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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Sebastian Chan

EDITOR
Matthew Levinson

DEPUTY-EDITORS
Shaun Prescott
Alexandra Savvides

ART DIRECTOR
Thommy Tran

ADVERTISING
Sebastian Chan

ADVERTISING RATES
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Unik Graphics

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Adam Bell and Sebastian Chan

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Blueskyhost
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COVER DESIGN
Grant Hunter

ISSUE 23 CONTRIBUTORS
Adam D Mills, Adrian Elmer, Alexandra Savvides, Andrew Tuttle, Blake Thompson, Bob Baker Fish, Chris Downton, Emmy Hennings, Ewan Burke, Joe Barton, Joshua Meggitt, innerversitysound, Lawrence English, Marcus Whale, Matthew Levinson, Max Schaefer, Richard MacFarlane, Shaun Prescott, Wayne Stronell, Grant Hunter, Suneel Jethani, Peter Hollo, James d'Apice, Matt O'Neill, Penelope Britain

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EDITORIAL

Without planning it that way, Cyclic Defrost #23 appears to split neatly down the middle. On one side we're taking stock of enduring purveyors of experimental music (Pimmon, Castings, Jon Hassell) and on the other welcoming a slew of new faces (Swoop Swoop, Peaking Lights, Mata & Must).

The former are fascinating artists who continue, even a decade into their careers, to blaze paths through the dense foliage of experimental music. Pimmon's influence in Australia's experimental scene is undeniable, while Castings' idiosyncratic improvised tension has yet to be properly documented, despite their reverberations being felt nationally. On the other hand, Mata & Must's dad answered the phone when we called, and Swoop Swoop is fast emerging from Perth's sun-drenched obscurity.

Suneel Jethani steps back from the perennially-burgeoning wonky hip-hop movement to make sense of the scene. It's already causing a ruckus, just wait for the counter arguments.

Of course, there's plenty more than what unfolds in this here magazine. Be sure to check out our brand new Cyclic Defrost website, where you'll find new features on the rise of autotune and Jon Hopkins, as well as over a hundred album reviews.

Shaun, Lex, Matt
Editors
Cyclic Defrost

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A POISONED TWEE

"I've drawn for as long as I can remember. I remember drawing *Masters Of The Universe, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Transformers* - stuff like that from when I was a kid. I know a lot of that stuff is still in a box somewhere."

For anyone familiar with Grant Hunter's work, any mention of cartoons in relation to the 26-year-old's drawings will probably come as no surprise. The Novocastrian noise-pop purveyor and erstwhile graphic artist seems to pointedly stretch everything he tries his hand at – whether it be music or art – into awkward, elongated and garishly captivating shapes, recalling the caricature of cartoon. As a central member in Newcastle group Crab Smasher, Hunter has managed to weave black humour and a technicolour freshness into a genre best known for its monochromatic sobriety. Grant Hunter also runs the Monstera Deliciosa label, for which he has designed album covers for both Crab Smasher and The Night Of Love – the later a nomadic improvisation unit with no fixed line-up.

"Crab Smasher came out of a really specific scene that was going on [on the Central Coast]," Hunter recalls, "One Dollar Short, Something With Numbers, After The Fall - all those bands were all doing the exact same thing and it made [the coast] all the more boring because it seemed like every other band was emulating that sound, trying to be the next success story. We didn't know anything about noise music, we just wanted to be obnoxious and make a point of doing our own thing. It's evolved considerably since then, I'd like to think that we've matured over time and it's not so much about pissing people off."

Cartoons, as well as other pop cultural phenomena, were formative influences for Hunter. He recalls drawing "Super Mario Mushroom Kingdom fantasies" as a child, and *Terminator 2* - that apex of 1990s action/science fiction cinema - inspired him to

obsessively draw scenes from that film. In a lot of ways Hunter's work seems to draw heavily from that decade, a period where the young artist's mind would have been at its most impressionable. "Through most of my teens I was convinced I wanted to draw

"I've been told that the figures and creatures in my work are intentionally confrontational and trying to be shocking, but I don't really agree with that."

superhero comic books for a living," he says, "but I never really dedicated myself to it and I skewed off in other directions, probably for the better."

The result is a strange bastard form of psychedelic horror, or an inverted, poisonous twee blended with the bold simplicity of childhood illustrations. It seems that Hunter's work will inevitably elicit one of two strong reactions, with the more positive reaction probably stemming from a shared cultural experience (i.e. mainstream '90s pop culture). It's a period that Hunter seems to embrace unabashedly, with some of his music tastes reflecting his interest in dubious forms of 1990s cultural output (see his sleeve reviews on pp 41).

"I've been told by fine art educators that the figures and creatures in my work are intentionally confrontational and trying to be

shocking, but I don't really agree with that." Hunter says, "I'm not trying to shock people, I'm just more interested in ugly things. They're cartoonish for sure, but that's what I was raised on. I've never been influenced by realism and any attempts on my part to work in that realm have proven largely unsuccessful. This is just what comes naturally and I'm much happier playing to my strengths. I love to experiment but generally when I'm going for something outside my comfort zone it's really forced and I feel like a bit of a fraud."

"I watch lots of movies and I'm slowly putting together a series of works inspired by Back To The Future part 2. I listen to lots of bad music."

Hunter believes that his drawings parallel his work in Crab Smasher in the way they challenge traditional attitudes towards authenticity, as well as the great divide between high and lowbrow art. "I've been studying a uni degree for the last few years and I've found that there's this real opposition to new and contemporary art by a lot of the old dinosaurs within the institution," he says, "Particularly if it is influenced by lowbrow things like comics or cartoons. And I think that occurs with Crab Smasher too. We

photography, and digital work, but ended up completing it 100% on the computer." He continues. "I tend not to think things out too much with my works, generally I just start with a blank page and something comes of it, often just through roughing out some shapes and hoping that an image or idea starts to take shape. I tend to overwork a lot of the things that I do, and I really wanted this to be simple and kind of just pop out.

"I don't know how I came to work the rabbits into it, but they tend to pop up in a lot of my drawings and paintings. I wanted a strong figure and I think the main rabbit is just really gnarly, in ways that many of my characters often aren't. I completed the work over a night or two with Corel Painter and some final tweaking in Adobe Photoshop. My laptop is a little bit slow and it was having all kinds of meltdowns but I got there in the end. This was really challenging for me, I've always loved the idea of guest artists on *Cyclic Defrost* and honestly never thought I would have the opportunity to do it, so I hope I haven't messed up and bombed completely. I hope people like it." **CD**

See more of Grant Hunter's work at http://granthunter.daportfolio.com/

definitely do have that novelty aesthetic, and we do encounter a bit of resistance to that from some other people we play with, I guess because they can't really nail us down. Anything fun or funny in 'experimental music' seems to be off-limits, and so if we record some pop song that has more in common with Gwen Stefani than John Cage, it's like it devalues some of our more arty and boring noise things or whatever. But polarising people is kind of what makes it fun for us.

"So really I'm just inspired by everything. I watch lots of movies and I'm slowly putting together a series of works inspired by *Back To The Future II*. I listen to lots of bad music. But what really inspires me is just being around other people that are making and doing their own things in their own way, and that enthusiasm kind of rubs off on me."

This issue's *Cyclic Defrost* cover is something of an anomaly for Hunter; more restrained in its use of colours, though still in keeping with his signature melding of the ugly and hilarious. Perhaps the opportunity to work away from the field of album artwork has produced something distinct from his earlier work.

"I've really been jazzed on digital painting lately," he says of the cover. "I bought a graphics tablet about a year ago, and it's really another set of skills that I've had to learn. It's kind of less experimental in some ways but also much more forgiving, particularly with the work I do. It will never replace traditional tools for me, but I really like playing with it.

"With this specific work I was hoping to incorporate a variety of different media, such as handmade drawings, paintings,

SOUND QUALITY

"It just had to sound right."

Paul Gough's wearing the same brown, short-sleeves and collared shirt as his press shots from five years ago. It's a favourite or the man has a limited wardrobe, and he doesn't strike me as the sort to fetishise clothing. He hoards music; he's fixated on sound; he is obsessed by too much else.

He looks up from his coffee and jumps to his feet, extending a hand in greeting: "I found this place on a blog," he says. Gough was reluctant to meet at his place, and suggested this little Glebe café instead, "They've got good coffee." He Googled me before the interview, he admits, and, reaching into his bag, hands over three DVDs: "Just a few things you might like," he says. Full of deleted free jazz albums, and odd pop 7" singles, they're rich for exploration.

That's typical Paul Gough: private, but friendly and eager to please; colleagues say he's easy to work with and genuinely into music. The latter is evident in his weekly radio programs for the ABC's Radio National ('Quiet Space') and Sydney's FBi Radio ('Paul's Playlunch'). The former, in the high regard he's held by all workmates I speak with for this story.

At 44-years-old, Gough might be better known (at least internationally) for making music as Pimmon. But, unlikely as it may seem, he learnt his craft making countless hours of radio among the big egos and flashy microphones of Sydney's commercial stations.

"I managed to wrangle my first job at 2UE just by showing up," he says.

"You make some assumptions about big radio stations. But the reality was we were using some pretty basic equipment. There was no tutoring in the technical theory of radio."

"It just had to sound right."

Gough was, and still is, 'PG' for many of the people at 2UE. One of the first broadcasters he worked with at the station was talkback host, Alan Jones, soon after the man started in radio. Two years later, he left and worked in Melbourne before returning to work with another heavyweight of talkback radio, John Laws, for a decade.

"These people are incredibly complex," Gough says, reluctant to talk about Laws or Jones. "There are things about them that I like, and things that I find incredibly frustrating."

Sometimes he joined Laws – 'the golden tonsils' – on air, using a little voice synthesizer to distort and pitch-shift his own voice. Every week, he noted good calls, jokes and anything that went down well, and then patched them together as a half-hour best of. Alistair Reynolds, the station's chief engineer, says it was mostly so Laws could get away at 11:30am on a Friday to get up the coast to his farm before the rush. "PG often worked 'til quarter past 11 on a Friday, ready to race upstairs and play it out at 11:30," Reynolds recalls.

Reynolds says Gough was one of the great producers to come through the station. "He was just comfortable in the environment,

"I'm a bit like a bower bird, I collected all these snippets of sound, just putting them aside and forgetting them."

and that's a good word for it: 'comfort.' I don't know if you'd call it a gut level instinct or feeling, but some people just get radio. PG got it."

Fifteen years ago, the actor Jonathan Harris was booked for an interview on the program. Harris played Dr Smith in *Lost In Space*, and there was nothing in the music library but a cheap remake of the television show's theme. The production team was in a spin, but Gough loved the show as a kid, and he remembered recording episodes on his mum's reel-to-reel recorder. He found one of them in a box of tapes in his garage.

"I had to work on the recording a bit," he says.

"It was basically a microphone in front of an old television speaker. I edited up some dialogue – particularly where Smith would say things like, 'You jangling junk heap!' – and I actually had the original theme somewhere on vinyl."

Harris beamed as he walked into the studio with this montage playing. Looking in from behind the producer's window, Gough got shivers. "I was eight when I recorded this," he remembers thinking.

Paul Gough's interest in sound goes right back to his earliest memories: hearing a song on the radio when he was four years old; using his mum's reel to reel recorder at eight.

He released his first music in the early 1980s under the name Yclept Dinmakers (Yclept is old English for 'known as', so: 'known as makers of noise'). Playing a tin of fly spray with a can and a looped budgerigar chattering in the background, it was a screaming homage to the Birthday Party.

"That stuff was really awful," says Gough.

"I don't think I've ever spoken about it to anybody in an interview," he says, admitting he recently sent the songs anonymously to the archival blog *Mutant Sounds* (mutant-sounds.blogspot.com).

It was pivotal at the time, however, as sending that music off to 2MBS, a community radio station, got him his first radio show on another Sydney community station, 2SER.

He went on to record a couple of CDs worth of jangly pop at one point, and kept experimenting with sound. But things change, and for a good decade he stopped releasing music. "I'm a bit like a bower bird," he says. "I collected all these snippets of sound, just putting them aside and forgetting them."

In the mid-'90s, 2UE invested in an expensive Mac-based system. A clunker, says Gough, an avowed PC user. He started searching the internet for software to edit the program, and to his surprise, found much more: software that let him really play around with sound.

But at work he felt creatively stifled. He was desperate to get out. Sitting over his coffee, he leans back in his chair, visibly shocked when I remind him of former colleagues, many of whom he has not spoken to since leaving the station. In retrospect, it's this need for a creative outlet that really triggered the birth of Pimmon.

"It was like someone fumbling in the dark," he says.

"Some of the staff members knew about my music, but I didn't go on about it," he says. "There was no reference point for them, they weren't even listening to anything vaguely electronic, let alone something so abstract."

Steve Turner, an ABC reporter who worked with Gough at 2UE, says they were all fascinated by Gough's other life.

The music community was equally intrigued by this outsider who lived in Greystanes, in the suburbs of western Sydney, had a family and a domestic situation that was so far from the usual inner city experimental music scene. Julian Knowles, who was teaching at the University of Western Sydney when he first came across Pimmon's music, says Gough was almost as different as you could imagine from the rest of the electronic music community.

"Being out of the city meant he did most of his business over internet connections," says Knowles, now a professor at Queensland University of Technology. "It gave him a presence that was very online and internationally connected."

"He had these great jokes," Knowles says. "Like he named tracks after rugby league players, and he called one album *Live at the Coolabah Hotel, Merrylands*. It was hilarious."

For years, Gough was known in the music community for being known elsewhere. Knowles says everyone knew this guy was doing the odd gig locally but releasing through all these labels elsewhere.

That global network was juxtaposed against Gough's solitary approach to recording. According to Knowles, his music has revolved around ongoing fascinations with new tools or processes ever since.

"He finds a new way of processing sound or a new software environment and just mines its possibilities for a few years," says Knowles. "Then he'll find another. His work's evolved as a journey through tools and software."

"Some of the staff members knew about my music, but I didn't go on about it. There was no reference point for them, they weren't even listening to anything vaguely electronic, let alone something so abstract."

Technology is clearly important for Gough, but the centre of his studio is his ears.

"The first thing you have to do in a studio is listen," says Julie Rigg, presenter of the ABC's *Movie Time* – which Gough produced for several years. "Paul listens. The second thing you need to understand is rhythm. A radio show is like a CD or any other performance, and Paul just understands this intuitively."

"Plus he's got this enormous reference of sounds in his head!" she exclaims. "On production days he would turn up with a couple of Woolworth's green shopping bags bulging with obscure CDs. I trusted him totally."

When he's making music, Gough says a lot of the process is just listening.

"I tend to do most of my work on individual sounds," he says. "Editing. Just listening to one sound over and over again." He gets home from radio after midnight, wired, sits at his PC and puts his headphones on. "Often I'll fall asleep listening to these things."

The fragments of sound might start life in records by The Cure or The Chills, or even trashy production CDs, but they end up virtually unrecognisable.

"I avoid anything that gives you a reference point, but a lot of the stuff I do is in homage to the things I love. Even the titles. For example, *Sleeping Secret Birds* (2001) was named after a track by The Makers of the Dead Travel Fast on an M-Squared cassette release."

"Obviously I like loops, but I don't ever work with loops that sequence into the same pattern – unless it's the loop itself – I like loops of various lengths that go in and out of phase with each other, and sometimes catch up."

"I don't think to myself, 'I want this guitar sound' or 'that melody.' I work a bit more by chance. I've got boxes of sounds: some good, some bad, some I'll never use. I just hang onto them, until going back over I find something I like."

The end product is music with a sense of grandeur and drama, according to sound artist and music critic Gail Priest.

"It's made up of overlapping swathes of textures that fill the sound spectrum," says Priest. "But each individual element is crystal clear – it's constantly stimulating."

The first time I saw Pimmon perform live was at the Sydney art space Pelt, a tiny cube of a room in inner city Redfern. Gough leaned over his laptop with a plastic cup of red wine in his hands. He looked like an office worker checking his email on the way home.

But the comparison extends only so far. Gough's hands flew about the keyboard with a curious style using two hands on the trackpad instead of one. Watching his cursor move around the screen while he's playing, and you don't often get to see that if you're not in the right part of the room, he's hyper dextrous. It's the kind of dexterity that only comes from decades and thousands upon thousands of hours in studios and on computers.

Musically, it was a three-dimensional thing: too much emotional resonance to be lumped with the typically academic world of sound art; far more texturally fascinating than most electronic music. I sat transfixed on the hard concrete floor as a rippling current of sound spilled from the speakers.

In the past decade, Gough has released 30 records on a long list of prestigious record labels. He was included in a San Francisco Museum of Modern Art show on new music from Australia, and 2003's Snaps*Crackles*Pops was selected as one of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* top 50 albums for the year.

"You make some assumptions about big radio stations. But the reality was we were using some pretty basic equipment. It just had to sound right."

As these things go, just as Gough's music was taking off, everything else was falling apart. Increasingly frustrated at work, in 2001, his marriage broke up. If not quite rock bottom, it must have been close.

Eight years later and there's a splash of white in his dark beard. He's remarried and now happily working at Radio National, producing for Phillip Adams – he won a joint Walkley award with the team for a report on the Solomon Islands in 2004 – and he presents music shows on the ABC and FBi Radio.

Gough's first album in five years, *Smudge Another Yesterday*, is bleak, and at times brutal. And, although Gough had used vocals for texture in the past, he says this is the first time he's really expressed himself with his voice. Still abstracted, and mostly textural, it helped him deal with what he calls 10 years of turmoil.

"It was like when someone needs to say something to someone who has died, for example, and they write a letter, then burn it. I didn't want to write these things down in a public way. But I could release that emotion through the album, and it stays private because it's buried in the music."

"People have said that my music was dark in the past, but this time it really has come from a fairly dark place." He looks tired, but relieved. "I wonder what they'll make of it." **CD**

Pimmon's *Smudge Another Yesterday* is available from Preservation.

ALTERNATE MAPS

Shitty jobs, breakdowns, illness, deaths, girlfriends, Ataris, rehearsal spaces and lack thereof, stereos, music, Roman carparks, cassette tapes, alcohol & hallucinogens, breathing, eating, shitting, fucking and all the other (in)significant moments in between.
- Castings' influences, from their MySpace

Approaching Sydney's Central Station from the CBD, Hibernian House is an imposing old building – a crumbling remnant of Surry Hills' industrial past. The dull green exterior is rotting away and the panoramic windows are fogged with years of rain and dirt. Across the road a towering dental hospital pitches a perpetual shade over the street and a grandly developed dive bar cum multilevel entertainment complex buzzes just over the way. Inside Hibernian,

"The preliminary shit talk over a couple of beers is peppered with faint warnings: we can't explain this; don't ask us about that; we talk shit; this whole thing is stupid."

pokey graffitied stairwells lead to cavernous, fluorescently lit hallways; dubious suspension bridges hover over a treacherous central pit, surrounded by alcoves and residences. Somewhere in the maze is Yvonne Ruve: a small room with a gutted piano, some couches, ashtrays, leering posters, audio refuse.

For the six members of Castings, this is their home away from home. For most of this decade, Castings have hosted shows and rehearsed here, with most of its members commuting from Newcastle. Yvonne Ruve is, in my mind, the seventh member of Castings: the derelict decor, the bad lighting and the gracefully fetid surrounds are a perfect fit for a band whose experimentation is too urgent - too instinctual, pent-up, reactionary - to be relegated to elevated stages, stuffy music halls or grog-branded rock venues. They are the best band Australia has coughed up unwillingly in living memory.

Interviewing Castings is a long time coming: the members seem ill at ease whenever I bring the topic up over a six-month period, whether intermittently via email or at a Castings show. For longer than that the group has been preparing their forthcoming Lexicon Devil-released album, due for release later in 2009. I finally arrange to meet them at Yvonne Ruve, but we end up - over the Queen's birthday weekend - at a pub nearby, where mid long-weekend inebriation is in full swing. Seeing the group outside their natural habitat reminds me of how tentative they look on stage: several members of the group will quizzically manipulate their instruments, presumably unaware of what kind of maelstrom they might trigger while scaling their treacherous and fragile form of improvisation. Amidst the furrowed-brows is the always shirtless Nick Senger, lurching, hollering and occasionally beating his drums.

When we finally fit ourselves onto a table on the street it soon becomes clear that some members of the band still aren't entirely comfortable being interviewed while others, as I've come to expect, are disarmingly open and given to cheerful banter. They're a friendly bunch – among the most friendly and likable interview subjects this writer has ever encountered – but the preliminary shit talk over a couple of beers is peppered with faint warnings: we can't explain this; don't ask us about that; we talk shit; this whole thing is stupid.

Despite this, the most vocal of the Castings unit express an undying belief in what they do. They proudly insist on their integrity both in navigating the machinations of the cottage industry they inhabit and their musical vision, but are also sceptical of how they're perceived, whether in fact anyone actually likes them. More than any other band I've encountered, Castings really do seem to be doing it for themselves, and no one else. They formed in 1999 as a three piece, out of the ashes of previous bands. Kane Ewin and brothers Sean and Mark Leacy hail from the rural NSW township of Young. Sam Kenna is a Tamworth fellow, while Nick Senger – born in Sydney - has lived in Melbourne but now resides with the bulk of the group in Newcastle. Dale Rees, the quietest, least demonstrative

"We play what we want to hear. We do our best. We're humans and we fuck it up.""

of the group, was born in New Zealand and has spent time living in the United States.

The group was originally a three-piece made up of Senger, Rees and Ewin, with the group culminating in a six-piece in 2004. Ironically, Ewin and Senger met at TAFE while studying Music Business, a tenure they both describe as useless and soul-sapping. Most members played in other bands prior to Castings – Ewin, Shaun Leacy and Senger in Ex-Pat, and Rees in a group called Zodakahn. Music, it seems, has always been the focal point of each member's lives.

"We'd all had experience with music, structure, performing, but we all got sick of it," Senger says, describing the birth of Castings. "It was a communal thing: we'd all hang around, get fucken loaded, and play with a four-track. We realised one day that it was more fun than practising the same songs over and over again and performing them. So we just changed."

Castings' formative years were spent rehearsing in a dilapidated squat and a muffler shop in Newcastle. Their first gig was at the Hunter on Hunter in that town. Gradually the group grew into a five piece, producing an unreleased debut and their first public offering: 2003's *Electro Disco Weirdo*. Spanish Magic – the label that Senger birthed in the late '90s to release some of his home recordings – was revived for the release, and is now overseen by each member of the band.

When you ask any given member of Castings what an album represents, or what the motivating factors for said album were, they invariably insist that it was "a moment in time," a culmination of the unit's lives interacting, clashing, communicating through music. They strive to challenge themselves and their audience, but rather than concoct elaborate or difficult methods to do so, the group are largely driven, they say, by instinct. Castings play what they do because they're trying to find a sound they want that they've never heard before. When pressed about the process of recording, the driving factors, Kenna – initially the least willing of the Castings unit to be interviewed - becomes defensive: "The question you're asking, the idea of the process – this whole thing is awkward. The idea is, we put an album out and it's good music. It has to be a masterpiece. That's our piece of art, and we put it out for whatever reason and that's it."

Unlike a lot of the improvisational groups that Castings are frequently lumped amongst, the processes of performing and recording an album are very distinct. Castings don't document their development through regular missives but instead painstakingly piece together their output; improvising for long stretches of time and later

connecting the most cohesive results into a thematic collage. "We don't want to be off-cast shit," Kenna insists. "We don't want to show people what we're like every day, cause we don't want people to know what we're like every fucken day."

"We show up every week, and each week different stuff happens in our lives," Ewin offers, to which Kenna adds: "And if someone is down, or absent, something will be different."

"I think Castings is driven by the fact that we have six people that are friends, and that love each other, and who are willing to share their lives and music with each other."

Senger elaborates, "like Sam said, on any given day something could be different and that's reflected in the way we talk to one another, and the way we play. We don't try to hide that because a) we can't and b) most importantly, we're transparent. We don't want to tell everyone our secrets because we don't feel we need to. You can hear it on the record and see it when we play. Explaining it is difficult because we already feel like we've given people enough."

"We're embarrassingly honest," Kenna adds. For anyone who has ever witnessed and felt moved by Castings, the sense that real human beings inhabit these aural emissions - that real anger, joy, frustration and catharsis are embedded within these hazily chromatic sound worlds - will strike as the most blatant of truisms. The group's 2004 album '*Allo Hickory* sounds like 35 years of punk rock stripped of its declamatory tendencies. All the benevolent and functional aspects of rock music are fighting on their last breath beneath a frozen pond of reverberating, decaying hubris. It's one of the most disconcertingly claustrophobic but ultimately affirming albums I've ever heard:

"They proudly insist on their integrity…but are also sceptical of how they're perceived, whether in fact anyone actually likes them."

relentlessly bleak, but unrepentantly so, infused with the subtle hues of a faded polaroid where the picture captured is off-focus, ambiguous, familiar lines blurred by the malfunction of its means. Castings wield every commonplace rock instrument: guitars, synths, drums, but the way they're utilised exists in a grey area between ability and anti-ability.

"Why does anyone want to start a band?" Senger asks. "I figure people start a band because they want to play something they can't hear. We play what we want to hear. We do our best. We're humans and we fuck it up."

The conjunction of at times contrary inclinations, moods and tendencies is what makes the six-piece's music so colourful, but as Kenna points out: "[regarding] the idea of achieving a particular sound, we do that sometimes. But another person in the band might be thinking at the same time 'yeah I've got this sound in my head' and I'll be like 'ah fuck this.' I don't necessarily know how it's gonna turn out because I don't know what's going on in the [other guys'] head."

When it comes to performing live, the group is divided. Kenna doesn't like it. "I hate playing live," he declares. "I don't understand the process, so if I could not do it, I wouldn't do it. But other people in the band think differently, they love the release and the idea of it. But I find it completely uncomfortable. It becomes such an aesthetic thing. For me the whole idea of it being analysed in such a public way seems ridiculous."

"It's just a different energy," Ewin adds diplomatically. "That's what I like about it. It's the energy of being put on the spot. Sometimes it works 100 per cent, sometimes you finish wanting to kill yourself. There are so many elements and reasons why it can go either way."

But when asked if Castings would prefer to be a 'studio' project, Senger claims, "not in the slightest." Other members of the group, Kenna in particular, vehemently disagree. Rees believes that "to be able to lose ourselves" in the performance is important, and Kenna concedes to that at least. "The last gig [at Yvonne Ruve] was good because the lights were out, and it worked because there was no focus on the person and it was just the music," he says. "Everyone was in this hot sweaty room and all they could hear was it. There was no 'oh what's that guy doing,' they were like, 'oh I actually have to listen to this shit.'"

"Playing live is difficult simply because we didn't see ourselves that way," Senger says. "We didn't see ourselves as people that could do that. A lot of us thought that was stuff for people who weren't like us. So it's awkward, but it doesn't mean that it isn't appreciated."

"People like us" is a phrase that arises frequently during the conversation. Castings see themselves as separate from any music community or scene – whether imagined or otherwise – in Sydney or the country. "We try to challenge ourselves and the way we play," Ewin offers. "We're not going to give you a clique because we've always seen that as extremely redundant. To go and see a punk gig, or a rock gig, is absolutely ridiculous. It comes back to the question of 'what music do you listen to'? Holy shit, what kind of a question is that?

"We don't want to align ourselves with anyone," Senger continues. "We play with people who are going to challenge us and challenge the audience. We want to play with someone who's going to teach us something. I want to learn from the people we play with. And we can't learn from one genre, we have to hear everything. So yeah we are a fucken punk band, punk as fuck for sure. But, Maggotville [the Marrickville punk warehouse] wouldn't have a bar of us, they laughed their fucken arses off at us. But they're wrong."

Again, Kenna disagrees, stating that he doesn't think there's anything to learn from other bands. "This is the worst thing I've ever discovered." He says, "When you're playing with other bands you're in this world where everyone is meant to be sympathetic [towards one another]. But there's no difference between me being a chef and working in a kitchen with a bunch of careerist fucking chefs and being amongst careerist musicians.

"They're all the same fucking people."

"I initially thought the utopia of something like SoundNoSound series of events Spanish Magic briefly ran in 2004/05 was 'this is

great, we'll create our own world," then I realised that most people have an agenda. I can't go to the pub with any of these people and talk about something normal. I have no need to be a part of anything like that. I don't want to hang out with musicians or bands, or people who think they're doing something."

To the members of Castings, scenes, collectives, artists collaborating due to mutual aesthetic backgrounds or pursuits, is not

All the benevolent and functional aspects of rock music are fighting on their last breath beneath a frozen pond of reverberating, decaying hubris.

for them. "We're definitely trying to extinguish the redundant, the comfortable," Kane says. But what is comfortable? "Something that is routine. Something that is so familiar that you end up relying on it and somehow blocking out those emotional patterns of up and down and in and out," he explains. "It's easy to create a safe haven but the fact is that life goes in and out. Being friends for so long and not being ashamed of any of that means what we do is honest." No matter what the outcome – whether indie rock or power electronics – dawdling in circles among a group of self-congratulatory peers would be the death of Castings.

Instead, in Nick's words, Castings see themselves as "pop music created by people using a different map." The notion that Castings is an uptight experimental group of the noise variety frustrates the group. "There's more to us than that. CD-Rs seem disposable," he says, referring to the constant onslaught of output by noise musicians in that format, "We're not disposable. We mean it."

This point was amply proved on the group's last release, 2007's *Punk Rock Is Bunk Squawk*. Ironically, the album opens with one of the most aggressive and 'noisy' sounds Castings has ever created – a move the group say was calculated as a (rather deadpan) response to claims they were just another American Tapes noise band. Castings did release their 2006 album *Lanky Says It's Close Enough To Jazz* on that label though, a distinction that might mislead some. On the contrary, *Punk Rock...* goes on to showcase some of their weirdest, bleakest and most blissfully kaleidoscopic moments. The closing track 'I'm In My Warface' sounds like a culmination of all the group's idiosyncrasies; it starts in a forbidden zone of woozy hyper-melodic synth atmospherics before harsher industrial beats plough through the bliss, taking down the whole track in a spectacular storm of fire and brimstone. For many minutes the embers are allowed to calmly darken, before a welcome, numbing silence prevails.

Later, when we're forced back to Yvonne Ruve after last drinks, we listen to Essendon Airport's Anne Cessna songs, Senger waxes rhapsodically about The La's, and the group admit to Nick Cain's legendary *Opprobrium* zine being a massive influence in their formative years as avid music listeners. Again, when pressed about their forthcoming Lexicon Devil release (working title: *Reel Hot Lime Lights*) the group claim that their music is a record of a collective "moment in time", though what marks these moments is something the group are either reluctant or unable to define. "I think this album is a bit more of a slow burner," Senger admits, adding that it won't be as restlessly diverse as *Punk Rock*. "It's probably a bit more avant garde," Rees adds, "a bit more restrained and a bit more trance like."

There is one moment I manage to wrest from the group though, a tiny portrait, something – at least – that might go some way in showing the kind of miniatures of life that presumably influence Castings' output. Kenna explains how, before a show Castings played at the Mandarin Club in 2005, he saw a dishevelled man being angrily accosted by his partner on the side of the road, both lurching quickly, probably homeless. After a few moments of the woman's tirade, having had a gutful the man swung around quickly and spat "Well I buy ya food and I fuck ya don't I?"

In addition to "shitty jobs, breakdowns, illness, deaths, girlfriends, Ataris" etc, these tiny occasions bleed into Castings' work. "That influenced my performance that night," Kenna says rather solemnly, "Those are the types of things that influence me."

All those (in)significant moments in between. **CD**

Castings releases are available from Spanish Magic.

OCEANIC EMISSIONS

There's a quote floating around the internet that paints Swoop Swoop (formerly known as Streaky Jake, actually Sean Gorman) as a bit of a ladies' man. In it, he proclaims that he started playing guitar after his friend Lucas McCain strummed 'Under the Bridge' at their primary school assembly, causing the knees of many a girl to quiver. An impressionable young Gorman professed that he wanted to make said girls weak at the knees too.

Right now though, he's laughing. "I was just joking. Lucas was always trying to get someone to play the 12 bar blues with him so then he could just do face melters over the top of it." As for the girls? "He's a very tall, handsome chap so I shouldn't have hung around him. I was always in the shadows."

Somewhere in the Shadows is the first album to be released under Gorman's Swoop Swoop alias, on Sean Hocking's now Hong Kong-based label Metal Postcard. Filled with delicious, subtle takes on acoustic guitar and minor forays into electronic elements, there's no one phrase to pin down the aesthetic. Instead, there are influences, sounds, and fragments. "I love Bob Dylan," Gorman says. "I remember listening to 'Don't Think Twice, It's Alright' once and that really affected me, the sound and everything about it. I was into the blues for a long time, not so much anymore."

Harmonious Beach Boys pop also gets a look-in too, alongside a childhood fascination with punk. "When I was in high school I listened to Dead Kennedys, American punk bands, but then I kind of got over that. I used to play a lot of punk with Lucas but it wasn't very good."

The story behind Gorman's evolution, as Streaky Jake at least, is just as intriguing as the tales of the young Lucas McCain. It all began in September 2005 when an unmarked demo arrived for review here at *Cyclic Defrost*. Alex Crowfoot (Ollo) reviewed the record *What's Wrong? Nothing*, with its hand-etched sleeve, for issue 12. As there was no way for Crowfoot to contact its author, in the review he invited the musician to contact him to mix and master the record.

Gorman, based in Perth, got in touch via e-mail to thank him

for the review and the wheels were set in motion. Crowfoot passed the demo onto Hocking, and the first Streaky Jake album got a proper release through Metal Postcard. Gorman and Crowfoot since collaborated on the Swoop Swoop record, and another release as Swoop Swoop appeared soon after that, a CD-R called *Factory & Porch Songs* featuring a few lo-fi versions of tracks that also appeared on *Somewhere in the Shadows*.

"People (who live in Perth) love to hate Perth, and I find these people are quite affected by it…people don't tend to write that many songs about the place."

Shifting between Streaky Jake and Swoop Swoop seemed necessary given Gorman's desire to change tact with subject matter. "The Swoop Swoop album was more a collection of songs about place," he says, adding that the Streaky Jake alias was for his character-driven songs. "I just thought there's no point in being Streaky Jake anymore, it was quite specific to that album. I was kind of over it as well."

It's this concept of place that proves most interesting in the new persona, particularly when listening to the breezy ambivalence with which he addresses the city across the album. Gorman admits he's not exactly a part of the Perth's music scene, hardly performs live (except for a minor detour which we'll elaborate on later) and simply writes songs at home on a four or eight track, and will just "mess around with them."

"People (who live in Perth) love to hate Perth, and I find these people are quite affected by it…people don't tend to write that many songs about the place. The thing about people in Perth is that they whinge about how there's no culture, so they all leave. If people stayed, and wrote about it, tried to create something."

Gorman took the latter path, with many of the songs on *Somewhere in the Shadows* tracing the relationship between himself and the city. "More of it was just driven by the place itself. What I like about Perth is the coast and the horizon, and all those things."

The gentle strum of 'In The Indian Ocean' is just one of these songs that deal with his affection for the landscape, the experience - the activity - of Perth. Between the gentle finger picked progression, he lists them all: snorkelling, diving, surfing, swimming, sunbathing, fishing, kissing, romancing. It's interesting to review the list because it unveils this simultaneous discourse between universal and (what the listener assumes is) Gorman's personal experience. This city has a particular dialogue that Gorman is able to tap into more so than you first think.

Indeed, you'll probably be challenged on initial listens to decipher what is being sung, with the delivery being almost glossolalia-like. "I guess that's not really intentional. I know what I'm singing, it's just, I don't know, singing is not just about the words; it's about how it sounds. If you can get into it the emotion should come across anyway even if you can't hear what's being said."

Which brings us neatly to Gorman's playing style. The finger picked, resounding sounds that traipse across the album sprung from necessity as much as anything else. "It was quite funny", he begins, describing the surfing accident which forced him to change his playing style. "The waves were tiny. My board flipped upside down and I put my hand down, it went right onto the fin and it severed a nerve in my hand. There's a muscle between your thumb and your pointing finger, and I can't send messages to that muscle anymore. I couldn't play bar chords anymore so I had to play open chords. It was good in some respect because open chords ring out. I started doing more and more finger picking."

Meticulous attention to structure and detail is a characteristic of Gorman's songs, even if he's adamant that most of his compositions are simple. He talks about the process of creating a song: the construction, deconstruction, and abandoning methodology that are part and parcel of a track's evolution. Process, rather than result then?

"I don't really sit down and write a song from start to finish in one go. Sometimes that happens. The idea of going 'alright, it's time to sit down and write a song' doesn't work for me. Sometimes it takes me ages to nut out a song. Sometimes I'll just have the chord progression and the arrangement, musically, and slowly try and think of something. At some point you might think of lyrics, but lyrics are pretty hard for me. I guess you always think what you've written is crap."

"Sometimes I'll have a song and lyrics for it but it just won't work and then I'll abandon it. But then you might have another song you've got going and you might switch them over, take the lyrics and put them with that music, or vice versa. Sometimes you get so fixated on the one idea and it's just not working, so you just need to throw it away."

This reflective analysis permeated the recording process too,

Crowfoot and Gorman recorded the album over a week in a home studio in Bundanoon, in the Southern Highlands. It was "cabin fever."

even though the end result is the gloriously hazy, woozy world of Swoop Swoop that evokes Saturday afternoons, sunlight and carefree memories. It's a testament to the songs that this mood can be carried over, given that the recording experience was anything but relaxing. In March 2008, Crowfoot and Gorman recorded the album over a week in a home studio in Bundanoon, in the Southern Highlands. It was "cabin fever," as Gorman puts it. "I was just stressed and scared. I wanted to do a good job. And at the end of it you don't know, you get tired of the same song over and over again, so it's impossible to judge whether or not you like it or dislike it sometimes."

Intriguingly, the Swoop Swoop methodology takes the listener on an excursion between recollection and lyrical fragments of memory in (using a deceptively simple term) the quiet moments, offset against grandiose sounds further down the track. Gorman is again reflective. "I guess it just happened that way. A part of that was having Alex there because he actually knows what he's doing as opposed to me when I'm recording on four track, it's very haphazard. We were actually able to do a lot more so I guess it just happened. In the week that we had to do it we just nutted it out. There wasn't that much time to think too deeply at the time when we were recording the tracks. We did record lots of tracks and tried anything. As a result of that short period of time there were a lot of forced, quick decisions. Having said that, Alex took that and worked on it for a long time, and I think maybe that's where a lot more of the grandiose, elaborate parts came into it."

Crowfoot and Hocking had to convince Gorman (cajole him, even) to take the songs on the road. The tour, which began in July, will take in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. It's a veritable one man band, with Gorman packing everything into a van, driving and sleeping in it along the way. Even though he's played live before - there were instances in the US before this - there's a definite sense of trepidation when we broach the subject of the upcoming dates.

"I'm a bit worried about it," he begins. "I guess because Sean released the album, and I did nothing to promote it, so I feel a bit guilty because [Alex and Sean] put a lot of time and money into it, so I'm trying to do my end of the bargain." He laughs slightly at this. "Part of it is just going to see what happens. I've already got my van so I'll just chuck my surfboard in the back."

There was even talk of getting Swoop Swoop performing in a backyard, though the idea that did come to fruition was a date in a Melbourne record store. "Alex had that idea, he thought that might be cool. Although not many of them actually want me to come. I'm not really known and I don't really perform so quite possibly I would suck," he laughs, "drive people out of the shop."

There's definitely no precedent, but there was one particular incident when Gorman went over to play a few gigs in Williamsburg and New York, in 2006, that he knows will provide the perfect fodder for a music journalist to end on.

"I played in a record shop in Williamsburg when I went to stay with Sean and across the road there was a construction site and they had this big industrial drill. And there was a horse outside, walking past. It was quite weird. I think it was a pony actually. I got distracted, but you don't see a horse walk past your window every day." **CD**

***Somewhere in the Shadows* is released through Metal Postcard/Vitamin.**

Illustration by Penelope Britain

OF STERNER STUFF

"The improvisation/composition dynamic is pretty blurred for most artists working in experimental or exploratory ways. It's not one or the other, but usually both. "

In many ways, Joel Stern is a product of the synergistic world we inhabit. The past two decades have borne witness to the gradual hybridisation and intermingling of various media formats.

Visual art philosophy has bled into the creative approaches of pop stars like Lady Gaga, while rock musicians like Nick Cave and Sonic Youth have been exerting influence throughout the worlds of art and literature. The advent of technologies like the internet, iPhones and mp3 players, meanwhile, has physically embodied the very hybridity musicians and artists have attempted to touch upon since the middle of the twentieth century.

The work of Joel Stern, while greatly removed from the popular territories of such innovations, is very much representative of the world that has arisen in their wake. A multimedia artist, curator, musician and academic, Stern's work is an exploration into the abstract, fluid nature of sound and imagery, as well as the individual idiosyncrasies and characteristics of specific sounds and concepts. His studio work encompasses vast, detailed sonic territories comprised of everything from abstract found sounds and office stationery to off-key instrumentation and soothing textures. Meanwhile, his live performances easily augment these constructions with improvisation, avant garde film footage and other media.

"It depends on context and how I feel," Stern says, of his performance approaches.

"Live performance is really different from what I do in the studio. There's always freedom to improvise with the materials I use and I like to incorporate a lot of chance and indeterminacy into my shows. I think with solo performances it's important to feel prepared and ready, and have something fairly clear to express. I think the improvisation/composition dynamic is pretty blurred for most artists working in experimental or exploratory ways. It's not one or the other, but usually both. You sort of have to accept and celebrate both."

"My attitude to media is that we are in a moment now where we can apply contemporary approaches and techniques and attitudes – but choose from the history of media and technologies for materials that have distinguishing attributes, fidelity and malleability," the composer explains. "That's why you see artists returning to or sticking with celluloid, cassettes, vinyl, analogue synths. Medium specificity is a tool for artists to use. I like the artist Dick Higgins who, in his 1965 statement on intermedia, said a composer should compose for all mediums."

It is somewhat inaccurate, however, to describe Stern's work as a mere product of the zeitgeist. The composer has developed his philosophies and practices from a myriad of approaches and investigations over the past decade – working within a number of experimental communities (Melbourne, London and Brisbane), lecturing at universities and collaborating across a variety of disparate projects.

A number of Brisbane bands (Impromptulons, No Guru) count Stern as a member, while his work in Brisbane-based multimedia ensembles OtherFilm and Abject Leader has been instrumental in expanding Brisbane's growing reputation as a creative hub.

"I think Brisbane's getting better every year for artists," he says.

"The rest of Australia is looking to Brisbane with curiosity and interest, just as we are looking around for inspiration from them. Brisbane's been good to me. It has nurtured me."

"It's important for me to immerse yourself in music, to listen with open ears, to seek out new and challenging ideas and sounds, and to have the skills to reflect on your own work contextually, and know how to develop and evolve it. Experimental strategies followed by reflection and application, that's the evolution of music. The internet has accelerated everything involved with art apart from the making of it, which still does and should take time." **CD**

Joel Stern's *Objects Masks Props* is now available from Naturestrip Records.

* Cyclic Defrost Magazine

MATA OF FACT

"There's a lot of paradoxes. We're not doing this for money, but on the other hand, we want to do it to the point where we can make money for it. We run a label and we're artists on that label, you know?

It's easy to feel like the only way of making hip hop is to either create ironic, self-reflexive pastiche or to pretend it's 1994. To feel like the only subject to rap about is rap. I mean, if Jay Z can flip everyone out with 'Death of Autotune,' imagine if he did a song about the death of a phenomenon that meant something.

So, if no one can do anything relevant, what is there for it but for today's mic-wielders to either hide behind video game nostalgia and pop culture references, faux-gangsta posturing, or under-conceived political nonsense?

Somehow this madness has passed by Mata and Must. A shining beacon – like an inner city pub that's yet to be renovated, or a chef prepared to cook with water and not stock to keep it white – Mata and Must have managed to hang onto relevance, despite not giving a shit about it. They've managed it by simply immersing themselves in their own music, being earnest about it, and making sure it's good. It's a fairly simple formula, it's just surprising that something so simple (and, occasionally, *simplistic*) has managed to get a foothold. In a genre where 'believing in things' has become such a convoluted, clumsy, hulking palimpsest, Mata and Must's earnestness is refreshing.

So how do you bring a genre back to life, then? Time to phone Melbourne to find out.

A minute passes and then two bright, keen, friendly, *young* voices materialise.

"Sorry, that was my dad," says Must.

It turns out that both Mata and Must live at home with their respective parents. It doesn't bother either of them. It's a pretty accurate microcosm of the life they lead: unconcerned by much of the world outside the studio – living in a cool suburb, getting away from Mum and Dad, partying – their life besides music isn't worth fretting about.

Mata and Must work at the same place, share a car trip there and back, listen to community station RRR or PBS, and talk music. Music, music, music.

This lifestyle makes the first question obvious. A close friendship, a common workplace, and an obsession with the music they make; how many hours a day are the boys in the lab?

Raucous laughter, then Mata explains, "It depends, you know when you're your own boss it could be anything from 16 to one. We'll go in five days a week and then sometimes on the weekend."

"I feel like we're making a good contribution by putting music out there."

So they're living the dream? "It's the reality! We are doing it all the time. We might not see each other on Sunday but chances are we both made a beat or were involved in music – playing a gig or going to a gig – so we're so immersed in thinking music that it that it's hard to remove ourselves anyway."

To business, then. The boys have completed their new album *Paradox of Minds*, six years after their first, and it's stunning. I can't help thinking it's a metaphor for something, though. So much of the lyrical content is straightforward – about the industry and about making music – but I feel like there's something else going on.

"We wanted to write an album and we wanted to make it about opposites," Mata says. "It kind of reflects me and Musty's relationship. This inverted sort of reflection of each other. We're pretty different, but we're real close. We've known each other since about '96. And have spent a hell of a lot of time together and we're similar in the things that we like to write about as well."

"There's a lot of paradoxes," says Mata. "We're not doing this for money, but on the other hand, we want to do it to the point where we can make money for it. We run a label and we're artists on that label, you know?"

The cover art for *Paradox of Minds* is striking. Black and white photographs of a studio filled with recording stuff and two men in their 20s managing it all. Inside the cover: a list of the equipment and computer programs that the boys used in putting *Paradox of Minds* together.

"I guess that's about how we like to do everything ourselves from start to finish. We save up for the new equipment and then end up writing about that. We make music for, you know, really enthusiastic hip-hop heads. This is sort of an emcee's album or producer's album. All the people we hang out with that make music or run labels; they're the ones we think will get the most out of it,"

"We wanted to write an album about opposites…this inverted sort of reflection of each other. We're pretty different, but we're real close."

says Must.

"That list is just the sort of list we would appreciate in an album," Mata says. "I find it interesting to learn how something was made."

Much of *Paradox of Minds* is spent reflecting on the state of the industry, and manufacturing a way forward in a market struggling to deal with the new media. Mata and Must are also label heads of Pang Productions. Surely, as both artists and label runners, they'd have a fair bit to say about the commercial realities of music making. They've reflected on it at length, and Must says, the way we consume music is changing.

"At the end of the day those 10 people who've downloaded might spread it to another 10 who might purchase. Are we making music to make money or to influence people's lives?" A paradox (of minds), apparently.

Mata adds, "when you had the CD sales fall, you had the prices of tickets and the actual sales of tickets go up so there was this parallel between them. If you have more people downloading your music, that's just more exposure so other income avenues should go up."

"But the main reason I make music is the need to create something. At the end of the day – and this is also through running the label – I feel like we're making a good contribution by putting music out there."

But (and these paradoxes keep piling up) if Mata and Must were all about getting their music to the greatest number as easily as possible, why charge for the album? Why feed the beast?

Mata and Must considered putting the album up for free download.

"We weighed up the advantages," Must says. "If we did it as a free thing, maybe we could get it to a lot more people and maybe sell out larger shows."

"But I have a thing about value and how you value your product. Some people will have a product that they sell on the street for five dollars when it's really worth 20. The value you put on your product transfers to the listener. If I've worked one hour for 20 bucks and I can go out and buy four albums in comparison to one, I will value each of those four albums less that the more expensive one."

So a free album is only worth as much as it costs?

"We're selling this as a product, and that's why we spent so much time on mixing and mastering…Churning it out is just not our style. We're always trying to make the highest quality we can possible; you've got to make the best track."

They're making art. They're selling it as a product. They're label bosses. They're artists. They object to the industry. They're a part of the industry. They want their music to be heard by as many people as possible. They won't give it away free.

Paradoxical, indeed. **CD**

***Paradox of Minds* is available through Pang Productions.**

By Suneel Jethani

SHOES IN THE DRYER: WONKY BEATS AND BLIP HOP

The post-Dilla era heralds a new chapter in the evolution of left field beats: much of the art form's innovation is occurring upon an aesthetic platform that is being termed, somewhat problematically, as 'wonky'. And while Dilla struck equipoise in terms of the human machine balances with those slightly off kilter drum patterns, the aesthetic that he helped materialise has become, somewhat restrictively, a motif and rhetoric frame within which much of the work of forward thinking producers is being contextualised.

Jay Dilla's free form programming style has inspired producers to disturb the fixity of traditional kick-snare matrices, explore polyphonic and compound times and develop their own enunciations of machinic humanity that made Dilla joints so charismatic.

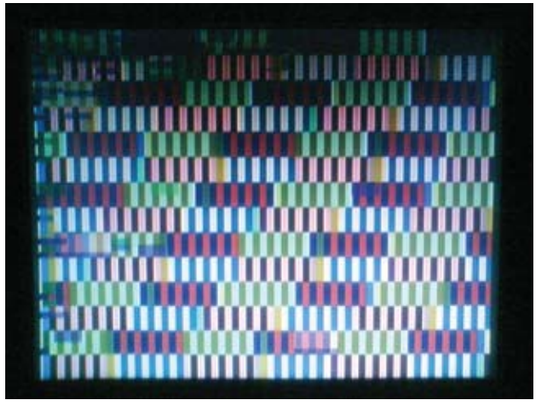
Now I'm sorry, but hip-hop is hip-hop, a beat is a beat and despite much of the web discourse on the topic, 'wonky' alone does not constitute a sub-genre although the term is *sonically* accurate. It's easy to think of much experimental hip-hop as a genre exercise and the work of many producers may be deemed Dilla copies, clever to the point of counter intuitiveness or simply interchangeable, but is that really a fair judgement to make just because loose drum programming seems to be the solid ground that innovative beat makers are territorialising?

In an attempt to broaden my definitional horizons, I decided to engage in some analytical listening, hoping to distill some aesthetic and effectual dimensions that better characterise the grand narrative of hip-hop innovation post-Dilla. After pulling out every record on my shelf that I'd define as wonky, and conversations with two producers I have much respect for, UK based Charlie Dark (Attica Blues, Blacktronica) and Tadd Mullinix (Dabrye), I set out to formulate my thoughts on 'wonky'.

Firstly, there are the drums (and the drum machines), by scattering kicks and snares loosely intuitive frames of reference are disturbed. This is achieved by either switching off the drum machine's quantize function (which results in shifting of beats just a fraction off the point where they should be) or experimenting with polyrhythmic structures and compound times.

Beat maker Charlie Dark warns against the temptation of aesthetic extremism when it comes to unquantized drums, the connection between producer and listener can be lost. "I have this theory that a good beat should be like a breath or a heart beat with a beginning and an end," he says. "The problem I have with a lot of the dubstep/broken/Dilla copycats is that the theory of being able to follow the beat has been lost somewhat. Some producers are suffering from being too clever for their own good. We've all done crazy things at points in our careers, but at the end of the day I don't care how good your tune is. If my dancefloor can't dance to it or my listeners can't listen to it, then I'm not playing it. Dilla messed around with quantize and timing but he came from a DJ aesthetic and at the end of the day his stuff was always danceable whereas a lot of the clone

"A beat is a beat and despite much of the web discourse on the topic, 'wonky' alone does not constitute a sub-genre although the term is sonically accurate."



Dilla stuff is simply un-listenable. A microkorg and an MPC do not make you Dilla, but rather a sad biter! Learn to program with the quantize on first before you turn it off."

One thing that is evident in many examples of 'wonky' is that despite the looseness of the drums there's usually a unity of layers on the 'one,' which acts as a orientation point. This can be seen in Nobody's 'All the Golden Fronts,' where a solid kicks works in unison with stuttering snares and a choppy sting sample which adds a little flutter to the head-nod. New Afro-futurist Ras G's loop driven 'Soul Pulsating,' where the slight wobble is accented by pitch shifting the chords layered over the drum line, is also a good example of this structure.

"Prefuse 73 uses hyperactive polyrhythmic drums on 'Life/Death' so much so that I felt the need to pop a Ritalin the minute the needle hit the runout groove."

"I try to achieve a looseness in the programming in order add feeling to the rhythm of my beats," adds Mullinix. "But I am inspired by the coldness of synthetic sounds and sound pieces. I have no strategy other than wanting to listen to more music with these qualities. But I have to say, too much of any of these elements is a big turn off. I listen for subtlety and nuance in music and a traditional frame of reference helps to facilitate this."

But there is a threshold when it comes to drum programming. "I see a very uninteresting approach to abstracting rhythm," Mulllinix says. "Sometimes I hear over-inspired producers whose beats sound like shoes in the dryer. Just because it's super loose doesn't mean it has 'feeling' or funkiness. But maybe they don't care about that. Lots of people are listening to Dilla thinking that he took rhythms way out of sync. What they don't realise is that he was very subtle in this approach and that is what makes it so good."

Wonkiness need not be just about putting some swing into the drums. The use of compound time signatures and polyrhythms also add an off kilter feeling to a beat. Prefuse 73 uses hyperactive polyrhythmic drums on 'Life/Death' so much so that I felt the need to pop a Ritalin the minute the needle hit the runout groove.

Dark, too, acknowledges the importance of polyrhythmic structures that sit outside modern electronica's intuitive frame. His Attica Blues project set a precedent for 'wonky' with its use of staccato polyrhythms. Dark's interest in rhythmic abstraction has evolved beyond aesthetic differentiation. "I get many of my ideas for beats from listening to phrases and conversations, which I guess in some ways, is related to the tradition of the talking drum. I'm trying to learn how to play the tabla at the moment and am fascinated with the traditions of learning being passed down. On a talking drum or tabla you are not just chucking out anything but playing and learning patterns that are generations old. It will be interesting to see if this passes on to the next generation of drum programmers."

The second stylistic element relates to synthesisers and if viewed in terms of soundwave properties like frequency and amplitude the mystique around the sound becomes a little more apparent. Variations in these properties are used to produce the sawtooth basslines on Dabrye's 'Bloop,' sine, square and triangle waveforms coupled with low bit rates produce a simplified melody structure (think: musical greeting cards or arcade games) that are characteristic of Flying Lotus. Lotus has become the poster child for 'wonky' LA, which seems to have become the epicentre of the leftfield beat movement, or perhaps it's a scene ready for colonisation by hipsters with fresh out of the box MPCs and the latest kicks? Either way we're seeing a lot of music coming out of this whatever-you-want-to-call-it that LA has become, some mind numbing derivatives, and some truly awe-inspiring and situating artists like Flying Lotus add greatly to their marketability...but I digress.

I characterise Lotus by the strong video game-like property in terms of his synths and track structure. In 'Two Bottom Blues' we see his kick drums wobble yet a more linear placement of snares allow for lo-fi keys and the underlying layer of hiss and noise to not be overly disorienting. Structurally, Lotus' tracks follow game-like stages with new elements dropping in and out and synth stabs occurring at random intervals. Samiyam shares Lotus's 8-bit rudimentary approach but his production style is varied in its pace and its sonic textures which makes his productions feel less nostalgic than some of the 8-bit game beats of his peers. The Return EP shows us a melody and melancholy, particularly on 'trick platform' and 'cheesecake backslap' which resonates in a different part of your brain, which is by and large left un-stimulated by 'wonky' fodder. Lotus and Samiyam's collaborative project FLYamSAM is a suprisingly coherent example of the style. The aptly titled 'offbeat' appeared on the *Ghostly Swim* album, and 'Green Tea Power' illustrates that the two approaches when superimposed can produce results that are equally engaging.

Manipulation of a sound's envelope, such as the attack (the speed at which a note reaches its peak) and decay (time it takes to fade to silence) also allows producers to achieve a wonky orientation of sounds. Hudson Mohawke's 'Polkadot Blues' uses undulating attack and decay which makes synths sound like they start and end a little behind or in front of where they should despite being triggered in phase with the drum loop resulting in an asymmetric surge over a relatively solid foundation.

The third and final element characteristic of this sound is the approach to sampling. Digitality liberates sounds of their material confines and this fracture of form and content creates both great opportunities and constraints for artists working with appropriated material. Digitality not only allows access to a greater range of sounds, it allows for a greater flexibility for artists to manipulate or 'flip' samples yet conversely, digitality also creates the condition where copyright law restricts artists, forcing them to over-flip samples which takes something away from the essence of hip-hop. Musing on this, Mullinix says, "I regard hip-hop as a sampling art in part. Part of the tradition of hip-hop is to reference a piece of music. But flipping is a high art. It can be subtle in order to bring new light to an older piece and give respect to older forms of music. Or a sample can be drastically flipped in order to suspend the moments that are cherished of the source material. Sampling can be used as a protest to sampling laws. And I sometimes find that interesting too."

"[Dilla's] stuff was always danceable whereas a lot of the clone Dilla stuff is simply un-listenable. A microkorg and an MPC do not make you Dilla but rather a sad biter!"

I agree, the sample epiphanies of my future are likely to be more along the lines of 'How'd they do that?' as opposed to 'They used that!' And that is set to radically alter the nature of the relationships between original and derivative works in hip-hop music.

As a style, 'wonky' is at this point in time intrinsically linked to the future directions of hip-hop. A lot of that has to do with Dilla and his legacy and though it's perhaps a little unfair to label much of the work that fits into this category as thoughtless or derivative of Dilla's sound; there are other pitfalls that these producers, and hip-hop artists more generally, face. The danger is a future of technological determinism for the artform. The territorialisation around a style can sometimes serve as a creative engine and it's an important phase in the hip-hop dialectic, there will always be a boom-bip even if there's a few blips. It will be important for forward thinking producers to readdress the balance between the synthetic and organic elements of their productions and acknowledge the precarious link between rhythm and chaos as to avoid the monotony of stylistic convergence and machine driven simulacra. **CD**

MARMITE POP

"Well, Marmite, the English equivalent of Vegemite, their advertising slogan for years has been 'love it or hate it'."

By Peter Hollo

Tim Shaw started making drum'n'bass tunes in 2000, for labels such as John B's Beta Recordings and Moving Shadow. His first Planet µ release in 2005 brought a thrilling combination of breakcore and experimental aspects to his sound, but 2009's Living Tree has added a surprising pop sensibility into the mix.

He is on tour in Japan. Unfortunately almost as soon as we start talking, he has to get the volume turned up on his phone, which happens to be a borrowed phone with everything written in Japanese. No small task. I ask him how the touring is going.

"It's good! Kind of exciting and tiring – it's been the most intensive and sustained touring that I've done in my life so far. I think when I started touring this album in September I had a completely new live show, and I was quite surprised at how long it took to really feel comfortable with it – and also, you know, singing,' coz I've never sung on stage before. So that took a bit of time – longer than I'd planned really. Because before that I'd had the live show, and different machines I'd programmed, and I guess I underestimated just how accustomed to my old setup I'd become, and I didn't know long it'd take to get used the new setup."

In his youth, Shaw learned violin and played in choirs. He recently relocated to Berlin, which seems (to an outsider at least) to be an exciting, vibrant place for developments in electronica and experimental sounds, not to mention other artistic endeavours. It's artist-friendly, he says, with opportunity for collaboration and plenty of space to work with. "It's not really competitive, in the same way that London can be. There's kind of enough to go around for everyone, and people aren't under the crazy financial pressure that they often are in England. So that made sense to me, as I wanted a

bit of space to get my house in order, and map things out. I was also doing some work for Native Instruments, who are based in Berlin."

Shaw's move to Mike Paradinas' label Planet μ in 2005 was initially unexpected, given that his first releases (as Exile) were fairly mainstream drum'n'bass 12"s. "I almost ended up making

"I'd never listened to any Depeche Mode, or Cabaret Voltaire or Human League or any of these people that the style of songwriting is being compared to now!"

drum'n'bass by accident," he says. "I ran into John B at university – he was the first person I'd met who had a record label, basically. I'd made some drum'n'bass stuff before that, and also made some housey stuff, some downtempo stuff, and some pretty weird experimental stuff. But that opportunity came along, and I made a couple of drum'n'bass tracks that John released, and kind of ended up following that path a bit from a fairly arbitrary beginning. That's the way it goes, really – I don't see myself as having this independent artistic trajectory that I'm following. It's more like I'm very aware that I exist floating in the wind as anyone else does. The fact that I've ended up being an artist in itself is something that well may not have happened – had other things not arisen."

Those "other things" he's talking about could have led Shaw down a completely different path. He completed a degree in philosophy which prompted the inevitable self-questioning thoughts about getting a "real job," about moving on. Fortunately the impetus from his earlier releases was too strong. "I was really keen to pursue that somehow," he says, "and given the funny compromise between my expectations, my parents' expectations, the possibilities of getting money to live and so on, I figured the best way to make it work and have time to really focus on what I wanted to focus on was to do this a Masters in Electroacoustic Composition... I have to say I spent most of my time actually just doing what I wanted to do... the professors were really encouraging.

"I also kind-of lucked out in a way, because at the end of that masters year, I randomly landed a commission to do backing track work - reasonably well-paid - and I realised that it would actually be possible to earn a basic living, so then I decided that I was going to spend the next few years trying to get some fairly mundane production work, and then spend the rest of my time working on my own stuff. It was like making karaoke backing tracks, and some production music for TV."

His previous release, *Tim Exile's Nuisance Gabbaret Lounge*, was more like a live album: or at least a document of what Exile was doing live at the time. It sounded kind of revolutionary. "Well, *Nuisance Gabbaret Lounge* – there's a video of me explaining the setup I used to do that album on the Native Instruments website," he says.

"I used a patch that I programmed, which consisted of sample players and loop players, taking live loops and playing with those. All those shows were completely improvised – I'd get up on stage and have no idea what I was going to do, which can get fairly chaotic. I'd recorded shows over a period of about three or four months, I think, and then edited highlights out of those shows and put them together. There were bits of playing keyboards – most of it was pretty live. I had a drum machine that I programmed loops into, so it was pretty much like 'from scratch' live. I would sometimes also drop in samples of pre-made tracks, quick loops that you could do mashups between, and there were lots of keyboard-triggered effects and processors that I'd use to re-order stuff with my fingers."

While it may seem initially that *Listening Tree* is a radical departure, Tim Exile has kept many of the essentials of his sound, from heavy basslines to frequent digitally-effected freak-outs. Nevertheless, the songs on *Listening Tree* are full-fledged songs, with intriguing lyrics and fun harmonic progressions. Reminders seem to appear of prog,

"I felt this so-called IDM thing really reached a bit of a cul-de-sac, and there seemed to be a kind-of post-Aphex style, really reflective and backwards-looking in a way."

'80s electro-pop, the ska of Madness. The process of reproducing the songs on *Listening Tree* for his live show is particularly interesting. "I've built another machine, that still has all the possibilities of the last one – probably more possibilities for improvising now," he says.

"I've made something with a lot more instantaneous and fluid use. And when I'm playing songs from the album, I have a song-player thing that's integrated into the patch, and I basically play the backing but I can also put the backing through effects and re-loop it and re-order it as well. So I'll do a bit of an improv, start off with some beatboxing or whatever, put in some synths and build it up, have a bit of a play around, and when the time feels right I'll drop in one of the tracks – and it's all synced to tempo, so I just need to mix it in, and then sing along to the track. And then I can put different effects on my voice, do different looping over that and so on as well."

Tim Exile's vocals have previously appeared, even back in the d'n'b days on a few tracks (such as 2002's 'Save Me'), so it seems natural to wonder if this is a direction he's been thinking of going in for some time. "It's always been there. There was an 'ability gap' in my confidence to sing. So, writing this album was a real learning process – learning how to get roughly the sound I was looking for out of my voice, and again, being able to do that on stage, which is an entirely different skill. So, I'm still learning, but it was something that I wanted to do for a while, but I think I had to get the wild experimental stuff out of my system – or not out of my system, but I really thought it was important to express that first, maybe."

Much of the commentary on *Listening Tree* has drawn comparisons to the electro-pop of the 1980s, such as Depeche Mode – perhaps due to the glut of genuinely backward-looking music on the scene at the moment.

"Well the thing is I'd never listened to any Depeche Mode, or Cabaret Voltaire, or Human League or any of these people that the style of songwriting is being compared to now! To be honest, it was only when I finished the album and played it to a few people that I had any idea that it sounded '80s. As I was recording it, it just sounded like my music to me – so it was a real surprise that pretty much every single review has said it's like these bands. What shocked me most was how often it's been assumed that this was really intentional – that I was either trying to write the next chapter in this kind of music, or I was trying to ape these musicians. In a way it's quite interesting – given me a new perspective anyway."

The new material is certainly different. So how has it been received by the fans of the older stuff?

"Hm, it's been very marmite. Do you know what I mean?"

Not entirely sure.

"Well, Marmite, the English equivalent of Vegemite, their advertising slogan for years has been 'love it or hate it'. So yeah, people pretty much love it or hate it. In a way I've found that it's highlighted people who are actually musically open-minded."

The album spans genres with gleeful abandon – taken to a logical if audacious extreme on 'Family Galaxy', which increases its tempo via time signature changes, through dubby hip-hop, techno, drum'n'bass and into a kind of gabbercore, while the vocal becomes raucous.

"One of the reasons behind me wanting to write songs, and broaden the possibilities of the use of pure electronic music, was that I felt this so-called IDM thing really reached a bit of a cul-de-sac," Exile says, "and there seemed to be a kind-of post-Aphex style, really reflective and backwards-looking in a way, a nostalgic attitude. And I think that people who think along these lines have really not liked the album at all.

"There's a lot of people who don't really want to take the album as a cohesive work, and I've seen lots of comments who say 'Yeah, the tracks are nice, but the vocals…' – obviously they're coming from that pure electronic perspective. But actually, when I was writing the album I was going through some really big personal changes, and spiritual and emotional reflection, and the lyrics are really genuinely heartfelt. There were a couple of tracks on the album which, when I first did the live shows, I couldn't actually sing the songs, because I couldn't hold the tears back, because they were so moving for me to sing." **CD**

***Listening Tree* is available on Warp/Inertia**

CHANGE OF PACE

The meandering new album from Tokyo-based ambient composer and musician Chihei Hatakeyama channels the city's tranquil side. A decrepit shrine amid the snare of snaking lanes and backstreets of Ikebukuro; a skeletal winter's garden in Koenji; a decaying public housing block amongst the money and glitz and galleries of Aoyama. It may seem an anomaly, but you can find pockets of quiet, even in Tokyo.

It's a quality that permeates the shimmering piano, guitar and laptop tropes of *Saunter*, the latest body of work from Japanese ambient artist Chihei Hatakeyama. Recorded following his relocation to the capital from the Kanagawa prefecture south of Yokohama in late 2007, the album traces a very different side of Tokyo.

"About six months before I started to make *Saunter*, I moved from Fujisawa City to Zenpukuji, which is in the Suginami area of Tokyo," explains Hatakeyama via a translator. "Zenpukuji has a park that is rather large for Tokyo and has a lot of natural landscapes; it has a large pond and various birds come to this pond and a river flows from it. I live in an apartment right next to this river's path and I was visiting the park frequently."

Such a setting seems a world away from the sprawling image Tokyo invokes. *Saunter*'s six drifting compositions, too, echo with a sense of space and atmosphere antithetic to notions of the mega-metropolis. But there was more to Hatakeyama's engagement with his new environs than geography. He speaks of a "mysticism " that haunts the area. "People have been living near the river since the Neolithic era and there are still some remains from that age in the area," says the 30-year-old, known as one half of electro-acoustic duo Opitope.

"There is also a large shrine on a hill close by, and there are assumptions that this area was a holy ground. This was definitely a factor in the inspiration of *Saunter*."

Hatakeyama's musical upbringing was a world away from his current output. As a teen, he found himself enamoured by hardcore and thrash metal and went onto play guitar in a high school metal covers band. By the time he had reached university, his interests were beginning to crystallise. Having started exploring minimal and Detroit techno, he followed their lineage back to Kraftwerk, Krautrock and ambient music. It was only at that point that he began his compositional pursuits. "I bought a Macintosh computer when I was 23, so that I could compose in manners of electronic music," he recalls.

"I don't have a good sense of rhythm, so it was never going to work. I think it's a big factor in my style today, being without rhythm."

That said, electronica was never a comfortable field for Hatakeyama, who rues his own lack of rhythm. "I don't have a good sense of rhythm, so it was never going to work," he says. "I think it's a big factor in my style today, being without rhythm." Interestingly, he attributes much of his stylistic inclination to Japanese modern literature from the Meiji (1868–1912) and Showa periods (1926–1989). "I feel influenced by stuff from writers such as Soseki Natsume, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Ango Sakaguchi, Junichiro Tanizaki and Osamu Dazai," he says.

It was around this point that his musical career began to manifest, forming Opitope with Tomoyoshi Date and developing his own techniques of processing and reprocessing acoustic guitars and pianos through a laptop. Field recordings also proved an early focus. "I first started to do field recordings around 2003," he explains. "I was basically using a tape recorder to record the sounds of the city and to placing those sounds into my own works."

But when Hatakeyama began recording the sounds of nature, his understanding started to shift. Rather than merely inserting field recording into his works as markers or signifiers of place, he became more aware of his compositions' synchronicity with their environments. "I began to think about the relationship the sound that I made had with those environments," he offers.

He went onto release his tranquil, stunningly elemental debut solo album *Minima Moralia* in 2006 via Chicago imprint Kranky, before following up with Opitope's wonderful *Hau* (Spekk) in 2007 and his own collection of reworked old material *Dedication* (Magic Book Records) in 2008. *Saunter*, however, marks a departure.

Where *Minima Moralia* witnessed Hatakeyama offsetting pure tones with elemental acoustic motifs, *Saunter* sees the composer merge his instrumental counterpoints. Resonances of piano, guitar and vibraphone are subsumed in sparkling drones and tonal underlays. Field recordings appear as colour rather than illustration. But while the six pieces that comprise *Saunter* possess a fluid almost osmotic quality, Hatakeyama's compositional and recording process was remarkably deconstructive. Composing instrumental motifs on the guitar or piano, he then fed the untreated phrases through several processes, droning some passages, adding delays and field recordings.

"I recorded most of the sounds of instruments at my apartment," he explains. "I didn't use many types of instruments – just piano, acoustic guitar, electric guitar and a vibraphone. I didn't use a synthesiser at all, but just processed the raw sounds from these instruments."

"I tried not to use so many field recordings," he continues, "I only used those in the last two songs. They were both recorded at the park I mentioned earlier, and were recorded exactly at the same place. One was recorded on a sunny day, and one was recorded when it was snowing."

Indeed, while Hatakeyama avoided using as many field recordings in the past, he understands *Saunter*'s relationship to its environment to be stronger than any of his previous material. The idea of seasonality was central to this. "I prefer winter rather than summer," he poses. "It's hard for me to compose during July and August, but that's simply because it's hot."

"Resonances of piano, guitar and vibraphone are subsumed in sparkling drones and tonal underlays. Field recordings appear as colour rather than illustration."

"However, for *Saunter* I wanted to have a more superposed inspiration from the environment and I had clear intentions to express the seasonal conditions of autumn and winter, because that was when I was first experience of Zenpukuji."

"Not all my work is entwined with the environment and seasons, but this very much was."

That isn't to suggest that *Saunter* represents some kind of empirical, purely observational document. Far from it. Over its six compositions, *Saunter* swoons with emotive resonance. But while Hatakeyama is willing to admit to the record's emotionality, he doesn't see it as a motive.

"I don't disagree with the idea that this album includes my emotions, but that is a result of pursuing an aesthetic form," he says. "This record comes from a desire of an aesthetic appreciation – of a place and it's effect on me – and it is about beauty."

"However, I can't deny that my emotions are expressed as a result."

CD

***Saunter* is available from Room40**

HEARING PICTURES

"We wrote that record with this in mind; you flip from side A to side B and you're in a new world with the same story but in a new town."

It's pretty easy to pile desert or wilderness mythologies onto Peaking Lights; their tapes warble like mirages, all Zabriskie Point-style landscapes and skewed Americana histories.

They come in the form of pop songs, I suppose; stretched way out into free noise structures with a distinctly vague retrograde. The weird spaces and skewed mythos of recent album *Imaginary Falcons* are not entirely manufactured; Aaron Coyes and Indra Dunis and live in the woods outside of Spring Green, Wisconsin, in a house that sounds like it reflects this aesthetic way too well.

"It's in an area called the Driftless Region," says Aaron, "which has the oldest hills that used to be mountains in the US, maybe even North America. It's really beautiful green, lush and muggy in the Summer, and in the Winter white, dead and freezing. Our house is part of a complex in which there are two other houses and a massive barn that used to be functioning barn before it was converted to an arts/event centre in the '70s. It lay dormant and literally filled up with animal shit for 30 years until we moved in we cleaned it out last year for our wedding and have been using it since for recording and other things too. There is also a huge concrete silo/personal reverb tank attached to that barn. Our house was built attached to a second barn which we use as an art/music studio in the Summer, it has a real crazy '60s party pad feeling! We're the only tenants on the property all year round. The Dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright architecture school lives."

It makes a lot of sense given the way the Midwestern mythology glints in both their eyes but obviously, it's not just their locale that makes their scorched dreams so lucid; the massively image-based sounds are also thanks to Aaron's college days at film school, not to mention a heavy case of synaesthesia (yes, really).

"The interaction with sound and life, cinema has a big role in making music for me. Actually, for myself, with the writing process of songs has a lot to do with timing and flow, timbre and tune or feel of a song, I imagine the sounds dancing around each other each note or beat of the drum all have a separate colour and shape or wave and when they match up it's super rad. And then we have a song!"

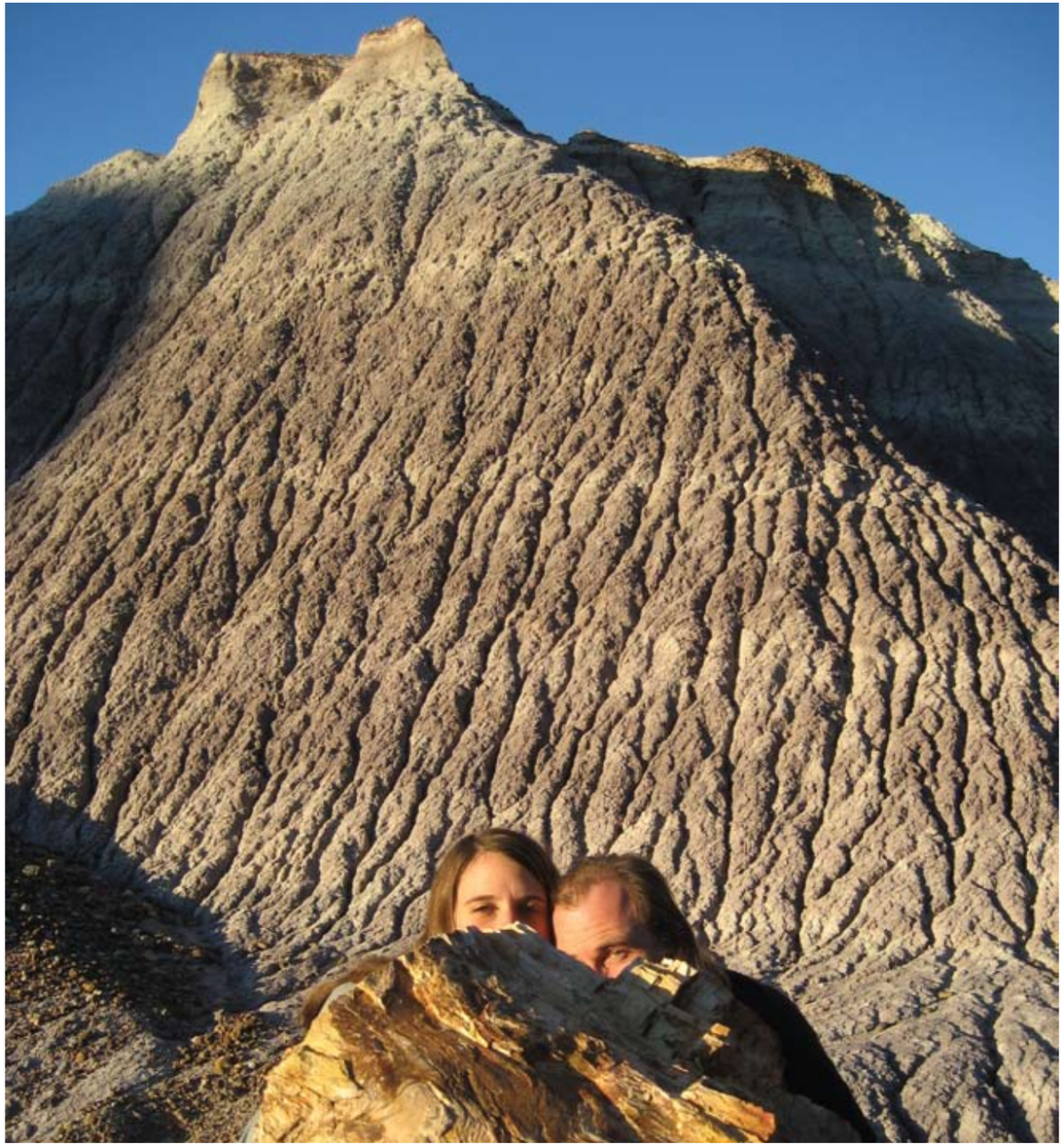
For Indra, it's a little more linear: "I think of images a lot while writing music, rather than say, words. Images with mood attached... like the sun rays falling on baby rabbits jumping around in the dark green grass and then comes a shadow and wham! A crack of thunder! I guess I think about dark and light a lot, and their interrelation. there is a constant battle between the two."

This type of interplay constantly rises and flows through tracks that are very much of a circular feel; they're often long, but it's the stoned methodical way they drift that sees the beginning and end blur in a haze of '70s (grounded) outerspace feelings built with reverberated keyboards, wayward vocal echoes and understated guitar experiments. The delirious and immersive wanderings are easy to get lost in, but when they decide to kick it epic-ballad-style at the very start of Side B on *Imaginary Falcons*, they attain a level of emotiveness often avoided by their DIY peers. 'All The Good Songs Have Been Written' is the most concisely structured jam on there and it just lets go, a total burnt out Neil Young-style lament. With releases on labels like the ultra-dark Night People or scuffed up Fuck It Tapes, it feels almost startlingly emotive in the wider context of that lo-fi and DIY adventurousness, where it's true that maybe weird sonics are favoured over strong sentiments. Indra, whose vocals here peak particularly heartfelt, has a "real love of catchy pop tunes and raw garage-y music."

"It was an attempt to write something with some pop structure. It's fun and challenging to write different types of songs, depending on how you feel at the moment. It creates a more interesting journey while listening to the record."

"We tried to approach writing *Imaginary Falcons* in a similar way that I think a lot of older groups did," says Indra, "which is to tie it together somehow, someway, somewhere. Like old 45s there's the A-side and the B-side, the A-side is usually a hit song and the B-side is the weirder stuff that may not have made it on to record but the limitation of the media dictates the songs to be three minutes or so mostly, so whatever you do in that time better totally slay! We wrote that record with this in mind; you flip from side A to side B and you're in a new world with the same story but in a new town. It's generally on my mind when we write stuff as how it will fit on a release how the flow will work, beyond just writing a song for a song's sake. I'm way more into the idea of the whole Beach Boys *Smile* record than I am into that one A-Ha song."

Given that many of the cassettes and LPs out on those aforementioned labels feature deliciously off-the-cuff recording approaches with one-take jams often characterised by a distinct



immediacy, Peaking Lights' lo-fi seems much more planned; not overly engineered or sly, but certainly their attention to rough details goes a long way in the moods and textures of their songs.

"It's really active" says Aaron of their approach to lo-fi. "If we fell into a bunch of money somehow I think maybe in small ways our recording process would change as far as maybe getting some more

"I think of images a lot while writing music… like the sun rays falling on baby rabbits jumping around in the dark green grass and then comes a shadow and wham! A crack of thunder!"

mics and a larger tape machine, but I'd still want to be building things and trying to record in similar ways for sure. I mean would you rather listen to a record or a CD? It's like that study Rupert Neve did (I think it was Neve?), where he studied the psychological impact of CD versus vinyl or analogue and that digital media made humans more tense and angry because of the limited range of frequency. You're dealing with ones and zeroes in a square so as I say this to you now, you can hear the rustle of trees and cars drive by in the background so you can understand that you're in a space, digital just strips all that subtlety away".

Not Not Fun co-founder Britt Brown was a bit, like, "woah" when mentioning Peaking Lights' recording set up. Apparently it's pretty intense, and a contrast to the otherwise loose and "whatever"-style approaches of that Californian DIY lineage of which they're very much a part. It's thrift store technology all the same, but of a perhaps ridiculously elaborate nature.

"We use two track 1/4 inch tape machines," says Aaron. "We do a lot of spacial and environmental microphone placement to get sounds, building mics, building tape delays and building filters for certain things. Our style is definitely more akin to early forms of recording like early Motown stuff or Beach Boys circa *Pet Sounds* or even *Smile* to the likes of some of the early reggae studios. We bounce tracks down and between tape machines, sometimes just record live straight up. Part of the excitement about recording is trying to make something that isn't going to be placed in a specific time period, and I think with all this stuff we use it has a unique quality to it. Part of the issue is money and not being able to afford certain luxuries of a studio so we built our own out of stuff we find that is garbage to most people, but then just figure out a way to make it work."

I figured their affinity for dub music was pretty strong, and not just because all their MySpace top friends are dub titans like King Tubby and Peter Tosh. They love dub, which is a possible part explanation for the building of their own instruments as well as the tonne of reverb that drenches all their songs, there is a super hot and delirious feeling that runs through them too.

"We wrote *Imaginary Falcons* last Summer when it was quite hot but also it was our first Summer living in the country after leaving San Francisco. So we were thrown into the magic of the natural

"We built our own out of stuff we find that is garbage to most people, but then just figure out a way to make it work."

world, with all the crazy lush plants and flowers and trees and waking up to insane bird symphonies and finding mouse babies living in my keyboard! We used to sit on our porch and watch the hundreds of bats appear at dusk, along with all the sparkling lightning bugs! Then we were also getting hot steamy days, with crazy tornado warnings and rain storms with floods out around our land last summer too. It definitely affected us and our songs, and still does." **CD**

***Imaginary Falcons* is released through Night People.**

SLEEVE REVIEWS

Grant Hunter

I REALLY ENJOY THIS SECTION OF CYCLIC DEFROST BUT DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE SO HARD COMING UP WITH A LIST OF MY OWN. I THINK ALBUM ART IS REALLY IMPORTANT BUT I'VE NEVER COMPILED A LIST OF FAVOURITES. I'M IGNORANT ABOUT A LOT OF RECORDED MUSIC, AND NOT NEARLY AS GEEKY AND ENCYCLOPAEDIC ABOUT OBSCURE STUFF AS SOME OF MY ELITIST FRIENDS. MY MUSIC TASTE IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE PRETTY UNCOOL BUT I FELT THE ONLY HONEST WAY TO DO THIS WAS TO PICK THROUGH STUFF I ACTUALLY OWN. I WISH I COULD HAVE DONE A WHOLE FEATURE ON OBSCURE BLACK METAL ART, SOME OF THAT STUFF IS INSANE! I FOUND THAT THE STUFF WHICH STOOD OUT DIDN'T HAVE THAT MUCH TO DO WITH THE ARTWORK ITSELF BEING PARTICULARLY INNOVATIVE OR FANTASTIC, MORE SO THAT IT JUST RESONATED WITH ME AS SOME KIND OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE YUMMY FEELINGS I GET FROM THE MUSIC, WHICH I GUESS IS KIND OF THE POINT.

CRISPIN HELLION GLOVER
THE BIG PROBLEM ≠ THE SOLUTION. THE SOLUTION = LET IT BE

I discovered this album thanks to the wonderful internet, when MP3s were becoming really huge. I couldn't believe that I could get all this incredible new music (very slowly) on dial-up. I knew who Crispin Glover was but I didn't know about this album, or his cut-and-paste books, or any of that stuff, so I ordered it off Amazon and it's amazing! The album consists of a bunch of spoken readings from his books *Rat Catching* and *Oak Mot*, as well as some original songs, and a few amusing cover songs. It was produced by Barnes and Barnes, and Weird Al plays accordion on it.

The cover has a photo of Glover in a dark suit. His face has been extended into a distorted mutated smudge. He stands behind an operating table brandishing a hammer in his right hand, with long red tendrils snaking from his left hand to a box containing a floating red question mark which I believe represents the big problem alluded to in the title.

Inside the booklet are reproductions from some of his books, and the back cover has a collaged photo and illustration puzzle detailing the nine topics covered by the tracks on the album. The words and lyrics point towards the Big Problem. The solution lay within the title: Let It Be. Crispin Hellion Glover wants to know what you think these nine things all have in common. I was so happy when he came out here recently performing the big slideshow and screening his films, it really was a bit of a geek moment for me as his films aren't available commercially, he only ever tours them around personally, so I really didn't think I'd ever see them.

KAADA
MUSIC FOR MOVIEBIKERS

This album packaging is really nice. It comes in a fancy digipak that it is longer than it is wide. The cover image features a Black and White photograph of the gorgeous man John Erik Kaada in a black suit. He is not wearing a tie. He gently cradles a large bird, whether it's a swan or a goose I don't really know, but it's big and white and very elegant. Projecting outwards from behind him and giving some impression of depth are a number of tiny little lights on the wall. It suits the album perfectly, which is a number of instrumental compositions by John Erik Kaada made in the manner of many of his film scores. You close your eyes and the songs tell these sweet little stories. Kaada's music is delicate and lovely, multilayered and really effective at conveying emotion. The art for this is simple and striking, yet ultimately quite mysterious. On the back cover and the inside are red bloody fingerprint smudges, perhaps indicating something murderous has happened. The design was by this guy Martin Kvamme, who really is a clever duck. I'm really not much of a design geek, but I've loved pretty much everything I've seen of his, it's oh so classy.

LIARS
THEY WERE WRONG SO WE DROWNED

I haven't heard much of their first or most recent albums, but I love this and *Drum's Not Dead* quite a lot. The art is a reproduction of an ugly cross stitch pattern in a rough red sack fabric. As best as I can make out, the image depicts a large cross overlooking a massive eagle shooting lightning bolts into the ocean, a skull and crossbones with broomsticks, and a game of hangman. The title of the album is haphazardly stitched across the top in a bright green colour. I don't really understand it all but I figure it all ties into the album's concept of drowning and witch hunts and all that. Inside the booklet are a series of illustrations continuing along this theme, and I particularly

like the one of a little girl floating in the river. On the back cover there is an image of the reverse of the cross stitch pattern,so showing all the loose threads and cotton. It looks so crappy and handmade, kind of like the craft equivalent of just scrawling the album title on with a marker. I haven't seen anything else like it, and the album is as spooky and evil as this cover is.

NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL
IN THE AEROPLANE OVER THE SEA

It struck me that this might seem like a bit of an obvious choice but I couldn't think of anything that resonates so well with me. This album rules. It has the most simple songs, but is completely powerful and overwhelming as an album. I'm sure everybody has a copy, if you don't go and get it! It's perfect. Let it win you over. All of the art that comes with the album has this sort of European gypsy carnival sort of influence which is present in the music too, but the cover is just beautiful. It features a number of strange figures drifting about in the ocean, their boat wrecked. The figures raise their arms, presumably waving down the aeroplane referred to in the title. The main figure is wearing a fancy red gown covered in little gold stars, and she has this a giant head that looks like a drum skin or something. I really don't know what it is and I've never bothered to research it. It's just an awe inspiring image that is difficult to make sense of. In a way it is as impenetrable as the lyrics, and I like the mystery of it. The background is painted with little textured dots which is pretty neat too.

SKELETON KEY
FANTASTIC SPIKES THROUGH BALLOON

I think I first discovered Skeleton Key watching *Rage* one night in 1998 and Dave Grohl played an EPK/Short film from this album which consisted of raucous performance footage interspersed with a strange narrative featuring the band members playing these oddball characters that eventually end up on the same train in New York.

Their music is really weird - but fun - rock music via Tom Waits, with an awesome trash percussion thing going on. Percussionist Rick Lee just bashed on scrap metal and junk and triggered all sorts of noisy samples, and I thought it was ridiculously cool that they were doing all this stuff within the context of a pop/rock band. I could never get hold of this album - apparently it pretty much tanked on release - but I eventually found one in the second hand section of Utopia one day, as well as Erik Sanko's solo album *Past Imperfect, Present Tense* which is completely depressing, and one of my favourite albums that I own.

The cover art for this album is really unusual. It features a sausage balloon on the front, but the whole booklet has a grid of 9x9 holes punched right through it. ON the inside there are photos of the band, and gas tanks, and a strange puffer fish thing. You can see the CD through the holes on the front. I think it was nominated for a Grammy for best cover design or something similar.

WEEN
THE MOLLUSK

Ween are my favourite band in the whole world and every single one of their albums are works of genius, but this one has the coolest album cover, closely followed by the babe with the Ween belt on the front of *Chocolate And Cheese*. Most of the songs on this album have a nautical underwater marine theme, and the album was recorded by the ocean side, so it makes sense that the cover art would continue that theme. The booklet is full of strange images of sea creatures hiding in shadows and the like, but the cover itself features a bizarre sculpture creature consisting of various parts of fish and crab claws and tentacles and things, presented like a floral display on this dark blue/green watery background. It's difficult to tell if it's a painting or a photograph, whether it's real or fake. It's just odd. I think the creature exists as a weird sort of mish-mash of things that are recognisable but slightly off. I did some research and it turns out this work was created by Storm Thorgeson who has done a whole bunch of unusual album covers, most notably Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Neat.

THE LOCUST
PLAGUE SOUNDSCAPES

The Locust are so great! They're like a musical equivalent of a chainsaw to the face, but still really melodic and musical in a way. The crusty analog synths melt my brain and warm my soul. The art for this album features an illustrated city in ruins, likely the result of the zombie plague that appears to have infected its

inhabitants. Zombies and zombie football players are fleeing and vomiting in the streets. The sky is red like blood and, as if that wasn't awful enough, a giant reptilian monster with a lipstick for a face is doing battle with a giant muscle bound blue spandex hero without a head. That's a movie I'd like to see, and the music of The Locust is the perfect soundtrack to such a ridiculous scenario. I love everything about this band, but especially love the dumb grasshopper costumes and song titles like 'The Half-Eaten Sausage would like to see you in his office and Late for a double date with a pile of atoms in the water closet.'

KYLIE MINOGUE
IMPOSSIBLE PRINCESS

I'm not really sure what I love about this. It could be the neon colours, the composition, the symmetry of the image. It's probably Kylie's little blue dress and her spiky hair. I'm not sure how they did the cool wall of coloured lights around her, it looks like a big plastic wall or something that was done in post, but I think it was done practically with a long exposure and rotating coloured gels around her. This is her best album by the way, a lot of mainstream pop singers put out albums with some great singers and mostly filler, but this is packed with cool songs that are all very different. I guess this was her experimental phase, I'd love to think this is Kylie really taking control of her career and driving it a bit, but I guess the reality of it is she was just working with the right people. The album is all over the place in a good way, some of it is poppy fluff and ballads, some of it is almost hardcore dance, but it's pretty diverse stylistically. She went a bit rubbish after this and did that lame song with Robbie Williams, but I still think she's heaps cool.

THE BLOOD BROTHERS
MARCH ON ELECTRIC CHILDREN

I first got into the Blood Brothers when *Burn Piano Island Burn* came out. I was a bit of a sucker for bad nu-metal and I was listening to everything Ross Robinson was involved with, but this band just killed me. I immediately tracked down all of their old albums, and this one is my favourite. The cover is a blurry out-of-focus close up on the mouth and nose of what I gather is a woman's face. It has video lines through it, which is consistent with many of the images within the chunky booklet, so it looks like they've been photographed from a television set. I can't really pinpoint why I love this, I guess it just seems wrong for an album cover. I like that it's not really clear what's going on, it's really vague, yet implies a sort of soft-focus sleazy sexuality which is really all through their lyrics. It's cropped in such an extreme way that it obscures all other information and draws attention to this particular part of the image. But why? The vinyl version looks really cool too. It's a real shame they broke up, but I think they were starting to run out of ideas, their formula was really specific. If only all hardcore was this fruity.

NANCY VANDAL
RETURN OF THE ZOMBIE SKATE POETS FROM PLANET SEX

I have a real soft spot for Nancy Vandal. I first started listening to them in my early teens. They were essentially a punk rock band, but they remained consistently challenging, reinventing themselves with each new album and being much more interesting than the bands they were lumped with. When Crab Smasher first started in 2002 our first recordings were actually really bad, noisy electronic Nancy Vandal covers made with pitch shifted vocals, pirated loop software and Windows Sound Recorder. Even though we've never sounded anything like them, we've always tried to retain that half arsed not overly serious but always fun approach to our music making. All of their cover art is by band member Mike Foxall, whose work you'd be aware of if you were anywhere near a Frenzal Rhomb T-shirt in the '90s. This is their first EP and it's not necessarily Foxall's best work, but it's still awesome. It depicts a mean looking zombie skate poet from the Planet Sex. It's wielding a massive chainsaw and that's about as much as I have to go on. It 's a crudely drawn illustration and is totally punk as hell. I think more than anything else I've selected, you can really see the influence on my own work here.

CD

CYCLIC SELECTS

Tim Koch

TIM KOCH STARTED OUT WITH REEL-TO-REEL RECORDERS AND EARLY COMPUTERS, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE HE WAS AN EARLY CONVERT TO THE USER GROUPS AND LISTSERVS OF THE MUSICAL WEB. HAZY INDIE ROCK BANDS CAPTURED HIS IMAGINATION EARLY ON, BUT HE SOON DEVELOPED INTO A FORMIDABLE PRODUCER OF INSTRUMENTAL, SEQUENCER BASED ELECTRONIC MUSIC. FIVE ALBUMS AND COUNTLESS SINGLES AND COMPILATION CONTRIBUTIONS LATER, HE'S PRODUCED A BACK-CATALOGUE THAT MOVES THROUGH CRUNCHY DETROIT INSPIRED BLEEPS AND MELANCHOLY SYNTH PADS FOR LABELS INCLUDING DEFOCUS, MERCK, U-COVER, SEELAND, N5MD AND INTR_VERSION, AS WELL AS HIS OWN SURGERY LABEL, AND HIS LATEST PROJECT, 10:32, FOR GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL, COULD BE HIS BEST YET.

PIL
METAL BOX (1979)

PiL began as a shambolic and skeletal framework of a band that was always destined to self-implode. Regardless of Lydon's previous associations, the gesture he made by wanting to reinvent and not regurgitate what had come before was an admirable one. Beer driven jams, and a dual dose of cheeky laddishness and unpretentious experimentation resulted in a landmark 'album' in *Metal Box* (or Second Edition), nestled between two equally ambitious yet not quite so effective audio documents. A friend since childhood passed on a well worn copy of *Flowers of Romance* on vinyl causing me to seek out all that came before. Being exposed to such a shambolic, fragmented and unconventional framework of an album at such an early stage of listening to music had quite a profound effect on my outlook on music. I immediately wanted to learn drums, guitar and bass just to mimic the machine-like repetition and treble-laden guitar parts of Keith Levene. 'Poptones' (of which I mimicked partly on 'Jitter Heart' on the *Vanitas* EP in terms of basic structure, also of which Alan McGee named his post-Creation label in honour of), and 'Swan Lake (aka Death Disco)' were two songs that mesmerised me with both machine-like glorious repetition, and pure emotion respectively.
I listened to this album on high-end headphones at least once a week for a year, and found for all its flaws, it has a plethora of hidden detail that I encourage everyone to discover (seek out the recent Men With Beards re-issue on 3x12" with the authentic record-tin packaging).
Experiments with an old ex-Telecom Tascam four-track reel to reel became my fascination post-discovery of *Metal Box*, recording (already horribly bit-reduced) drum parts from an old Amiga500 and then physically damaging the tape surface, and re-recording the damaged-tape beats back into another mix with guitar and bass parts. *Metal Box* as an album is wonderfully erratic and haphazard, yet personally as a source of inspiration it probably helped to shape, more than anything, my interest in experimentation and a tendency to avoid conventional music making methods.
Track down the Death Disco 'megamix' single for an extra few minutes of the Swan Lake / Death Disco 'live' take - still the most haunting moment of the post-punk era output (which also has an alternate version of 'Fodderstompf' on the flip)..

WEATHER REPORT
BLACK MARKET (1976) / HEAVY WEATHER (1977)

Both *Black Market* and *Heavy Weather* represented a more funky evolution of prior versions of Weather Report, and at a young age my brother and I were prone to listening to both albums with a sense of amazement and curiosity. We used to laugh at the bizarre wavering melody of *Black Market*, yet Zawinul's odd chord voicings (and penchant for odd analogue synths) and ability to arrange things so tightly would later in life spark my interest in composition and what it would take to actually make music such as this. I learnt alto-sax for around five years throughout high school, but have subsequently lost all music theory and the ability to read music in any way.
Jaco Pastorius' 'Teen Town' is basically the template for Tom Jenkinson's entire musical output, and is a stunning example of a song that is essentially a bass-solo, and has none of the hallmark wankery associated with 90 per cent of any formulaic improvised jazz, instead focusing on melodic runs that still retain groove and feeling. Pastorius's playing was an astonishing revelation to me in that I had never really heard any instrument quite played like that (fretless electric bass), to the point of high-level expression and nuance. It was as if his melodic expression was almost conversational, with slapback counter melodies branching from an original idea.
'Birdland' is a landmark song for me in that it was probably my first introduction to relatively complex arrangements of melodic music. Zawinul's melodic tendencies always offered something different, and Birdland is the culmination of Pastorius's bass harmonics (and ability to run basslines that are always counter to the main melody), Zawinul's precise playing, and again just an arrangement that is so tight.

BRIAN ENO
AMBIENT 1: MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS (1978) / AMBIENT 2:PLATEAUX OF MIRROR (1980)

A father of a friend at primary school passed on an extra special chrome long-playing tape with both *Ambient 1&2* dubbed from vinyl, and at the time the other-worldliness of both was deeply affecting, and the most vivid memory I have of childhood is long car trips listening to Eno and Steve Reich (*Music for 18 Musicians, Electric Counterpoint*), building bizarre daydream fantasy constructs of colour, movement and depth of field. My father's cigarette smoke wafting into the back seat, the faint nausea of winding South Australian coastal roads, the distinct calm that used to exist with the lack of electronic phones and devices, are all deeply ingrained in my childhood memories and firmly bound to the stark ambience of *Music for Airports*. The underlying tape hiss that creeps to the surface plays its part amongst the textural tapestry of phasing, pitch altered piano segments, resonating vibraphones and other incidental instruments (1-Part1). Eno's method of creation also fascinated me, making use of tape loops to create phase-compositions that created interplay and counter-dynamics; this was sampling and automation before the concepts even existed.
The generous tendencies of Roger Noakes and his willingness to dub his vinyl collection on tape for friends got me on a path in later life to discover and then explore Eno's back catalogue as well as those of Robert Wyatt (played on *Ambient1*) and Harold Budd (*Ambient2*). The stark emotion and honesty of Harold Budd's playing is perhaps more the culprit for the emergence of the term ambient as a genre..

BARK PSYCHOSIS
HEX (1994) / TALK TALK - LAUGHING STOCK (1992) / MARK HOLLIS - S/T (1998)

Talk Talk's progression and transformation from New Romantic beginnings to long-jam post-rock stalwarts is a fascinating example of band outgrowing itself, and having the focus and precision to reinvent themselves sufficiently to almost single-handedly birth a new genre. it's an impressive feat to say the least. Similarly, Bark Psychosis took the

baton, strangely enough with Lee Harris from Talk Talk joining the band (which was subsequently snatched by the likes of Radiohead, amongst so many other more recent bands). The one characteristic of any band (and logically it is usually only one album that refines and distills this quality) that is immortalised in releasing a stunning album, is that they employ multiple levels of dynamics, and create whole slabs of space between instruments and arrangements. A song such as 'Street Scene' from *Hex* has tension, deep melodic basslines, hushed vocals that sway in and out of focus, horn parts, muted snare drums, a Hawaiian-themed slide guitar run, and a serene outro that is a song in itself. *Hex* is infamously the album that Simon Reynolds used to coin the term 'post-rock'.

Laughing Stock and its logical progression in the form of lead singer Mark Hollis' self titled solo album, both exude a production aesthetic of over-analysis, of far too many hours spent tweaking mixes that most would leave untweaked, but Talk Talk (in their post synthpop reincarnation) and Mark Hollis are two entities that strive to better the concept of what an album should be as an audio document. The precision and fastidiousness of production are so apparent, that repeated listens only reinforce the strength and depth of feeling within the songs, rather than the unfurling of the magic within an album that often occurs form over-exposure. The abandonment of sequencing and over-programmed phrasing with my own music at the moment is a direct consequence of my love of these albums.

RED HOUSE PAINTERS
'ROLLERCOASTER' / 'BRIDGE' (1993)

'Katy Song' was my introduction to Red House Painters, and whilst a self-indulgent and stripped bare account of Mark Kozelek's eternal heartache, it managed to be a soundtrack to my own angst whilst starting university and really not having much of a clue as to why I was there. Shimmering fuzz-driven acoustic guitar, slow building 10-minute songs ('Funhouse' alternating between dissonant phrasing and delicate, pretty finger picking), Kozelek's soaring reverb-laced voice, all seemed to be the musical accompaniment to every memory I have of the early to mid nineties. The majestic arrangements and grandeur all seemed to gradually diminish with each following RHP album, as Kozelek focused on a more live feel and developed a penchant for grating rock-out interludes amongst more heartfelt moments. Both albums are self titled but have been fan-branded by their cover art (both *Rollercoaster* and *Bridge*), and the sepia-toned imagery of these earlier albums are as ingrained on my memory as the jealousy-drenched verses of Kozelek's slowcore doomed-love anthems.

HERBIE HANCOCK
HEADHUNTERS (1973)

Herbie Hancock's twelfth studio album, and the first thing I ever heard in my life that had groove. This record sat in my parents' vinyl cupboard for a long time merely as an object that scared the living shit out of me as a very young kid. Herbie, complete with an alien-like UV-meter headgear on the sleeve cover-art, and menacing personnel in the background was sufficient to prevent me from hearing it until into my teens. The plodding slow-groove of 'Chameleon' and 'Watermelon Man' just blew me away. The clavinet as a replacement to rhythm guitar, the weird vocalising with a beer bottle on 'Watermelon Man', and Herbie's use of unconventional synth gear all blew my mind.

SUN ELECTRIC
30.7.94 LIVE (1995)

Picked this up from a Central Station for five bucks probably 15 years ago, and have managed to play the vinyl to the point of complete top-end decimation. This live set to me is a stellar example of a structured performance that still has mistakes and flat-spots, yet manages to remain graceful and dynamic. Something about the evolving and pulsing sequences encapsulates all that I remember about '90s ambient-techno and electronic music, yet the album has near to no beats. This is such a sensual album (particularly 'An Atom of All Suns'), and it represents to me an audio abbreviation of very good sex, possibly why this album never quite moved into the periphery for me and always creeped onto every new music device, music library on a new computer, CD in a car, the top of every stack of random vinyl having moved to a new house.

Postcards from Sónar 2009 Barcelona

www.cyclicdefrost.com/sonar2009

by Richard Byers

Roland Olbeter, Jon Hopkins (DE), Filastine (US), Ryoichi Kurokawa (JP), Bomb Squad (US) Quayola (UK), Nikka (ES), Grace Jones (JM), Mary Anne Hobbs (UK), Joker (UK) Richie Hawtin (CA), Ben Frost (AU/IS), SND (UK), Byetone (DE), Alva Noto (DE), Atom tm (DE) Orbital (UK) & Moderat (DE) & more

18,19,20 June 2009