
ISSUE 25
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CYCLIC DEFROST

Cyclic *Defrost* Magazine

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Contents

Editorial

Far from quivering anxiously in the corner, the 25th issue of Cyclic Defrost celebrates the joys of quarter-life, without the crisis.

Given this magazine's history it would be easy to think that we might skirt around some of the more prominent heavy-hitters from times past and present. Instead, this issue we're proud to present our writers' takes on musicians that have helped shape the contemporary electronic musical landscape.

Four Tet, Icarus and Severed Heads are all profiled in this issue, alongside new sounds from DāM-Funk. Jennifer Moses provides an insightful profile on DJ Spooky, an academic, musician, and author who manages to articulate so many sentiments experienced at the quarter-life mark, almost unintentionally.

Our cover is provided by Dave Fernandes from HAHA Industries and Lucas Abela provides a brilliant take on Cyclic Selects towards the end of the issue.

There's also plenty of web-only features to check out, including an interview with Pantha Du Prince.

As always, enjoy.

Shaun, Lex, Matt
Editors
Cyclic Defrost

Dave Fernandes
Local
by Alexandra Savvides

Discoteca Psychadelica

As *Cyclic Defrost* peeks across the threshold of quarter-life, Dave Fernandes takes its cover into a realm of potential and positivity.

Fernandes is a DJ and digital designer, part of Sydney design and promotional crew HAHA Industries, a team of five who aim to create unique music experiences for a city too often restricted by other live music venues. “Everyone is extremely dedicated and talented at what they do and together we make HAHA Industries. We’re not a nightclub or festival brand”, he says. “We like doing things a little differently, we like to change things so that Sydney doesn’t end up so monotonous.” The crew have brought acts from Optimo to Tim Sweeney to our shores, pulling in crowds to covert locations and warehouse spaces across the city.

The HAHA ethos could be anti-establishment, if the establishment consists of terrible music, over priced booze, gorilla bouncers and pretentious beauty queens: things Fernandes lists as characteristic of the mainstream Sydney live scene. “Primarily we need a platform and space for music to be heard and respected. We’ve dealt with a list of venue owners who are concerned with nothing more than bums on seats and squeezing dollars out of every promoter, slowly annihilating Sydney’s artistic integrity and culture, and we just don’t stand for that.”

Speakeasies are common in the HAHA world - punters find out locations close to the performance date, by mailing list, Facebook or word-of-mouth. But far from being a nostalgic throw-back to the past just for the sake of it, the speakeasy is a method of promotion that allows Fernandes and the crew to bring together likeminded people in an environment free from venue restrictions and those who just don’t get it.

In terms of how this affects the visual design for flyers and promotional material, Fernandes finds it particularly liberating. “It allows me to design as open and freely as the music we are trying to express. Most nightclub and festival flyers have a commercial and general message, where as with ours we try to communicate the message of creative sound and a unique atmosphere in order to attract an intelligent and switched-on crowd.”

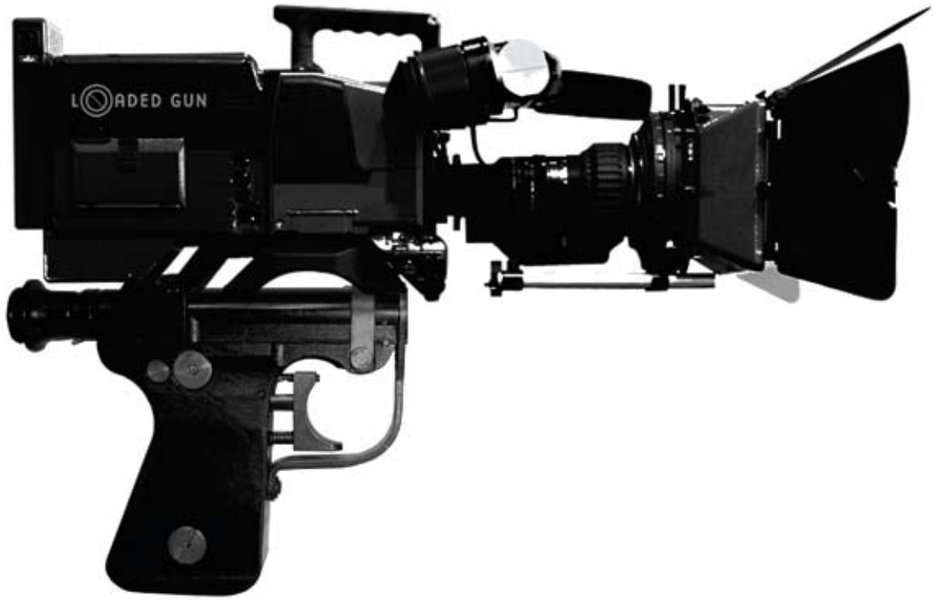
It’s something that is present in all of HAHA’s visual output, particularly visible in the Under The Radar (UTR) flyers. Augmented by bold sans serif typography, the UTR flyer for Optimo’s show in March 2010 consisted of a vintage looking photograph of a man with what appears to be two giant amplifying cones strapped to his ears, overlayed with a giant black circle. This circle stems from the HAHA logo, appearing as a frequent motif by being referred to in the rest of the black shapes in the so far seven part UTR series. Other representations have included a cosmic landscape stamped with the trademark black circle, or a kookaburra emblazoned with a hexagon. It’s this retro, war-themed photography covered in black objects that represent HAHA’s “battle with soul-destroying venues of Sydney without being ‘detected’,” says Fernandes.

> “Influences never end, and as long as they don’t you’ll never be short of something to create. I think that’s a beautiful thing.”

“For UTR#04 we used a stealth bomber for Mark Pritchard’s appearance, as he is known to have a dubstep and electronica ‘stealth’-like sound. The police sirens ringing in his second track was quite surreal.” Alphatown also played live which had a very “flying” feel to it; rolling and speedy. For UTR#05 the photo of the inside of a submarine was used as we had Sub Bass Snarl, MonkFly & Johnny Faith all playing a deep, dubstep and techno orientated sound.

“I think I try and deliver something visually the same way one would hear it in the sound we are embodying – familiarity mixed with the new and in different expressive ways. Our sound is quite open so I try to take the same attitude towards the design. Not being bound by ‘brand rules’ and trends allows us to change all the time. This is also used as a way to find the right audience, which we think is pivotal to any event. We’re in a world where we are surrounded by communications that don’t require you to think, I like going against that grain and it works. Our audience is an influence, the art attracts the desired audience and its the audience that makes our events.”

In 2008, HAHA hosted Tim Sweeney in the basement of a Spanish restaurant, at an event called ‘Discoteca Psicodelica’. “Tim’s radio show is called ‘Beats In Space’ in New York and he really pushes some great electronic music, reworked and experimental sounds and a lot of it does sound wonky and trippy, though still coherent, beautiful and makes you want to dance. That’s where the “Psicodelica” came from and “Discoteca” speaks for itself. Why in Spanish? It created another point of difference



> “I think I try and deliver something visually the same way one would hear it in the sound we are embodying – familiarity mixed with the new and in different expressive ways.”

that was still understood. It makes you think.

"The colour scheme has been commonly used to represent the bright contrasts portrayed with psychedelic states, the pink on blue together makes it a little hard to focus as your eyes are left trying to adjust."

Throughout his childhood, Fernandes was taken by his brother's involvement in graffiti, though he gradually moved from walls outside to one inside: a computer screen. He cites early influences like pop-surrealist artist Todd Schorr, Coop, Doze Green and Paul Insect. "I didn't aspire to illustrate like those guys because they're ridiculously good, but the way they visualised things was mind bending and extremely engaging." Previous digital and online influences included work from The Designers Republic, Tomato, Joshua Davis's "Praystation", Michael Cina and Hi-Res studio in the UK, which Fernandes still references from time to time.

"Locally I remember coming across the early Design is Kinky and Australian InFront community portals. It amazed me that there was a community of creatives online, actively sharing thoughts and working together. They're both now two of the biggest, if not the biggest online communities for the Australian design industry and ones that I am continually referring to."

"I find influences in lots of different things. [Looking at] other artists away from design is really interesting. I like seeing how minds think alike yet produce in completely different manners. I don't try to produce a particular style, I use what I know, or seek out what I can learn, to create what I need to communicate."

> "25 is a beautiful age, so young and full of potential."

"Today there's hundreds of influences that come in many shapes and forms and I love drawing from those, but in terms of design I still haven't seen a studio compare to UniversalEverything in the UK. They're my all time favourite design studio whose crossover with design and art I have not seen anywhere else."

When Fernandes is designing for a particular event he likes to surround himself with music from that particular artist. "Obviously I work with electronic music so that has precedence but when I'm designing I go off a few different things. When doing commercial work it's emotional, so I go by how I'm feeling at the time, or by the urgency of the job. On high rotation I have things like Jamie Lloyd, Flying Lotus, Julian Casablancas, Lou Reed, Optimo's *Sleepwalk*, Massive Attack, Arthur Russell, Horace Andy… Also my background being Portuguese, I have developed a love for the Fado and Spanish Flamenco also which I find quite serious yet flamboyant."

For this issue's cover, Fernandes drew on the theme "Cyclic Defrost", as well as the milestone issue number. "I used the letters from the name "Cyclic Defrost" as a basis to create the shapes used to generate the typeface and the number 25 for the 25th issue.

"The shapes are clean, geometrical and straight edged but overlapped and randomly placed to create the colour and pattern. They were constructed then left as they lay, non-specific to a grid that a lot of traditional design is based on. I also wanted the design to reflect the liberty of the music that Cyclic Defrost embraces."

Black-and-white photography overlayed with monochrome shapes is something that's prevalent throughout Fernandes' work for HAHA, yet for this cover he has allowed colour to play its part. The photos, of sakura blossoms and a young woman, "signify that 25 is a beautiful age, so young and full of potential.

"Influences never end, and as long as they don't you'll never be short of something to create. I think that's a beautiful thing."

More of Dave's work can be seen at www.hahaindustries.com

After the accident

Severed Heads
Local
by Chris Downton

History is filled with creative artists whose cultural influence far outstrips the number of records they've sold, and when it comes to the last thirty years of popular electronic music, Sydney-based band Severed Heads certainly make that list.

While the arena-straddling likes of Trent Reznor and Orbital have praised the band as a pivotal influence over the years, apart from perennially remixed dance favourite 'Dead Eyes Opened', Severed Heads haven't really had a 'hit', remaining a cult/underground act in the eyes of many listeners. That said, the above factor is perhaps at least partially due to Severed Heads' refusal to remain stylistically in the one place or repeat covering the same predictable ground. Over their lifespan they've been linked with a multitude of divergent scenes ranging from industrial through to noise, post-punk, synth-pop and ambient. It's telling also that Severed Heads fans are humorously termed 'Cliffords' – a reference to the band's retrospective collection *Clifford Darling Please Don't Live In The Past* – a statement that could perhaps describe the band's ever-shifting nature alone.

Throughout the last thirty years a number of different collaborators including Garry Bradbury, Loop Orchestra founder Richard Fielding and late dance producer Robert Racic have passed through Severed Heads' shifting lineup, with founder Tom Ellard remaining the sole constant member. In many senses, it's also Ellard's early integration of computer generated visuals that set the standard for other artists to follow, with the animations just as crucial to any Severed Heads performance as the musical elements. Given the band's cultural and artistic significance, it certainly seems appropriate that this year's 'Circa 1979' post-punk retrospective as part of the Sydney Festival saw Ellard presenting a talk at the Seymour Centre, as well as a recent well-attended farewell Severed Heads show at the Hyde Park barracks that marked the official end of the band as an entity after three decades of creative activity.

With Severed Heads' farewell live set at the Hyde Park Barracks just a few weeks in the past at the time of this interview session, one of the first things I'm curious to ask Ellard about concerns the challenges faced by a band with such an extensive and stylistically diverse back-catalogue when selecting material for a one-off farewell set. Given the strict limitations of a one hour live performance, were there tracks that he would've liked to include or emphasise that he was forced to leave out, and vice versa? As it turns out, Ellard's response is firmly in keeping with the opinions expressed recently during his talk for the Circa 1979 series regarding artificially manufactured ideas of nostalgia for 'classic eras.'

"What was important was that old and new are not different," he argues. "Whether 1982 or 2002 should not matter, the date a track was written has no bearing on the quality of the music, but that's how it gets described far too often by rock historians and I despise that kind of thinking which makes no sense in the confused culture of 2010. So we put tracks next to each other that were written 20 years apart and said – look it's all one. A demonstration of timelessness, which I think is exactly the current issue in music."

I suggest that this issue of 'classic eras' must be something that comes up quite often for an act that's moved through such distinct stylistic phases over its thirty year long existence, shifting from the early tape-based noise experimentation of albums like *Since The Accident* through to the more pop/dance-based tracks of the early nineties like 'Greater Reward' and 'All Saints Day'. Indeed, over the years, I've heard a multitude of descriptions applied to Severed Heads ranging from industrial through to pop, noise and post-punk, all of which seem to only describe very limited aspects of the band's work.

"Tom Ellard is just getting old and wants to say goodbye to the 16 year old that started all that band stuff."

Does he find these genre tags restrictive or frustrating?

"Genre tags are disgusting filth," Ellard replies. "Why in God's name are they attached to everything except as some aid to the terminally dull? It's something that now is institutionalised via MP3. I've said this before, but the moment somebody decides you're a 'dance' band they criticise you for being insufficiently 'dance'. Replace 'dance' with any term you like – same backwards need to conform and compartmentalise music into little boxes. We refused to stay put and people put us down because we were never 'dance enough', 'industrial enough', 'experimental enough' or whatever term they wanted to use as their straightjacket. Just plain wrong.

"And history is bunk. There was no 'sixties' or 'eighties'. There's no such thing as 'classical music'. It's all manufactured by people that need to box things in retrospect. Beethoven's music is as fun now as it was when first played."

As a longtime Severed Heads listener, I'd had the initial impression from statements made by Ellard on his website and blog that the band had quietly ceased to exist as an entity sometime in 2008/early 2009 (a perception reinforced further by the 'Severed Heads 1979-2009' inscription displayed at the end of the Barracks set). The very concept of a farewell show also doesn't immediately seem in keeping with an artist so critical of dwelling on the past. Was a farewell set something that he'd always intended to do prior to the Sydney Festival, or was it a case of the surrounding Circa 1979 event making it a more interesting proposition?

"The only reason we came back for that show was that it was a genuine enquiry from some young people that had missed out on the era and wanted to see if it was important for their own ideas," Ellard explains. "*Signal to Noise* was not old people celebrating their lost youth, whining about the present – those were the sort of people that made me shut it all down in 2008. I really hated Severed Heads at that time, I still find it tedious, but when asked politely and with mutual respect, we were happy to do it one more time. Now of course the backbiting, cynical old BS is raining down again, but they can't touch it. Severed Heads is dead," he emphasises. "Maybe we put that on display like Chairman Mao - but it's not going to get up.

"Honestly it was due to Sarah and a few helpers at Modular who looked at the whole thing fresh and made it happen just right. They weren't doing it for the business – this was nothing to do with Modular, but the company kicked in here and there to make it happen. I just advised, but when it came down to it, it was just mutual respect at work."

Throughout the Barracks set, one of the things that was immediately apparent was the updated nature of many of the older tracks such as 'Harold & Cindy Hospital' and 'Greater Reward', with the reworked sonic elements being matched with retooled versions of the accompanying visuals, the latter track's digitally rendered dancing bats being a key example. Was much of this material prepared especially for the farewell show?

"We were asked to perform in Belgium a few years ago (2005's Bimfest) and the promoter contracted for there to be a lot of old tracks in there, which is common in Europe," Ellard explains. "I was prepared to do this so long as they could be expressed in a recent voice and that was OK with Antwerp. What you got in 2010 was a continuation of that show concept. Old track, up to the minute version. At the front of the show the audience were given the lock off date – December 2009. Same as when you buy a tin of dog food, you want it fresh and you look at the use by date.

"Most of the ideas in those clips are now traditional to us. 'Greater Reward' has used the same dancing bats for 22 years, just remade. The robot people in 'Firefly Overlocker' are nine years old. The biggest thing technically was making all the clips high definition widescreen. Many of the assets were made for old TV and some of the clips took months to rebuild from the basic parts. But if you are truly alive, you grow. And having critiqued Kraftwerk for being a travelling decaying museum built in 1991, it was up to me to prove that there's a better way."

On that particular note, I'm curious to find out more about Ellard's reasons for drawing Severed Heads to a close after thirty years of steady activity. Does this mean that all of the music he releases from this point onwards will be under his own name, rather than a 'band' entity or alias?

"By using my name I declare that I am a person," he affirms. "The day I quit was when I realised that people treated me like a utility company - something to ring up and abuse and say whatever nasty thing that came into their mind because hey, it's not a person, it doesn't have feelings. Seeing as one of the reasons the band continued was to gather like-minded souls, it was a failure. It found some, but these good people didn't need to go through all that band/fan garbage and it was better to drop that and just relax.

"Also, despite the nice big farewell, the previous decade was pretty bad. We struggled and we struggled, but very few people cared. When people say that the gig was great and we should do it again – maybe they don't realise we did lots of great gigs that were not noticed.

> "There's no such thing as 'classical music'. It's all manufactured by people that need to box things in retrospect."

Tom Ellard is just getting old and wants to say goodbye to the 16-year-old that started all that band stuff.

"The back catalogue will continue to be available (on Ellard's www.sevcom.com website) and as inexpensive as I can make it," he continues. "More of the albums are coming out in the UK. Sevcom will continue to offer a view of the past, and my own site will offer a view of what is coming, and always try to be not too sensible."

When I interviewed Ellard a few years ago around the time of the *Illustrated Family Doctor* soundtrack/DVD, he'd mentioned that he thought CD albums were over and that he was far more interested in exploring DVD albums in the future. I ask whether this still an avenue that he's interested in exploring with reference to projects such as his upcoming Aerodrom audio photo novel.

"CD albums are over, and I struggle to find the replacement," Ellard replies. "I love wheels – Blu-ray is the latest – because I am old. But maybe wheels aren't it either, given that most culture is being sent over torrents. So many people claim to do good by providing other people's music for free online, including mine. It's kind of uninspiring to go to a blog and see praise heaped on some guy for offering something for which I dared ask five dollars at my site - I guess they are the real artists now."

"Right now Aerodrom is stuck because there's just so much other work to do. But for my work (teaching game design) I am playing a lot of adventure games released over the last 35 years and trying to accumulate the wisdom of it all. When I can get to it I hope to be a complete guru!"

I'm also keen to find out more about an upcoming video project he's mentioned online called *Umami* that would select the highlights of an entire day's TV programming and then compile it into a mix based on various pre-set parameters – and from the sounds of things, it's something that's exactly as conceptually complicated as it first sounds.

"Oh, that's horribly complex," Ellard confirms. "It's turned into a doctorate and the hard part is this – what makes a 'highlight'? What makes something 'interesting'? If you had a machine that watched TV all day and then compressed and recalled the highlights into a vision mix all night – wouldn't that machine be something that dreams? I have had to back away from *Umami* which is really John Jacob's idea. I am trying to start with something that orders video according to a simplistic model of depth psychology. Then perhaps it can recall these according to a 'train of thought' – really a vector drawn though a multidimensional space. I have to start with very simple models of the idea."

Given Ellard's earlier comments regarding balancing his creative audiovisual activities with television and soundtrack work and a day job as a university lecturer, he's certainly got his hands full. In closing, I ask whether he could ever see himself being in a band again in the future. In many senses, the answer is pretty much exactly the one I was expecting.

"No one is in a band anymore - everyone is a label," Ellard explains in parting. "I just want to enjoy music the way I did before it all became so scrutinised by uptight critics. Maybe that means just recording for myself and never releasing any music again, but that somehow seems like I'm trying to be snobby. So perhaps, recording music and then dumping it on a torrent, saying that it's really somebody else I'm pirating. That might be fun!"

Severed Heads' five CD retrospective collection Adenoids and the rest of the band's back catalogue is available through www.sevcom.com

The Avant-Garde Compositors

Chicago Underground Duo
International
by Kurt Iveson

"Brazil is all about sound, rhythm, melody. It is hard to walk down the street and not hear someone whistling a song or clapping a rhythm or singing something."

Rob Mazurek and Chad Taylor made their first album together as the Chicago Underground Duo in 1998. With the 2010 release of *Boca Negra*, they're up to their fifth album together as a duo. They have also made five other albums with others in various configurations of the ever-mutating Chicago Underground Collective. And in between all this, Mazurek and Taylor have been heavily involved in other ensembles, from post-rock outfits like Tortoise through to other jazz and avant-garde acts like Mazurek's Exploding Star Orchestra and Marc Ribot. Busy people!

Boca Negra contains the Duo's trademark mix of atmospheres and styles. It opens with a raucous free improvisation, which highlights the sympathy and telepathy that has developed between these two players in their years working together. The rest of the album includes tight and frenetic grooves such as 'Spy on the Floor' and delicate, beautifully-crafted melodies and layered loops such as 'Hermeto'.

Typically for a Chicago Underground Duo album, *Boca Negra* also features a wide range of sounds and instruments. Mazurek and Taylor have continued to explore options beyond the cornet and drums which are notionally their first instruments. Here, they also make use of melodic percussion, woodwinds, piano, sequencers and a range of effects. And they've also deployed a range of interesting production methods, with Matt Lux (bass player for Iron and Wine, Isotope 217, Mandarin Movie and the Exploding Star Orchestra) on the boards.

To coincide with the album's release, I had a chance to put some questions to Rob Mazurek about the recording of *Boca Negra* in Sao Paolo and its place in their musical trajectory.

I want to start by asking about the relationship between your music and place. You've been working together for years as the Chicago Underground, what does the 'Chicago' in 'Chicago Underground' mean to you guys?

Chicago is my home. I moved to the city in 1983 and have used this city as a base of operation all these years. I split time between Brazil and Chicago these last years but almost all my projects and recordings have come from the city. Early on in the late 80s and early 90s I spent a great deal of time learning the language of jazz

"We have always enjoyed the idea of blurring the lines between composed and improvised music."

with such extraordinary musicians as Ken Prince, Lin Halliday, Dave Bloom, Billy Brimfield, Von Freeman, Jodie Christian and developing music based on the jazz music of the 50s with George Fludas, John Weber, Erma Thompson etc.

But later in the 90s I became excited at the prospect of creating a different sound. Based on the idea of the midwest and the ideas of such avante guardists like Sun Ra, Art Ensemble of Chicago, etc... I met Chad Taylor and Jeff Parker and began rehearsing new forms (at least for us) in order to find something else. These first Underground sessions were held at the Green Mill in Chicago and were the catalyst for what would come. The influences of the then brewing post rock thing and groups like Gastr del Sol, Jim O'Rourke, David Grubbs, Tortoise, Isotope 217 etc. Chicago is home. Always has been home.

This was the first record you guys have made outside of Chicago. What is it about Brazil and its music that attracts you, why were you there?

I invited Chad to play with My Exploding Star Orchestra featuring Roscoe Mitchell in Sao Paulo Brazil, where I was in residency for a while. I wanted to experiment with the idea of three drummers. It was a great success and enabled Chad and I to spend some time together, which is rare these days based on our schedules and the fact that Chad lives in NYC now and I shuttling back and forth from Sao Paulo and Chicago. Brazil is all about sound, rhythm, melody. It is hard to walk down the street and not hear someone whistling a song or clapping a rhythm or singing something. It has an extremely sound/music oriented culture that

you just don't find in many places I have been. This of course puts you in a state of mind that is quite joyful. But on the other hand, we have been developing our own vocabulary for more than 15 years, so location is not everything.

So how are those elements of Brazil reflected in this record?

The thing is, Brazilian music is so much more than the stereotypical samba music, or bossa nova. There is a deep history in subversive, radical sound, especially during the time of the dictatorship. The underground movement in Brazil during the 60s and 70s was and still is intense stuff both in words and music. The music we made for this record is a sum or anti-sum of our experiences up to this point in time in this world and perhaps beyond.

The name of the track 'Hermeto' is the only explicit Brazilian reference in song titles. What's the story of this track?

This is a song that Chad constructed based on some music that Hermato Pascoal gave us at an airport in Brazil. We saw him sitting there and struck up a conversation. A few minutes later he is writing something down on some music paper and hands us this amazing composition. Chad took a part of this and made the song, while I floated colour within the cascading pianos on my muted distorted cornet.

***Boca Negra* has a mix of improvised and composed tunes. What does 'composed' mean in your writing and recording process? How 'composed' is 'composed'? And what role does post-production play in crafting the final structure?**

We have always enjoyed the idea of blurring the lines between composed and improvised music. So for example, 'Spy on the Floor' was a written bass line and melody. The idea on 'Spy on the Floor' was to find the Rhythm. The electric Mbira songs are a mix of improvised and fixed ideas. The idea on these songs was to find the melody. Not many things were cut up in post production. A little bit on 'Spy on the Floor' and the rest was pretty much how we played it in the studio.

Presumably you are both playing and composing all the time, but you both have so many different projects going on. What makes something right for the Duo as opposed to another project/group?

I am always thinking of the Duo. It's the group that I have spent the most time with. Whenever I get together with Chad, some kind of magic happens. It doesn't matter how long we have been away from it, things just flow. Pretty much all the sessions have been fully planned and half found within the process. We try a lot of things and what works for us we use and what doesn't work we throw out or perhaps use for other

"I think our music relates to everything. This truly is our music."

projects. The idea is finding the space between us that creates a kind of magic.

Like your other albums, this one involves you both making use of heaps of different instruments - not just cornet and percussion, but electronics and computers, piano and flute and melodic percussion. Were there any particular instruments that either of you were working with for the first time here, that you reckon drew out some new ideas or approaches?

Chad has been studying the Mbira and this sound done in this way is very new to the group. Chad also rolled up the sleeves and got in there on the computer, programming some beautiful stuff. I stuck more to the cornet for this recording with some flute. I was more involved with the mixing of the record where we did some interesting things with filtering. And for sure we hit upon some areas that were new to us as far as orchestrating silence.

Are most of the effects added in post-production? Is it important to hear them as you're playing, to have control over their dynamics in the process of recording, or do you find yourself applying them with some distance from playing?

For this recording most of the filtering of sound was done live. Chad using ring modulator and analog delay for the Mbira and me the same for the cornet and flute. We like to have complete control over this. The idea is that the instrument filtered is the instrument and we play that. The added things in post-production usually only act as an enhancement of the initial idea.

Could you tell us about your relationship to jazz? You both bring a jazz background (among other things) to your music, and there's lots of improvisation in your music, but your albums don't feel to me like "jazz records", and I guess I find it hard to pin down why I feel like this. Is it something about focusing on creating atmospheres instead of displaying virtuosity? Or something else? How do you think what you do relates to jazz?

We were both brought up playing jazz and still do play jazz. My personal trajectory has moved into realms of noise (Italian futurists, Merzbow, John Cage, Kevin Drumm). The idea of silences as reflected in the perception works of James Turrell, or the paintings of Mark Rothko, piano music of Boulez, the minimalism of Chalemagne Palestine and the silent energy of Bill Dixon. I think our music relates to everything. This truly is our music.

That leads me to ask about how you find an audience for your music. Part of the function musical boundaries perform is not just to separate but also to find and specify an audience for performances and recordings. "This is a jazz record, you'll find it in the jazz section, hear it on jazz radio." So, how have you gone about building and reaching an audience for your music, when it doesn't neatly fit in a pre-established category?

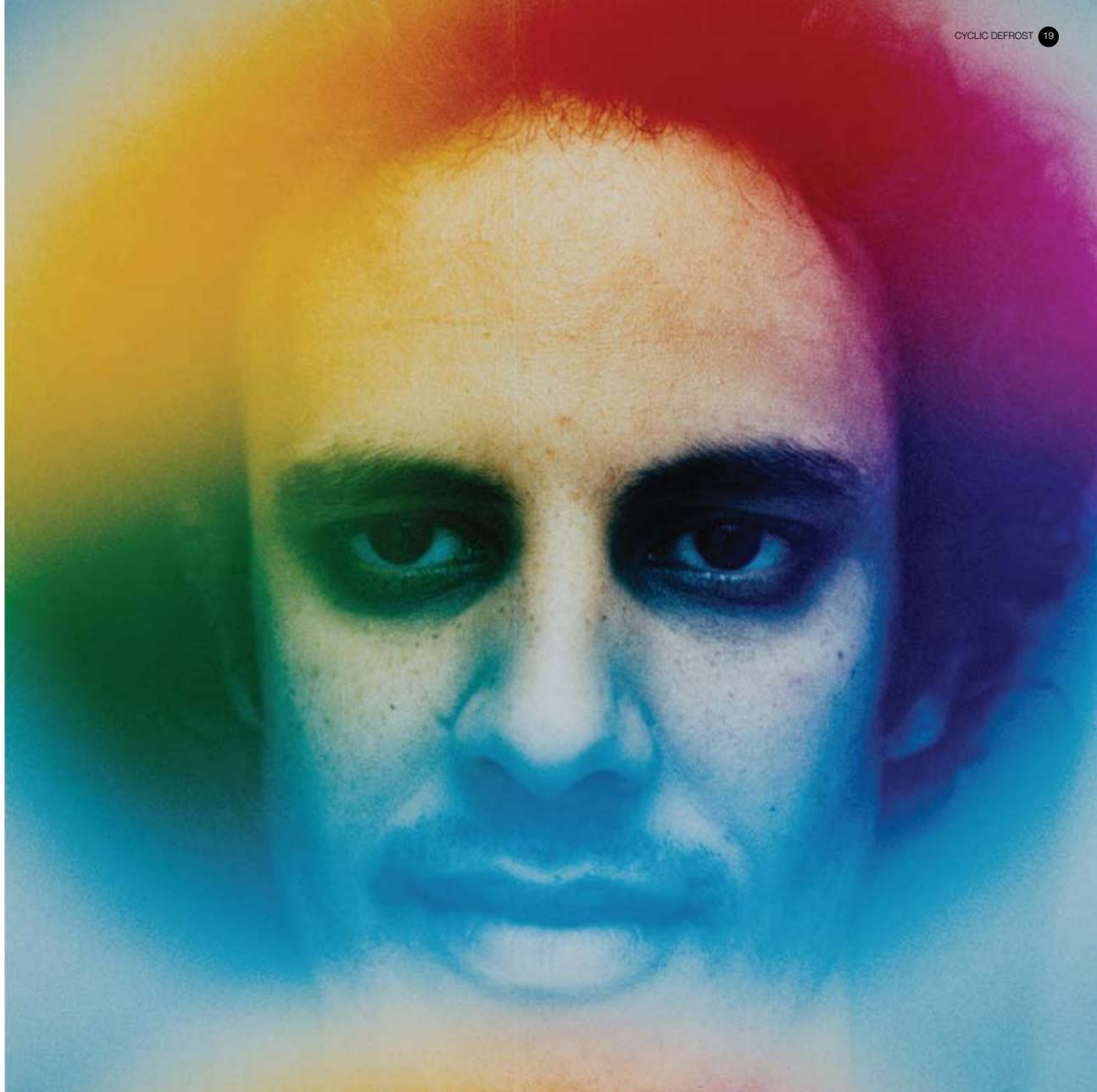
We play, we record, we try to be as honest as we can be about the pure sound we are trying to project.

***Boca Negra* is released through Thrill Jockey.**

A Different Drummer

"After working with Steve my whole rhythmic idea had changed a lot. I found that I'd moved away from a hip hop influence, into a different area."

Four Tet/ Kieran Hebden
International
by Wayne Stronell



Together with school friends Adem Ilhan and Sam Jeffers, Kieran Hebden was the third member of UK post-rock band Fridge, releasing highly collectable records on Output Recordings throughout the 90s. The instrumental trio released four EPs for Output Recordings; two albums and a compilation of the vinyl singles, and flirted momentarily with Go! Beat Records for two EPs before setting up their own Text Records and releasing two albums. Kieran Hebden openly admits he has always enjoyed working on his own, and the first Four Tet 7" under the early name 4T, (also released on Output Recordings) came out the same year as the early Fridge vinyl singles. It's been a progression from the very first release, alternating between his solo work as Four Tet, and the band's output as Fridge.

On the eve of the release of his fifth album *There Is Love In You*, I had the opportunity to chat with Kieran, and while the interview was meant to focus on the new album, it was too hard to ignore the last 13 years of his career, and I was quite certain he'd probably had endless interviews that only concentrated on the now, and part of understanding Kieran's sound is looking how he got there. The grueling wheel of music press must be taking its toll. "It's just surreal; I don't think I could describe it as grueling, but strange for sure, I've done them every 15 minutes for the last hour or so.

"I was never really into the rock sound; guitars, drums, bass, vocals always seemed tiresome, nothing really grabbed my attention, and experimentation was what excited me, something fresh and original. When 'out-rock', 'post-rock' or 'experimental rock' caught my attention in the mid 90s, it offered something new, not entirely original but fresh, with no vocals to distract my attention from the many influences I was hearing from what I thought was a redundant sound. Years of listening to electronic music had brought me back full circle, being excited about sounds that real musicians make. Fridge really seemed to make a connection, distilling everything good about rock instrumentation, jazz experimentation, and technical finesse in the studio."

> "I don't want to spend all my time just plugging things in and messing around with cables, I just want to make music."

Kieran Hebden seemed to take this one step further, releasing a more electronic sound as Four Tet, his solo project. "I'd always made music on my own, even before Fridge. I had a little four track at home and it was very normal for me to always be experimenting with recording and things. Then we had the Fridge record out, and I'd been working on this solo electronic music just as an experiment, just learning how to do stuff.

"I played that to the guys at Output, and they were into that as well, so I put it out," he continues. "I just thought of it as an experiment really, but then when the first Four Tet records came out, they were just as popular as the Fridge stuff, and I think the response was so good, that it encouraged me to take the solo stuff more seriously in some ways."

He has embraced both creative avenues, which appears to have kept him well grounded; he comes across as a humble, passionate, and focused musician. For now he's concentrating on his solo output as Four Tet. "It's just a different experience, like you get the chance to really see through pure ideas in a really clear way. Then you also miss that thing of being able to bounce ideas off people as well. I do enjoy working on my own I think, its something I've always done, and I always will find myself going back to."

Since his very first album *Dialogue* Kieran has fused many styles and sounds. Jazz always seems to be a major influence, no matter how subtle. His music is never static; the progression with each release is what continues to make any Four Tet release essential listening. "It's always been an idea of mine to make sure that my music is moving and changing, and evolving. You mentioned the influence of jazz earlier. Listen to John Coltrane or Miles Davis or something, and look at all the records they've put out, and [hear] how the records document the musical journey they went through. It's always very forward thinking. That's the attitude I want to have towards my music: its constantly moving on to the next thing, and I never want to get stuck repeating myself. I guess that's my main thinking."

This hasn't stopped Kieran collaborating. The other members of Fridge have been busy doing other projects, so this has left room for Kieran to make contacts with other musicians, either as direct collaborations or as a sought after remixer. I was keen to ask him was how he came to work with the legendary jazz drummer Steve Reid.

"I'd actually always had the idea I wanted to work with a drummer. It was after *Everything Ecstatic* came out, I'd put out three Four Tet albums one after the other quite quickly, and I thought I just wanted to do something really different for a bit, work with some other people, do something a little more scary and different again. I mentioned to a friend of mine in France that I wanted to work with a drummer, and he managed to track down Steve, and he got in contact with me, and he's like 'you won't believe who I'm in touch with. I'm in touch with Steve Reid, and you should meet up with him!'

"Steve and I met up and arranged a concert, and what started off as one concert actually became the main focus of my music for quite a few years." This is where I embarrass myself, completely forgetting two of the releases with Steve Reid, and I sheepishly try and cover up this omission with some lame comment that sometimes there's just too much music, "actually there was four albums, two volumes of *Exchange Sessions*, one called *Tongues*, one called *NYC*."

If this shift in his sound wasn't enough, his collaborations continued to surprise the music press, in particular his involvement with the remix project for Madvillain. Perhaps it shouldn't have come as such a surprise; it's been obvious from day one that Kieran has a love of hip-hop. This was reinforced when he hosted *Rage* on ABC TV recently: he showcased his love of a broad spectrum of sounds, but the program was heavily dominated by hip-hop. Kieran has managed to connect with one of the few American labels still pushing the boundaries of hip-hop - Stones Throw Records.

"I met the Stones Throw guys really early on, the first time they came to London. I think they did three nights, at a small club here called Plastic People, and I went and met them. I'd just pressed up this 7" by this guy Koushik, I gave them copies of that, and they ended up signing him. So I was in touch with them, and I did this thing called the Red Bull Music Academy in Brazil, and I hung out with Egon and Madlib, and Madlib had just started working on the Madvillain record I believe. They just called me up a few months later and said "how about you do a remix of one of the tracks from the album", and they asked Koushik as well.

"They ended up sending us all the accapellas from the whole album. I think we both ended up doing four or five mixes, it was too hard to choose one. Once we turned in so many remixes, they had the idea of doing two proper 12 inch records." What was contained on those two EPs became a staple in many a DJ crate for quite a while (mine included), and are now highly sought after. "The Madvillain album was one of the great albums of the last 10 years or so I think, and being asked to do that was really exciting."

The buzz hasn't stopped there. A mysterious black label 12 inch was released in 2009 with minimal information. This time it was a joint release with Burial, which seemed like a perfect collaboration of like minds. Upon its release the internet was abuzz with debate over whether it was a split release or a collaboration. "That was a total collaboration," Hebden confirms. "We didn't do it by email, we worked together in the studio together, we really wanted to do it that way. I went to school with him. When he put his first 12" out, he got back in touch with me, and it was something we were talking about for ages, but kind of slow getting it together. By the time we did get around to putting something out, he'd got a huge reputation off the back of his music, and we ended up having this record on our hands that everybody got quite excited about, which was really good fun."

> "There are so many good sounds around, especially living here in London; it feels like a really exciting time."

Kieran Hebden has been a prolific artist, but the back catalogue of remixes he has done for other artists is also outstanding. He has reshaped many a song by artists such as Aphex Twin, Anti-Pop Consortium, Bonobo, Beth Orton, Super Furry Animals, Radiohead, Matthew Dear, Sia, Nathan Fake, Bloc Party, Battles, David Holmes, The Cinematic Orchestra, and the list goes on. Although his own sound is injected into the remixed songs he still manages to stay true to the original.

"The remixes come from the artists direct, and half from the record labels," he says. "It's pretty normal that a record company will get in touch and say 'we've got this coming out and we want to hit a new audience with it.' A lot are done like that. Most of the remixes I've done over the last few years have been for musicians I have a mutual respect for, bands like Battles, or Thom Yorke. It's a chance to collaborate with them, without having the complications of trying to get in the studio together." It's in no way easy work though, for an artist that respects other musicians' work, Kieran is often humbled by those he produces remixes for. "It's hard. You feel the pressure because you really want to do something the other person likes - you want to be respectful to them and what they've done in their song as well. It's a little bit of a mine field in that way, you also feel very proud and honoured to be doing it at all, it feels good."

After all this banter, a record company representative interrupts our conversation to let me know I don't have much longer before Kieran will have to prepare himself yet again for another interview. I take this prompt as a signal to actually talk about the new album, *There Is Love In You*. The album draws obvious influences from krautrock and African rhythms, with more emphasis on a dancefloor sound. This is no doubt a result of his recent DJ performances as well as his association with emerging producers. "That's definitely true, it's a combination of all that, and the stuff with Steve Reid. After working with Steve my whole rhythmic idea had changed a lot. The rhythms he works with are a lot faster, and more influenced by African music, with a different kind of pulse through it. That combined with the DJ gigs meant that when I started on the new record I found that, especially rhythmically, I'd moved away from a hip hop influence into a different area. It just felt like a good way to move on, just to speed the music up, to put a different emphasis on the drums, and it changed the sound straight away."

I make reference to the short 'Pablo's Heart' from the album. "It's a heartbeat," Hebden reveals, regarding the sound dominating the track. "A friend of mine had a child. It's my Godson's heartbeat, before he was born. I recorded it at the hospital on a mobile phone. I was using the sounds at concerts and things, it sounds like a mad synth or something, especially heard really, really loud. I put it on the album as a little gift for him."

***There Is Love In You* is available now on Domino Records, and you might just find a few copies left of the first two 12" releases, *Love Cry and Sing*.**

Dual Processors

Icarus
International
by Peter Hollo

In the last years of the 1990s, Icarus – aka English cousins Oliver Bown and Sam Britton – released two of the most incredibly detailed drum'n'bass albums in the literature, *Kamikaze* and *Fijaka*. The complex drum programming and sub-bass swoops combined with a willingness for sonic exploration which came to the fore over the next decade-plus of their career, during which Sam would complete a Masters degree in electronic music and composition at the prestigious IRCAM in Paris, and Ollie's work in music performance software would take him to Melbourne to work at the Centre for Electronic Media Art at Monash University.

While their music these days retains the pulse of drum'n'bass, it sits more as a kind of folktronica informed by musique concrète, electro-acoustic music and free jazz. One seems (rightly or wrongly) to hear generative jungle rhythms produced by Ollie's computer programs and snippets of modern composition from Sam's other life.

But, as I put it to Ollie & Sam, the first two albums, in their production, seem to lie more towards the dancefloor end of drum'n'bass with the likes of Photek than with the drill'n'bass of Squarepusher.

Ollie begins: "we were certainly geared up for doing dancefloor music at that time, but we didn't hang around in those circles. I never felt totally at ease in the basement of Blackmarket Records... much happier at [havens for IDM and electronica] Atlas or Ambient Soho!

"But we were certainly convinced of the magnificence of vinyl and the great prestige of getting a track played by a well-known DJ. This was also the time that Warp / Rephlex-style avant-garde re-treatment of hardcore and drum'n'bass styles were emerging, artists such as Plug were very influential, and we considered ourselves broadly spread amongst those interests. Photek was a huge influence, but bear in mind that quite a bit of his music was not really that popular on the dancefloor (although we DJ'd it and freaked out to it all the time).

"The exciting thing about drum'n'bass which doesn't really apply equally to any dance music that came before it is that the stuff seemed so multi-purpose: with the threes against fours and the wide range of time-scales, lightning-fast

drums and drawn out dopey basslines, you could pick and choose your own totally weird dance, juxtaposed with people around you. You could dance to the weird stuff even more weirdly, but there was also a lot of really dancefloor-based work out there which made great listening music, such as Danny Breaks or Paradox, who just got really involved in these incessant beat chopping frenzies that basically provided the content for the whole track, save a couple of drops here and there. I mean, some of my best dancing experiences involved little more than standing in front of a couple of huge speaker stacks, feet firmly stuck to the ground, grinning and prodding a finger into the air. So I think it was really head music for me anyway. No wonder I've put on a bit of weight.

"Bottom line: Plug, Paradox and Photek are the 3 Ps of late 90s breakbeat wizardry."

Both are still very enthusiastic about the d'n'b from their early days. Sam continues: "I think the other thing about drum'n'bass at the time is that no one seemed to really be able to put a finger on it. There was a period before it became a staple diet of London clubs, where it was just renegade music, it was a totally broad spectrum melting pot and it was really exciting to hear the breadth of ideas – I remember going to the Notting Hill Carnival a couple of years in a row and hearing so many different variations.

"For me, that was one of the most inspiring things about it; that sense of experimentation and mashing things up that seemed to be at its core and I think a large part of that was also about the tools available to music producers: the fact that samplers were suddenly mass market music production tools – they no longer cost tens of thousands of pounds, you could pick up an Akai box of tricks at a fairly reasonable price and all of a sudden a whole new world of sound opened up.

"Like a lot of people at the time, we'd also been really influenced by the rhythmic pulse of techno, particularly the Detroit minimalism that would surface through clubs like Tresor in Berlin, but when I started to hear what you could do on a sampler, that was it, I had to get one... Suddenly, it seemed like all of the '60s and '70s tape experiments (that you could buy newly re-issued on CD for bargain prices) by the likes of Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Soft Machine, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, had found a new lease of life – to be spliced out of song structures and looped into some crazy rhythmic throb that would drive itself like a runaway train straight through your psyche on a dance floor. The future had arrived."

> "The thing I remember the most was just hanging out in the studios all night making the most wigged out music you could possibly conceive of."

The scene they found themselves in was much more idiosyncratic and quirky – centred around Phil Earle's Law and Auder label. They worked with people like Bedouin Ascent and Apache 61, artists who were pushing the boundaries of drum'n'bass. Oliver continues:

"At around the time that Roni Size won the Mercury Music Prize, drum'n'bass seemed to get sucked into a nasty little socio-economic corner of the music business, in my mind tied in with a kind of boom-time of big-business clubbing. Those that wanted to make music for 12" vinyl and dancefloors became buried under constraints: 'Keep that snare drum straight, mate, the crowd might get confused or something', and 'we can't have that, they'll be buying bottled water and vodka Red Bulls next door instead!' Or maybe I just got older. It's always enjoyable to imagine that some die hard beat-heads from the late '90s are wondering how Icarus could have lost the plot so bad."

But ten years on, despite a hugely widened palette, Icarus's releases continue to dance to the drum'n'bass beat. "Yeah", says Oliver. "It becomes more and more of an identity. In some ways it is an absurd pose to strike, because you could take out that element and be left with something for a completely different genre: some of our tracks, and Sam's solo work, and both of our experiments with free improvisers, do exactly that. For the past five years I think we've been treating our music in that way, very introspectively, not as something which aims to be something, an end goal, more something which is how it is for a number of historical, personal and technical reasons. Then we play with that identity."

Sam adds: "I also think there was a sense in which a lot of what we started off doing was finding crazy bits of records to sample – we would spend hours going through records and 'digging in the crates' for samples. I had inherited my father's record collection which was about 70 per cent jazz and we both regularly used to frequent the bargain basement record exchange shops in Notting Hill, where the rich denizens of West London were generally off loading their record collections in the switch to CD. You could also pick up a lot of dance music there too – so the things that ended up in our sampler would come from the most eclectic of sources.

"So if anything, I kind of feel that the progression of Icarus over the years has been an investigation into all of the things that used to excite us and we'd sample, a LOT of which would come off of improvised jazz records and weird European avant-garde records made by people with unpronounceable names. If there was one thing that stayed constant it was the eclecticism of our inspiration and the jungle

reference tempo of 160-180 BPM."

Icarus are fascinating partly because of this smudging of genres – outside of drum'n'bass they fit awkwardly into many areas. In 2004 both Icarus and Sam's alter ego Isambard Khroustaliov remixed their friend Four Tet on the *My Angel Rocks Back and Forth* single, a highly effective collaboration and many people's introduction to their work. Given this connection, I tentatively bring up the genre of the time, and am surprised at Ollie's acceptance: "Yes you can say folktronica. I quite like that term. I really like folk music and I really like electronic music, and obviously we do electronic music with acoustic guitars, so it would be a bit of a waste of energy to rail against a term like that. As far as genres go, isn't it just best to be disinterested but also not to take other people's categorisations for granted? Create new genres, as many as possible, and distribute them liberally."

Kieran Hebden himself has suggested that he sees (or saw, at the time) Four Tet as a kind of hip-hop. It may be tempting to throw genre considerations out the window, but with a band as allusive as Icarus, straddling electronic and acoustic, popular and academic, context is important within the music, and becomes an important consideration in listening to and discussing it. Sam takes up the thread:

"I think it's fair to say that, broadly speaking, electronic music has a far bigger issue with the concept of contextualisation than most other types of music, which in a way is totally exemplified by someone like Kieran. As a recent *Pitchfork* review points out, he is someone who thinks very hard about how his records and what he is doing can be referenced and interpreted within the history of recorded music. In many ways, that's symptomatic and indicative of the fact that he admires and samples a great deal of those records to make the music he does; it also reflects a situation where, in the '90s virtually no one performed electronic music live and your lifeline to an audience as an electronic music producer was through DJing. For a DJ, I think it's a natural progression to take a style of music you like, spice it up a bit (or get someone you know to spice it up) and re-mould it for an audience who might never have even considered listening to the original style of music, but love the derivation. If you look back at dance music, that's happened endlessly and it's a testament to a specific language and a creativity within that language.

"Given this, there are some interesting points where this language and the mould of what has been developed starts to become inadequate to nurture the music that is being created. For example, what happens when the people producing the music step outside the arena of producing 12"s and records tailored for DJs? And secondly, what happens when electronic

musicians take to the stage and start performing themselves? It seems to me that at a certain point there was a conflict of interests and for me the fact that the record industry was and is going through this crisis of piracy and record sales is exactly as a result of that conflict of interests: it's about a bunch of musicians saying, 'We don't want to be dictated to by an industry that won't accommodate a new way of looking at musical creativity'. People say that's all fixed now, but if anything the current trend seems more like a regression than a fix to me.

"For our part, I think we realised quite early on that even though records are able to project a kind of ethos beyond the musical performance (through the artwork, the record label, the liner notes etc.), it was nevertheless the act of communing and creating music in real time that was the source of the apparition. It was also the point at which I think you start to think; electronic music is becoming more and more versatile such that I can program a computer to do these types of things, perform live, generate patterns, listen etc, and there's no reason to think about the creative process in such rarified cultural terms. So the seeds of our interest in things like improvisation and not wanting to be tied down to a particular role as music makers came quite early on and perhaps influenced the fact that we remained pretty skeptical about the role of record labels and the concept of categorisation in the whole scheme of things. It's nice to think that people can now generally just go straight to the source, completely bypassing that whole mechanism."

Although they also work with labels still, Icarus have released their own music (as Icarus, solo and in collaboration), and others' on their boutique "fantasy non-label" Not Applicable. For their current Australian tour, Icarus have self-released a live album called all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, which will be available from Not Applicable after the tour.

Their previous album, *sylt*, and the earlier self-released *Carnivalesque*, are edited from live recordings too. Indeed, the live element has always been a big focus for the pair – surprisingly, all the way back to the drum'n'bass days. Ollie recalls, "when we started out, we played live with a laptop and sampler (the laptop just sent MIDI to the sampler, it wasn't powerful enough to play audio), and there weren't many people exactly improvising with breakbeats at the time. It's still a joke in 2010 that a live laptop performer is probably just checking his emails. In 2001 I remember playing live on a laptop (sending MIDI to Sam who was 'on the sampler') in a club where we had to set up in the middle of the audience. There was a drunk guy incessantly shouting into my ear throughout the entire set about how he wasn't really too into the DJ and hoped someone would play some more housey beats. There was no way I could begin to explain to him what I was doing.

"Also, in those days, a band comprising of live instruments and electronics was, in my mind, always a bit of a dodgy fusion. Since then, the

technical conditions, and the kind of musical culture has changed so much. Dance music people, non-classical types, just discovered a lot of new stuff. The academic guys always get first dibs on the technology, but often it's culture at large that works out the best stuff to do with it. Dub, hip-hop and breakbeat music innovated techniques and sensibilities that maybe just now are becoming appropriately absorbed into classical-academic music culture. We're straddling both worlds (in our own very independent ways), but it's far from a cosy combo, it's quite messy, and that's not a bad thing.

As for when their interest in the more academic side arose, "it pre-dated Icarus, but I don't think either of us were aware of how it was all going to pan out. And certainly for myself I set off on the wrong foot – I should have learnt how to program 10 years earlier. I would have absolutely loved it, but nobody had ever even suggested it to me! MaxMSP, an intuitive tool for musicians to use algorithms, broke open a door which might have remained closed forever. I like the expression, 'There are known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns'. One great area of unknown unknowns is how you'll view what you've just been doing when you go off and learn some new stuff. You find new things you didn't know that you didn't know.

"So I can say that I had a load of interests surrounding Icarus, but there are some ways in which life was more complete before 'studying', because you just did things, savagely. By this I mean all this studying and discovery wasn't necessarily a great thing to happen musically, it was just really what my brain hungered for. This can be really bad: I sometimes no longer get how you can sit down with a timeline and decide how something should be, and I really don't get how you can go on stage every night and do set songs."

Ironically, just as Ollie started to study Artificial Life and enter into his PhD, their Four Tet remixes were released, and then their album for the Leaf Label, *I Tweet The Birdy Electric*, became rather successful. Their most "folktronic" release, it confounds listeners with acoustic instruments, bizarre percussive sound-sources, and beats that just don't quite let you find the bar-lines.

"Things calmed down again after that, maybe because I was already committed to a slightly different path. I find it hard to make music and do research. So the truth is the interface hasn't really got there yet. Making software is not the same as making music."

> "Electronic music is becoming more and more versatile such that I can program a computer to perform live and there's no reason to think about the creative process in such rarified cultural terms."

Sam's studies at IRCAM sound like the proverbial kid in a candy store. Quite unlike the snooty attitude of the ivory tower Western Art Music academic, Sam declares, "the thing I remember the most was just hanging out in the studios all night making the most wigged out music you could possibly conceive of and then walking down the hall and hanging out with someone else on a completely different trip. Then on top of this, having this enormous resource in terms of the people and literature there in the building with you – so if for some reason the process or software you were working with didn't quite bug out in the desired way, you could go and hang out with the guy who was developing the software or the guy who had pioneered the technique and explain your ideas. I mean – to be doing that on a daily rotation – it was pretty insane.

"Ultimately, you can sympathise with a lot of people in France who are pretty pissed that millions of Euros of their taxes go into facilitating something perceived as being so elitist, but I think that kind of argument wilfully ignores the necessary wayward flow of any type of thought process and research in order to end up with something that is way more that the sum of its parts, rather than just delivering 'value for money'. Ultimately I still think *Vortex Temporum* by Gerard Grisey is one of the most beautiful pieces of music I've heard and Miller Puckett did invent Max [music processing software used by everyone from Hrvatski to Radiohead, mentioned by Ollie above] there. No doubt the Large Hadron Collider will come up against the same kind of criticism sometime."

Getting back to "contextualisation" and research, "I think as a European, you're always in some way overly historicised – I mean there is so much STUFF. It's good and bad I guess, but the long and short of it is, you're always dealing with that, whether in the form of researching who did what back when, or trying to find some strategy that is openly reactionary. It's also part of a humility and acquiescence about culture: chances are your ideas aren't as radical as you might think and I that is definitely something I feel we're both very aware of – so part of the Icarus process has always in some way been about research: or broadly speaking, I think we've always done things partly to find out about other stuff.

"Ultimately, I kind of think it's the way Ollie and I converse – as you go, you integrate so many concepts into your psyche, at a point, it becomes difficult to just talk about them, you have to go and do it – you have to play the music."

***All Is For The Best In The Best Of All Possible Worlds* is self-released through Not Applicable.**

Searching For *Funk's* Future

"Some of us real funkstas, we've always been here, you know?"

DāM-Funk
International
by Dan Rule

Los Angeles' boogie funk sovereign DāM-Funk is mining genre's past for a way forward.

Damon Riddick doesn't see himself as a "bridging artist", nor a missing link between generations. His palette of vintage synths, drum machines and expanded, bass-driven, funk jams may seem of another time, but the man behind the DāM-Funk guise understands his work as anything but retrospective.

"People sometimes talk about my work as if it's a throwback," he offers, pausing as if for emphasis. "I like to consider it a continuation."

Chatting from across town in his local neighbourhood of Leimert Park, bordering South Central LA, Riddick's logic flies in the face of much of the hype and hyperbole surrounding his expansively proportioned and equally celebrated debut album, the five-LP *Toeachizown* – commissioned and released by Peanut Butter Wolf's increasingly dynamic LA alt-hip hop imprint Stones Throw in late 2009.

While fans and pundits alike have hailed the record's distinctly 80s, synth-washed sound, complex chord structures and earnest, romantic lyrical direction as a kind of celebratory reflection on early Prince or the post-disco RnB of the BB&Q Band and Change, Riddick himself – who is best known in his hometown for his weekly Funkmosphere night in Culver City – considers his output to follow a far more contemporary vein.

"My music has a certain kind of sound, sure, but it's the extension of that sound," he says. "What I'm trying to do is remind people that the sound never died. It just kind of went on hiatus, if you will."

"Maybe some of the labels didn't pay attention to it, or maybe it got hidden in G-funk or in some of the rap songs or samples or whatever, but some of us real funkstas, we've always been here, you know?," he continues. "So it's sort of my way of saying that, you know, you can listen to other stuff like techno, trance or have hip hop thrown down your throat 24 hours a day, but there's room for other types of urban music. That's what I'm trying to do; I'm trying to open the door again."

If there's one aspect that marks today's affable encounter, it's the seriousness with which the quietly spoken Riddick takes his music. In fact, it's the whole reason we're chatting on the phone. After planning to convene at Stones Throw's offices in Echo Park, Riddick rescheduled at the last minute to afford himself

a couple of extra hours in the studio. It's barely 11am and he's already done hard time. "I always record – I never stop," he says proudly. "I recorded a song this morning as a matter of fact."

Indeed, Riddick is an anomaly in an era where his choice of instrumentation and aesthetic is all too often viewed with a sardonic smirk. Spend time with *Toeachizown* – or his *Burgundy City/Galactic Fun* 12" – and you'll find nothing in the way of irony. Often spanning six or seven minutes and littered with tumbling Oberheim DX kicks, snapping snares and Roland Juno Series synth washes (not to mention the odd lengthy keytar solo), Riddick's deep funk excursions are no laughing matter.

"I like to make melodic, modern funk, man," he urges. "I don't do retro – I do modern funk. You see, modern funk never died with the people where I come from; it never stopped. We grew up on those kinds of groups making sophisticated funk. Teena Marie, you know what I'm saying? Like you could drink a glass of wine with this kind of funk, you know what I'm saying? It's not that kind of funk that's got that porno-style sound and wah-wah guitars. You know, James Brown, rest in peace – I always give him props – but I don't do that kind of funk. I do that kind of melodic funk where you can still get dressed up and cruise down to the beach and chill in your ride, you know?"

"These days we have attention deficit disorder," he continues. "Even I've fallen victim to these traits where, even if we haven't had them diagnosed, the world around us passes down to us, you know, with the remote control and your computer and your iPhone. You go crazy if your computer doesn't load up to the homepage fast enough," he laughs.

"Everything's just fast, fast, fast. For people coming up now, especially the kids, a two-minute track to them is pure genius. All they need is a two-minute beat and they think they're geniuses. I like to listen to something that's a bit longer than two minutes, you know. That's just my taste. You don't have to be into that, but I am man. I'm of that generation. I grew up on songs that were long, you know, listening to a lot of double albums and stuff like that."

It's written over all of Riddick's methodology. "I record from beginning to end, laying each track," he explains. "I don't need Fruity Loops, I don't need these computer software in a box. I do it from the gut and that's what I'm trying to show people. You can make music like this and it can still be relevant."

"You don't have to call it 'old school'. It's not dinosaur funk," he laughs. "It's just real."

Riddick's sound – let alone his penchant for oversized shades and perfectly straightened locks – is little surprise considering his upbringing. Growing up an only child in a neighbourhood ruled by the Bloods gang in Pasadena on the fringe of Los Angeles, Riddick spent his childhood playing in school bands, staying out of trouble by noodling his afternoons away in his bedroom. His grandfather was an army bandleader and multi-instrumentalist, while his father played the saxophone and keyboard.

By the time he had reached high school in the early 80s, Prince and modern funk bands like Zapp were ruling the airwaves. Suffice to say, it was then that he acquired his first synthesiser and began overdubbing cassette tapes with his own recordings. "I grew up with the funk, man," he says. "I'm a generation X cat, you know, so I'm not unfamiliar with days of Prince and P-Funk and Zapp and One Way and Loose Ends and those kinds of groups."

"I was hearing Loose Ends, even groups like Change, who were just like sophisticated funkstas, you know? The chords were great and the bass lines were poppin'. A lot of people say it's disco, but you could interview Kevin Robertson right now, from BB&Q Band, and he'll tell you it was funk. It was just more sophisticated, man, and I couldn't get enough of that stuff."

"I actually heard it on the radio, you know? It's not like I'm trying to imagine what it was like back then. I actually experienced it and it was a very different time. Things were different in music and on the street. People didn't shoot guns half as much; they actually had a real fistfight, you know? I came up around that kind of stuff. It wasn't about like how it is now."

After graduating high school, Riddick began to pick up session work with various LA studios. Celebrated producer Leon Sylvers III enlisted him to play keyboard sessions for New Jack Swing act Double Action Theatre amongst others on his Solar Records label. But it was only after being introduced to Binky Mack of gangsta rap duo AllFrumTha I that Riddick's reputation really began to flourish, tracking sessions for countless members of the city's burgeoning gangsta rap scene.

"I was doing a lot of session work with cats like MC-Eiht, Mack 10, Ice Cube and WC," he recalls. "It was strictly session work, but it was good, it was a good experience. They were very business minded and I got paid and I got credited on the albums and it was nothing but professionalism."

> "I stood on top of the technology and looked at it in the face, like 'I'm running this, you're not going to run me'."

"What happens is that a lot of people get those cats misconstrued and think that these cats were walking idiots with guns loaded in their pockets 24 hours a day. But it's not even like that."

That's not to suggest it was an environment without its challenges.

"Don't get me wrong, of course they were still real cats and they get down in a real way, but people still handle their business and I was able to handle my business around these cats because I grew up around these kind of things.

"Game recognises game and nobody took advantage of me. Some people couldn't hang, but you have to know how to survive in any situation, whether it be the paradise of the Swiss Alps or the jungle of South Central LA. You've got to learn how to adapt to either situation. It was a good experience overall, but what happened is that I just got tired of doing session work. I had my own music and I wanted to do that. So I reconvened and thankfully everything worked out the way it did."

The DāM-Funk nom-de-plume emerged at the start of 2000s. "Everybody calls me Dam, short for Damon. They don't use the 'e' because here in America, 'Dame' means a lady," he laughs. "Well I'm sure everywhere 'Dame' means a lady. But it was just one of those things where I was kind of a funk student and a funk digger. I was already tagging my name but then I just added the 'Funk' because nobody was reppin' that shit, you know. So it just clicked man – I just started hittin' my name up like 'DāM-Funk' and that was that."

It wasn't until close to the end of the decade that Riddick's DāM-Funk persona began to enter the wider vernacular, firstly via his Funkmosphere parties, then through a remix of Baron Zen's cover of the Gap Band's Burn Rubber in 2007. The mix caught the ear of Peanut Butter Wolf, who urged Riddick to contribute to Stones Throw's BBall Zombie War compilation for gaming company 2KSports. The brilliant Burgundy City 12" surfaced to great acclaim in 2008, before Riddick set about tracking his full-length debut.

"I was just recording a lot of joints – like a lot of joints, man – and there were way more tracks than could fit on a record," he laughs. "We just couldn't narrow them down. That's why we came up with – and we laughed when we did it – the whole five-album box set. A lot of people cut out songs and edit them down, but we didn't want to do that. We kind of just wanted to do something special."

Toeachizown is epic to say the least. Bouncing between maximal beat attacks and opaque synth atmospheres, rich, complex chord structures and impeccably smooth, syrupy bass lines, the record extends and abstracts what might otherwise be straight grooves into sprawling, intergalactic boogie-funk jams. The snaking bass lines, snapping beats and fluttering synths of tracks like 'Brookside Park', 'Mirrors' and 'The Sky is Ours' stretch compact breaks into transcendent instrumental drifts, where cuts like 'Searchin' 4 Funk's Future' shatter shimmering atmospheres with kinetic bass hooks and stinging high-hats. It offers the perfect foil for Riddick's Prince-like falsetto, which he moulds into various romantic odes to his wife, music and the funk gods themselves.

"It was kind of like a puzzle you know," he recalls. "But it just made sense, you know. Almost everything lined up the right way in terms of the music and the situation. Just in meeting Wolf and him believing in my music and just recording these songs and what they meant and the way they flowed putting together the record. I mean, anyone can put together a record, but it doesn't mean it's going to sound right. It's like 'Why'd this guy put this song after that track?'."

"But *Toeachizown* is done so strategically, you know, so it's almost like a long ride. Each track was placed purposefully. I didn't just turn in a bunch of tracks and let people pick the sequence or whatever. I actually meticulously placed the songs where I wanted them and that's why the five-record box set is the way it is."

For Riddick, the key to the record is the human touch. "It feels real and that's the way I'm trying to record," he says. "Even if I do choose to use some of the more modern recording technologies, I'm still going to give it a human feel. So if I do get some new equipment, I'll still approach it like a human as opposed to letting the technology dictate me."

> "Everything's just fast, fast, fast. For people coming up now, especially the kids, a two-minute track to them is pure genius."

"I want to dictate the technology, you understand what I'm saying? That's why that album sounds the way it does. I didn't let the technology overtake me; I stood on top of the technology and looked at it in the face, like 'I'm running this, you're not going to run me'."

But while something of a purist, it's not to suggest the Riddick's views on music are all puritanical. Indeed, he's outwardly approving of a new generation of beat-makers led by the likes of Flying Lotus and Hudson Mohawke, whose skittering, schizophrenic song structures seem to run counter to DāM-Funk's fluid sound.

"I respect everybody's approach," he offers simply. "I go back to the title of the album, you know: *Toeachizown*. I don't know if that phrase is common in Australia, but the way I see it, it just means that everyone is entitled to their own way of living. So it's like, kudos to Hudson Mohawke and kudos to these other cats. What they're doing is really amazing to me. There's room for everybody to do their own approach, because it would be wack if everybody was sounding alike. And trust me, there are plenty of cats sounding alike right now. I'm glad that there are a few of us out here who aren't sounding alike. It's a breath of fresh air, you know."

In fact, Riddick is enthusiastic about beat-based music's current state of play. "I think it's pretty cool and I'm really glad that these cats are starting to experiment with different sounds urban-wise. Not just indie-rock or what have you, but some urban sounds are starting to be a lot more experimental."

Indeed, we might just be closer to funk's future than we realised. The man known as DāM-Funk thinks so. "Man, as these major labels break down and run for cover and don't know what to do next, it's opening up doors for these artists to come out of the underground and rise up and start to get their music out there and travel and share it with different people," he urges.

"I mean, just the fact that I've been to Israel and some of these places man, that the funk genre can go back to these places… I mean, some of the guys I came up with, they didn't even get to make it out of the city."

"So it's just a new world, man. It's just good to be a part of it."

***Toeachizown* is out through Stones Throw/Fuse**

Sound Borders

DJ Spooky
International
by Jennifer Moses

DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid is a most mercurial of musicians, an explorer of ideals and a messer of minds. Otherwise known as Paul D. Miller, he is an explorer in the digital age, processing information through music, multimedia, the written word, and film. Based in New York, he conceptualises, sources, cuts, flips and communicates all of it back to you as his portrait of the social landscape.

Holding degrees in philosophy and French literature and a Professor of Music Mediated Art at the European Graduate School, he tours the world lecturing, exhibiting and, among other things, recording the sounds of Antarctic ice and trying to capture the soundscape of Nauru.

Themes running through all his work are collaboration and collage, mixing and remixing. He'll even let you remix his own work through a downloadable iPhone application. Miller was in Australia in March this year to give presentations on his latest book *Sound Unbound*, a collection of essays on sampling, digital music and culture in the 21st Century.

Sipping on green tea in a Paddington café wearing a beret, as opposed to a NY Yankee's baseball cap, DJ Spooky aka Paul D. Miller got down to the business of explaining just why it is he has his hands spinning so many proverbial decks at the same time.

"I encourage people to be hyperactive," he says, excitable and alert, eyes scanning the room and taking in the theatre of the street. Pointing out a man in a suit with a large leather bag, he says: "I wonder what that person's story is, what do you think?"

Then he follows on with; "maybe specialisation and doing one thing all your life is just a different generation's response to trying to exist in the economy of that era. It's a strange moment here and now in the 21st century, you have to imagine that the creative, the writer, the artist – anyone who is interested in information, it is unceasing, there is a huge amount of information going on everyday, everywhere, all the time.

"You're just swimming in an ocean of information. So I just kind of accept it and just feel like a fish swimming in these ocean currents."

> "Sound is one of the hardest things to quantify in our culture as the dominant media of our time is visuality."

He agrees there are pluses and minuses to not specialising – that perhaps he doesn't get structurally deep into any one thing. "I just kind of glide on this postmodern pond of the seductive surface of our culture, ya know?"

He pulls out his passport; a book jammed with stamps and visas, and stapled photocopies that pass for visas, and demonstrates places he's physically traversed. He flips from interviewee to interviewer when we established we lived in Paris at the same time, delighted at the thought we may have been swimming in the same current at the same time.

A school of interested aquatic types turn up to Ariel bookstore in Paddington on a Tuesday night for his presentation of *Sound Unbound*. Curators, journalists, musicians and even photographer Spencer Tunick, he who can get thousands of people naked for a photo, mill about in between aisles of books expectantly.

Miller thanks everyone for turning out, introduces himself and others in the audience, already making links and supplying connections and begins "Welcome to the Sydney - New York remix, here we go!"

Miller has connected a diverse array of people, or "36 egomaniacs" as he calls them, who present us with their ideas on sampling, digital music and culture in the 21st Century. *Sound Unbound* seats Brian Eno next to Moby, Chuck D next to Steve Reich and Scanner next to Daphne Keller.

"Think of it as a virtual dinner party, or maybe like one of Spencer's 'happenings' getting a whole bunch of people together, naked, who would never normally be in the same room". *Sound Unbound* jumps and cuts between diverse ideals from diverse voices and the main thing that connects the stories is Miller's notion of the 'collage aesthetic'.

Fittingly, the book *Sound Unbound* comes with a CD soundtrack selected, mixed, scratched, re-worked and produced by DJ Spooky. It takes classic works and words you know and repositions them to music you may also know. Miller takes a host of pieces from the Sub Rosa label, a Belgian record label which has released celebrated avant-garde artists since the 1980s. Diving into the label's catalogue he has selected works classified by the label under 'Aural Documents'. Works by Marcel Duchamp and William S. Burroughs are read by Iggy Pop and even James Joyce's reading of Ulysses are blended with electronica from musicians including Bill Laswell, Aphex Twin and lauded composers Ryuichi Sakamoto and Phillip Glass.

With 45 tracks there's room for a bit of exploration on the experimental side of the pond, and you'll even hear a DJ Spooky remix of Sonic Youth's 'Audience' and "Hommage a John Cage" from Nam Jun Paik. "The whole pun here is that the CD is like a kind of literary collage in its own right – so you 'read' the CD and 'listen' to the book".

You're on notice here; DJ Spooky wants to

expand your mind, create new synapses in your brain and take you swimming through the oceans he's spent time in. Surfing on sine waves, indeed.

A repeated theme throughout the collection of essays, not unlike a squelchy TB 303 drum loop in your favourite electro track, is the use of new and ever-evolving technology that gives almost anyone quick and relatively easy access to tools for creating.

New technology allows digital kids to take unconscious clues from movements like early 20th Century Dadaism and its collage culture to, in the words of Daft Punk; "cut it, paste it, save it, load it, check it, quick re-write it".

Taking from the ideas of others and building on them, mixing them or reinterpreting them is essential to the evolution of art, science and even culture - but when the lines get blurred and ownership of ideas is questioned, copyright law inevitably rears its controversial head.

Daphne Keller, who contributes the tantalisingly titled essay 'The Musician as Thief: Digital Culture and Copyright Law', is Senior Products Counsel and the lead attorney responsible for analysing copyright and related legal issues at Google.

Her essay in *Sound Unbound* tells us human culture is always derivative and maybe music is more so than other art forms. "We hear music, process it, reconfigure it and create something derivative but new – folk melodies become Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies…Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favourite Things' becomes a John Coltrane classic." There is a long history of music being re-interpreted or re-worked and brought to a wider audience in the Before Google (BG) age.

Take the hot, sweaty dance floors of New York clubs in the 70s, with Grandmaster Flash keeping people grooving while perfecting his 'Backspin Technique' under the flickering lights of a disco ball. By using duplicate copies of the same record and a mixer he could isolate the same fragment of music on each turntable and extend that fragment in the record indefinitely by switching the mixer between records, extending the groove.

Instead of passively spinning records Grandmaster Flash invented techniques to create new music and the art of turntablism was born. "The beginning of hip hop was about playing familiar sounds that were taken out of context, Grandmaster Flash did that back in the day", says Miller.

Keller's essay explores the current state of US copyright law in relation to music, sampling and hip hop. Keller discusses the clause in the US Constitution granting limited rights to authors to "Promote the Progress of Science and Useful Arts" and how it could, in theory, be applied to the cultural practice of sampling. She mentions famous court cases and out of court settlements that have tried this tact and failed, notably the first sampling case in US history, the Biz Markie case in 1991.

The referral by Judge Kevin Duffy for criminal prosecution for Biz Markie's sample of Gilbert

> "I just kind of glide on this postmodern pond of the seductive surface of our culture, ya know?"

O'Sullivan's 'Alone Again' changed the hip hop music industry and required any future sampling be cleared by original copyright owners. Keller argues copyright law needs to stop lagging behind cultural change and technology shifts in music to 'Promote the Progress' in the Google age.

With the onset of digital technology, the After Google age reels of heavy, bulky magnetic tape containing music could be converted to an MP3 file and downloaded on the other side of the planet in a matter of seconds.

Take that newly uploaded MP3 file, and software allows you to isolate snippets of songs digitally, grab them and replay them wherever you like. You have created a 'sample'. "Music is one of the most elusive aspects of our culture – it vanishes into thin air- but it leaves a trace. So manipulating memory has become part and parcel of sampling," Miller says.

With sampling in the digital age you can hold a series of sourced sounds in your hard drive and create a new composition out of bits of other people's songs in moments, which is what experimental sound artist John Cage, an inspiration to DJ Spooky, did in the analogue era with tape. Although it took Cage a year to record and splice untold reels of tape to make his famous 'Williams Mix' – which at just four minutes long only just eclipses the quintessential three and a half minute pop song.

But artists selling new digital compositions of found sound could be criminal according to current copyright laws. "I've never been sued," Miller tells his audience "because I rework samples so intensely that they become virtually unrecognisable".

Many hip hop artists were directly affected by the landmark copyright ruling against Biz Markie, including Public Enemy. "If you look at Public Enemy's first album it's an amazing chaos of sound and in fact you couldn't make an album like that anymore because of copyright law." says Miller.

Public Enemy has always embraced new technology in its politically charged music and in 1999 signed to the independent, web savvy Atomic Pop to be one of the first artists to release an MP3-only album, a format relatively unknown at the time.

Public Enemy are currently using another web-based project 'SellaBand' to fund its upcoming album. SellaBand invites fans of artists to donate capital to help musicians fund new albums and the slogan of the company is "We Believe in the Freedom of Music". Chuck D, Public Enemy's lyricist, has a powerful, booming voice; the kind that makes you sit up and listen, like a believer in a pew listening to a preacher at the pulpit.

A teenager growing up in Sydney's suburbs now is just as likely to call back "Fight The Power" to Chuck D as an African American teenager would have in Brooklyn in the 80s. 'Fight the Power' is regarded as one of the most popular and influential songs in hip hop history and calling along to the chorus for followers of hip hop is like punctuating a prayer with 'Amen'. Even if you don't know what the power is you're fighting, you know from the strength and depth

of Chuck D's vocals backed by Public Enemy's beats that something big is going down.

Chuck D's contribution to *Sound Unbound* is 'Three Pieces'; an article titled 'A Twisted Sense of God' and two rhymes, 'Hip-Hop vs. Rap' and 'Rap, Race, Reality and Technology'. "Rap, race and reality and technology set you free" is the way Chuck D writes the introduction to his final rhyme in *Sound Unbound*.

The written word and copyright gets a look in too in Jonathan Lethem's essay, 'The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism Mosaic'. Lethem is a *New York Times* best selling author and brings to *Sound Unbound* the idea of 'gift economies' and cryptomnesia. He begins with the synopsis of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita – as described in Heinz von Lichberg's story published 40 years before *Lolita*. Lethem asks: "Did the earlier tale exist for Nabokov as a hidden, unacknowledged history?" Or, spun another way, did Nabokov write *Lolita* under the phenomenon of 'cryptomnesia'?

"Art that matters to us – which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living however we choose to describe the experience - is received the way a gift is received", he says.

Miller puts the idea of the 'gift economy' into action as part of his presentation and hands out mixes to everyone of bits and pieces of his latest music. "I'm hoping everybody, instead of just being passive and just pressing play, you'll go home and make mixes of this and send those mixes to your friends".

> "Instead of just being passive and just pressing play, go home and make mixes of this and send those mixes to your friends."

Don't despair if you weren't there. You can always, like "75,000 people have since Christmas" download the iPhone application and get mixing. It is a basic DJ set for your phone, complete with a mixer, samples of scratching, synth loops, drum patterns and songs from the DJ Spooky release of last year The Secret Song.

"There is an update coming that will let you import your iTunes library and record your mixes, but right now you can visually beat-match music on a mobile platform - forget bringing records anymore, now it's all about sound files and doing DJ tricks on your phone."

Miller took a mobile recording studio to Antarctica to do a 'sound portrait' of the continent by recording the sound of ice – 'TERRA NOVA: Sinfonia Antarctica'. "Antarctica itself is a document, it has millions of years of history, you dig down into the ice and the call it 'core sampling'," he says. "'Sampling' here is actually a scientific term". Miller toured the multimedia installation 'Sinfonia Antarctica' globally through 2009.

The next multimedia project took him to Nauru with architect Annie Kwon to create 'Nauru Elergies: A Portrait in sound and Hypsographic Architecture'. Miller teamed up with Finder's Quartet to perform Nauru Elergies at Shed 4 in Melbourne's Docklands as part of the Experimenta Biennial.

"Sound is one of the hardest things to quantify in our culture as the dominant media of our time is visuality." By witnessing the combined visual with the aural for this project we are invited to meditate on the bizarre colonial and economic history of a remote Pacific island.

Signing copies of his book at the end of his presentation, Miller plays the conductor, consciously connecting people who stick around. Introducing new people he's met to old associates who he thinks will spark, striking up conversations, inviting those around him to follow his lead.

As we walk down Oxford St, we pass an accordion player outside a cinema in a striped Bretagne t-shirt and red kerchief. He's an entertainer for French Film Festival goers and his presence evokes shared memories of Paris. Miller, adjusting his beret, says "I feel a deep sense of connectedness to all the information around me and I think my writing and my music reflects that." Hmmm…spooky.

***Sound Unbound* is out now through MIT Press.**

Sleeve Reviews ☞

by Dave Fernandes

Being a designer with an involvement in music, I have tried to pick as many influential album sleeve designs that I could find where both musician and designer are known respectively in their fields, and that are also an influence on me. In no particular order:

Lou Reed - *Set The Twilight Reeling* [1996]
Lou Reed needs no introduction: you like him or you don't. He's laid back and just downright cool to listen to, one that I love getting into from time to time and this album is one of my favourites. This is a later album recorded in 1996 that I found at Sydney's Glebe markets, second hand for $10, and it jumped out at me because of its

deep blue plastic CD case. The case acted as a UV screen which mutes yellow only showing Lou's dark face through the cover but when removed from the case the sleeve is bright yellow and white with a star burst around his eye! It was a complete surprise. The design style was evidently from the 90s that I had seen used many times before, commonly with the grunge movement. Unbeknownst to me did I realise that the design was produced by Stefan Sagmeister, a world famous designer and creative director in New York whose style is very cut and paste of handwritten text with ink and photographs pasted with vector graphics. Stefan had originally created this effect for his own book with a German Shepherd on the cover that goes from a good dog to a barking dog when you remove the case.

Flying Lotus - *Los Angeles* [2008]
Having a very close resemblance to Massive Attack's *Mezzanine*, I still can't help but to love the photography taken for the album by Timothy Saccenti, who has also shot Prefuse 73, Tricky and the Mirrored album for Battles. Flying Lotus, a tall gangster looking bro from Los Angeles, came up and smacked me in the face with 'LA dubstep' – man what a sound! A sound that makes you turn your head and stop what you are doing. I haven't experienced this for quite some time. The sound is dark and mechanical, rough edged with syncopated rhythms hitting half the speed of techno - it's beautifully crafted chaos. To me, Timothy captured that sound in a photograph with the twisted, cold black steel with the blood-like liquid texture: so vibrant. There's no telling what the photograph is of, but you get the feeling quite well.

Quadrophonia - *Quadrophonia* [1991]
I can't pin point the designer of this cover. I was only eleven when this record came out. It 'belonged' to my older brother and I remember

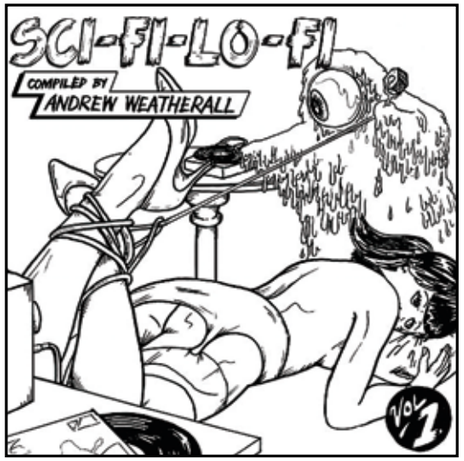
when he played it to me. Even though I didn't know the context of which dance music was played in, it still sent me a little bonkers with its grand enchanting sound, produced by Dutch men Oliver Abbeloos and Lucien Foort. It was released when many 80s to early 90s Italian and Chicago dance records sported computer aided typographically designed sleeves using basic shapes and patterns, solid colours with large type out of standard computer fonts. This is a design style I have seen resurfacing again but in a more modern way, using 3D graphics, more

complex patterns and well crafted fonts. I like its simplicity as it leaves room for the music to explain the rest.

Massive Attack - *Heligoland* [2010]
I saw Massive Attack at the Opera House when they performed in Sydney and it was by far one of the most sensational concerts I've ever been to. I'd been listening to Massive Attack for around twelve years, and still do, so it was quite special for me to have been there. Their artwork is also of their own style, a mark to express the messages in the music, created by Massive Attack's front man Robert Del Naja. Even though the Tom Hinsgsten studio in the UK designed the cover, the art itself was produced by Robert Del Naja for *Heligoland*, as was done for *Blue Lines* and *Mezzanine*. Del Naja has released his own book and held multiple exhibitions. UK grafitti artist Banksy even refers to him as an influence. His art has recently been banned from all London Tube stations because it "looks like graffiti". Much respect for this man.

Thunk Recordings circa 1999-2003
Thunk Recordings was an Australian electronic music label that not only produced a stack of vinyl records which I spent my hard earned wage on during my twenties, but was also a great source to relay Australian talents like Pocket, Infusion and Andy Page. For this example I shot Infusion's 'Spike' which was my introduction to Thunk. All the sleeves were pretty much the same design, only a different colour. The typography was bold and clear and the labels only ever contained one graphic – a man standing in between a giant set of headphones. Such a simple yet direct and effective mark. In my opinion they were the best Australian electronic music label, unfortunately no longer operational.

Andrew Weatherall - *Sci-Fi Lo-Fi* [2007]
If I had drunk a bottle of bourbon, greased my hair and was on my way to get a peacock tattoo, I'd be listening to this. Soma recordings released this compilation series as a spin-off to the Sci-Fi Hi-Fi techno series. Andrew had the privilege of creating Volume 1 and produced an all rockabilly, 50s and 60s rock'n'roll mix which were influences to him as a producer of his band The Two Lone Swordsmen. The sleeve illustrations were produced by Crimpton Fury & The Headless Truth with Andrew's direction described as a "B-movie sci-fi crossed with the sin and sleaze paperbacks of the 50s and 60s".



I have played this CD on every road trip since I first owned it. It's a very raw but yet fun feel, very different on the ears after hours of techno.

Four Tet - *Ringer* [2008]
I found this LP about a year ago, even though it had been out for a while. Four Tet's "performances" were becoming more and more apparent to me as sound art. He's more a sound designer than anything else, even though he has many 4/4 beat tracks and is played widely by DJs all over the world. His sounds are very loose and looped, dreamlike and light-footed, each being in their own atmosphere.

The design was by Matthew Cooper and Jason Evans (who has photographed Herbert & Franz Ferdinand among many). This particular sleeve comes on a grey and rough textured stock with black-and-white photography of circles and lines, what looks to be a cross between a paper cut-out and a close up of cells in a lab. As simple and layered as the art is, so are the sounds contained on the record, again finding it a great representation of the sound.

Grace Jones - *Nightclubbing* [1981]
It's no surprise really that Grace Jones is wearing (and as stated on the sleeve) a 'Jacket Giorgio Armani' and 'Painting by Jean Paul Goude', a French graphic designer and illustrator born in 1940. I found this record in Reno on my way to Burning Man in 2008 and has some real solid tracks that always get a few people nodding, including 'Pull Up To The Bumper', 'Nightclubbing' and a cover of Bill Withers' 'Use Me'. Admittedly I'm not much of a fan of Jean Paul Goude, but the designs produced for Grace are pretty damn cool, I'll give him that.

by Lucas Abela

Cyclic Selects ☞

These are some of my most sentimental or favourite records listed in order of when they came into my life. After reading back they tend to take the form of stories from my life, which as the cliché goes, music bonding itself to your memories. In these stories I sometimes neglect to really describe the records or the music thereon in any detail. Let me assure you they are all golden, if you don't know any of these it'll be far easier for us both if you search for them on YouTube, rather than for me to find words to describe why and what I like about them. Taste is an intrinsic thing and to be honest what has drawn me to these albums and others like them is far too abstract, so please take my advice and have a quick listen.

Genghis Khan - *Moscow Moscow* 7" [1980]
My first record. Olympic fervour was abound and this catchy number, which failed to win the coveted Eurovision song contest in 1979, was adopted as Australia's official Moscow Olympic song by Channel 7. The anthem became a huge hit here, staying at #1 for five weeks. I still have my copy and always pull it out at parties to show off my cossacking skills, a talent I taught myself as an agile eight-year-old. As a child I used this as an advantage whenever playing Simon Says (I won every time, although teachers always decided to keep playing and that my unusual skill wasn't appropriate, limiting me to only doing movements all the other kids were capable of). If you're drunk enough you can still see me doing this during the latter hours of the party; just like riding a bike, the ability has never left me.

Dogs In Space *OST* (R Rated Black Cover) Chase Records [1986]

As silly as this might sound, INXS were my 'gateway' band. At 12-years-old their cassette *The Swing* lived in my walkman, and this relationship lasted all the way up until their awful album Kick from 1987, the year I learnt mainstream success corrupts the soul and breeds failure.

Between *The Swing* and *Kick* however, and at the height of the *Listen Like Thieves* U.S.A breakout success, Michael Hutchence had made his acting debut in Dogs In Space, a plotless film set in the backdrop of arguably one of the most important underground music scenes this country or the world produced but failed to record. So, at 14, this INXS fan rocked up to the Surfers Paradise Hoyts to watch his hero on screen and came out with several new ones, although I had to buy the soundtrack to find out exactly who these new heroes were.

Some of them were easy to find even on the Gold Coast: Nick Cave, Iggy Pop and Eno were all available at our only independent record store, Bop-In. But the one band that eluded me the most was the hardest to learn more about. Besides their brief appearance in the film performing the track 'Pumping Ugly Muscle' and the liner notes mention of what 'Little Bands' were and their part in it, no one could tell me a single thing about 'The Primitive Calculators'.

In the ensuing years the mystery would slowly unravel piece by piece. First in the early 90s I discovered an atrocious 12" version of 'Pumping Ugly Muscle' at Ashwood's which made me think the band became a euro disco outfit or something. Then years after the turn of the century, Mark Harwood pulled out a box at his now defunct Synaesthesia record store. It was full of MINT untouched Primitive Calculators LPs fresh as the day they were pressed 20 years earlier, that apparently no one wanted after all this time. I should have bought the lot then and there and given them to all my friends, but a combination of stupidity, homelessness and money problems made me think "next time, I'll pick one up next time I'm down".

I would never have the chance again. In 2003 I played a festival with Meeuw music label head honcho Jan, who gave me a pile of singles which included 'Glitter Kids' by the Primitive Calculators. It seemed the world was starting to catch on, and by the time I returned to Synaesthesia all I could get my hands on was a CD reissue of the LPs no-one wanted for 20 years, now digitally remastered on Chapter Music.

Clint Ruin And Lydia Lunch - *Stinkfist* [1987]
It will forever be bizarre to me that while at high school, when everyone else was all about Scott and Charlene, I was starting my masturbatory life watching 10th generation video bootlegs of Richard Kern's *The Right Side of My Brain* - depicting my teenage idols in hardcore sex

acts. When they joined forces on this god punching 12" it was my Neighbours moment, giving me hope in the knowledge that a boy from Melbourne could end up with New York's punk rock queen. From then on I knew anything was possible. And to think my parents thought they were bad role models?

Boredoms - *Soul Discharge* [1989]
I first heard the incredible Yamantaka Eye when someone handed me a copy of the first *Naked City* album at Kent records in Brisbane and insisted I have a listen. I was immediately blown away by this record but made the awful mistake of following the John Zorn tangent leading me into a world of shit pretentious crap. Fortunately, after my disappointment with Zorn's work outside of Naked City I finally managed upon this album, instantly realising where the true magic of *Naked City* lied. *Soul Discharge* is the holy grail of the Osaka Underground and one of the greatest records of all time.

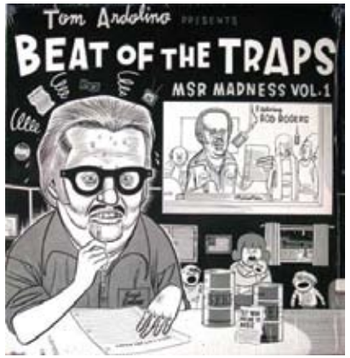
I have especially fond memories of their 1996 visit when, of all bands, Regurgitator brought the Boredoms out as their 'support' act for the 'I sucked a lot of cod to get where I am' tour. By this time Boredoms were my absolute favourite band and I managed to see them four times during the tour. It was the last show in the country that was to become the most memorable. Good friends Phelgmeson (a combination of Phlegm and the Mu Mesons) were playing their opening support set when the Metro's house soundturd took it upon himself to close the band early bringing down the lush velvet curtains on the band mid-set. Mark Harwood and I took extreme offence at this blasphemy and decided with just a simple look at each other we had to make it right. Rushing either side of the stage we pulled the curtains back as the band kept playing.

Security at this point descended upon us and I was dragged to the door while screaming obscenities into a monkeys face to "let me the fuck go". And he did by hurling me down the fire exit stairs where more security bounced me out the door. Although I had just seen the previous three Boredoms sets that tour, I wasn't by a long shot going to miss this one. I quickly discarded what I was wearing and put on a Boredoms tour t-shirt as I dashed across George St in search of scissors. You see, I had been growing my hair since I first decided Jim Morrison was God at about 14 or 15 years old and had, at this point, over the shoulder curly locks that would reach half way down my back if stretched out. After popping my head into a couple of establishments I finally found a café willing to let me use their scissors and I quickly removed my hair unceremoniously in the back toilet, coming out looking like a psych-ward patient. The new look was enough to fool the bouncer who had just kicked me out as I calmly showed my stamp and made it inside just in time to see the Boredoms one last time. As promised, fucking incredible every time.

Thug - *Fuck Your Dad* 7" [1987]
I never actually owed a copy of this Black Eye Records gem but 'Dad', the A-side, existed

in my collection for some time on a mix tape. Often underestimated as Tex Perkins' joke band (they had yet to know of his future fronting of a Johnny Cash covers band) Thug are simply one of this land's greatest ever bands, uniquely ahead of their time. Nothing before or since has touched them, due to Peter Read's sonic genius. For Christ's sake, here's a man who should be given an Order of Australia medal or something for his service to the country. It's my dream to have these boys reunite for the closing night of the Auraltered State series, and if Clint and Lydia didn't teach me anything was possible, I'd give up on that thought right now!

Msr Madness- *Song Poem Compilation Series #1 - #4* [Late 90s]
Song/Poems, for the unfamiliar amongst us, are best described as the results of the collective



creative efforts of amateur lyricists and the song sharks who prey on their ambition to break into the music business, or something like that. Under the guise of a co-writing 'partnership', accompanying music would be hastily arranged to basically any lyrics sent in - for a fee! 'Peace and Love' better known as 'Blind Man's Penis' is a great example of song/poem shark Ramsey Kearney's ability to spot a great song, sincerely choosing only the best lyricists to work with!

These obscure recordings were pressed in small quantities and would normally be lost forever; I guess a lot of it is lost. Luckily for us, song/poem collectors like Tom Ardolino and Don Bolles (who first indoctrinated me into the world of song poems) have spent countless hours searching through record bins for these artefacts. We have them and other hunters to thank for the MSR (named after one of the strong arms in the industry) madness series of compilations on Carnage Press, which are the quintessential collections of the genre.

These albums separated the obviously awful from the gloriously unique tracks so we wouldn't have to. Digging out the gems of unbelievable madness that results when you pit the naivety of aspiring song writers from across North America with bored overworked sweatshop musicians. Popular themes for songs would be politics, fads, religion and possibly the most overly repeated theme of Christmas (enough for its own compilation, Is Santa Really Six Foot Four?) and then you have the unimaginable tracks like 'Human Breakdown of Absurdity' & 'All you Need is a Fertile Mind', an anti-porno ballad about wanking!

Incredibly, I discovered these companies still exist to this day and I'm now working on a series of singles titled 'Lyrics To Oz Rock Hits That Didn't Travel Well As Reinterpreted By American Song/Poem Companies'. I've got some dude in LA right now writing music to The Radiators' 'Gimme Head'!

Bill Orcutt - *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* [2009]

After Harry Pussy spilt in up in 1997 after an apparent relationship breakdown between Drummer Adris Hoyos and Guitarist Bill Orcutt, Bill was so heartbroken that he didn't play live or record music for 13 years. Well at least that's the lowdown I was given at last years Colour out of Space festival in Brighton's before I had the

good fortune to witness his magnificent return to the stage alongside drummer Paul Hession. Orcutt's blistering atonal 4 string guitar twang swarmed like a fine August day in New Orleans over Hession's showy improv polyrhythms. As much as I enjoyed the set, my ears were totally focussed on Orcutt and if I could have had it my way he would have performed alone that evening.

Later as I was squeezing my way through the crowd en route to the pub to drink my sorrows away, (my set at the festival was awful, equipment failing me spectacularly) a hand reached out to mine. It was Orcutt wanting to congratulate (or maybe commiserate) me on my set, casually handing me a copy of *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*. I thanked him for his show and gave him Rice Corpse in return, before a stream of others vying for his attention forced our brief meeting to a close.

Once at the pub, Mark Harwood, (who for some reason keeps popping up in these stories) snatched the record from my hand exclaiming "How did I get this!" - apparently Orcutt refused to sell him a copy earlier as he only had a few copies left - before righteously demanding I give him my copy as he's an archivist record collector and I'm an irreverent nomad who couldn't possibly understand such a treasure. I almost gave in to his begging, he so desperately wanted the record, and in a way he was right as I have tons of unlistened to gifts piling up at Dualplover HQ. But this wasn't an ordinary trade, the sincerity in the way he offered me the record without thought was endearing, and coupled with the new found fact that he could have sold all his last copies easily made our interaction all the more special and my sentimental side took over. As I write this with Bill's almost-country noise blues trailing out from my speakers I'm fucking well glad it did.

Lucas Abela is curating the monthly Auraltered States performances, showcasing weird and unusual NSW acts throughout 2010. Check dualplover.blogspot.com for details.