



establ. 2002

Cyclic Defrost

free in Australia

SIDE A

issue no.
3

★ ★ ★ good music, proper culture, real history ★ ★ ★

Aphex Twin
as Mixes for Cash

apheX twin
26 mixes for cash 24.03.03

Aphex Twin double CD featuring remixes of David Bowie, Nine Inch Nails, St Etienne, Meat Beat Manifesto, Wagonchrist and includes two previously unreleased Aphex Twin tracks.



mira calix
skimsquitta 03.03.03

i-D magazine has already described Mira Calix's second album as another "indelible listening experience as she detunes busted sounds boxes to create her broken songs of meditative noise... her most beautiful record yet"



beans
tomorrow right now 10.03.03

"One of the most original and catchy hip-hop records of the year. Fly-girl chants, a sing-song dancehall De La Soul flow (about testicles) anda catchy, electro-bells sample", the forthcoming album 'Tomorrow Right Now' promises old skool fun with a killer edge."

- NME



autechre
draft 7.30 07.04.03

"Autechre's music holds up as great music, regardless of the vagaries of fashion, genre or trendy sub-cultural validation. It's simultaneously confrontational, mathematical, hypnotic, funky, abstract, visceral, sweet, dangerous and seductive. Enjoy"

- Richard Wolfson



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CYCLIC DEFROST

good music, proper culture, real history



The first thing you're probably wondering about is the brown wrapper... the Sydney-based Sopp Collective are this month's cover designers and they've poured their heart, soul and many hours of work into making and then stuffing the paper you have in your hands into wrappers.

Whether vinyl, or indeed offset printing, will ever die is beyond the point if artists remain as passionate and focussed as the Sopp people, though whether they now regard agreeing to stuff three thousand magazines into bags as a good idea we'll leave up to them.

Speaking of time spent in idle leisure, publishing a music magazine in a print run of fewer copies than the Americans threaten to

bomb Baghdad with in the first hour of the war (and costing about .01% of a each warhead per print run) seems all a bit irrelevant in these increasingly grim times. Wouldn't our energies be better spent protesting, rioting or engaging in computer 'hackitivism'? Perhaps. But perhaps it's these little things such as the work of artists that escape the pull of big capital and big power that are important in times like this. These may not be times to party, but they are certainly times for communities of artists and people of like minds to band together. Resistance is only futile when it's devoid of pleasure.

In this issue we feature articles on Perth-based pianist and designer Domenico di Clario; Canberra's renegade political noise makers Blatant Propaganda; Melbourne's raucous microsound producers Snawklor; Adelaide's ever-prolific Tim Koch and wunderkind Clue To Kalo; and a face-to-face with broadcasting pioneer Tim Ritchie. Nestled into the local and overseas reviews Nicholas Gebhardt takes on Graham St John's recent book on the politics of dance music in Australia; And, if you turn to the mid-

dle centrefold you get a lovely poster of The Ladiez of the Jump Rope 4 Art Skipping League. Since bursting onto the scene at This Is Not Art 2002 in Newcastle the Ladiez have been taking on the skiphop wannabes with their ropes, choreographed dancing, and their uncanny abilities on the mic - both inside and outside the karaoke booth. Led by the woman with the golden pun, Femineminem, they've busted their way into this issue with QRS-ONE's guide to karaoke in Sydney. And that's just the beginning, so eat up your fibre and prepare a long stint on the toilet, there's a few days of reading to be had.

Sebastian Chan & Dale Harrison
Editors

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Sebastian Chan

Designer & Co-Editor
Dale Harrison

Sub Editor
Aparna Khopkar

Advertising
Sebastian Chan

Advertising Rates
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Distribution
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Printing
Torch Publishing

Web Programming
Giv Parvaneh, Qbique <www.qbique.com>

Web Design
Luke Elwin, Qbique <www.qbique.com>

Web Hosting
Blueskyhost <www.blueskyhost.com>

Guest Cover Design
Sopp Collective

Contributors
Lucinda Catchlove, Peter Hollo, Bim Ricketson, Chloé Sasson, Jordan Spence, Angela Stengel, Adrian Ferra, Tom Phillipson, Vaughan Healy, Melinda Taylor, Alex Crowfoot, Tim Koch, Lawrence English, Caleb Karl, Domingo Yu, Paul Armour, Tim Levinson, Richard Tamplenizza, Jonothan Sykes, Anthony Williams, Glen Martin, Nicholas Gebhardt, Serena Armstrong, Bob Baker Fish, Que Minh Luu, Benjamin Millar, Blumen Hestonthal.

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We welcome your contributions and contact

CYCLIC DEFROST MAGAZINE
PO Box a2073
Sydney South
NSW 1235 Australia

www.cyclicdefrost.com
info@cyclicdefrost.com

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VIC: Synaesthesia, Record Collectors Corner, Greville, Readings, Polyester, Gaslight, Raoul
SA: Big Star, B Sharp
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ISSUE 3 CONTENTS

- 4** COVER DESIGN PROFILE
Sopp Collective
- 7** ARTIST PROFILES
Clue to Kalo
Domenico de Clario
Tim Koch
Tim Ritchie
Snawklor
- 20** GENRE OVERVIEW
Karaoke
- 22** LABEL PROFILE
Blatant Propaganda
- 24** DESIGN
Odd sizes and Shapes
- 26** REGULARS
Reviews
Degrassi

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ISSUE 3 EXCLUSIVE WEB CONTENT

- Additional reviews
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- Exclusive on-line giveaways
- MP3s of selected artists

Cover Design

Interview with The Sopp Collective

by Bim Ricketson

SOPP STORY



To find the Sopp Collective you should probably meet at the dry cleaners on King Street in Newtown, Sydney. Turn down the alley, knock on the mauve door and follow the dark stairwell upstairs to the rickety floor-boarded studio. Accept a beer from one of the European-sounding hosts and take a breezy seat by the window with the soothing car tones of Newtown below. Admiring the Mum tune playing and kids' drawings on the walls, you will notice that all the iCube Macs are centered together on a large web of trestles in the centre of the room. You might get the feeling this would be a great place to work – a bunch of friends designing cool stuff together.

Sopp Collective was formed in 1999 by Katja Hartung and Thorsten Kulp from Germany, Nelson Alves from Portugal/Germany and Käre Martens from Norway. Lured to Australia by an interesting sounding design college, a friendship soon formed.

'We all met at design college and I think the reason we all clicked together so well in the beginning was a common sense of frustration in the way our college was driven,' begins Katja. 'The college and the college environment was, to say the least, not what we had anticipated...There was such a lack of passion and interest from fellow students and such a narrow-minded attitude from many of our teachers that we kind of decided to get together as a group and help each other out. On top of this we obviously shared a very strong friendship and we always hung out together so I guess it was the natural thing to do design together as well.'

And so Sopp was born – initially without a name or studio, just a common goal to do work which 'feels good, works well and looks great'. This simple philosophy of creativity over commerciality gives Sopp the opportunity to work on interesting – if not always well-paid – design briefs.

'Most of our "clients" are not of the wealthiest multinationals of this world so we don't really ask for the big bucks,' explains Thorsten. 'The compromise for them is that we demand tight control of and freedom over the project. Of course we wouldn't mind having a super good client that paid well and gave absolute freedom, but those clients don't grow on trees these days.'

'Our main criteria is finding out, before we say yes to something, if the project will be of any benefit for us. Not financially, of course, but if it's going to be interesting to work on, if we'll learn some new things. And most importantly if it's going to be fun. We're always keen to work on interesting projects with interesting people, artists and musicians.'

Amongst their client list of established companies like home, King Island Cheese and Rossi Boots you find Ugress, a Norwegian electropop band, the Moving Through Air drum and bass nights and Tepid. Works include websites, annual reports, a pixel based film clip and custom fonts. All with a trademark lushness, simplicity and uncluttered aesthetic.

Cyclic Defrost readers – in Sydney at least – would probably be most familiar with Sopp's work for the monthly drum and bass club Moving Through Air. The flyers, ads and posters have been adorning Sydney streets for the last year, and if you've been to the gigs you would have seen the specially crafted visuals. Moving Through Air's absence of a traditional brief has freed Sopp to experiment with ideas of which a well paying corporate client wouldn't necessarily approve.

'There has never been a brief as such for this event which is, of course, the way we like it! It means that on a regular basis we have a white space to play with, on which we can get some designs down that we like, get it printed and distributed all over Sydney. Only one person in Sopp designs the flyer for the event but we rotate who's doing it so we all get a fair share of the pie.'

'We also do the visuals for the night. We have tons of animations, illustrations, films and some live sound-feed stuff that we have compiled in a Director shell so we just press buttons on the key-



board to bring them up on screen. We try to do new things for each event but it's always dependent on how busy we are with other things.'

If you're a designer and wondering how to land such a sweet job, take consolation in the fact that the old rules still apply – it's who you know. 'Moving Through Air is run by Ben Marshall and Craig Shuard. Ben was a flatmate of Nelson and Käre's for a few years and Ben was very keen on us doing the Moving Through Air stuff all along.'

Moving Through Air is probably the best example of the Sopp's rotating design policy. 'As with any group of people we all have our different strong and weak sides. But the point of having a collective is that each person brings to the table what he or she thinks is a worthwhile contribution to the group and to the project. Our group of people is quite strange compared to a normal design firm. Since we're all designers at Sopp Collective everyone wants to get as much of the design bit of the project as possible, whereas at a design firm they would probably have a project manager, copywriter, art director and so on. Our projects are a bit more flexible as to who does what within a project.'

Each member's individual style is reflected in the designers they admire and their own design philosophy. 'I think we all have somewhat different approaches to design which is good, of course,' says Käre. 'Personally I think it's more a method of doing things rather than having a philosophy.'

'I tend to try to apply a method of simplicity and trying to say some accurate things without using too many design elements. What I leave out of a design is just as important as what I put in. But that does not mean I only like neo-modernist design because that would be ignoring many other more expressive forms of communication. I think most designers have a core way of doing things; but one should not follow this all the time. Sometimes a solution to a project demands something more or different to this so, in my opinion, as a designer one always has to be open minded to try new things and not be a slave to one's own restrictions. But being appropri-

ate and unselfish can also save you a lot of trouble for yourself and others sometimes.'

'A good concept carries the graphic and the work,' adds Nelson. 'I do things on paper and try to work on concepts and ideas rather than trying to make something work on the surface. Apart from this I try to do what comes out of me; feels good, works well and looks great.'

'Philosophy is a pretty strong word,' says Katja. 'Uniqueness, strong and clever concepts and visual

'We all love sneaking around old second hand book stores to find old nice things,'

flow are always on my wish list when I start a project...but they can be quite tough to achieve.'

'I believe your design philosophy evolves and changes with you and the different stages in your life,' says Thorsten. 'It's a kind of a continuing progress, which for me personally hasn't ended yet. Probably like every designer, I try to come up with an innovative and original idea and focus on the concept rather than just style and good looks. I think the four of us like working with each other because we all take this similar approach concerning our "design philosophy."'

With a uniformity of quality rather than style, it's no wonder the members site varying inspirations for their design. 'Presently it would probably be Kim Hiortø from Norway,' says Käre. 'He applies his subtle designs to the record covers of Norwegian label Rune Grammofon. Another one is a middle aged Danish theatre director called Gitte Kath who designs

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Top and bottom left: Work for Norwegian band Ugress; “We also produced the cd cover of the album. We made a 2 sided poster which on one side had the full overview of the town we built, including everything from cows to petrol stations, and the other side had a pin-up style band shot of the four rockers. We folded the poster around the cd and that was the cover.

Left: Tepid artwork; ‘The cd had to get printed twice since the lines did not match up the first time and as a result the printer that did it got fired...’

her own posters for the theatre she works at in a very organic and tactile way, only using her own found objects. I don’t think she even uses a computer in the process. Mark Farrow is another hero and so are North, Intro and Blue Source. They all have a similar approach. And I’ve always admired the very thoughtful and intellectual approaches of Fuel and Tomato. Peter Saville does very emotional work and I love the work Designers Republic do for Warp Records, especially for Autechre.

‘In the past, even though they’re not very old yet, I’ve admired and still admire David Carson and Neville Brody’s work. I think they’ve had a big effect on designers our age. Further back in time I guess people like Saul Bass, Pablo Ferro, Bruno Monguzzi, Joseph Mueller Brockmann and tons of others have had an effect on me for various reasons.’

‘I always loved American design,’ admits Nelson ‘especially work coming from Cranbrook and California and the magazines *émigré* and *Ray Gun*, as well as the old Russian designers like Rodchenko. I’ve always loved the magazine *Colors*.



Above: Moving Through Air fliers; ‘They don’t have a common topic and are rather a result of curiosity and little experiments compiled usually in a short frame of time’

‘My main inspiration always came from what goes on around me and my life, like my fellow students and friends, drinking beer, chatting about things, and getting hyped up about ideas and what is possible to do. Music, art galleries, street poles, notice boards, record stores, op-shops and King Street are always great sources to get me going.’

Katja adds, ‘My big heroes back at uni were David Carson, Neville Brody, The Designers Republic, Tomato, Pablo Ferro, Brockmann, Chris Cunningham and the Attik. And from there the list grows...Scott Clum, Deanne Cheuk, Jennifer Sterling, Yoshimoto Nara...But even though all of their work really hit me in some way and I admire their design, it is not the biggest inspiration when I am doing work myself. I usually find real things that I find on the street, or in music, nature, art or ‘unpolished’ work more inspiring. Sometimes it triggers something that makes me think or helps me as a starting point for something completely different.’

Thorsten continues, ‘I love Swiss graphics (Josef Müller-Brockmann for example) and minimalism.

But as for inspiration, everything goes. Stuff I find on the streets or in op-shops, my grandma’s attic, architecture, art, my friends, dreams, drawings done by Käre’s eight-year-old sister, etc. I stopped buying design magazines because everything looks the same and subconsciously, to a certain extent, you always use what you already have seen in there.’

The theme for this issue’s cover is both obvious and perfect. Like the dusty old gem of a 45 that you find hidden at the back of a record shop, readers will no doubt find glee in ‘uncovering’ a stack of what look like free old records. ‘We all love sneaking around old second hand book stores to find old nice things,’ explains Käre, ‘so the inspiration for the cover was the piles of really old and dusty record covers that are sometimes to be found in these stores. We wanted to create a feeling of old worldliness in these very digital and unhuman times.’

The Sopp Collective can be found at www.soppcollective.com



Clue to Kalo

Interview with Mark Mitchell
by Sebastian Chan

LOVE & LAPTOP MELANCHOLY

Based in Adelaide, the lanky Mark Mitchell has been absorbing countless influences from his two passions – music and comics. Mark is on the verge releasing his second full-length album whilst in the midst of writing a PhD thesis on comics. The first *Love Like Life In Miniature*, recorded as Superscience for Surgery Records, was a particularly memorable debut back in 2001, and its follow up finds Mark undergoing a name and label change to become Clue To Kalo. The new record with a very Donnie Darko title, *Come Here When You Sleepwalk*, will be simultaneously released on Mush Records in the USA, and Leaf in the UK and the rest of the world.

As Superscience, Mark was already well ensconced in the growing canon of quietist laptop indie pop or equally unimaginatively, ‘indietronica’. Since 2001 and Radiohead’s *OK Computer* and *Kid A*, there have been increasing forays into laptop electronics by indie bands like Hood, but the most interesting music has been from those going the other way – laptop musicians taking up digitised guitars and...errr, vocals. Melbourneans Pretty Boy Crossover, and their side project Other People’s Children, San Francisco’s Dntel, Pulseprogramming on Chicago’s Aesthetics imprint, Berlin’s Lali Puna and others on the Morr Music label have been leading the charge. The general aesthetic is reminiscent of late 80s and early 90s UK bands like My Bloody Valentine, Ride, and their counterparts – squalls of melody, drifting introspective damaged vocals, searing rushes of mid-range noise, and head nods to the 60s folk rock of The Byrds, ‘60s psychedelia, and the wispy vocal murmurings of ‘80s Cocteau Twins.

In many ways this is a kind of ‘feminised’ oceanic electronica, a soft antidote to driving rhythms or alienating harsh metallic experiments. Indeed, late last year Morr Music released an album of Slowdive covers, one of the more obscure Creation Records shoegazer outfits. This is more than nostalgia; there has been a growing movement of a select group of electronic producers towards a greyscale melancholia driven partially by Boards Of Canada’s wistful repressed childhood memories and a growing interest in vocals, or at least voice. Also working with

related sensibilities are producers like Manitoba, Keiran Hebden’s Fourtet & Fridge, as well as the neo-folk of Neotropic. Superscience’s *Love Like Life In Miniature* and *Come Here When You Sleepwalk* combine elements of melodic laptop melancholy with fey vocals strangely not too dissimilar from The Smiths.

Mark explains, ‘I missed out on the whole shoegazer thing when it happened. I was young and not really into anything outside of what was being played on commercial radio and so I’ve heard bands like My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive only recent-



ly. A friend of mine gave me a mini-disc of [Slowdive’s] *Souvlaki* about a year ago, and I bought [MBV’s] *Loveless* without hearing it because a friend of mine told me that it sounded like Seefeel. So I feel like I’ve discovered things in reverse. I listened to electronic music in high school, and the kind of stuff I enjoyed seems (in retrospect) to owe a lot to those Creation Records bands. Stuff like Seefeel and the Ecstasy of St. Theresa sounds like shoegazer music made with electronics, but one is considered more ‘electronica’ than the other, when I don’t really see that much of difference between them. Discovering Creation, for me, almost felt like hear-

SHOEGAZER STARTER KIT

My Bloody Valentine

Glider EP

The most important single from 1990’s *Loveless* album, this is one of the defining moments in shoegazer, and also represents a fertile time of crossover between experimental guitar outfits and the sampler revolution. The guitars and vocals were played then sampled then reconstructed by Shields and Butcher creating a drifting wall of sound resembling an ecstasy vision blur. The video clip confirms the connection to ecstasy and club culture whilst the legendary Andy Weatherall remix nicked, almost whole, the beats from Westbam’s ‘Alarm Clock’.

Ride

Smile MiniLP

Springing a much more traditional English rock vein *Smile* is a collection of the two first Ride EPs from 1990. Classic ‘60s psychedelia with vocal harmonies and alternating crashing and chiming guitars. The standout tracks were the two original a-sides of the EPs *Chelsea Girl* and *Like A Daydream*.

Pale Saints

In Ribbons

The second proper Pale Saints album for 4AD, this record moves into new territory with the addition of cello and more space into their songs. Following their debut *Comforts Of Madness*, *In Ribbons* is a much richer record full of depth, chiming guitars and the addition of Muriel Barham’s voice as a harmoniser to Ian Masters high vocals. For the trainspotter the first single, ‘Throwing Back The Apple’ also featured a cover of ‘70s oddball pop group Slapp Happy and their tune “Blue Flower” on the flip, a track also covered recently by Hermann & Kleine for their recent album on Morr Music (and Mazzy Star). Further notice that Slapp Happy’s Peter Blegvad is now a comic author.

Slowdive

Catch The Breeze EP

An early single that actually did a little bit of business in Australia courtesy of some Triple J airplay. ‘Catch The Breeze’ was one of the tracks that tried to emulate *Glider*’s Balearic beats and cascading guitars, before Slowdive moved into ambient rock territory with their subsequent releases all with undecipherable vocals and endless drones.

Nu-Gazer acts :

Mum, Sigur Ros, Hermann & Kleine, Dntel, Pulseprogramming.

CLUE TO KALO'S RECOMMENDED COMIC RELIEF

Peter Blegvad
Book Of Leviathan

Perhaps Blegvad is better known as the musician from Slapp Happy, but his cartoons are among some of the finest being produced. Full of playful inquiry and philosophical speculation.

Daniel Clowes
Eightball

Equal measures of misanthropy and genuine human understanding come through in Clowes' kinda famous periodical. His story *Ghost World* was recently filmed, and he's currently writing the screen adaptation of another of his strips, *Art School Confidential*.

Ben Katchor
Julius Knipl: Real Estate Photographer

Julius Knipl is the ill-defined protagonist of this short strip that's quite unlike anything else. Knipl walks around and discovers the considerable magic of Katchor's imaginary New York.

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons
Watchmen

The comic that got me into comics. Moore expertly deconstructs the conventional superhero with breathtaking results.

Joe Sacco
Palestine

Sacco produced this piece of comics journalism after spending time in the occupied territories in the early to mid-nineties. Self-consciously subjective and profoundly moving.

Julie Doucet
Dirty Plotte
French-Canadian cartoonist Doucet makes sort-of-autobiographical comics that are as much about what's going on in her head as in the 'real world'. Beautiful, charming, and full of broken English.

George Herriman
Krazy Kat
Considered by many to be the greatest comic of all time and a direct precursor to the Beat writers, Herriman explores a love triangle between a cat, a mouse and a dog. Wonderful and infectious.

Adrian Tomine
Optic Nerve
Melancholy, beautifully constructed stories, many of which focus on the difficulties of relating to other people. Alan's (our drummer's) favourite comic.

David B
Epileptic
An ambitious autobiographical comic from this French cartoonist about the ways in which his brother's epilepsy affected his life. Not so much a documentation as a hallucinatory recollection.

Jim Woodring
Frank
Childlike but pretty frightening, Frank is an unidentifiable animal continually walking into curious and horrifying situations. Jim Woodring was nice enough to draw a portrait of my soul for my website.

ing earlier manifestations of similar ideas. Like someone who might listen to the Shins and then go back and discover '60s bands. I have a kind of false nostalgia for that music too. A lot of my friends were there when it happened, and get misty-eyed when they put on MBV. And I guess I see that and imagine it as the soundtrack to an early '90s that I missed out on. Like when you see kids who are into "original" punk and you can tell that they're bummed about being born too late. That era may have little to do with them historically, but still they feel nostalgic.'

Working in what might well be the best 'generalist' record store in Australia, Big Star Records, Mark is always picking up on connections between musical genres. 'I tend to get into bands or sets of bands and listen to them intensely for a month or two and then become intense about something else. I don't know much about music history, so there are lots of things that I've missed. I was into Red House Painters [on 4AD], then went nuts about Yo La Tengo, then listened to [early 90s] shoegazer indie pop. At the moment it's [60s psychedelic rockers] Love and their album *Forever Changes*. A friend bought it for me as a gift, and it's just wonderful. It would be great to make a record like that...the real benefit of working at Big Star is that I can find a CD or a band that looks interesting and play it in the store. Not just once or twice, but multiple times, to see if it will grow on me. I think it's unfair to listen to a band once, in a critical mindset, to decide what you think of them. There are so many factors at play in what strikes you at a certain time. Working at a record store means that you can surround yourself with music, let it seep in, let certain things hit you when you don't expect it.'

The new album was due to come out on Adelaide's Surgery



Records back in early 2002 but the Anticon tour in October 2001 changed all this. Out here for Sound Summit 2001, Dose One was pushed and prodded into seeing Mark perform live at one of the showcase events and was given a copy of *Love Like Life In Miniature* and a demo of the then untitled new record to take back to the States. At the time Dose One was doing A&R for Mush Records who released the cLOUDDEAD records and had a long affiliation with Anticon. Shortly afterwards Mush Records approached Mark, which complicated matters as Surgery, who had already paid for the recording of the new album, were on the verge of releasing it. 'For a while, I lost my enthusiasm for music. The "business" [side of things] can really put you off. It can put this great horrible weight on the whole process. I stopped making music for awhile, and started again in earnest only when it was all sorted out, so I have a quite bit of new stuff now. At the same time, the result of the experience was amazing. Mush and Leaf are two fantastic labels, run by two great people. They have a genuine love of music, and have been great to me. Robert at Mush has been especially patient. I was saying to a friend the other day that now that all the bad stuff is over, things couldn't have worked out any better. I don't regret any of it. I'm incredibly excited about the future.'

The threat of Mush putting Clue To Kalo on a grueling 25 date American tour with members of Anticon, Alias and Themselves late in 2002 forced Mark to reconsider his live show, which until that time had been a solo laptop and microphone set. Somewhat fortuitously Mush realised that Clue To Kalo was not necessarily the most sympathetic act to tour in a hiphop show and the tour was delayed. Mark explains, 'Actually I'd thought about changing the live show for quite a while. I do enjoy getting up and playing solo with a laptop and microphone, but there is a part of me which thinks that it must be kind of uninspiring for the audience. As my fears increased, I entertained the idea of recruiting a cou-

ple of friends and making the Clue to Kalo live show a three-piece band.

It was the tour to the States that we were going to do with Themselves last year that eventually made me do it. Hip-hop is a very performative type of music, and I was afraid that one dude with a laptop would look bland next to that. I discussed the live band idea with Robert, and he encouraged it, so I got Curtis and Alan involved...We've done three shows as a band, and we're getting better. I think the Clue to Kalo band, on their worst night, is more fun than me solo on my best. It's just more exciting for me. It's rough around the edges, there are fuck-ups, Alan can't hear the computer beat track sometimes, but it doesn't matter. When I go out, I want to see a band play. I rarely feel like watching some guy play alone with his mouse. There is a dynamic of people playing together on stage that really appeals to me. And if you fuck up, you're all in it together, you laugh at yourselves, and it doesn't matter...I still play occasional solo shows, where I usually play new songs that I haven't rehearsed with the band, but they're not as fun. I usually get incredibly nervous, freeze up, look pained, sing badly, and feel shit at the end of it. It's not that bad, but the band is a lot more fun, even though some people may not like it as much. One guy has seen both shows and said he preferred the solo show. But you usually find that those people are into electronic music more or



less exclusively, and aren't really into the idea of a band playing live. They often don't get that it doesn't have to be ultra-professional or digital-tight to be affecting or fun, that those things can even sometimes work against it...For the next record I want to write some songs for guitar and drums, give them to Curtis to Alan to learn, record them into my machine and mess around with them.'

Beyond music, Mark is busy with comics and cultural theory. 'I think a conventional rhetoric of art establishes it in opposition to popular culture. What I'm talking about is how certain instances of different media, like film, music, literature, visual art, are contextualised by this conventional rhetoric of art. A lot of the time you might have music that people consider to be 'Art' (high-brow experimental doo-

dlings), set up in opposition to music that is read as 'not Art' ('empty' Top 40 hits). I'm researching examples that challenge a simple opposition between these things – with specific reference to comics – and how these examples are absorbed by this opposition.

'So muso types might write off some chart stuff as bullshit, but then they'll like Timbaland or the Neptunes, and they'll say that they're liking it for the "right" reasons, reasons that are different to your twelve year old sister who just wants to shake her booty. With comics, the whole medium is often seen as devoid of artistic merit, but then something like Spiegelman's *Maus* comes along that challenges this. So then people say, "okay, well, *Maus* is art, but superhero comics aren't." And then something like *Watchmen* comes along and people have to reassess...so now I think I try to make my music embody some of these ideas that I'm interested in. I think of what I write as essentially pop music, but I try to do different things with whatever that implies'.

Clue To Kalo's Come Here When You Sleepwalk is released on Mush and Leaf in March, and his debut as Superscience on Surgery Records is still available.



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SOLSTICE WITH THE SHAKERS



Italian born Perth resident Domenico de Clario is not a musician, yet Burnt Friedman's Nonplace label has recently released an album of his piano work. To appreciate the music on the album, one must first be aware of the fascinating story behind the artist and the release. 'I've never had a lesson and I don't actually have any musical background. As a performance artist I started using the piano in 1978 as a way of trying to propose ignorance or the lack of understanding something as a way to another kind of knowledge.'

On this occasion the way to another kind of knowledge was through staying in a Shaker village in the United States in 1996 where the music featured on his album *Shaker Road* was recorded. 'I was in New York in 1995 and I got invited to participate in a project taking place during the summer of 1996 in the Shaker Village. The project was called *Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art and the Shakers*. It was curated by Francis Morin (a freelance visual artist). It was very much about trying to demonstrate or understand or in some way measure the kind of disciplined approach to the creative life which artists have and find a correlation with the Shaker life. The Shakers have a very disciplined and structured life. They're a community who have almost died out (there's only five left now but there were many thousands in the 1850s) because they are celibate so they need people to become Shakers rather than being born Shakers. Essentially they have common belongings and they believe in Father/Mother/God. They're the closest thing to Buddhism within Christianity.'

Being part of the project required de Clario to take on all aspects of the Shaker life, but it seems it was just as difficult for the Shakers to understand the life of the artists. 'It was very hard for the Shakers to see what the point of this project was but in the end they accepted it. We (contemporary artists from around the world) ended up living in the Shaker community for about six weeks each. It was structured so that we would live and work and share in their chores in the morning such as working in their vegetable gardens or restoring picket fences. We

would pray with them and have breakfast with them and sing with them in the evenings. The afternoons and evenings were ours to involve each one of us in our projects and each one of us saw the project differently.'

De Clario took the project as an opportunity to interact with his surrounds. 'I was interested in seeing the relationship between, if you like, the micro and the macro and the way that the body interfaces with the two of those. I was interested in seeing the Shaker village, the lake, the Shaker himself, the houses, the orchids, the whole thing and the body with its seven energy centres located somewhere within it. I located those centres eventually as the lake, the orchids, the oak tree etc. I structured it so that over the 28 days of the project I would walk from one energy centre to another and there I would do a blindfolded painting of the colour of that particular energy setting. The painting wasn't a painting of anything, but just a way of touching the paint and letting the body be a bit like a seismograph needle to give evidence of the journey through the body. There were three aspects to this journey and the second aspect was the improvisation on the piano every sunset. It was also done blindfolded on a piano that I had put in the room. The last aspect was that before bed I would memorise some Shaker text from songs or prayers. Blindfolded as well, I would try and copy them down onto a piece of paper. The blindfold is very important for the work that I do. The idea was that I would immerse myself in the Shaker world.'

Immersing himself in the world of the Shakers was made easier because of their love of music and the arts. 'With the Shakers themselves, music was very powerful for them. They relied a lot on visions and were given what they call gift drawings and gift songs and somebody would wake in the middle of the night – particularly "gifted people" – with a lyric to a song which they would adapt to what at the time was Irish folk songs but they would add new words to them or come up with a drawing of something. They were so against individuals taking credit for anything that the dreamer wouldn't make the drawing because that

would be too much for one person, so they had a community drawer of dreams. The dream would be described to the drawer. In that particular community what I did at night – the drawings and the paintings and the songs - were very much about trying to put myself into a position where perhaps the disciplined life might give rise to a way of dreaming of music and paintings and drawings. I wanted very much for the inner life to be related to what this music was about.'

Some would find a life of such control and discipline to clash with their creativity, but not de Clario. 'I found my time there ecstatic. I went back there for another six weeks and still wanted to go back again. I almost became a Shaker, or nearly considered it (I have children and family here). If it wasn't for the celibacy - which I'm sure a lot of people have said over the years - I think that way of life, with those people in that part of the world would be a dream life. It's about the relationship to your inner life and spirit. I really love the disciplined life. I'm probably not a very disciplined person but I love the structured life. I do build a structured life. I'm a very private person and I like to generate that kind of life and I believe that within that comes tremendous freedom.'

Despite the initial hesitation of the Shakers early on, the end of the project saw them enjoying the friendships and art which had come from the project. 'They came to the exhibition in Boston and there are still more exhibitions happening of the same thing because there is so much interest in the Shakers. They were very enthusiastic about what we did. At first they were very sceptical and said n, until in the end when they just gave in. They developed very close relationships with a lot of the artists. I'm still in touch with some and I went there only last year.'

The album which was released in late 2002 is only a small segment of what de Clario created while staying at the Shaker village and was never intended for a wide scale release. 'Part of the project of the journey through the Shaker body was the production of 28 paintings/drawings and these blind-

folded musical improvisations on disk. I made two CDs – one of them was of bits that I recorded in my room every night and the other was of the long performance (the all night performance) that I did on the solstice. This was played in my installation when the project was exhibited. I made 500 and they sold in Boston and in other places I gave them away. About a year ago Burnt Friedman who runs

I don't have any musical training and I'm not trying to achieve a musical effect – it's not about musicality. The music becomes a kind of residue, another type of approach if you like."

the Nonplace label heard the sounds in somebody's house and contacted me to see if I was interested in publishing the music. It wasn't made for that purpose and I didn't think that people would really be interested in it. I saw it as being an aspect of the project that people who saw the exhibition might want to take away. Everyone really liked it very, very much right from the start but I never really thought of doing a promotional thing.'

De Clario also never really thought about being a musician either – in fact he still doesn't consider himself one and has never had any musical training. He feels that music is not just about musicality. 'The first time I ever touched a piano was in public and I did a series of performances at a place called the organ factory in Melbourne in the 1970s. Just sitting at the piano and playing for as long as I could - not playing, but composing. Involving myself in a world that I knew nothing about as a way of suggesting that it's not knowledge but some other thing. I started playing blindfolded about ten years ago when I

began getting a visual understanding of the keys. I wanted to get back to a place where I was lost. It doesn't always sound like that sometimes as there are very different sounds that get made. I don't have any musical training and I'm not trying to achieve a musical effect – it's not about musicality. The music becomes a kind of residue, another type of approach if you like.'

Bridging the gap between various creative arts is an easy thing for de Clario whose artistic background is quite varied. "I studied architecture at university but I was always involved in art. I've taught for 25 years at RMIT in the visual arts and at the moment I'm head of visual arts at Edith Cowan University in Perth. I don't think the music and visual arts industries are connected enough. Like all of our world they are sort of sealed into our compartmentalised lives. In the last thirty or forty years there has been an increased sort of dialogue between different kinds of music, dance, visual arts and writing and I think that is completely where the future lies."

'I'm interested in the pedagogical approach to the thing I'm interested in,' says de Clario. 'Not believing that you can really be taught how to be an artist, I believe that you can construct a community of creative people where possibilities are inherent.' Possibilities including the album by an artist who has never thought of himself as a musician, or at least not as a creator of music for a musical audience. 'It is a surprise that it's out and it must be remembered that it is a particular fragment of a particular experience which is never to be repeated. It was a very unique moment in my life, both where I was and where the thing was recorded. Just one of those very, very special moments that I don't think I can ever really re-do.'

*Domenico de Clario's album
Shaker Road is out now on
Nonplace records*

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IN KOCH WE TRUST

Prolific is probably a good word to describe Tim Koch. He co-runs two record labels, has a number of full-length releases, remixes and compilation appearances, as well as gigabytes of critical acclaim, all from the relative isolation of Adelaide. So how does he do it?

Koch's earliest involvement in music began with learning the saxophone for four years as a kid, progressed through playing bass 'to try and emulate Jah Wobble from PiL', recording guitar and bass experiments on reel to reel 4-track, and on to three years of music technology at Adelaide University. But it is Koch's early fascination with 8-bit computer game music that is most evident now. He has a lo-tech, digital aesthetic, distinctive in its drum rhythms and atmospherics, all with a fun simplicity that can only come from a guy who still gets a kick out of the 80s Commodore 64 classic from Epyx, California Games. Think Lackluster and Lode Runner, Arovane and Asteroid.

Asked to describe his own music, Koch has a couple of funny but apt descriptions. 'I have thought about how to answer this type of question before,' he admits, 'and all I could really think of was the same feeling that you get when eighties films snap to dream sequences. Like in *Risky Business* when he does what's-her-name on the train, which had a Tangerine Dream track in the background, and Tom Cruise was acting all moody and brooding.' Right.

'Or similarly, the sequences in old computer games where you get the "you won" screen, and there is this jubilant music that sounds happy-sad if you know what I mean, sounds like it would only fit at the end of something like a film or a silly computer game.'

But inspiration comes from different quarters these days and, perhaps surprisingly, it's not from the IDM world. 'I hate to sound all whiney and whiney but not much electronic stuff I hear inspires me hugely,' he concedes. '[Its more] stuff like really technical fusion or jazz drumming or innovative guitar playing or anything really original sounding that just astounds the listener, that inspires me to forget everything and block the everyday shit out and focus on music, pick up a



guitar and create something that relieves the pressure that builds up.

'But with electronic music, I think it's in a live setting I get the most inspiration, especially when something just pings at a gig with visuals and music – when both gel together so seamlessly – I guess I really enjoy that a lot – regardless of whether it is some guy like Pimmon doing his electronic tax return or VST chess plugin during the set.

'Apart from that, after coming back from three months of music related travel, I have realised more than anything that people and places are the biggest inspiration for anyone. More specifically, immersing yourself in different cultures and situations. That could mean travelling to other countries, or simply just hanging out with some new and different people who do things or think just a little bit differently.'

Luckily there are cheaper ways than boarding a plane to get inspired by and connected with the world. Koch realised the power of the internet for musicians early. 'Without the internet I wouldn't

have been able to do any of the stuff I have,' he admits. 'The ability to fire off insane amounts of email at will is the only thing that has let me network with anyone and everyone who can be bothered to check out my stuff.

'So yep, email is really the one most crucial thing I could recommend, and people making the effort to follow up things that kinda seem insignificant at the time, like a remix for an artist that isn't really well known, but just the fact that you have put a lot of effort into that remix shines through, and the limited audience that hear it can feel that effort and therefore get something out of it.

'Also, despite all the negative shit about it, MP3s really made a lot of music available to a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't have access to it due to geography or lack of money. MP3 was and probably still is single-handedly the most efficient form of distribution for the raw concept of delivering songs and music to people everywhere, regardless of packaging etc.'

Having dispersed his music via email around the world and expanding his opportunities, Koch is now happy for people to be sharing MP3 ripped copies of his published work for free. 'I am online sometimes and someone I don't know will say "Someone has every single song of yours on Soulseek as MP3," expecting me to get narky, and when I just say "So what?" in response, they seem disappointed.'

The internet also plays a part in the ongoing roles Koch has with a number of independent labels. He co-runs Tundra Music with a Californian he met on the net and his Adelaide-based Surgery Records is set to release vinyl by well-known internationals and net buddies.

Surgery Records began back in 1999 with 'just a simple idea of putting out music that we all liked and felt passionate about.' Initially that included some overseas acts as well as locals Superscience (now Clue To Kalo), Modula and Pretty Boy Crossover.

Happily there is an abundance of local talent staying off the internationals from the hygienically sealed Surgery door. 'There is just so much good new and exciting music being made (electronic or

otherwise) in Australia that we have a release roster cued up of all local stuff,' he says 'although we are planning to put out some one-off seven inches of some well known internationals soon.'

Koch does the A&R and 'a lot of leg work' with distribution, promotion and gigs for Surgery Records. 'Although essentially we all share the workload, each person kinda sticks mainly to what they do best: Ian does all the design and flyers...it was always intended that have a design aesthetic to a standard that would be appreciated in a broad sense, and to keep consistency so that there would be recognition of the logo and also the design template of each album release.'

The label also has a great open door policy for its artists. 'We are hoping to collaborate with other labels in an effort to get away from the 'so and so artist is our artist so therefore they can't do any other work or projects outside of our label' mentality which I guess is just caused by stuffy contractual restrictions.'

Koch also co-runs Tundra Music, a vinyl based label, with Pietro Da Sacco, who is based in California. Sacco has a long-running radio show, Stateside (digital:nimbus), as well as running an online mag (www.igloomag.com). Koch and Sacco met online six years ago and 'always spoke of doing a vinyl label at some point, and finally got around to it.' Their first EP is out now, featuring Tim Jackiw from Adelaide, and Tim Martin from Cambridge, UK (Pause_2, Expanding Records). Koch insists that Tundra is not an IDM label. 'A lot of what we have in mind for release is much more smooth Detroit-styled techno from local boys such as Tim Jackiw and also Jeff Symons, who have both been just under the radar doing great music for years,' he explains.

Co-running two independent labels may seem a hard task – but it's made easier by a vast network of contacts Koch has made and kept over the years. 'All the people I have met and become friends with via my music are part of a big network of friendly and inspiring people who will inflict my music or releases upon their friends, and I do the same whenever I can with their labels or releases. So in effect it is a form of distribution as all the net chums I have (a lot of the Merck crew as well as labels like Civik Records, Cactus Island, Shaped Harmonics etc) all push each other's stuff to people who wouldn't otherwise be exposed to it.

'Of course it isn't all smiles and candy though...there are a lot of pitfalls to net hookups with distributors. If a distributor is keen on a label that contacts them from across the other side of the world via email, the transaction happens pretty swiftly and without much of a relationship developing. So more often than not things go sour and there is the label left thinking, "what the fuck are these people doing with my stock? I haven't heard from

them for months and they owe me xxxx dollars." Then there are the distributors at the other end thinking, "Well they are over in kangaroo land and it's pretty easy for us to just ignore their mails and act like we aren't here... let's just ride with that for a while." And so it goes.

'There are crooked people in all levels of the music industry, but it hits home a little harder with the electronica scene, as it is largely based on close and genuine relationships between labels and artists for some reason. Mainly because most people making the stuff have a DSL connection and we're all nerds on mIRC dcc'ing each other our latest tracks!'

Having the chance to finally meet this international network of nethead musicians was just one reason Koch recently went traipsing across Europe with his laptop. 'The trip was more based around just gauging the community in Europe and the UK,' Koch explains 'so most of my time was spent meeting up with labels and distributors as well as radio people and press. My thinking was that I would lay that foundation first by distributing showcase material of myself and then returning later this year to consolidate with gigs.

'[It was] amazing to see that there is a presence for an artist based in Australia, and great to see other labels and people about in record shops - like seeing Couchblip releases available in Edinburgh or Pimmon's stuff all over in little shops. It was also a shock to see my record in shops over Europe and record shop owners actually saying hello to me once or twice. But the amount of jaw dropping is pretty astonishing when you mention that you are an Australian artist who has made it over to Europe or the UK just to promote their music.

'Also the laptop performance lashback has well and truly set in, with most laptop performers getting a caning for supposedly 'checking their email/downloading porn/playing minesweeper' whilst doing a live set... Having said that, I did play the odd modest gig, and it was nice to play to a whole different audience.'

And no European trip is replete without wacky anecdotes, surely? 'Haha yeah some crazy stuff happened along the way,' confirms Koch 'A train we caught in France happened to catch on fire... As a consolation we all got one free beer, so I guess that says a lot about the French.

'Also saw a lot of really strange things, like big packs of riot police in Belgium all eating yoghurt with little plastic spoons, all sorts of mullet variations all over Europe, too much mention of Steve Irwin, cockroaches that scream when you squash them, walking past Michael Jackson's balcony in Berlin about half an hour before he hung his freak spawn over the edge, being mistaken for a German too often, hearing John Peel locally, seeing incredible amounts of cheap vinyl that was impossible to carry in my backpack, missing Mouse on Mars by one day across all of Europe...'

'Of course it isn't all smiles and candy...there are a lot of pitfalls to net hookups with distributors. If a distributor is keen on a label that contacts them from across the other side of the world via email, the transaction happens pretty swiftly without much of a relationship developing [then] things go sour and there is the label left thinking, "what the fuck are these people doing with my stock?'

With such a hectic 2002, one would forgive Koch for stepping back and consolidating. Not so, apparently. US label n5MD recently released the 'Mine Is Yours' minidisc with remixes Koch did for Fourplay, as well as other Australian artists Lawrence English, Brunatex, Mr Eel and internationals like Hrvatski and Proem.

Koch also received some funding from Arts SA to release a remix album of the *Please Don't Tell Me That's Your Volvo* release from a few years ago, entitled *Please Don't Tell Me That's Your Remix*. 'I hear everyone groan in unison,' says Koch 'but it really is a strong collection of tracks from Australia and overseas artists including Yunx, Raven (Peter from Fourplay), Quark Kent, Proem, Mr Projectile etc. Out on Aural Industries and distributed in Australia by Inertia, Koch will tour Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to launch the disc in March.

Around March *Islandtones* will be released, a long player out on Belgian label U-Cover. 'It is a lot different than any other stuff I have out I guess, with more sampled guitar, bass and manipulated vocal samples.'

There are also remixes for a double CD on Skylab, sitting nicely with Bochum Welt, Isan, B. Fleischmann and others. As well as some remixes for Don Meers, Siktransit, and Ontayso (Koen Lybaert and Esther Santoyo who run U Cover)

Tim Koch will tour the eastern seaboard in March. His album Islandtones will be out in March on the U-Cover label

SOUND CONTROL TO MAJOR TIM



TIM RITCHIE TOP 5 TOP SHELF TIPPLES

1. Neat, not chilled, Stolichnitsky vodka with a Pils chaser
2. Red Wine with the Radio National Staff Wine Club
3. 'A good brandy' (whatever that means...Hennessy Paradis?)
4. Pernod
5. Uila

Tim Ritchie's World Cup Selection: New Zealand

Tim Ritchie likes to think about radio. And radio is something that bears thinking about – or rather, what bears thinking about is why it is so hard to find radio worth thinking about, not to mention radio worth listening to. You have to hoist your antenna pretty high to find any moments hidden between the mindless banalities of corporate media. The only programs to really rise above the oversupply of plastic ambience are a handful of shows on community radio, and of course, old Auntie.

Tim Ritchie is an ABC veteran, Radio National producer and at 10pm on Friday nights presents *Sound Quality*. If you don't know Radio National, think of it as the hardcore of ABC radio output – it's the (mostly) uncompromising programming where the last remaining vestiges of Reithian ethic remain. (And when I say Reithian, I am talking about Lord Reith, the BBC controller whose trifecta was that broadcasting should 'inform, educate and entertain'. In that order). It's the station of choice for people who need real news or serious opinion, away from tabloid propaganda and lifestyle soundtracks. *Sound Quality* is something of a round peg in a square hole. But where else on the ABC would a show filled with weird electronic music feel comfortable? Radio National already features a motley crew of music programmers from Nasty Tek soundbwoy Brent Clough to transatlantic ageing hippy Lucky Oceans; it's the only place for this sort of show.

Sound Quality was born of opportunistic confidence. In 2000, Radio National had been replaying *The Story of Music*, an epic 52 part BBC-produced series examining the history of pop music from 1900 to today. As that wound its way towards the end of the 20th Century, Ritchie reacted as any optimistic senior ABC staffer would: he offered to produce and present a new release music show to take its place, for free. Since then, it has shifted towards one end of the spectrum – weird, leftfield music that sometimes gets put under a category of "electronica". The portly DJ with the familiar voice admits that while 'it was initially planned as a new-release show, and it is, in a sense, it has evolved into what I think is under-represented electronic sounds.'

As an added bonus, Ritchie replays sections of *Solid Steel*, the cult cut-up Cold Cut radio program which was, until recently, broadcast on the BBC. It's your only chance to check that without the 404s, dropouts and buffering that go with web-casts.

Sound Quality is the only place you are going to hear anything remotely approaching underrepresented electronica, and in many ways these sounds represent a logical progression from his time playing hiphop and early house music in the 1980s. Ritchie is obviously pleased with the sound of the show. 'It's here because the ABC doesn't have anything like it elsewhere. I said, "Here is an obvious hole!" The ABC is not just about getting numbers but about fulfilling a cultural role about Australia. JJJ and Classic FM do what they do, but Radio National deals in specialist programming and it seems logical that Radio National should have a program dealing with this sort of specialist music.'

Self-vindication is a theme that you can't ignore when you talk with Ritchie. He is a consummate survivor, and (unlike most of the sycophantic throwbacks in the worlds of the music and radio), his credentials are firmly in place. Old-timer Sydneysiders will remember Tim Ritchie as a JJ presenter, and might even remember him from the early days at Goodbar. Rewind fifteen years and take a subterranean stroll into that steamy underground club on any given Friday, and you would be bumping shoulders with eastern-suburbs scenesters, finding Ritchie in the DJ booth next to Shaun Finley and Pee wee Ferris dropping late 80s New York hiphop like Public Enemy, Cash Money and Cold Chillin'. Not much has changed in fifteen years. Except of course today, radio "personalities" walk out of private colleges and into bland and banal jobs with about as much commitment to music as their marketing department allows them (ie none).

It doesn't have to be this way. For a few years, JJ (and later, Triple J) was a wonderful station to listen to for new music. It was a station that was very important to its Sydney audience, which may be very hard for our younger, interstate, or international readers to appreciate, especially when compared to the Triple J of today. It was a station brimming with a certain type of revolt and dissent; or at the

very least, our eight cents a day used to go towards a station with presenters who knew and cared about music and radio that could rock, and dance, and pose, and think. According to Ritchie, ‘Then, it used to be that there was this one station that you could go to, and there were people who loved music and finding new music and giving it to the audience. It was the portal where the good stuff was found.’

It was also the only Sydney station with an agenda set to agitate, and a station pushing leftfield comedy. Famously, Roy and HG developed their bit many years ago on the Js, but in particular, Ritchie name-checks JJ breakfast presenter Russell Guy, ‘This was the best radio I had ever heard – they had this guy called Captain Goodvibes who was just this surfing pig who just blew joints all day as this little comedy routine, and Major Judith Kidney Stone was the producer who used to write a skit that talked about the social and political events of the day but set against a backdrop of Rommel’s desert campaign! It was just magic, Russel Guy had a way of communicating which was just off the planet but just spoke to me absolutely. It was what used to get me up in the morning. As well, he made *What’s Rangoon to you is Grafton to me* – a road journey in someone’s head. It was a classic JJ radio play. If ever you get a chance to get a copy of that, it’s fantastic.’

In a story that has since become folklore, pressure was mounting from critics who claimed that JJJ was media for the metropolitan elite, inner-city arty wankers who were out of touch with real Australian youth. The station was dragged kicking and screaming towards nationalisation in 1990 and the Chapman-Frolows steamroller ironed out any kinks in the roster by effectively purging any staff who didn’t toe the line. Ritchie and a few others survived the sackings but were increasingly marginalised in a station whose identity became nothing but a lightly modified imitation of the useless, interchangeable, corporate networks. So today, we have a neutered JJJ. Tough luck if you are interested in Captain Goodvibes: finding a copy of an obscure twenty-year-old radical radio play can be easier said than done. Ritchie is rightfully unrepentant: ‘If I ran JJJ, that would get back on the radio. There are classic things from the past which have entire worth and relevance today, and there is a new audience for it.’

Throughout the interview, I get the feeling that Ritchie would rather be fighting for the forces of good trying to reform JJJ than making anonymous management and editorial decisions in the rarefied atmosphere of Radio National. Who wouldn’t? Ritchie is brutally positive in his belief that the national youth broadcaster can be hauled out of the depths of insipid wallpaper. His vision is noble, but I can’t help being cynical. Unfortunately for all of us, the tide is against the sort of patrician broadcasting Ritchie is talking about – where decisions are made by individuals and programming is idio-

syncratic. The digital era has ushered in an age where we have infinitely more media, but no choice – media content is sifted through focus groups and demographics (not to be confused with democratic). There is little room left over for individuals to develop ideas outside of prescribed boundaries. Of course, we’re not all mindless automatons with a home and garden in need of a refurbish. The wonders of widescreen/digital/interactive/multichannelled/payperview/5.1 portable media amounts to nothing when you can’t find anything to watch/listen/read.

There are some content creators who stake their fortunes on distinctive subject matter, for example TV stations like HBO in the US or Channel 4 in the UK. And Tim Ritchie can be included here – he has always programmed divergent (if not deviant) radio, and his attitude has paid off. He has single-mindedly championed new music, and new sounds: in his own words, ‘I spend much more time looking for new stuff than most young people

‘Then, it used to be that there was this one station that you could go to, and there were people who loved music and finding new music and giving it to the audience. It was the portal where the good stuff was found.’

I know.’ This was evident from his early radio voyages into cut n paste. ‘I used to do this thing when I was doing midnight to dawn shifts on JJJ; I would get in the BBC World Service, and mix it with tape loops, and weird music and everything. Someone heard about it in the media and wrote a lovely article but then management came and said “No, no, no, you have to put announcements in it, the audience has to know what they are listening to and what station they are on.” Ridiculous, who cared what I did at three in the morning? It was going to be crap, so I stopped.’

Aside from this typically community-radio-type hi-jinx, Ritchie was also working on a program called *The 12 Inch Music Show*. ‘It was things like Breakers Revenge and that sort of stuff, it was considered a wild concept to play these records. I used to get asked, “How would you get enough of these records to fill in a whole show?” That was just at the start of the explosion of that music...When I came back from working for JJJ in New York my passion

for this sort of stuff was heightened. That’s where I fell in love with hiphop especially. One time when I was there, I had this press card which could get me into anything, so I went to this club which was evidently a predominately black club. So I walked in there and everyone was quite polite to me because they thought I felt cool and confident enough to be there. In fact, I was just being a complete idiot and I shouldn’t have been anywhere near there at all. But I was just enjoying this thing, seeing people have a great time with some fantastic sounds.’

During the interview, Ritchie takes a call from his bank manager about a car loan – obviously the ABC doesn’t afford him a garage of Bentleys. As an expectant father (and due to his bad back), he is in the process of exchanging his modest hatchback for an even more modest family-mover. There is something prophetic about the shift. *Sound Quality* is the state of nation according to Tim Ritchie in 2003, and the slamming hiphop and house music has been left far behind. Its playlists wouldn’t look out of place in *The Wire* magazine (apart from the huge selection of Australian music).

The recently released compilation *Sound Quality, Volume 2: Top Shelf - Approved for Export* is a perfect vignette of the program. It sprawls over two CDs and could be vaguely demarcated into the beats/ambience category. The CD was hamstrung by a badly executed release schedule and promotion, and it features some uniquely ugly neo-Yellow-Submarine design; nevertheless it’s worth tracking down if you can find it. The tracks range in sound and quality (there is a review elsewhere in *Cyclic*). Essentially, it’s a comprehensive and worthy document about what is currently going on behind some of the closed doors of Australia’s ‘underground’, unsigned, unknown electronic producers. Sometimes the program (and the compilation) lapses into the wrong side of whatever passes for avant-garde these days, worst of all, that isn’t a guarantee of it not being dull. But *Sound Quality* is radio made by a true aficionado with a clear vision of the sound and direction of the program. Think of it as another element of Ritchie’s determined bloody-mindedness which also surfaces in his ability to survive and prosper in the backbiting world of ABC journalism. Enthusiasm, naivety and audacity are close companions and Ritchie is full of one of them. His judgement is nothing but idiosyncratic and it usually pays off. After all, during his time at Triple J, as he will proudly tell you, he pulled in the highest ratings ever, and he out-rated Sydney competition. Those ratings haven’t been beaten on Triple J since.

Tim Ritchie can be heard on Radio National each Friday night at 10pm. Sound Quality is out now.

Interview with Dylan Krasevac and Nathan Gray
by Bob Baker Fish

QUIET DEPTHS

Rushes, the debut album for Melbourne duo Snawklor was a beguiling, eccentric and distinctive release that blended field recordings and digital manipulation in strange and interesting ways. The opening cut "Carbonated" began with what sounded like an extra fizzy glass of Coke that slowly evaporated into resonating gongs and a clipped, highly structured and quite funky spray of static. A later track "Strettle" felt like a night sitting around the campfire in the electronic wilderness, where instead of the sounds of crickets, frogs or possums, the environment was alive with bizarre buzzes, shudders and clicks of electronic insects and mechanical fauna.

Whilst the duo of Dylan Krasevac and Nathan Gray have been playing together for around ten years, it's only been the last five years that they've devoted their attention to Snawklor. Initially starting life as a sculptural art project, they have slowly refined their sounds over the years, guided by a few unpleasant rare experiences.

'Dylan was playing and skipping a couple of different CD players, kind've skipping scanning through tracks as a tonal thing over the top of different rhythms and stuff,' remembers Gray. 'That was when raves were really going off and we'd get all of these crap gigs in chill out rooms and be hassled by idiots going "Can't you play something funky?" That was a low point in human history. I thought we were funky. I still think we are. It's just hopelessly misunderstood hip-hop to us.'

Whilst the prospect of folks dangerously loaded up on ecstasy, freaking out and ducking into the chill out to regain composure only to have Snawklor further damage their synapses does sound amusing, it was an experience that has forever marked the duo's approach to live shows. Having since played numerous shows at a variety of venues around Sydney and Melbourne, they believe that the Snawklor sound is best suited to specific venues and since releasing their album have elected to be more selective in showcasing their sounds.

'We just want to do really appropriate shows where we know that people are going to be sitting



down there's not going to be anything else on,' relates Gray. 'I don't want visuals with it, I don't want art openings, I don't want people drinking, I don't want any of that stuff. I just like those rare sit down quiet gigs and if these opportunities don't come up then we just won't play. But they come up every now and then, especially in Melbourne. It's a great scene for that at the moment.'

It also has a little to do with the development of their sounds, as Krasevac relates. 'It's just been gradual, just becoming more and more concerned with the sound quality,' he states. 'Originally it was more beat driven and now it's more slow and fragile and more concerned with intricate sounds and spaces and a lot of the time it wouldn't come across in a pub venue. It's very easy for a lot of the sounds to fall flat or not be heard at all in the wrong space.'

This change has meant Snawklor are producing quieter and gentler stuff when they play live. 'Most of our stuff is kind've getting more mellow,' reflects Gray. 'It's mellower than the first CD. We're just getting better at producing tracks, giving our sounds the space that they need within the track as well, you know. Space is the main concern.'

With even a cursory listen to *Rushes* it becomes clear that whilst much of their heavily manipulated sounds are wrenched from the internal organs of their trusty laptop, they are also interested in found sounds, snippets from television and field recordings. What makes their sounds so interesting is their ability to seamlessly merge the above ingredients, treating each sound source with the same degree of respect regardless of its origin.

'The majority of our sounds are sourced from our environment using DAT players and mini discs whereas before we'd probably grab samples and that kind of stuff,' reflects Krasevac.

'But that's the great thing,' adds Gray, continuing the thought. 'We're increasingly heading towards a sound which is basically a remix of our environment. Some sounds from around our house, and in a way the records you listen to, are part of that environment in some ways.'

'I think one of the things that makes us use sounds from outside,' he continues, 'is the idea that they basically occur at random and the sources of the sounds are really arbitrary, they create this atmosphere and that has a lot of resonance with the way we work because we sequence the sounds. So this idea of remixing the world around us is kind of a part of it.'

'It's a pretty tightly reigned randomness though,' adds Krasevac. 'It's not John Cage. We really love structure and we love pop music and dance music, it's just that we love small elements of surprise, especially when we're playing live. We don't want to know what's coming or exactly when it's coming next.'

One thing that's definitely coming next is a new album due to be released on the Synaesthesia label and a possible tour of Europe, New York and Japan with Delire (who mastered *Rushes*), Anthony Pateras and Robin Fox. Working on tracks over the last six months or so they recently got together and knocked the entire album out in just a weekend, an approach that they believe helped provide a stronger focus than *Rushes*.

'It was good,' states Gray. 'Getting everything down so quickly gives everything a unity in some ways, that it possibly wouldn't have had otherwise.' Of their new release, the duo believe that it's a much easier listen than *Rushes*, utilising more space and making a concerted effort to edit the tracks.

'I don't think it's so dense,' considers Gray, 'there's not so much going on. We thought a lot more about the listener. We really did the first one for ourselves without really worrying what anyone was going to think of it. As much as I like the first one, compared to the upcoming release, I really do think there was a bit of hard listening involved. You really have to invest time and effort into listening to it because I think a lot of the tracks were ten or eleven minute tracks which, over a whole album, is quite a lot.'

'But to sustain that sort of duration especially if you are doing something minimal, one fuck up is enough to blow the whole thing out of the water,' he continues. 'You put a lot on the line. I've got a lot of respect for people who do those minimal tracks and make them work and are just awesome at it. Where we're going is somewhere different to that.'

So where exactly is that?

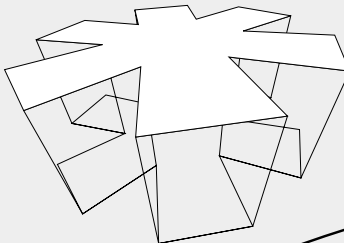
'Well, I don't know,' considers Gray. 'I mean yes, it's just, there's not really a way to describe it.'

Snawklor's new album It Would Have Lived Here is out soon on Synaesthesia records



Frigid is a long running weekly Sydney club night established in 1996. Originally a downtempo and experimental electronic night, it has mutated into a weekly event which oscillates wildly from genre to genre, IDM to hip hop, postrock to glitch house, bootlegs to reggae. Each week features live acts and resident DJs Sub Bass Snarl, Sir Robbo, Prince Valium, Sleepy Robot, Kid Calmdown, Clark Nova and Ollo.

Each month Frigid also has a in-club shop run by Couchblip Distribution that features import and local CDs from artists and labels you might hear regularly at Frigid, sold direct to you at lower-than-store prices.



Weekly lineups www.snarl.org/frigid

We are always interesting in live acts. If you want to play live at Frigid then send your demos to
P.O.Box A2073, Sydney South, NSW 1235, Australia.
(no cassettes and no DJ demos please)

Hopetoun Hotel,
416 Bourke St Surry Hills, Sydney
Sundays from 5pm to 10pm
Usually \$5

FRIGID

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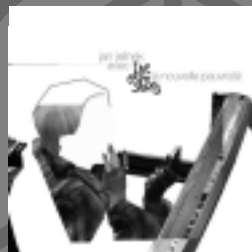
Various Artists
Electronic Music For Heroes 02
Hydrogen Dukebox DUKE100CD



Various Artists
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Sonar 13953-2



Brokeback
Looks At The Bird
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Genre Overview: **Karaoke** by QRS-ONE of The Ladiez of Da League

OKEY DOKEY KARAOKE

Karaoke is lame. Lame but fun. There is something about belting out someone else's song in front of a few friends and strangers. That something is probably lame. Lame and sad. But fun. Being pathetic and silly for a few hours is a blessed respite from the overwhelming pressures of being cool and fashionable most of your waking hours. Believe me I know. So let's say you're ready to take a shot at being a karaoke practitioner. First thing you need to ask yourself is: are you looking for something with a stage, in a restaurant, or are you looking for something a little more private where the shy types will feel more at ease?

Personally, I prefer the private room option, as the plush confines are far more conducive to your friends and colleagues letting rip with some old chestnuts and making complete dicks of themselves.

They should really be paying me after all the referrals I've made in their favour, but I've found that Karaoke World is the best and safest venue around town. It's just a good all-rounder, with a comprehensive collection of songs - you're unlikely to be disappointed by fruitless searches in the database for well-worn hits. That said, John Cage's work is sadly under-represented.

It doesn't have every song ever released, but must be fairly close - golden oldies, hits of the eighties and nineties, and today's chart toppers. There's some hiphop there too (although we're talking the commercial end of the spectrum). I'm hoping my next act of K World patronage will yield the much sorely missed Avril Lavigne from the repertoire. They also serve beer and food, and if your friend's version of R Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly" is making your eyes water, there are video games in the lobby. The largest room (for 20-30 people) features booths, a stage, wireless microphones and costs \$88 per hour. All the other rooms are basic: just seating against the wall, a coffee table etc. The 20-person room is \$76 per hour; the 15-person room is \$64 per hour. It's worth spending that little bit extra for the big room and the wireless mics. Travel in style.

The songs are programmed via remote control, and in the last few months they've phased out the



catalogue system and replaced it with a swanky computer database that allows you to search via artist, song title, and new releases. The system, of course, is confusing to start with and will need some experimentation. The old catalogue books are still available on request for a hefty fee. They're relatively out of date, however, and you could probably do without.

For folks who just aren't in their optimal vocal range you can adjust the key of the song being played accordingly - a vital facility for enhancing the pleasure of all concerned. There are also basic volume and mic controls on the remote. The quality of the songs is the best I've seen so far. They've spent a lot of time making sure that the lyrics are accurate (I've seen some godawful Chinglish in my karaoke experience), and the instrumental re-creation of the tracks is second to none. After all, there's nothing worse than singing to a midi-based Casio-keyboard-with-polka-beat interpretation of "Simply Irresistible" - where's the fun in that?! Would you feel like Robert Palmer? Some of the songs don't have the best timing, but they can't all have the Motown swing, so best not to nitpick.

The staff are quite pleasant although language may be a barrier depending on whom you're dealing with at the time. If you want to go on a Friday or Saturday night it's important that you book well in advance as Karaoke World is very popular (a week and a half should do it).

I'd avoid all the other places in the city as they are usually frequented by shady chaps who look like Triad members. Avoid Cash Box in Haymarket, Ding Dong Deng in Surry Hills and avoid the Mandarin Club. The last time I was there the experience was marred by the Chinese gabba which pounded through the walls. There was also an ancient, really ugly stripper whose very appearance was enough to cause significant retinal damage. It is also compulsory to buy alcohol at the Mandarin, but given the general need for alcoholic encouragement to sing, and the aforementioned ugly, ugly stripper, this is probably not going to be a problem. On reflection of my experience there, I can only remember bad perms. Of course this should not reflect

poorly on the delightful Fu Man Choons parties held at The Mandarin of late.

In terms of restaurant-based karaoke, I've heard that Jujus in Kings Cross is a fine establishment - I have it on good authority from reliable informants with a similar passion for this most noble artform. You eat, get maggoted and then sing, so this could be a good venue for those who have no inclination (read: talent) for singing whatsoever. Please note however, that instead of an hourly rate, you are charged per song. Last I heard it was about \$1.10 per song, but it may well have gone up since then. This is OK, but if you are pissed enough you may find yourself considerably out of pocket by the end of the night. Do the maths and you find that a party of 30 people at Karaoke World, for three hrs, costs \$8.80 a head in total, not forgetting the wireless mics. Being a shameless exhibitionist and microphone hog as I am, I prefer to program my own songs too - not a possibility with restaurant karaoke. I would call them about what sort of song range they have. Also, remember you are competing for stage time with a restaurant full of other drunken schmos with delusions of golden tonsils.

I can't really recommend any other restaurants - my general experience has been that they feature shitty songs with bodgy music and bad translations. Hiring a karaoke DJ is another option - you get really awesome quality and the latest songs, but these guys are expensive and if you suck they have no qualms about pitching in and upstaging you. This is a really irritating habit. Not that I've sucked. Well maybe once.

Lastly, an honourable mention goes to FM Music Studio in beautiful downtown Strathfield. A bit out of the way for ghetto-dwelling hipsters, yes, but pretty good. Pros are that it features a swanky looking lobby, a bouncer with a head set, coffee and TV while you wait for your room, ultra hygienic dispos-



Lil' Sonic going down
in a blaze of glory

able microphone covers (a big plus in my view), light up tambourines, multi flat screen TV panels, it's cheaper than Karaoke World and there's nary a crusty old stripper to be seen. The cons are that the range ain't fantastic, the remote and practically everything else is in Korean so you'll have to get someone to translate for you, and they don't serve food or beer.

In conclusion, if you make a booking, make sure you turn up on time. Every 5 minutes late is a song you can't sing. And here's a valuable tip - The Scorpions "Winds Of Change" and anything by REO Speedwagon should match everyone's vocal range. Aerosmith's "Don't Wanna Miss A Thing" is great when you're ready for a group hug. Finally, K Worlders, next time you make the trek, select Shania Twain's "That Don't Impress Me Much". The song sucks but the video that goes with it...key-words: Underwater G-Banger Booty.

Happy crooning

*What are you waiting for?
Karaoke World awaits...*



24HR PARTY PEOPLE CYCLIC DEFROST SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Given that in the first issue of Cyclic Defrost we featured a profile on Peter Saville's designs for Factory Records, and we actually had an article (on brokenbeat) written by former Factory artist and Hacienda bar woman Hillegonda Reitveld (Quando Quango) it seems only fitting that we have this giveaway ...

24 Hour Party People is the story of Tony Wilson, the British TV journalist who started and ran Factory Records, signed Joy Division/New Order, and the Happy Mondays but turned down The Smiths. Directed by Michael Winterbottom and starring Brit comedian Steve Coogan as Wilson, the film is a rambling, funny and chaotic story of an equally rambling, funny and chaotic record label. From the early punk years to the birth of the Hacienda (which painstakingly reconstructed as a set since the real club is sadly now a block of posh apartments), the Madchester years and Shaun Ryder's label-destroying drug binges, there's a feeling throughout the film that what Wilson did was both utterly stupid and utterly important. There are plenty of distortions of truth throughout the film which makes for very amusing viewing and a larger-than-life rock-u-mentary.

**Dendy Films, the film's distributor,
have offered Cyclic Defrost TWO special
free screenings to our readers ...**

**Sydney:
Wednesday 12th March, 7pm**

**Melbourne:
Tuesday 18th March, 9pm**

Location of screenings are printed on the free pass.

To receive your free double pass to one of these screenings simply fill in the form at
<www.cyclicdefrost.com/comp>

Tickets are strictly limited and are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Successful entrants will be posted the double pass prior to the screening.

24 Hour Party People opens nationally in late March.
More information at <www.dendy.com.au>

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT



EYE outside Parliament House

Many things lurk in Canberran suburbs. Behind the fences and hedges there's an unsettling calm which is in part due to the city's layout: meticulous, neat and circular; and in part due to the sense of transience that pervades the place: the ghostly presence of folks who come to town to study or take up a contract with the public service, laying no real foundations and unwilling to think of the city as anything but a stopover.

At least, that's a common outsider appraisal of a city that, in reality, houses many committed creative renegades dedicated to making a mark from within the city's confines. While the refrain of 'Why don't you move to Sydney or Melbourne?' is a common one here, the ideal standard of living, not to mention the proximity to fantastic bush land, is a drawcard for many. While acts formed in Canberra like Dark Network, Biftek and Meem have moved on, J Citizen of the Blatant Propaganda label has stayed and built a worldwide following for his label through a simple mail order business and the quality work of his own projects and a number of other acts.

Alongside his variant electronic projects (the industrial activist outfit EYE, the dancefloor shaking analogue electro outfit E.L.F., and the non-specific DJ Citizen, amongst others), Citizen is a political instigator of some note, and uses Blatant Propaganda for culture jamming and political activism as much as he does for musical outpourings.

The scope and scale of Blatant Propaganda's following was evident in the multimedia campaign led by Citizen against recent propositions in Parliament to implement the Government's police-state-style anti-terrorist laws. Senate Leader John Faulkner was quoted as saying that the passing of the Bill was stalled mostly because of the online campaign Citizen put in motion.

The label itself is run from a borough in Canberra's suburbs, more familiar to young families than media activists and fantastically talented electronic producers. He takes his tunes to Canberrans through the highly energetic live shows of E.L.F. and EYE, and through his radio programs on the city's community radio station 2XX. After the release of last year's industrial compilation *A.S.I.N.G.E.D.*, he's set to release *Electricity*, a low price and top value double CD of Canberran artists from all across the electronic field.

Where did it all start for you, musically and politically?

Musically it all started in about 1991 with EYE. After years of noodling with various bits of gear, getting a job and being able to afford a 4-track, a synth and some effects units led to a couple of (self produced) EPs, which were much more raw, industrial and soundscape-y type sounds as compared to later EYE releases. Receiving arts grants hugely helped finance the early studio sessions.

E.L.F. grew out of hanging with the Canberra Clan Analogue crew and buying a couple of older synths, a 303 and a Juno 6, and toying with something more dancefloor oriented. Hearing the early works in progress of Dark Network in particular made me want to diversify.

Politically, I had an 'ah-ha!' experience ideologically when I was 19, although I had been politically minded throughout my teens on issues like sexism, racism, homophobia, and environmentalism. Still, in 1992 I came across a booklet that detailed how the animal rights movement is controlled by the pharmaceutical industry. This exposé on how big business takes over, or even sets up, their opposition groups, and then controls the information flow to grass-roots opponents (rendering them ineffective with misinformation) totally blew my mind as to how propaganda and thought-control works in our western 'democracies'. That is, to give us the illusion of freedom and to keep us passive, the media features seemingly democratic debates, but which are, in reality, tightly controlled within parameters that are safe to advertisers and establishment interests. Sometimes truly alternative views do pop through, but it's rare. I was studying university-level biology at the time and through the subjects raised in the booklet, my beliefs in modern medicine, pharmaceuticals, medical research and science were totally undermined and drastically reformed. It was that booklet, which switched the button within, that made me 'an activist'.

How have the musical output and your ideas about music changed since those early days?

The early EYE and E.L.F. stuff was a helluva lot more experimental than the current work, so I guess that's an indication of my influences and interests changing over time. I'm also becoming more interested in the music I used to hate, the commercial element in dance. I've got another project on the boil called Q-T, which is glossy, polished dance music—it's coming from the pipe dream angle of being able to give up my day job, so if I can do something trashy and commercial and make money from it, then I can do the E.L.F. and EYE stuff full time.

How open is the Blatant Propaganda label to submissions from like-minded folks sitting on a demo CDR?

[illegible]

What is the motivation behind the compilation projects? Is it simply the feeling that there's too much good music not getting its due?

Yes, I love Canberra. Canberra is a magnificent place in which to grow up. It can get a bit frustrating when you hit the 'I want to party lots' phase of the late teens and early 20s. That's when a lot of people tend to move to bigger cities. However, if you get through that phase, the advantages of Canberra (clean air, lots of open green space, relaxed vibe, wildlife, etc.) shine once again. As for culture, there's always been lots of groovy stuff going on in Canberra in various scenes but it's not always evident on the surface. Like anywhere, it ebbs and flows.

ODD SHAPES, WEIRD PACKAGING

In the first issue of *Cyclic Defrost* I raised the issue of getting people to actually buy records or CDs in an era of downloadable, deletable, ever-more disposable music. There is still a lot of scope to create something special in traditional sleeve formats.

A fine recent example is the vinyl version of Boom Bip's *Seed to Sun*, released on UK label Lex and designed by Eh?. The lo-fi feel of uncoated, recycled cardboard half-covered with coffee stains is beautifully contrasted with gold foil stamping. The foil picks out the shape of some hand-drawn type that falls somewhere between graffiti and Arabic script. It flows over the spine onto the back cover, where a tilde-shaped die cut on the back allows the barcode to show through. That was enough to hook me. But there's more. Once you remove the black and white inner sleeve, you find that the barcode has been artfully twisted to make the word 'Bip' and you're just seeing a slice of a bigger design. 'Boom' appears in the same style on the other inner sleeve of this double vinyl. Preliminary sketches for the hand-drawn type also make an appearance on the inner sleeves, maintaining a deceptively casual feel. The typography of the lyrics and credits maintains the flowing swirls of these sketches, elegantly enhanced by the use of repeated closed brackets as a graphic device.

The record's labels elicited a bit of a grin, and so they should because they're the design's punchline. They feature photographs of a ceramic mug, source of the very dark coffee stains on the sleeve. One 12" features a black mug, the other is white, complete with chips and cracks. The final detail that gives

away the thoroughness of this designer's thinking is the inclusion of artist name, album title and catalogue number, realistically appearing as moulded letters cast into the mugs' bases.

In this issue of *Cyclic*, we are looking at packaging that truly breaks the mould. It's a realm of 'coffee table' sleeves, where the design not only adds to the desirability of owning the music but can sometimes outweigh it.

Special packaging isn't a new phenomenon, whether it's the boxed sets major labels have been peddling for decades, or the creation of art objects that happen to incorporate recorded music, aimed at a specialist market of serious collectors.

However they pale in comparison to the level of creativity and invention shown by some of the packaging below.



Above clockwise: Throbbing Gristle's TG24; Detail of Boom Bip's *Seed to Sun*; :zoviet france's *Popular Soviet Songs and Youth Music*



Venetian Snares

A giant alien force more violent and sick than anything you can imagine

(Hymen Records, 2002)

Format: Card box with picture viewer plus 3" CD
Designer: uncredited

A deep red box beautifully made from linen-textured card features the CD title embossed into its lid. The embossing has flattened the board so it appears to be a deeper, slightly shiny red, a nice side effect. Half-moons are die cut from the sides of the lid so you can grip the bottom of the box to remove the lid. The first impression is of a degree of luxury.

Inside the box is a 3" CD in a full colour gloss varnished sleeve. The cover features a signpost that has been Photoshopped to incorporate the artist and track title. The back features a close-up of the signpost with the phrase 'Adopt a snare.' This trace of cuteness is the antithesis of the intense and frantic music on the CD itself.

The design of the disc is minimalist. One navy band of colour contains all you need to know in silver print, set in heavy Helvetica to match the embossed lid. The type's rough edges are the only thing about this release that is not immaculate.

Now we get to the even better part. Lift the CD to find a bright red picture viewer in the shape of a '50s TV. It's nestled in an exceptional die cut – there are no ragged edges here, just a pristine TV shape. This is quality craftsmanship. The amount of care and labour that has gone into this release is impressive. On the TV there are eight pictures to view. Seven of these are perhaps alternate CD covers and place the artist name and track title on a piece of urban/industrial signage – next to a freeway overpass, on an advertising hoarding, on airport signage. The last picture features the text on the skeletal remains of a seriously strange bug/crustacean. It doesn't look giant or violent and sick but it certainly looks alien. There are some great contrasts here. Contemporary and bleak images viewed through a cutesy plastic 50s TV. The restrained typography and its understated aesthetic set against music that is anything but.

Various Artists

Raster Noton 20' to 2000 series

(Raster Noton, 1999)

Format: 12 CDs in translucent plastic shells

Designer: uncredited

Raster Noton asked artists to create a piece for the last 20 minutes of the year 1999 'as a cutting edge of the past century.' The resulting 12 CDs were released one per month throughout 1999. The artists include members of Coil, Scanner, Thomas Brinkmann, Noto, Ryoji Ikeda, and Mika Vainio from Panosonic, amongst others.

Each CD is encased in a colourless translucent plastic shell. A clear sticker announces its membership to the series with the words '20' to 2000' and a diagrammatic funnel-like shape, presumably representing the end of a millennium, or time and space.

The CDs themselves are full sized, but only half silver – the outer half is clear plastic. Printed around the edge of each disc is a line of type identifying the artist and the month of release.

There are no track titles and there are none of the usual peripheral credits. Instead, the CD is printed with one or more small dots containing a number corresponding with the tracks, followed by the track length in white type. This is minimalism in full force – a match for the conceptual nature of the project.

On some CDs, unusual numbering breaks the relentless logic. '0 0' and '1 9 9' on March's Ryoji Ikeda release, or '123' in a cluster with one track length on label founder Carsten Nikolai AKA Noton release in September. Answers on a postcard to...

The masterstroke is the inclusion of a strong magnet attached to the centre of each CD case. This means that when the whole series is put together, the flat end of the "shell" (where the hinge is) becomes a base so that the collection can stand on its own. The magnets are strong enough to hold the whole collection if you only grip one CD.

I imagine this set would be very welcome in minimalist design freaks' households, being placed just so on a white shelf next to a white chair against a white wall. The CD set as contemporary ornament, perhaps.

Various Artists

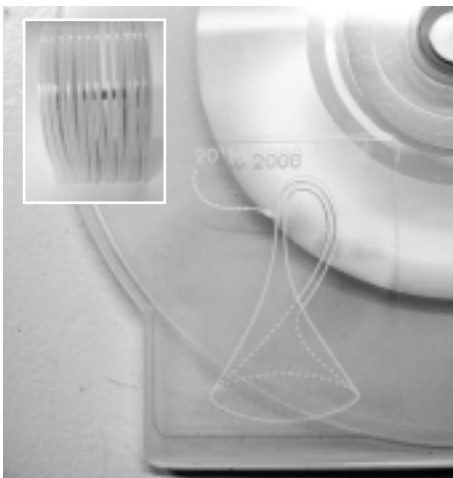
Lonely is an Eyesore Limited Edition Boxed Set (4AD 1987)

Format: 12" vinyl, standard CD, video, audio cassette

Designer: 23 Envelope

Way way back in the mists of time, before mobile phones or Prozac, when dance music meant music to dance to and reality TV meant the news, the record label 4AD became a collector's dream, mainly due to the design work of 23 Envelope (principally Vaughan Oliver and Chris Bigg).

4AD took the boxed set to an entirely new level. Only 100 *Lonely is an Eyesore* boxed sets were made, and of those 30 were released for sale. This box cost five hundred pounds to produce and was sold for two hundred. It's almost a piece of furniture. A beautifully crafted wooden frame holds the contents. Part of the frame slides out, and this contains the vinyl sitting snugly on one side, and two limited edition prints on the other: *Flag* by Jinny m'Garrity and *sore to the touch* by Terry Dowing. These prints are sealed in printed tracing paper.



The vinyl comes in a slip case which uses the standard sleeve design, a muted, delicately layered and textured piece with the trademark 23 Envelope typography – wide letter spacing, uppercase characters, with a florid capital "L". Fold open 4 12" pages to create a cross, and you find a book detailing the contents, with discographies, lyrics and credits. Oh, and a vinyl album.

23 Envelope's style was so unique it hasn't dated, aside from some of the graphics accompanying pieces on bands such as Colourbox and The Wolfgang Press.

Both the vinyl and the prints fit very snugly into their slots, indicating some excellent carpentry, not something you often get with a music release. The limited edition prints are similarly delicate in texture to 23 Envelope's work, contrasting the sturdy wooden frame.

Sliding off this top section of the frame you find the CD, video and MC set into a back wooden frame, with a poster lying on top, all using different versions of the same graphic style as the vinyl sleeve.



**toby1
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Zoviet France

Popular Soviet Songs and Youth Music

Staalplaat, 1994

Format: 6 x standard CD

Designer: E van Weelden

This 1994 CD re-release of an elaborate 1985 cassette release (it came in a white vase shaped box with feathers attached) pioneered another completely original approach. The six CDs are held together with a Soviet army badge fixed through the spindles. At either end of the CDs is a circle of grey felt, and one is printed with the title and artist in gold and black respectively. Lifting off the top felt covers reveals the first disc, with its two duotones of matted bird's feathers in dark green emerging from the black disc. The track listing is printed in white, with the words 'Stains and filth in the convent' and 'Aouei' in green.

And that's the purpose of this disc, because it contains nothing but a test tone. The tracks listed appear on the next CD, which has a disc of green felt glued to its non-playing surface. Printed in a milky green onto the dark green felt is an ancient looking symbol which appears on the previous CD's stacking ring. Turn over and the CD is identified by its title in white print, seen through the transparent stacking ring.

The next 2 CDs follow the same design formula. This time the tracklisting CD features a very graphic red and black design that replaces each star in the US flag with a hammer and sickle. The stacking ring has another ancient-looking symbol printed onto it, this time a star, in red and white. The next CD features the complete symbol in a milky print on burgundy felt.

The final tracklisting CD, like the first, uses a green and black photographic image. It looks like a bad photocopy of two politicians. This is where you'll find the record company's details as well as tracklisting. The stacking ring symbol is reminiscent of a maze. This time, the complete symbol is shown, the first break with consistency. The second inconsistency is that the next felt disc is not green, as expected, but bright red, printed with the maze in a dark reddish brown.

This is an interesting package that breaks with convention in many ways. It has no box or other rigid protection; fabric is glued to the disc's surface, risking unplayability on some systems; and 3 CDs act simply as the tracklisting (unless you enjoy listening to a test tone in which case, deep joy, you've got three discs full of it). As a set it's let down by the design of the two Disc Threes, but overall it's certainly evocative and is one of the most original approaches to CD packaging I have seen. It's also clearly on a different plane to the current plethora of modernist designs and is refreshing for that.



Lawrence English

Map 51F9

(::room 40:: 2002)

Format: 3" CD

Design: Rinzen

Coming from the ever-creative Rinzen studio, this release could be seen as a lesson in ingenuity over budget. It shows how two colours, a piece of tracing paper and a DVD case can be made into a unique piece of contemporary design that has depth as well as beauty. It's a great piece of work.

A patchwork of urban images is (screen?)printed in brown onto tracing paper and inserted into the clear sleeve of the translucent case. The tracing paper has just enough opacity to obscure the contents. Trees, street signs, traffic lights, streetscapes, and a car's automatic transmission all reference the project's title, *Map51F9*.

The images' style has no gradation, adding mystery to the apparently mundane and urban. They still have lots of depth and detail, though – including a few jokes if you look closely. The cover incorporates a familiar street sign with a bicycle symbol. Above the bike is a guitarist, drawn in typical urban informational icon style. The back cover includes a 'wear your seatbelt' symbol on the top of a lamppost. And a lizard. Also on the cover is a white silhouette of Lawrence English sitting on a park bench as a circular white 'sun' sits behind the trees above him. This 'sun' also matches the size of the spindle inside the case, creating a link between artist and product.

The back cover features a circular band of white that corresponds the CD inside. Both of these devices also create a visual link with other ::room40:: releases, as does the understated typography. The design on the CD itself repeats the white band and a section of the cover art.

All of this serves and compliments the content, a beautiful 17'30" organic/electronic soundmap, and all it took was the title of the piece, and a close listen to the CD to decode the artwork; an unusual congruence of design and content.



Throbbing Gristle

TG24

(Industrial Records/Mute 2002)

Format: 24 x Standard CD

Design: uncredited

This is a remastered CD release of a boxed set of live recordings on cassette, originally released in the '80s on Industrial Records. The box contains 24 CDs of live recordings so it's hardcore collector's territory. A certificate of authenticity is included, signed by the band.

The CDs are presented in a pale grey-blue fabric-bound box with TG24 printed in geometric black type on the top. Underneath the certificate is a manila envelope, closed by a wax seal bearing the TG 'flash' logo. Inside the envelope are sew-on patches, button badges, pictures, postcards, and a copy of *Industrial News* which contains some obituaries, trivia questions, lyrics, a list of each band member's likes and dislikes and a personal statement.

Underneath this envelope are two stacks of twelve CDs bound with light grey ribbon sealed with a clear plastic adhesive dot. Each CD features the same cover design with the catalogue number and location of the live performance. The image is a darkly textured photo of an old factory with the TG flash superimposed, printed on standard card with a matt varnish. The back of each CD features a different black and white photo. The CD labels are nicely done in a transparent matte coating, the type and TG reversed out so that they appear in the uncoated silver of the disc – subtle and effective.

A 25th CD comes separately in a plain brown envelope with a letter of explanation. It was originally to be included as CD 24 but a tape of sufficient quality was only found after the manufacture of the set.

Design-wise the package is not particularly interesting, however fans that enjoy TG's use of imagery will doubtless disagree. The typography on the CD sleeves features type that has been condensed using software, rather than a condensed cut of the typeface, which is a letdown. The sleeve designs are certainly consistent, but the focus here is on the content and documentation rather than design, and the set has the air of a historical document, as confirmed by the wax seal.

Sleeve reviews of Muslimgauze's Iranian Female Olympic Table Tennis Team Theme and Björk's Family Tree and Greatest Hits online at www.cyclicdefrost.com



REVIEWS

The last couple of months we have witnessed an ever expanding wall of sound shimmering in the distance, threatening with its enormity but dissappointing in its overwrought, flabby nature. Despite a number of claimants to the throne, and an ever expanding multitude of releases, it seems the next era-defining sound has yet to arrive, and in its place are sounds that build only incrementally on previous work or worse, regurgitate to a formula. RnB looked like it could cut a swathe in psyches but it turned out to be a one trick pony. Similarly, UK Hiphop and Garage fell to a heavy release schedule and increasingly cynical artists. Glitch and Nu as prefixes were stale before they took hold. So what is it be? The pressure drop is happening now, it's only a matter of time before the storm.

LOCAL RELEASES

El Mopa

The New Weather
(Quietly Suburban)

I approached this release with great anticipation. Maybe it was something I read (though I think more likely was the delicious subtleties of their name) as despite knowing very little about El Mopa, I tried unsuccessfully for many years to catch one of their live shows in their hometown of Sydney. I'm not sure what exactly I expected, nor whether having listened to *The New Weather* I should feel fulfilled or dissappointed, as they sound at once exactly as I expected but at the same time not at all. Certainly the album succeeds in as much as it presents an easy languidity in terms of delivery and production, and it's possessed of a sureity and strength that little else around it in this country can lay claim to. In many ways it feels like a distillation of all my favourite bits from the last golden era in Sydney rock, a time in the mid '90s when bands like Peg and Crow eschewed the stated rock formula for an altogether more angular and at times crepusculant vision groups like Bluebottle Kiss (especially in their first album and EP) waltzed with metaphors that exuded the unique desires and wons of an Australian landscape, and southern imposters like The Blackeyed Susans hinted at the dark depths and musty corners of the psyche in dis-ease. All this may do little to appease or impress El Mopa, and this is probably the point – perhaps I've got the map round the wrong way and I'm heading back where I came from, rather than towards their singular landscape. Whether or not we eventually meet is probably unimportant, as this oddly affecting set of drawled and scrawled songs stand alone, and no doubt will yield their secrets to the truly worthy. **DH**

International Karate

Weapons of Mass Protection
(Sensory Projects/Inertia)

Sweeping, languid lines of ethereal guitars driven by a smooth and chunky bass with splashes of a cymbal-heavy kit build the promising soundscapes of Melbourne-based International Karate. A predominantly instrumental affair, this debut album shows an allegiance to the undernourished world of organic music as it unfurls across a series of slowly evolving riffs. The simplistic, innocent aching of the piano riff in 'The Details of Your History' is helped along by the solemn chord progression and boyish vocals (courtesy of a guest appearance from Daniel Brownrigg). It's a refined, simply produced track where all the forces of the band work together to achieve the one effect; building up slowly and producing delightfully distilled emotion. Although some of the tracks waver from sparsely produced to under produced, there's plenty of excellent hooks, beautifully wrought sounds from soaring guitars and reassuring, plump and juicy bass despite a predictable rhythm section.. It's thoughtful, it's attractive, it's structured... and yet somehow imperfect. **Serena Armstrong**

Oxford Parker

Welcome to Brisneyland
(Self-Released)

Oxford Parker describes himself as 'fatuous and yet sublime, exuding a vile beauty'. With funding from the Australia Council, he was able to put these talents to good use and record this wonderful little album from his parents' home in Brisbane. Very personal in parts, with found sounds and glitches, it's gentle and nostalgic, inventive and sometimes funny. 'Memento', a spooky combination of gamelan type bells and arrhythmic percussion is followed by the down low minimal 'Baby Baby If You Love Me

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Just Give Me a Sine' described cheekily in the notes as 'an experiment with static and moving sine waves which achieved negligible Top 40 success'. At least four tracks feature 8-bit Commodore style video game themes to funky yet dark effect. 'Video Game Theme' apparently features the Afro-Cuban six eight-pattern 'bembe'; the result is like the final super-difficult fight scene in your favourite old computer game – except with cowbells. 'Eeyore' is a short and melancholic cello interlude before 'Postscript', the final, short track of Fridge-style harmonics with cardboard box drumming and scratch noises. An album combining experimental homemade percussion and C64 tomfoolery shouldn't hang together at all well, but it somehow does in a silly, simple and personal way. **Bim Ricketson**

Architecture in Helsinki

Like A Call
(Trifekta)

With opening track 'Like a Call' there's an immediate throw back to early 99: tight drum beats with mallet percussion in sugared-up cheerfulness. It's not until the next track, 'Feather in a Baseball Cap', that the Sekiden urges appear, with clear parallels to the latter's 'Love Songs For Robots' release. To this general vibe, Architecture in Helsinki give an added twist with a live crew that includes a wide variety of percussion, keys, winds and brass – there's even a tuba. But then there's the '80s thing. *Like a Call* doesn't bode well. The sounds are great, the approach is fun, but it simply fails to contain the variation required to warrant close attention. So after an initial, 'Wow. How Cool!' I found that, despite a remix from electronic wunderkind Qua, by the end I'd tuned out. It's like having too much fairy floss when the carnival comes to town, and vomiting pink goo on the space between the carriages on the way home. **Serena Armstrong**

REVIEWS

Amphibian

Adventures In Whistle Village
(Groovescooter/Creative Vibes)

Having performed at The Big Chill in the UK last year, this is the second album from a band that is probably better known overseas than in Australia. Amphibian work around a core lineup of drums, double bass, keys and background electronics and invoke memories of Directions In Groove, The Necks and Tortoise – each in varying degrees. At their best; the endlessly evolving loop of ‘Tentacle’ with its slightly changing varying piano motif and droning synth and rolling drums, or the red light district of the first half of ‘Duck Squadron’, they can be involving and intriguing; but other times the tracks slip too easily into a late night café jazz. The electronics are too subtle and don’t intrude enough to break the ‘easy’ vibe and add a bit of much needed unease. The bonus disc contains remixes of the ‘radio’ track ‘Empty’, which on the original disc is almost pure D.I.G. with Natalie Gay doing solid but derivative vocals. However, it also contains a worthwhile remix of ‘Orphan’ by Melbourne’s Nightswimmer, who brings a bit of welcome discord to the original. Compared to the other ‘jazz’ records reviewed in this issue – Kopernik and Jan Jelinek – Amphibian play it very straight at a time when digital processing offers so much. They are batting too much like ‘70s Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar – technically accomplished, a big scorer, but not very exciting to watch. **Sebastian Chan**

Toby1

Cracks Increase
(Surgery)

Chilled, wispy beauty wafts through the ether thanks to this offering from Adelaide duo Toby1. Think Lamb with a slightly dirty Portishead twist. Think Goldfrapp with the volume down and a battalion of computers. Think uplifting vocals with neat machine-gun drum patterns underneath. ‘European’ gives a promising start with its cooler-than-cool attitude while ‘7x7’ funks it up a little more in an almost countrified fashion. The vocals come through less processed, there’s less of the computer-cool and more of the quirky, dirty joy from vocalist and ‘live’ instrumentalist, Ruth Wilson. Though a standard formula it allows the group’s personality to shine through, Wilson’s adventurous vocals complemented by the unique character of the accompanying synth sounds. ‘Svetlana’ gets my track-of-the-album vote, a well-chosen sample is skilfully incorporated into the musical content of the composition. Fabulous clarinet solos are complimented by hints of mandolin, yet the vocals are dense and low providing a focus but not detracting from the more interesting instrumental content. Digital sound processing decorates each track; think of it as aural tinsel speckling the *Cracks Increase*’s Christmas tree, and the ten tracks show a convincing belief in their product and a uniformity of vision. Beautiful background sounds, sweet beats, mean vocals – if only they’d take a few more risks on the way to defining themselves.

Serena Armstrong

Various Artists

Sound Quality Volume 2
(ABC/EMI)

A double CD compilation of the contemporary local, underground, unreleased Australian electronica, compiled by the host of the *Sound Quality* radio show Tim Ritchie. This album name-checks a few local producers you might already know – 5000 Fingers of Dr. T, the Herd, Funkenbubble, Deepchild; as well as bunch you probably won’t. It is mostly committed downtempo, and Ritchie has included some material which could deliberately freak some people out. There are some wonderful moments, but on the whole it sounds dated and derivative, with the ghosts of a few well-worn clichés floating over many of the tracks. While self-consciously avant-garde, nothing on these CDs exceeds established boundaries of form and sound and much of it tends towards being digital and neurotic. Worst of all, song-writing appears to be a dead art among most of the artists represented. Though it’s significant that this is released on ABC music and in that regard is an indication of overdue recognition for Australian electronic music and a precursor to a wider access to the national consciousness at some level, this doesn’t save some tracks from being exercises in self-indulgent expressionism, or stop them from being badly produced and constructed. It’s not all bad: in fact it’s perfect music if you want some uneasy, unobtrusive late night background, and while as an archive it is a valuable project, it’s breadth belies a lack of quality control: these projects come off as parochial unless compiled with sharp scalpels. **Blumen Hestonthal**

LOCAL 7s, 10s & 12s

The New Pollutants

50K Backtrack and a 2 Dollar Mic
(Self Released)

In Issue 2 The New Pollutants talked at some length about sid hop; the fractured pun they use to describe the tracks they make using the SID chip found in Commodore 64 computers. The use of outmoded technology is normally accompanied by a level of dreary sentimentality, however Mr Speed and DJ Tr!p manage to bypass the pitfalls of the humourless masses and again emerge with a couple of playful but at the same time interesting and arresting pieces. ‘50k Backtrack’ skitters along at a cracking pace, with a great hook provided by the interplay between Speed, a distorted snare and a mildly disturbed monophonic synth line. Though a little more bratty ‘80s in scope ‘Return of the One Hit Wonder’ is worth checking too, especially on clear vinyl. **DH**

Prop

Nebula
(Inventing Zero)

Inventing Zero have a knack of releasing artists that are preceeded by hefty reputations but who are also prone to stretches of inactivity and total disappearance. Frost, reviewed in issue 2, has been joined in IZ’s latest release by the Sydney post-glock band Prop. Gloriously simple artwork and a much better pressing combined with the best format you can imagine makes for a tasty morsel. **DH**

Rekindle

Ice Skating Girl
(Output)

Sydney producer Rekindle has been doing stuff for years, in the mid 90s as Raised By Wolves (with Richard Austen) making moody instrumental hip-hop and later as Rekindle he started making drum n bass

, the best of which were rinsing machine-funk workouts with heavy drums and a sheen that separated them from much of the overseas-produced techstep of the time. Immediately prior to a move to the UK, he started to add processed vocals that had an affinity to mid 80s electronic funk of Cameo and Prince, and this incarnation was succesful in catcthing the attention of Trevor ‘Playgroup’ Jackson’s Output labelresulting in his debut 7” ‘Ice Skating Girl’. A high gloss pop song that, more than anything, reminds me of Justin Timberlake’s Neptunes produced ‘Like I Love You’. Elements of his drum n bass past echo remotely but the old Rekindle is far gone. Digitally processed, almost falsetto vocals carry the simple love song – the delicious refrain of ‘ice skating girl, you got me caught up in your winter world’ - and there’s the obligatory MC section that emerges late in the tune that makes this a perfect piece of urban pop. **Sebastian Chan**



SHELLING PEANUTS

Demo Reviews

The Peanut Spell broadcasts every monday on Sydney's 2SER 107.3 from 12 until 2pm presenting newly released and unreleased local music, from glitch happy lappies to oz hiphop to antipodean drum n bass and beyond. Shelling Peanuts is a chance for us to review some of our favourite releases of the past months. For those outside Sydney you can listen in on <www.2ser.com> or visit <www.dyclicdefrost.com> for selected MP3s. You can also email <thepeanutspell@2ser.com>

Send Demos to:
The Peanut Spell
PO Box 470
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ESL

Issue No. 1

There's something very refreshing about a completely new crew that has few affiliations with any other groups, because it normally results in unexpectedly exciting sounds. I simply haven't heard such effortless flows roll with obviously well thought-out lyrics in a long time. This is not a straight up hiphop demo at all (not that that it seems that was the aim), with many interludes, spoken word deliveries, vocal samples and harmonica-led tracks. What you have here is a bunch of playful and intelligent people working poetically over an underlying bluesy lo-fi sound. Still in their early stages of formation and yet to produce their best, these guys will tighten up and do good things I'm sure. Remember the name and look out for Eyton, an MC that is honestly about as sharp as anyone right now. **Tim Levinson**

Audio Cephlon

Untitled

Coming on like Garbage era Autechre, with the pairing of big synth washes and scatters of percussion, Audio Cephlon tread that uneasy edge between what was once known as chill-out and what now bears too much baggage to adequately describe (courtesy of the twin horns of new age blandness and allusions to 'intelligence'). In doing this they take the decidedly unfashionable route of unabashed prettiness, and prefer to make grand statements rather than nitpick over the remains of the sonic carcass. The five tracks emerge in a lovely, organic fashion such that they pass like a good train journey – you arrive at the appointed destination feeling refreshed and somehow fulfilled, rather than lost, alone and drained of life. **DH**

ToeKeo

Down South E.P

Coming from the heat of Darwin is ToeKeo, a duo made up of Toe-Fu (of Elefant Traks fame) and Chris Keogh/Blastcorp. Apart from this project they've also been involved in some encouraging music work with young Aboriginal kids in outback communities. The lead track from this demo is *John Howard is a Filthy Slut*, squarely taking aim at Howard's disturbingly excessive devotion to the US. In short, it rocks hard. The break retains a funk/Public Enemy feel as Blastcorp spits venom convincingly, although in his reserved conversational delivery, leaving me wondering whether a more aggressive approach could've been used. But underneath the grittiness is a real sense of urgency and authenticity, driving politically charged songs like the latter, and *Another Day*. On top of this is the amazing vocals of Toe-Fu on the downtempo *Long Grass*, and *Horizon*: a catchy-as drum 'n' bass ripper. **Tim Levinson**

Vice-Versa

Untitled demo

These guys have been churning out quality drum'n'bass for well over a year now. Their production skills were discovered by LTJ Bukem on one of his many outings to Sydney last year. Since then they have had at least 8 tracks signed to his Good Looking Records imprint. This recent demo continues on with a similar flavour to their earlier works but as usual their production has gotten much tighter. The tracks are DJ friendly with long intros and those killa build-ups which, although you've heard a million times before, still manage to get your rump shaking. Highlights include 'Ease On By' a laidback summery tune with keyboard licks and a nice warm bass workout and 'You Keep Me Moving', a nicely layered roller with disco riffs thrown in with the odd filtered vocal snippet. **Richie Tee**

Keliphresh

Untitled demo

Ninja-movie snippets, cinematic string hooks and some tasty bootlegs. This is an impressive demo from Brisbane's Keliphresh. This duo work their way from hiphop cut-ups to party electro, with some hilarious piss-takes on some of the hottest rnb booty tracks of recent months. 'Theme for 100 hoes an hour' is classic with some serious dance floor potential. Whilst people will definitely make comparisons to Pre-Fuse73 for the downtempo numbers like the luscious 'Samurai', Keliphresh's sample pool is a little more eclectic. The production is slick and most of the tracks have a big sound ripe for large sound systems. **Richie Tee**

Ben Wah

Album Project/Demo

Though not yet in the ADD category, Ben Wah obviously has a short attention span. This album length demo is interesting in that the shifts both within tracks and in terms of the album as a whole are as often as they are fruitful, so that tracks suddenly stop, twist and throw curly passes worthy of a kiwi netballer, and at a higher level genres are mixed and meddled such that a detroitish track is immediately followed by gloatingly sullen downtempo, and house stormers complete with whistles wrestle with complex contrapuntal melodies. Though this is a delightful characteristic it doesn't necessarily equate with achieving a purpose, and if I were to level any criticism on this otherwise musically diverse and often interesting excursion it's that sometimes tracks meander and fizzle despite, and sometimes because of, the tampering and fiddling. **DH**

REVIEWS

OVERSEAS RELEASES

Kristuit Sali vs. Morris Nightingale

My Mines I

(Merck/Couchblip)

In a departure of sorts stylistically for Merck, 18 year old Detroitian Jimmy Edgar embraces all things micro DSP, but in a much more considered, refined and mature manner than the usual DSP fare. From the opening 'Conceptual Devaihdn' that is a raucous switch-DSP-effect-each-half-bar affair, we jump to a fine example of subtle glitch-dub in 'Germain Fabric'. 'Dope Soft Intake' and 'L.P Output' jitter along in a Plaid-meets-Scott-Herren (Prefuse73) merging of old school electro stabs and disjointed mb shuffles respectively. 'Bland Impair' grows from skeletal defragments of a bit-decimated percussion soup into a random mess of random syllables scattered amongst creeping synth pads. Pulsating washes of atmosphere altogether dislodge the schizophrenic RnB overtones of the LP with 'Anata Wo Ai Site Inasu'. Edgar successfully applies his micro-refined programming template to a handful of styles on the disc, and much like label-mate Machine Drum, he almost outdoes Prefuse73 at his own game. Look out for the 12" version that features bonus tracks as well as newly randomised parameters of selected tracks. **Barry Handler**

Machine Drum

Half The Battle

(Merck/Couchblip)

This release features six tracks from the *Half The Battle* put to CD plus nine remixes, featuring lots of gritty and tight beats, well thought out melodic structure, and also some oddball video game funk overtones. Proem delivers the goods once again with a nice middle point between fractured rhythm noodlings, and healthy harmonic meat and two veg. Vim! chips in with a massive Squarepusher-drenched beat workout that comes out on the top of a pile of really smart remixes. Esem and Lackluster twist their normal musical equations a little with nice laid-back slabs of funk melancholia. Lassi Nikko as Brothomstates delivers the goods as always with academic beat flurries and alien synth pads looming overhead. Ilkae and Proswell twist the original tracks into a taut blend of Mouse on Mars swingin' melody and confused rambling vocoders 'Sean Penn, sextet, pony, racquetball, machine drum!'. UK's Xela deals in smooth Autechre-styled rhythm but with a touch more rnb in his 'Soul in the Machine' mix, whilst Secede's 'Return To Island' cx mix toys in orchestral midi smatterings. Despite being a remix album, *Half the Battle* is a bunch of really strong, tight tracks. **Barry Handler**

Beans

Tomorrow Right Now

(Warp/Creative)

Though their three eminently compatible flows and vocal textures, spiky poetry and anti-funk beats should have heralded a new era in hip-hop, or at least a viable alternative to the twin poles of boom bap and skittish RnB; Anti Pop Consortium instead left behind a slew of decent singles and two good albums. Much has changed in the transition from group to solo project – gone is the darkly hyperreal photography of *Arythmia*, in its stead is high kitsch (with Beans looking like a camp black terminator with an '80s style highlight shining from the corner of his sunnies) and despite the obvious attempt to remain true to the APC ethos the beats bleep and blip along but rarely complete their hurdles, and apart from notable exceptions Beans sounds like he's holding back. He rarely conjures that former thrill that accompanied his verses in the past. It all seems a little empty, as though without the focussing lens of collaborators Beans' shining light diffuses and is lost in the ether. *Tomorrow Right Now* is a difficult listen, not because it grates or annoys, but purely because it constantly avoids committing lyrically and musically to a purpose. Historically Beans' work has rewarded persistence, but in this case it remains to be seen whether its rewards will come at a higher price than is warranted. **DH**

Hecker

Sun Pandemonium

(Mego)

On *Sun Pandemonium*, Hecker takes an artistic shift of sorts and aligns himself with a new range of audio approaches that see him shy away from the sonic devastation of his earlier work to a more linear sound. Perhaps drawing on the routines and influences of the concreté composers, Hecker's latest work is primarily concerned with the very nature of sound and the way that a variety of sounds can work together to create a sense of movement and colour. 'J'ean-z Character Generator' sees Hecker play with sine waves and other raw tones to create a piece that almost feels like some kind of synthetic birdcall generator. The fluttering tones fidget and flip back on one another to create an oddly enticing track. There are some weaker moments on this record, but none weak enough to make you reach for the skip button. If anything this is the kind of record you can find yourself being drawn back to again and again – each subsequent listen uncovering another subtle element of Hecker's audio treatments. **Lawrence English**

Fontanelle

Style Drift

(Kranky)

Perhaps misleadingly titled, album number two from Portland quintet Fontanelle is a solidly constructed slab of genetically modified playfulness. Despite frustrating initial impressions that its slide-rule symmetry keeps it all so neat and tidy it is unable to drift thoughtfully from its tether, it ends up being worth the ride. 'Interstices' is an early case in point – far from being about intervening spaces it is in fact intent on closing them up and smoothing them over. The problem is that this leaves very little for the listener to do, creating a nagging feeling it is music to colour-code your socks to. 'Just, Go, Crazy' then does nothing off the sort, its early lower-register rumbling ousted by soulless computations lending a rarefied attenuation that is all too early if we are going to see the journey out. By 'Scissure' things are warming up nicely, a groove of sorts being coerced out for a stroll. The keyboard tweaking is a tad less telegraphed and the layering is richer. 'Style Drift' is the centrepiece that finally allows the room required to fully develop these ideas, giving the two guitars, two keyboards and drum breathing space to joust and groove in their most natural way yet. You can finally appreciate the workmanship that has gone in without thinking "Volvo". 'Monday Morning' blips it all home with a cymbalic titter in tow, its nuanced unpeeling sounding better and better with each subsequent spin. **Benjamin Millar**

Phasmid

Cooper Is On Bubbles Remixes

(Skylab Operations)

Phasmid's track 'Cooper is On Bubbles' is remixed on this album by 15 different artists – quite a brave concept. The original is a pleasant IDM breakbeat track – nice but nothing special, so it's quite impressive what an array of sounds the various artists coax out of it. From its original IDM roots Jason Prine creates an appropriately-named 'DNB Cut'n'Paste Mix', reminiscent of old Subtropic. Headphone Science's 'Bubblescooper Mix' features nicely crunchy beats and clicky sounds, as does the following track by Anorak; then Pacifica's '64 Bit Rmx' surprisingly adds indie vocals to the mix. The best track though, is definitely Kenric McDowell's 'B.I.A.B. In A Bubble', where elements from the original are chopped into tiny pieces and spurted around the stereo spectrum; a bubble-bath of bliss. All in all, this is a solid release, but the fact that all the tracks are based on one piece of music does work against it. **Peter Hollo**



Sonic Youth/ICP/The Ex

In the Fishtank 9

(Konkurrent)

Recorded in a day between Sonic Youth's Holland Festival shows, outing number nine in this dutch series of collaborations gains much from the willingness of its participants to leave their respective comfort zones. Opener 'III' sets the agenda by obscuring its own intent, a sort of theme in this most themeless of ventures. The electrostatic melange of 'IV' is then driven from all directions but steered by none, jazzy improv trampled by a guitar cavalry staging a revolt. 'X' builds from the grinding bass of Luc Ex and aims upwards, for the first time with a discernable direction. This Tower of Babel is doomed from the start, the untranslatable competing with the unimaginable, and here we sit, wondering what the hell we can do, where we can go but the very start to try it all over again. Call it unabashed crash jazz, call it seat-of-your-pants composition or simply call it life, *In the Fishtank 9* succeeds through its spark and the organic flaws that reveal the ragged beauty of the unprepossessed. **Benjamin Millar**

Hangedup

Kicker in Tow

(Constellation/Inertia)

Like jocks and nerds in a school yard, Rock and violins don't tend to associate. This prejudice has never applied to the output of Montreal's Constellation, their flagship group Godspeed You! Black Emperor has had a string section since its inception, and has used their underlying abrasive nature to great effect in their excursions into rock's sublime core. As Hangedup, Genevieve Heistek (violins) and Eric Craven (drums) have taken this lead and reduced it to two of its main elements – rhythmic fluidity and harmonic tension. They state their intentions early, from the first bar of the aptly titled 'Kinetic Work', the staccato strings hurry along, pushed by Craven's busily off-kilter but appropriate stick work and the edgy chord progression created by the multi-tracked strings. These Godspeed style epics are interspersed by impressionist sonic sketches that range from soundtracks to desolation to glib workbook exercises, and they achieve varying success. Despite an interesting premise and Craven's singular voice as a drummer, the whole shebang lacks polish. Like much recent Constellation/Hotel2Tango studio output it seems unfinished and overly reliant on the assumed beauty of flawed takes. Mistakes can be as charming as a gap in a smile, but rarely do they make an ugly face pretty. **DH**

More Fire Crew

CV

(Go Beat)

London's More Fire Crew are another bunch of crack slinging, hooded, scooter driving gangstas walking in the path carved out for them by the So Solid crew. Their signature tune 'Oi!' was deservedly big when it was released: its incessant bass-heavy, 303-riff bouncing under razor sharp drum programming, but the real magic of 'Oi!' is in the vocal hooks, with each MC stepping up and introducing in typical garage MC stylee. Triplets are all over this album: not just the vocal skib-a-dee but also in the drum and bass sequencing, providing the cocktail of negative space and complicated hi-hat/snare/kick programming that gives garage that cocaine shuffle and groove. Unfortunately, for all the promise of 'Oi!', the album falls short on ideas. The instrumentals are limited by their Swizz Beats sounds and their monochromatic production, and though it's much more about bravado and their microphone presence, their delivery is confined to a few rhythmic gimmicks and, most fatally, they are all about smokin' caps and smokin' drugs; the haterz; the hoez, the paranoia, the fear. The Fear. If only it was a fear of clichés. **Blumen Hestonthal**

Kopernik

Self-Titled

(Eastern Developments/Couchblip)

A two piece that sounds like much more, Kopernik features one of the players, Tim Delaney, who has worked with Heron as Savath + Savalas on upright bass, alongside Brad Lewis on electronics whose first band Herron sampled for an early Delarosa & Asora record; it's all quite incestuous. Immediately Kopernik recalls the '70s astral jazz of Alice Coltrane and Pharaoh Sanders; the openers 'Ondoyant et Divers' and 'Man, Myth & Magic' using the upright bass to dive into swirling near-Eastern structures ever so slightly affected by subtle DSP effects. Elsewhere on 'Ava', 'Peacefully' and 'Found Photograph' there are strong elements of both modern classical and '70s ambient music, whilst 'Kopernistan' and 'Faraday' explore post-rock territory not far removed from Yo La Tengo's recent *The Sounds Of The Sounds Of Science*. All up, this eight track mini-album is a stunning spacious excursion into a slowly changing sound cocoon that will have you reaching into your *Impulse* re-issues.

Sebastian Chan

The Majesticons/Mike Ladd

Beauty Party

(Big Dada)

Beauty Party is the second CD in a three part series from Mike Ladd about these hiphop warriors. Of course, it's all just metaphor, stupid, because today generic *Star Wars* imagery can be rail-roaded over any situation. It's an interesting way to critique vapid bling blingism, but, like the Death Star, it's ultimately doomed. The tracks are a lame-o sarcastic mimic of the trillion dollar treatments we get from Timbo and the Ruff Ryders, but that's not really the point. In this concept-rich and irony heavy world, we are engaged in a battle of ideologies. But on this point *Beauty Party* is flawed and generally pointless. Goodness knows, someone needs to hold the likes of Diddy accountable for their crimes of mindless consumerism and Darwinist capitalism, but convoluted sci-fi metaphors are infantile and diversionist. I'm not opposed to satire as critique, but *Beauty Party* is a long way from the 'post-jiggy' version of *Animal Farm*. Fuck the morals: sippin' courvoisier and drivin' Bentleys, or for that matter, gang-bangin' and slingin' rock is far more interesting than listening to some new-age, Afro-futurist didactic rubbish about robots. The good guys might have the ideological high-ground, but they lost the propaganda war. **Blumen Hestonthal**

Kim Cascone/Scanner

The Crystalline Address

(Sub Rosa)

The Crystalline Address is essentially a collaborative project that aims to create two twenty-minute pieces through a process of feeding layers back and forth between the two artists. While collaborations such as this can be forced and dry, Cascone and Scanner seem attentive to each other's sounds – as one artist introduces a sound element, the other responds accordingly, and though there's no question that random chance played an important role in this collaboration, these sonic 'coincidences' could not have occurred without an affinity between the artists. Markedly abstract, *The Crystalline Address* explores their interests in textures, rhythmic drones and DSP. Moody, but with an almost refreshing feel in the choice of upper frequency sounds, it feels like watching a storm roll across fields in the distance. Rather than being hit by the ferocity of the storm head on, one is left to view it as a distant spectacle – and get the occasional digital thunder groan, the processed hiss of rain, and an overall a sense of sonic calm. **Lawrence English**

REVIEWS

Thomas Koner and Asmus Tietchens

Kontakt Der Junglinge 0 + 1
(Die Stadt)

Recorded live in 1999 and 2001, this dual edition of CDs captures two improvisations that meet every expectation. In usual form, Koner delves deep into the continental floor, running his audio nets across the sub sonic territories while bringing to the surface an array of unusual and charismatic drones and textures. Tietchens on the other hand seems to be more focused on the upper registry of frequencies and utilizes a range of field recordings to add colour and focus to Koner's sprawling tone fields. Despite processing, some of these field recordings are readily identifiable – with one section on '0' becoming powered by a series of hydraulic compressions and decompressions – the effect of which is highly enthralling. Koner also tips his hat to Porter Ricks in these sessions, as he occasionally slips in an ever so low mix of his duo's engineered techno rhythms. There's some nicely placed psycho-acoustic feedback moments in these improvisations, and you get the feeling that future meetings may result in a deeper exploration of those ideas. **Lawrence English**

Jan Jelinek Avec The Exposures

La Nouvelle Pauvreté
(~scape/Inertia)

Along with his fellow Germans Uwe Schmidt (Atom Heart) and Burnt Friedman, Jan Jelinek has historically pursued an objective of naturalising digital music. Forgoing synthesis, Jelinek works almost entirely with samples, but manipulates and combines them in such a way that, in the past, their sources have been obscured by the density of sounds. *La Nouvelle Pauvreté*, like Jelinek's other works as Farben and Gramm, is bursting with sound: static glitches; a slinking dark alley bassline; and chiming vibraphones make up the stunning 'Music To Interrogate By' which is held together by a beat that is equal parts swing jazz and deepest house but at the same time neither. On other tracks, 'Davos S', 'Facelift', and 'There Are Other Worlds', it is almost as if Jelinek is coating his samples in honey that drips slowly off as the tracks unfold, revealing details and clarity out of a wet, sticky morass of static glitch 'noise' leading to some sublime moments; the emerging of slow synthline straight out of a '70s soft porn soundtrack on 'My Favorite Shop'; the breathy processed Stevie Wonder samples buried deep in 'Trust The Words Of Stevie'; or the gradual show/hide of horns in 'Ifs, Ands and Buts'. An engrossing soundworld of unfamiliar familiarities to explore. **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

2088
(Skylab Operations)

Rather than go for a consistent sound, Skylab have instead collected a high-quality swathe of tracks from across the indie/electronic spectrum. The range of sounds might garner frowns from purists, but it's indicative of one exciting direction that music is heading in – bands like Hood and Dntel and labels like 555 and Morr Music leading the way for jangly pop to meet and procreate with bleepy, glitchy electronics. On *2088* there's a bit of everything; Boothby's track kicks things off in Rephlex style, melodic as all get-out with sharp junglist breakbeats, then the female vocal comes in is disturbingly succesful in moving it into some bright Sub Pop single. Collette Carter's track explores similar waters, while Headphone Science's 'Nitelite' off-sets dark tones with crunchiness, sometimes frenetic beats and a subtly surprising bassline, and Jason Prine's 'Breaks and Bleeps' holds pleasingly true to its title. Partnerships give us drum machine-and-trashy guitar pop with 'Just like Coming Home', where 'home' is early '90s Manchester. There's much more worth mentioning (Lesser's downtempo amen onslaught, Books On Tape's chunky beats). Despite the lack of recognizable artists this is top quality stuff. **Peter Hollo**

Autechre

Draft 7.30

(Warp Records)

Autechre's albums have been an inevitable progression from the beautiful and smooth to the ever-more distorted and deconstructed. About half of *Draft 7:30* shares earlier album *Confield's* obtuseness, with rhythms that don't loop in the way you'd expect, and not much melodically speaking. On first listen the initial tracks offer very little to hold on to, but clearly the focus here is on the sounds: how they develop and how they're treated. The third track, '6IE.CR', begins as abrasive distorted funk, but gradually a spectral wheezing synth fades in, and is left hanging over the last gorgeous, beatless minute. Ghostly melodies haunt a fair few of the tracks on *Draft 7.30*, such as 'V1 A1', whereas the excellent final track 'Reniform Puls' sounds like a return to 1998's *LP5*, with complex patterns and real (albeit fucked-up) melody. There's not a lot of development – everything's a bit monotone, and only holds interest as the beat gradually gets more chewed up, but maybe that's the promo cassette's lack of dynamics (Warp having paranoically issued pre-release copies on cassette). **Peter Hollo**

Fennesz

Field Recordings
(Touch)

Though he often works with warm, heavily processed, fuzzed up tones and washes of static, Fennesz is almost always immediately identifiable. This is due to his desire to chart his own trajectory through the incestuous world of clicks, cuts and avant electro meanderings. His debut long player for Mego, *Hotel Paral.lel*, is to this day an unsurpassed blueprint for shaping avant electronic atmospheres. *Field Recordings*, his second album for Touch, is Fennesz cleaning out his cupboards and putting together some disparate compilation appearances, movie themes and remixes from the last seven years together in one convenient location. There's the stilted 'Menthol' from *Clicks and Cuts 2*, another version of the rollicking static jig 'namewithnohorse', some evocative mood music from the film *Blue Moon*, and a remix of Stephan Mathieu and Ekkehard Ehler's 'Heroin', which with strumming guitar and a wash of organ is truly stunning. Perhaps the most interesting pieces are the four cuts from the *Instrument* EP, his debut for Mego that, though a little more abrasive than his current output, still display the techniques, obsessions and complex washes of sound that are so distinctive. **Bob Baker Fish**

Manitoba

Up In Flames
(Leaf)

When Dan Snaith was in Australia last year he presented a workshop on sampling and remixing. He spoke of gathering together samples and then cramming them in on top of each other until the mix was so dense that if he removed a sample it was almost impossible to tell. *Up In Flames*, is an example of this technique – in fact it's so dense it's hard to recognise it as electronic at all. Drawing heavily on psych rock it recalls The Byrds and My Bloody Valentine with nods to the Beach Boys, the UK garage influences from Manitoba's recent remixes and his live sets are pretty much all gone, replaced by crashing drums, Art Ensemble Of Chicago free jazz blurts, backwards guitar, frogs and birds, lush multitracked vocals and a sense that this is a very self-assured step into solid terrain. The two standout cuts later in the album are 'Bijoux' which shimmers with tinkling bells, an tremulous horn, multitracked voice, even a mini-orchestral breakdown; and 'Kid You'll Move Mountains' which is like My Bloody Valentine circa *Loveless* crossed with a late '60s psychedelic sitar rock. A stunning, important record that at just forty minutes is worth it. **Sebastian Chan**



BOOK REVIEW

Free NRG:

Notes From the Edge of the Dance Floor

by Graham St. John

Review by Nicholas Gebhardt

Amongst music critics and the like there is a good deal of talk about emotions, identities or economic needs finding an outlet in various forms of alternative music. Efforts to treat popular styles as expressive of deeper forces, from ethnicity to alienation, always run the risk of going from the source (let's say, globalisation) to the consequence (let's say, a hard techno track) without ever really saying what happens in between, of establishing why the people who make a techno track would do so during a period of globalisation. Sure, the techno producer is probably pissed off that Bush is in the White House (and what self-respecting techno producer wouldn't be), but why would she or he use that kick-drum sound or that sample (even a sample of George W)? Not just because there's a Bush in the White House, surely?

Some (very successful) publications have tried to solve this problem by staking out new relations between analysis and manifesto, politics and polemic. Prickly Paradigm Press springs to mind as exemplary in this style. Not quite fanzine, not quite scholarly text, the not-quite-ness of *Free NRG* will either bury it or establish a new kind of writing about electronic music and its politics.

Like much acid jazz, punk-funk and trip hop, attempts at 'crossover' (or, if you're a jazz fan, 'fusion') makes for a hard road to success. Kenny G did it, but he had a gold body-length jump suit; Sting did it, but his thousand-mile stare lasted all night, not to mention his husky tones and ska credentials. Never quite populist enough, nor serious enough to enter the dusty realms of 'a treatise' or 'a classic', the crossover effect has skewed many a fine musician, not to mention authors.

Free NRG is admirable in its efforts to document and explain a scene, and to relate that scene to larger national and international developments, particularly such movements as Reclaim The Streets, the S11 Protests in Melbourne, and the Jabiluka mine protests in the Northern Territory. Throughout the book, the social context for the changes in music are associated with larger changes resulting from globalisation, environmental crisis, and mass disaffection with the mainstream political process; while the forms of resistance to globalisation (the so-called 'culture of protest') emerge from a vital engagement with communications technologies, particularly the internet.

The overall aim is to assert a new 'alternative',

heterogeneous global vision, derived from the interaction of world cultures (often marginal), against the homogenising, conservative forces of multinational capitalist institutions, most notably the corporations, and the neo-liberal state. To this end, Graham St John informs us that 'the electronic music industry possesses a decentralised legacy. From the early eighties, developments in production and recording technologies permitted a means of access and level of independence which had enabled increasing numbers of young electronic (or techno) musicians to assume ownership and control over the means of music production (in their own homes) and distribution (through informal channels and independent micro-labels), despite efforts by the transnational entertainment industry to assimilate such activity. In Australia, the operations of this high-tech cottage industry, complimented by developments in digital recording, the internet and multimedia arts, has reinforced a grassroots sensibility potentiating creative interventions beyond that achievable by rock, punk or rave.'

Likewise, Kathleen Williamson maintains that: 'Within DiY media culture the distinction between producer and consumer is fuzzy, as the culture thrives on a participatory horizontal network which assists in breaking down the commodity relationship of regular commercial publishing, as participants share zines and ideas with each other.' For contributors such as Peter Strong, from Oms Not Bombs, this radical DiY culture (Do It Yourself, for any unreconstructed communists out there) operates in a global space out of which 'a new society is developing based on non-hierarchy, liberationist principles, and shifting the chains of knowledge and respect back to the custodians of the land. Collective dreaming towards a free energy future is setting an amazing new precedent for a fear-free place for new generations to live in.'

The potential of these post rave events, as St John calls them, is that they 'become rites of passage into new states of being. Interactive ritual-theatre installations built into doof foundations borrow from a cornucopia of floating signifiers and iconographical traditions. The panorama of Indigenous and 'traditional' belief systems and practices which inspired what 'zippie' Frazer Clark had called a 'shamanistic inspired anarchy' or 'shamanarchy', seems to have provided similar inspiration for the Metamorphic Ritual Theatre Company's Labyrinth installations. Designed by Chaos Magician Orryelle—who once proclaimed, 'Fuck the Patriarchy; Fuck the Matriarchy; Let's just have An-archy!' — the

Labyrinths were interactive ritual initiation cycles weaving 'a multi-cultural and multi-subcultural tapestry of ancient mythologies and modern technology.'

The overall effort to assert the novelty and value of rave and post-rave culture in contemporary Australian life, to demonstrate its political credentials, and define its spiritual powers, results in an eclectic text, uneven in tone and argument, but entertaining, optimistic and informative nevertheless. You almost feel like you're at a rave (the ups, the downs, the weird conversations), and the final essays by Chris Gibson, Susan Luckman, Kurt Iveson and Sean Scalmer should definitely be read at the recovery party.

Which brings me back to my initial point: in following a cultural process from a source to a consequence, the authors all make the mistake of reducing music to an elaborate cry of either ecstasy (in both senses of the word) or, if linked to subsistence or alienation, a cry of pain (in the usual sense). If, however, a musical event is, to borrow a phrase from Lloyd Warner, a symbol system in its own right, existing within the complexities of the larger system or structure, then the question of how underground techno, hip-hop, drum n bass, etc, and social events are related has to be treated as an ideological one.

An explanation for music cannot be referred backward to the social context that it is supposed to mirror, nor forward to the social reality it supposedly transforms. All the authors, however, fall into this trap. They invoke rave/post-rave culture as a new social form, radically transforming human relations across the planet, breaking down old barriers, hurtling us into a new future of sonic experience. Fair enough. The thing is, their paradigm reproduces an old ideology — individuals, doing it for themselves (with apologies to Aretha Franklin), making hay while the sun shines (or the lights are on), and gettin' all religious into the bargain. The 'communal effervescence' they dream of, what Perry Anderson recently called the 'emergent global catalaxy', is the result of a thoroughly metropolitan-centred vision of individual agency (bio-power, for example) and its relation to the world's cultures (the American melting-pot writ large). To demonstrate how rave and post-rave scenes are not merely augmenting the imperial powers they oppose (we are all 'ferals' now), and how the very structure and meaning of music itself is at stake in all of this, requires a more careful analysis of the kind of world we live in and music's significance within that world.

DEAR DEGRASSI

A REGULAR DOSE OF
IRREGULAR POP CULTURE

Dear Degrassi,

Something really keeps me up at night and I'm not really sure where to turn for answers. It all seems so unfair and unjust. Why is Scott Baio such a figure of fun?

Joanie Malone

There are many things in this world that will forever remain a mystery, sparking hundreds of hours and literally millions of cyber-bytes of speculation, but neither you nor I will ever feel satisfactory closure on the issue, the way one does when undoing the top button of your extra loose pants at the end of a hearty Austrian meal. Indeed, I feel so strongly about this issue that I will dedicate this month's column to arguing the negative on the topic: *Scott Baio is a washed-up has-been and worthy figure of fun.*

SCOTT'S SERVICE TO THE ARTS

We first caught a glimpse of Scott Vincent Baio (the name he now uses for his various directorial credits) at the tender age of fifteen in *Bugsy Malone* (1976). Not only was it a musical, it featured children acting precociously in adult roles like gangsters and 1930s nightclub sirens, and instead of bullets, they used cream. This works well until the final scene where what would have been a blood-bath in a Scorsese flick turns into a cream pie fight, which troubled me as a youth, but I talked myself into getting over it because Scott was such a five-star spunk.

It wasn't long before the makers of *Happy Days* spotted Scott's talent for standing around in muscle shirts and the character of Charles "Chachi" Arcola was born. Sort of like a mini-Fonz, he provided a love interest for young Joanie Cunningham (Erin Moran) that previously had been limited to crushes on some of the older characters. However, for me, Scott's appearance in Milwaukee was somewhat perplexing, although I knew that *Bugsy Malone* was a 'period piece', I genuinely thought that *Happy Days* was made in the 1950s.

While some of the older cast members jumped ship, like scrofulous rats, towards the end of the show's run Scott clung to the *Happy Days* mast as the rest of the vessel washed up upon the treacherous rocks of dwindling ratings. It appears he also clung onto his co-star Erin Moran both on and off screen, and so *Joanie Loves Chachi* was conceived. Unfortunately their off-screen romance wasn't to last and so their 1982 spin-off spontaneously aborted, though the premise of the story was pretty poor

too – with the pair moving to Chicago to further Chachi's singing career.

Scott has been a busy man since he burst onto the scene in the 70s. Word counts forbid me from listing all of his works of greatness, however there are some that are just so brilliant, they cannot go unmentioned:

Skatetown, USA:

If you have seen this film then you are one of the greatest human beings ever to walk this planet, I would sell my good kidney just for a glimpse of this 1979 roller-disco flick with better roller-sequences than *Xanadu* (now, that's a big call!). With a stellar casts including Scott (of course), Mark Hamill (stop reading if I have to explain), Patrick Swayze and Maureen McCormick (none other than Marcia Brady), it's essentially a story about clashing roller-gangs...but with a cast like that based around a novelty fad of the era, who needs a plot and a good script?



The Boy Who Drank Too Much:

Hot on the heels of *Skatetown, USA*, this made-for-television drama lacks the stellar cast and ball bearings of the former, but it had a stern message for teens everywhere: If you're going to drink from your dad's liquor cabinet, be sure to top up the bottles with water so they won't suspect your alcoholism.

Zapped:

Oh, the arguments this film caused on family trips to the video store! Eventually I saw it at a friend's party and it became a viewing staple. This is the first film in which I saw Scott team up with Willie Aames (Tommy from *Eight Is Enough*) – a partnership as strong as Hill & Spencer! (This partnership was set in stone when the two collaborated on *Charles in Charge* where Willie plays an Eddie

Haskell-type best friend.) Scott plays Barney, just a regular high school nerd who happens to figure out a formula for telekinetic powers. (Of course an undergrad can happen upon one of the most important scientific discoveries ever, with high school lab equipment.) High jinx prevails, girls' underwear is glimpsed more than once, and Scott uses his powers to do the world's longest projectile vomit... EVER! Top shelf comedy.

Of course this is in no way an exhaustive list of his thespian efforts, however they are some of the most ground breaking.

SCOTT'S SERVICES TO TEENS & PRE-TEENS

As if *Zapped* wasn't enough of a sex education for pre-teens! No, Scott had to take it one step further and made three educational sex videos under the working title: *The Facts, Feelings and Wonder of Life*. As the website cautions 'Don't let your children learn the Facts of Life on the street. Today it's just too dangerous!' That's right, you need someone with the qualifications and empathy of Scott Baio to tell your kids what's right and what's...dirty! If only Charles in Charge had been in charge of me n' my sex ed... Kids of today never had it so good!

SCOTT'S SERVICES TO WOMANKIND...

Especially the Chicks from Baywatch

Scott was once an A-lister when it came to the babes. Unfortunately he didn't have the heavy-metal-rock-god attitude necessary to retain Heather Locklear, although they were quite serious for a time. And you weren't a star in the early 80s unless you "dated" America's favourite virgin, Brooke Shields. (Was it as good as everyone thought it would be, Agassi?) Perhaps the most perplexing of his liaisons was with a woman fifteen years his senior and recently voted World's Worst Dressed Celebrity: Liza Minelli. Please don't make me elaborate!

Trivia question for you. What do Scott Baio and Tommy Lee have in common? If you answered Heather Locklear, you'd only be half right. The correct answer would also have to include: Pamela Anderson! Yes sirree, Baio has also been lost in the cleavage of a *VIP*, and he got pretty serious about it too, asking Pammy to tie the knot. I don't know why, but the union never went ahead, and leaves us pondering 'what on earth does Scott Baio do to women that causes them to marry Tommy Lee?'

There's shitloads more Degrassi
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[FAT-SP05]



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[oct-nov]

[CD13-02]



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[march]

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[march]

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[february]

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[march]

[FATCD24]



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[march]

[7FAT06]



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XINLISUPREME 'Tomorrow Never Comes' CD [FAT-SP03]	
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