. Tape hiss, mic overload and background noise all became quite essential elements of the pieces on that album to the point where I'm actually reluctant to enter a 'proper' studio anytime soon.

Animal Collective - *Campfire Songs* (Catsup Plate, 2003)

This album has been a pretty big musical and packaging influence on Seaworthy. I was introduced to Animal Collective via the electronic squeal and squelch of their 2000 release of *Spirit They're Gone Spirit They've Vanished* but, regardless of any previous exposure, I would have jumped at the chance to pick up *Campfire Songs* after reading the press release. Mostly recorded on a "screened-in porch in rural Maryland", *Campfire Songs* is dominated by acoustic guitar and voice with the five tracks bleeding together and infiltrate with background noise and add field recordings. I find the album incredibly meditative with strong elements of repetitiveness within the instrumentation and melodies together with an ebb and flow of rhythm and intensity. Animal Collective seem to be able to distil abstract soundscapes from traditional song structures, taking melody hooks that may otherwise find a welcome home in contemporary pop and smudging and smearing them, stretching them out and slowing them down.

The packaging is beautiful. The digipack is constructed from super thick cardboard with a paste on label and lengthy insert. There is certainly some shared aesthetic between this and Seaworthy's packaging of limited CD-R releases but it is the recording process I find most interesting. I really like the idea of allowing 'place' to infiltrate the recordings and while I'm sure studio trickery could create a similar effect, I find the idea of these guys sitting around outdoors at night playing along to the sounds of rural Maryland with the sound of birds and the wind in trees creeping into their improvisations addictive. I've tried to pursue similar ideas with Seaworthy recordings and live shows where field recordings are incorporated into pieces that, rather than simply being background fill, create trigger points for directions and loops within the piece themselves.

Seaworthy, Solo Andata and Taylor Deupree *Live In Melbourne*, recorded at the Northcote Social Club (Melbourne), is now available as a limited edition release packaged with 100% recycled material and biodegradable inks, through 12k. www.12k.com.