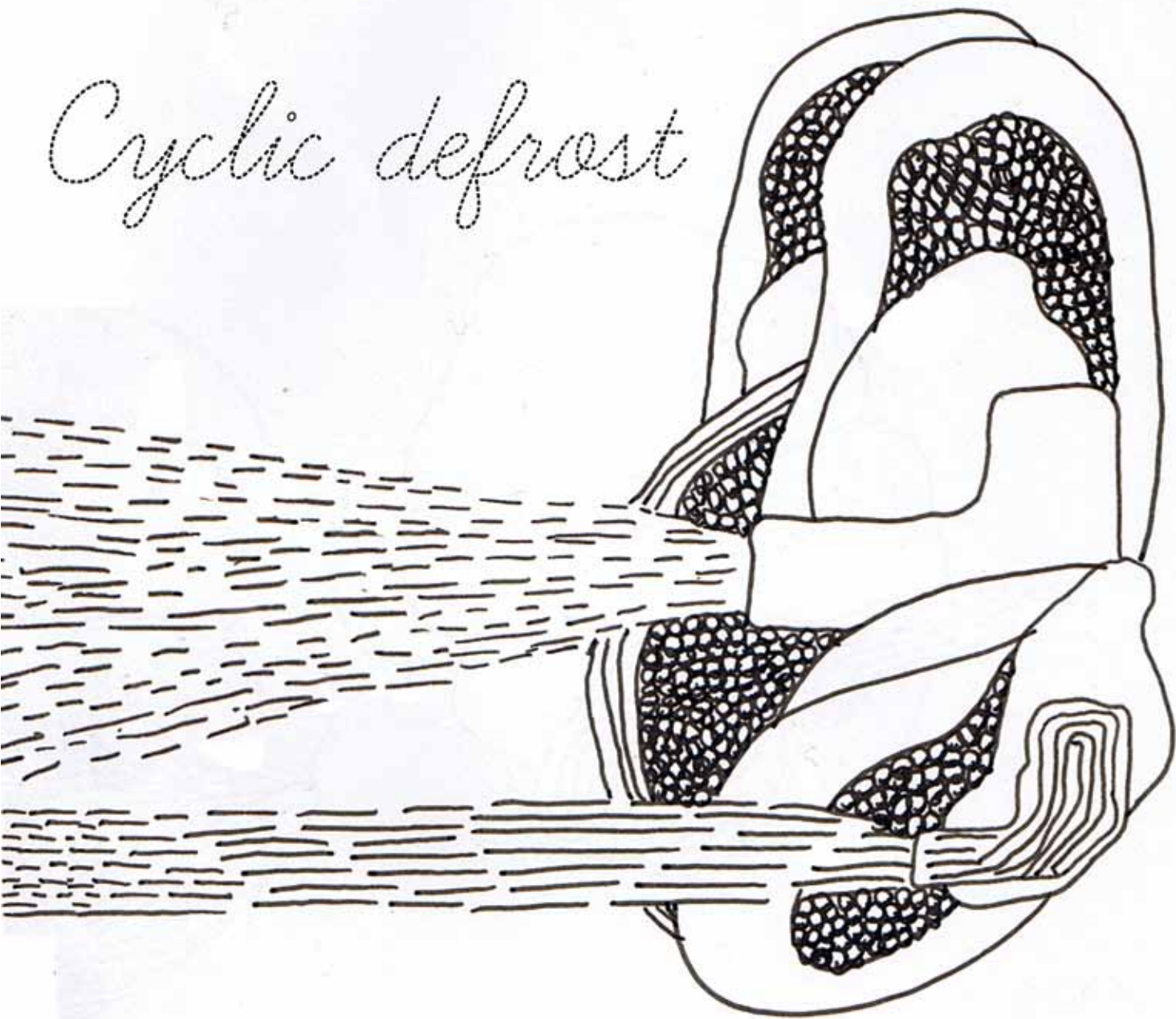


Cyclic defrost



Issue 31

SOUND SUMMIT

A FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT AND INNOVATIVE MUSIC
THU 27TH – SUN 30TH SEPTEMBER 2012, NEWCASTLE NSW

BLUES CONTROL (USA)



Genre-jumping East Pennsylvania duo Blues Control are one of the most original acts in modern music. Previously combining electronica with psychedelic rock, Blues Control have more recently shifted into jazz territories.

"Blues Control remain a 100 percent instrumental band, yet still have more to say than so many bands that actually write lyrics and sing them." BLASTITUDE.

Music available via Drag City | RVNG Intl. | Siltbreeze | R.I.P Society

HOME BLITZ (USA)



New Jersey's Home Blitz offers a refreshingly original take on power-pop and garage rock. Primarily the recording project of Daniel DiMaggio, Home Blitz sound has been realised via other musicians adding support to the project since its inception in the mid 00's.

Their lo-fi explorations have been released via a series of 7", 12" and two full-lengths, 2007's 'Home Blitz' and 2009's 'Out of Phase'.

Music available via Richie Records | Mexican Summer | Parts Unknown

MIST | OUTER SPACE | RADIO PEOPLE (USA)



Cleveland's MIST is the duo of John Elliot (also of Emeralds) and Sam Goldberg. Their widescreen synth-scapes, blistering rhythmic drive, and visceral live show has put them at the forefront of the American experimental scene.

Outer Space is the solo project of John Elliott. Elliott also curates the cult Editions Mego imprint Spectrum Spools (Motion Sickness of Time Travel, No Ufo's, Robert Turman).

Radio People is Sam Goldberg's solo project. Goldberg also operates the Pizza Night cassette label (Bee Mask, Mark McGuire, Telecult Powers).

Music available via Spectrum Spools | Arbor | Amethyst Sunset

LASSE MARHAUG (NORWAY)



Lasse Marhaug is one of the most active artists in the so-called 'Norwegian noise scene', having contributed to over 200 releases.

In addition to his solo work, Marhaug plays in projects such as Jazkamer and DEL. He has collaborated with artists working in noise, experimental, improv, jazz, rock and extreme metal, including Merzbow, Sunn O))) and John Weise as well as founding Pica Disk.

Music available via Pica Disk | Krank | Smalltown Supersound

HIGH WOLF (FRANCE)



High Wolf creates electronically tinged psychedelia, inspired by primitive and ritual music as well as adventurous modern music.

He is a fixture on the new underground psych scene, having collaborated with Sun Araw, Eternal Tapestry and Topping Bottoms. High Wolf has played esteemed shows such as Austin Psych Fest and Hopscotch Festival. He is one half of libii's Rooge and the man behind the *Winged Sun* label.

Music available via Not Not Fun | Holy Mountain | Group Tightener

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Editorial

At a time when most online music outlets are churning out news content on a nigh 24 hour basis, it feels kinda weird putting out a magazine every three months (or increasingly, "whenever we're ready"). A lot of panicked hyperbole is espoused daily about how the internet is killing our attention spans, but this issue of Cyclic Defrost focuses on artists that take time, and demand a lot of ours. Anthony Pateras has been operating at the heart of Australia's experimental music scene for over a decade now, delivering beautiful, unnerving music that gets richer the deeper one explores. Here, first impressions are rarely, if ever, sufficient: investment and patience is required of the listener.

And so it also goes on the other end of the spectrum with Mere Women, a new goth-inflected post-punk group from the bowels of Sydney's warehouse scene. Sure, it's basically pop music, but with repeat listens the unaccountably complex interplay between synth and guitar is quite staggering: if it sounds good the first time, the third time it really "clicks".

You don't need a new album a week, or even a month: sounds become more embracing and fascinating the more you hear them. Hopefully the artists featured in this issue will keep you busy until the next time we hit the street.

Enjoy the issue,
Lex, Luke and Shaun

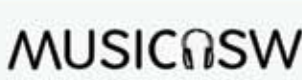


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CD

The seed of an idea



Local
Eve Klein
by Melonie Bayl-Smith



Pubs, alternative arts festivals and roller derby meets. These places have little to nothing in common. Yet each has been a setting for Eve Klein's operatic performances.

It may seem incongruous, though Klein insists that these non-traditional scenarios are more welcoming than one might think.

"The operatic voice or singing technique is easy enough to identify, so in a way people quickly recognise and understand what it is – that brings them up close to the music with a real sense of immediacy. So I really haven't had a problem performing opera in these places at all. Actually, people get excited - it's a bit different, it's exciting for them. The fact that I'm singing opera in new spaces is allowing me to demonstrate that there can be alternate modes of engagement and presentation of the art form."

Presenting opera in unconventional spaces is utterly consistent with Klein's approach to music on a broader scale. She started her career as a contemporary musician, and allowed her interest in electronic and ambient music to interweave with her operatic writing in the past few years.

When reflecting on why she has chosen to explore the potentialities at the intersection of opera and contemporary electronic music, Klein notes that the dual roles of singing and producing have enabled this *expansive modus operandi* to become an established frame of reference for her

compositional work.

"In some ways, this contemporary approach to operatic composition, for example where there are found and electronic sounds, was a logical connection given what I was doing prior to my opera career. Opera needs to be contemporised, it needs to go into new spaces," states Klein in a very matter of fact way.

"As an opera singer who sings traditional opera, I feel like opera has allowed itself to stay in the 19th century for a very long time, and in many ways it sort of skipped the 20th century - it skipped the way we have produced music over the past four or five decades. Perhaps because my approach to music as a contemporary musician has always been from the point of view that you sing, you write, you play and it's in the computer and it's mixed ... well, I couldn't leave this behind.

"In modern-day composition we add layers, we add ambiances, we add our own sound worlds. Those technologically-made ambiances and colours can add different and unusual layers of inflection. That these are lost from classical music is sad and frustrating – really a missed opportunity. We as modern-day listeners are used to production, we almost expect these spaces – it seems foreign to strip these out again."

This observation certainly brings clarity and context to Klein's position, for it is well accepted that a performer of classical music, even in this



"It is troubling to play representations of your gender that are archaic and plainly inappropriate"

pluralistic day and age, is most usually expected to adopt the spaces and ambiances of the composer and their “time”.

There are certainly musicians who seek to push the boundaries that traditionally fence in classical music – locally, the best example might be the Australian Chamber Orchestra – on the whole it is reasonably clear that many people find art music or classical music difficult to approach because it is presented in these spaces or ambiances that we don’t “know” or “inhabit”. It is also the expectation that the listener has a satisfactory level of “background knowledge” required to participate in this music at a satisfactory level.

Klein ploughs this threshold in her composition. She moves operatic singing into a different space that becomes the lynchpin for both the aesthetic of the music as well as the overall presentation of the opera and its potential inherent meaning on a number of levels.

To properly consider Klein’s position and the context from where these comments spring, it is pertinent to turn to her most important musical composition of the past few years, *The Pomegranate Cycle*. A contemporary operatic work, *The Pomegranate Cycle* was written over a four year period for Klein’s Doctorate in Music under the supervision of Julian Knowles, who as well as being a renowned composer and performer specialising in new and emerging technologies is also Professor

in Music at the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

As described in Klein’s thesis abstract, the project “investigates the potential of self-directed, technologically mediated compositions as a means of reconfiguring gender stereotypes within the operatic tradition.” From this single descriptive sentence alone, one is presented with the intent and content of the work and there is an immediate counterpoint drawn between traditional and contemporary opera. Further, what is possibly most interesting about this counterpoint is that it allows Klein to investigate issues relating to women, violence and power which construct the fate of female characters in not only traditional opera, but in the real lives of women past and present.

“All opera characters - male and female - are pigeonholed, and this pigeonholing especially emerges from the 19th century operatic canon. To illustrate, sopranos are usually idealised women, ‘princesses’ who experience some kind of turmoil of spirit or otherwise, and sacrifices herself or is sacrificed to reach a particular end. The purpose of this typecasting is to reinforce the morals of that time, societal values essentially. Following on from this, mezzo sopranos are used to represent or embody witches, old women, mothers. For men, the archetypes continue, although they are far less constricting of their gender. Really, in the accepted body of operatic works that exist, there are very

“Opera has allowed itself to stay in the 19th century for a very long time, and it sort of skipped the 20th century”

few exceptions where the vocal range doesn’t become subject to these archetypes.”

Consequently, the flow-on effect from these roles and the weight of their history is that any individual who has a particular vocal range then becomes typified, so even a performer of the current day cannot escape being painted as these roles. As Klein acknowledges, with operatic singing most performers have to specialise anyway – so the range of roles available is fairly limited, at best possibly fifty different roles in a highly successful career.

“For contemporary women entering the operatic tradition, it is troubling to play representations of your gender that are archaic and plainly inappropriate,” states Klein. However, she sees this as an opportunity for her approach to what is embodied in *The Pomegranate Cycle*. The work is a vehicle for cutting across the limitations of the operatic tradition by subverting and controlling the way the narrative operates. This handling of the narrative is directly linked to the manner in which the voice and the libretti are placed amongst the musical signifiers. Further, the work creates numerous opportunities for the audience to engage with the music and identify with the performer and the performance in provocative and unexpected ways.

Small scale in its performance resourcing – one singer, one dancer and one laptop performer - *The Pomegranate Cycle* is accompanied by an almost 110 minute long film projection. This visual content is central to the performance of the work, both with respect to addressing the imperative for a ‘staging’ component as well as providing further material for the ascribed context and intent of *The Pomegranate Cycle*.

“In essence, the entire work is based on the Rape of Persephone (from Greek mythology: Persephone, Homer’s “formidable, venerable majestic queen of the shades” was abducted by Hades, the god-king of the underworld). So from the outset, *The Pomegranate Cycle* is dealing with violence and examining the way in which society characterises women who have been the victims of violence. The opera reveals ways to rethink the way that we forever deal with these women, and to extend this, it really cuts to the core of why we retell stories of violence. I think we deal with the stories of violence because we don’t have a satisfactory way of dealing with the impact of violence directly on our stories, our lives.”

The libretto for *The Pomegranate Cycle* was written by Klein, and while she has performed substantial excerpts of the work out of context, most people understand the narrative with even

just a hint of its theatrical staging. To further draw this out, the film projection is edited to directly inflect on the libretti as well as to occupy contemporary metaphorical, poetical, and political spaces, including drawing its material from sources such as Wikileaks. One example of this is video footage of an American helicopter shooting people down in the streets of Baghdad. The use of such highly-charged contemporary content allows the narrative to incorporate themes which we are presented with often. This is a space and ambience we regularly inhabit.

Considering the opportunities and constraints of the small (but economic) resourcing of the opera, it is worth delving further about how the visual aspects of opera, including its presentation, influences Klein's work. "*The Pomegranate Cycle* was [also] written to be an ambient work, a piece that you could have on in the background and allow yourself to drift in and out of. However, because it is an opera, it has a narrative that progresses in a linear way - it has an ambiguous story that can only be clarified in the staging."

The film projection and the theatrical staging created by the singer together draw out the opera's thematic structure, where the introductory track of *The Pomegranate Cycle* is a spoken word soundscape. The delivery is like that of a newsreader, heavily punctuated and enunciated, announcing the place of the factual in the opera's content and intent.

"I have deliberately used the operatic voice to highlight how women are represented, and particularly as to how this is connected to the definition of opera. As an extension of this signification and exploration, rather than using 'landmark choruses' that are typical of traditional opera, in *The Pomegranate Cycle* I have used synthesized voices and different instrumental and electronic sounds to disrupt tradition. For example, the synthesized chorus parts – the chorus usually being the voice of society – is made of up "dodgy" proto-instruments. This allows me to highlight the way that choruses are traditionally used and then subvert this meaning. I've been very Baroque in the way that the choruses are written, sometimes there are up to eight parts. But in spite of any familiarity with this form, the slightly unkempt sound production is designed to unsettle the audience, because from a production point of view there is something not quite right, something ruptured in the opera experience."

Comprising of sixteen songs, *The Pomegranate Cycle* embraces this aforementioned rupturing in such a way that its import and intent is reasonably clear to the listener by the time of reaching the fourth song, 'Ripping'. Essentially a sonic representation of rape, this song - with its abrasive lines overlaid with tearing, disjunctive clattering motifs - accompanies the dancer who performs with the film projection behind. As a direct adjunct to 'Ripping' is the fifth song, 'Narcissus Bloom and

The Rape Of The Pomegranate', one of the most expansive in *The Pomegranate Cycle*. This song flows into the long lines of the Arvo Part-inflected 'Searching', where whispering vocal lines are accompanied by string effects and a disquieting morse code-like rhythm that reminds the listener of many possible sound sources. Not least, this method of engagement with the electronic and ambient points the listener towards the electro-acoustic and post-classical heritage of the work.

The insistence of the morse-code pattern resurfaces in a far more sinister and demonstrative fashion on the tenth movement/song 'Burning'. Without a vocal line, and with intense rhythms beyond the physical means of most humans, the fires of hell roll around furiously, and the opera comes to its turning point. In this final third of *The Pomegranate Cycle*, a reflective sobriety embraces the music, with subtle harp sounds and fuzzy white noise delicately interwoven behind the gorgeous vocal line.

In a way, whilst there is a provocative electronic subversion inherent in the disruptive industrial clicks, blips and tears that punctuate the work, it is the sheer beauty of Klein's voice, heard against itself, against the samples and lines, against the disembodied choruses, that is the glue by which *The Pomegranate Cycle* is most potently held together. Here, at the point of Klein's voice and its placement in the structure of the music, are operatic traditions celebrated, challenged and

reframed. The listener is drawn out and feels the lament of Persephone's mother Demeter whilst being enabled to reflect constructively on violence and destruction in relation to women's rights. This is contemporary music at its most relevant – it is simultaneously inward and outward focused in addressing the challenge of its existence and its capacity to produce something great.

To return to the intent of the work and translate its place amongst contemporary electronic music as well as contemporary classical music, it is worth considering who might stage this outside of its composer. Any contemporary music performer who has a passion for traditional music will be conflicted about the amount of space that traditional, well-worn works occupy in the programs of most established institutions, whether these be chamber groups, orchestras or opera companies.

When questioned on this point, Klein is pretty direct about her position. "Whilst theatre is constantly being refreshed and there is a strong tradition of contemporary theatre and plays, both in this country and internationally, there isn't such a vibrancy in the ongoing "refreshing" of the musical canon in the contemporary space. We need to allow and provide more space, literally and physically, to support present-day composers so that they are able to undertake a broader range of explorations within and around the classical or art music genre."



Hostile cars are a gust behind me, a rev, a honk, a swift sting of headlights. With deliberate steps and wide eyes, I pass the meat smoking factory, its steel machinery behind tall gates; a storm water drain; a hooded figure with a shadow for a face. Down an alley, the door opens in a slow grind upwards.

In a rehearsal space at The Pitz (II), under a ceiling of carpet scraps, the band's women, Amy Wilson (vocals, keys) and Kat Byrne (drums), sprawl on the floor and Flynn McKinnirey picks idly at the

described as not quite accidental, and sometimes spontaneous, things just somehow 'click'.

Soon they'll press twelve months of work onto vinyl: songs that in some way encompass ideas of "time passing, of change happening, of looking

"Like as in most of Mere Women's music, the keys and drums in 'Amends' proceed as though in a pop song, with a guitar that comes in and 'basically fucks it up' as Flynn puts it"

guitar. Kat's on the phone putting in an order for the Lebanese pizza joint in Enmore, and I motion to the whiteboard where a pair of perky tits have been drawn by some other band. "Oh yeah," Flynn falsely claims the crudely drawn rack, "I think women really are mere." The band stake The Pitz (II) as the grounds upon which they formed – in their words 'a DIY rehearsal space in the back blocks of Marrickville', a place where lumpy asphalt laneways lead to hidden venues, where amps are rolled down grimy footpaths. It's in this space that Flynn reckons about seventy per cent of the writing for the band's forthcoming LP, *Old Life*, has come together. The fact so much of the writing was done here while 'mucking around with a riff' is hard to explain for Flynn. In his last band Ohana, he would labour over writing, sitting for hours and hours with the weight of a guitar across his knee. In these little caves built for sound, in jamming sessions, through a process

back and looking forward as well"; of 'histories' and people from the past, "growing old, being alone, thinking back, stagnation, and the footprint you leave after you're gone." When I ask whether the songs, all degrees of brooding to the ears, are manifestations of the one theme, Kat is quick to point out it's not a concept album. "It's not quite post rock enough to merge into one," she says. "You wish," Flynn quips.

"You're playing fuckin' goth pop," Flynn's old bandmates said when he shared Mere Women's early demos for the first time. For a band so aware of genres, the classification had come as a surprise to the trio; and when I ask whether there's a specific sound in mind, three differently pitched 'no's reverberate as my question's last syllable falls. But it's 'goth pop' in the reverb, the beat-right-out-of-your-ribcage drums, the deep chanting on earlier released track, 'Sun Rising'. It's a sub-genre that

sounds ludicrous, but strangely apt enough for all members to swallow.

“I think Amy brings the goth,” says Flyn and she protests, “But I’m blonde!” she cries – bleached but ever-changing pixie cut and dimples. “You do,” he insists, “when you’re all ‘Ooh hoo ohh ho,’” and he chuckles at something in the imitation of her floating vocals. Perhaps it’s the self-conscious theatricality, the ‘corniness’ they all admit to. Later, when the room smells like sujuk and the band devour doughy zataar-crusteds wraps and vegan spinach pie, he will use this word – ‘corny’ – to describe elements that just seem to work regardless. They’ll call each other out on the ‘cheesy shit’ they all come out with, and talk about that line they walk every time they write.

“It’s... about balancing that pop element with something that’s a little more interesting, so it’s not just a three minute pop song,” says Kat: linear structures, rotating melodic and rhythmic roles and each member’s distinct style. This last part I had heard before from a mutual friend. His face had been cupped by shadow inside hole in the wall record store-cum venue, Black Wire, its Turkish-rug-in-a-corner-for-a-stage often graced by Mere Women and bands of their ilk. For those familiar with Ohana, Little A, Bare Arms and The Thaw, in Mere Women it’s unmistakably Flyn’s guitar looming, Amy’s bipolar vocals and off kilter keys and Kat’s melodic drumming.

A mongrel with gooey eyes wags his tail in front of a set of kitchen drawers and shadows linger in a narrow hallway in the self-made clip for ‘Amends’, the first single from *Old Life*. The band describe it as an ode to a beloved and rambling sharehouse seemingly held together with a bit of gaffer tape. The camera startles a flock of porcelain swallows against gaudy wallpaper, moves over a teapot on a windowsill, reflections in a scalloped mirror, old dials on a tape deck, a percolator whistling on the stove, long lazy clouds peeking over a lip of guttering; all to Amy’s refrain – an olive branch – Let’s make amends before we die, the cha-pa-pa cha-pa-pa of skins and a grate of guitar, the notes of which linger and snowball.

“The song itself... is the best indication as far as a single goes,” says Flyn, “because it kinda mixes that pop – that weird rhythmic vibe – and then the other side [that’s] a bit heavier, a little bit post rock.”

Like as in most of Mere Women’s music, the keys and drums in ‘Amends’ proceed as though in a pop song, with a guitar that comes in and “basically fucks it up,” as Flyn puts it. Lyrics are secondary to mood, to textures. The ‘Amends’ clip drinks in bumpy walls, stubble, stripey jocks and smooth surfaces. Similar to the clustered collectables that have accumulated like barnacles in the house, songs unfurl as vignettes, inspired by snippets of overheard conversation, ‘a shiver’, seeing something out of place, or ‘the worst shit that society has to offer’, like ‘Toddlers & Tiaras’ -

little girls with syrupy smiles painted on with frosted lipstick.

As the voice of warning, of lullaby, it is Amy who writes the lyrics. Mirroring the shy pageant queens she has taken as her muse, she sighs a long ‘ummm’ and looks up at the low ceiling when quizzed on the significance of her words. Long after the red light on my recorder dims, and the roller door judders to a close as I step out into the cold, she tells me she doesn’t like to reveal too much of herself through words. Themes are better expressed through the music; through her voice, which invokes a *danse macabre* of madmen, weathered gravestones, and memories of a grandmother stifled with depression, filling days with soap operas and crosswords.

At The Pitz again, while cars shoot down to Victoria Road, while a man under fluorescent lights shaves meat from a glistening rotisserie, and another serves up flattened hot dogs, Mere Women are set to play. The air is used and the space claustrophobic. Feedback screams through someone’s mic. Like the madame of a seance, Amy seems to address the unseen in the ether, “Who is this?”. When the noise is deflated, Kat bounces, Flyn jerks, moving rhythm through his legs and Amy pounces at her keyboard. Only a few words make their way out of the fray as the room resonates, then thumps to a tribal beat.

Winter has well and truly crept in, and we sit in a bleak beer ‘garden’ that’s a swathe of concrete. For what is a long time, he watches his frozen fingers attempt to tease tobacco, to roll and to seal a cigarette and as he does so, he speaks about Mere Women. They’re happy people making dark music. I mean, you look at them and it’s like ‘Where did that come from’, he says.

Back in the rehearsal space, words to describe the band’s sound had been spoken: witching hour, betwixt and between, ethereal ... ghostly

The words had stuck.

“It’s pretty funny how you say [our sound is ghostly], Flyn had said, “because me and Amy spend, like, a lot of time in the Camperdown cemetery, not as a fuckin’ spook thing, like goths, but we take our dog there during the day and I think it’s the most beautiful place in the whole of the Inner West, when the sun comes through.”

The weathered sandstone dappled under the boughs of decrepit trees.

“I saw a guy there the other day and his face was all punched in and bloody and he was wearing track pants [pop-button ones],” says Amy, derailing the beauty, or perhaps, as Mere Women so deftly do - amplifying it with a bit of ugliness. Something like that Leonard Cohen lyric that always gets bandied about - the crack in things, those perceived ugliness or imperfections - letting the light in. But Mere Women wouldn’t call it ugly, they’d call it interesting.

SELF IMPROVEMENT

International
Anthony Pateras
By Bob Baker Fish
Photos by
Anthony Pateras



Operating in an unconventional world that straddles new, improvised and experimental music, Anthony Pateras defies convention. This shouldn't be as surprising as it is; after all, these forms pride themselves on the relentless pursuit of the new, on creating new techniques and approaches that have never existed before, on offering answers to questions that have yet to be asked, or asking questions that have no answer. Yet the reality is that, even within this hallowed community of risk-taking artists, very few are actively contributing to the pursuit of the new. Experimental has become a catch-all term for the difficult, noisy or uncomfortable, and far too many improvise with a safety net. Most seem to find an approach, stick with it, and ride it as far as possible into the shore. Not Pateras. That would be too easy.

"One of my favourite analogies for composing and improvising is that it's very much like trying to keep honey on a knife. The ideas are always falling and you just have to twist the knife a little bit to keep them focused," he offers, enthusiastically, over a scratchy Skype line from his new home of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, a place he describes as the Coburg of Brussels.

"That's really close to what it's like, and sometimes it's like being half asleep as well. If it's working, sonic images and impulses are translated into symbols or instrumental gestures very quickly and unconsciously, and we really don't know how it happens."

Pateras is in constant pursuit of the new. As soon as predictability creeps in, he becomes bored, and wants to move on. In fact, it's a testament to his restlessness that he's recently disbanded one of his most successful projects, an improvised trio with Melbourne prepared guitarist David Brown and percussionist Sean Baxter.

"As a group, it was so musically stubborn and refused to budge on a lot of things, which was both a blessing and a curse," reflects Pateras. "Sometimes it's just the way these bands end up. You play together with like-minded people and you get locked into structural and aesthetic habits.

"It's always a tricky balancing act with improvisation," he continues, "because you start up these groups, hoping you will achieve some kind of telepathic communication, but when you actually achieve that, you have to try very hard not to be constrained by it. In a way, the priority should be to keep surprising yourself and your band mates. I always think that bands should finish when you stop surprising each other. Repetition in improvisation is antithetical to the very purpose of the act."

At any one time he has a ridiculous number of musical plates in the air. He is a solo composer and improviser, leader of the electro-acoustic quintet Thymolphthalein, performs piano in a duo PIVIXKI with grind drummer Max Kohane, has an occasional noise duo with Marco Fusinato called Poletopra, a piano duo with Chris Abrahams from the Necks,

and Kayfabe, yet another duo, this time with Natasha Anderson focusing on electronics. It's a testament to Pateras' relentless search for the new that these projects differ significantly in terms of role, approach and even instrumentation.

"When artists find a thing that everyone loves, then sit on it without any significant creative development, often the reasons why their practice was so great in the first place are emptied out," he offers. "No matter what you do, whether it's dance, theatre, sound art, audio-visual work, or playing the

"When artists find a thing that everyone loves, then sit on it without any significant creative development"

trumpet, it so easily becomes just another version of the classical music problem – just playing the same repertoire over and over, because that's what people know and that's what will sell. The greatest work is always borne out of taking risks and developing new strategies."

So, Pateras prefers to stay slippery, to challenge himself and to see what he is capable of.

"My interests are wide-ranging," he offers. "I'll play with an orchestra, then I'll play with a grind drummer, then I'll play with a jazz player or do some electronic/noise stuff. That's just me exploring my interests – by playing with these people, I try to learn new approaches, question the ones I thought worked. For example, with Max, I think he's loosened me up a lot – simmered the technical

focus out of my thinking and taught me to trust feel more. On the flipside, when I work with classical players, any kind of sloppiness that I have in my practice is confronted with a particular perspective I had to work hard to escape, but this kind of musicianship is very important to what I do. Thus, I'm always being thrown back and forth between instinct and precision."

Despite having upwards of 17 releases that bear his name, Pateras believes in finding the rewards for his exploration in the journey, not necessarily the

destination. He holds his processes very dear, and protects them vigorously, something that was a key factor in his relocation to Europe. It was his struggle to remain viable as an artist, and the increasing pressure in Australia for musicians to become quasi-small businesses, that eventually sent him overseas.

"In Melbourne, I increasingly found myself put into this position of being an administrator before being an artist, and I think, for everyone, that has a very negative effect on the work," he offers forcefully. "As a result, I think the way musicians interact with each other becomes very influenced by that – we all become horrible little products, fucking each other over, cultivating friendships simply to bleed our colleagues for contacts. It has

“Ninety nine point nine per cent of film composers are parasites, and not in an interesting way”

become more about the network and less about the work. We have become administrators, not artists. This is further fuelled by social media, which seems to occupy a lot of the time that artists could be using to make their own work stronger. When you're forced to adapt to a circumscribed mode of existence, you distort yourself and start prioritising what other people want or expect, rather than what you desire as an artist.”

Pateras has recently released his *Collected Works 2002 -2012*, the first offering from his own Immediata label. It's a 5-disc box set archiving everything from ensemble chamber pieces to solo prepared piano performances.

“I wanted to make all of the orchestral, ensemble, percussion, and keyboard pieces, available in the one place, and put it all out in a way that I thought was really special. I really wanted to have it all next to each other as a complete thing and demonstrate all the intersections in the work, regardless of the

instrumentation. I spent ages on making it sound and look the best it could.”

One of the highlights of the collection is *Architexture*, a piece that was recorded live last November on the iconic pipe organ at the Melbourne Town Hall. Pateras practiced on the organ over ten months developing a new composition. The beauty of this 1929 organ is that it was refurbished in 2001 and is now MIDI-fied, meaning that if you have a capture card, you can save your preferences without having to pull out or push in numerous stubs to return to the sound you're after. The problem for Pateras, however, was that, after nine months of extensive research and experimentation, his card crashed and he lost everything.

“I had to completely reinvent the piece,” he laughs, “all I had were these scribbles in my notebook and I had to work out a way to play it live, but I think it turned out a lot better. It's what



we were talking about before: absolutes are so tempting but they never work out. The memory card crashing forced me to think in a different way. It was a great gig; I think it's my favourite piece on the box in terms of idea and execution and concept. I think it's the strongest."

It's quite a tonal piece in which moments of intense activity are contrasted with these strange pitches of droning midway. It's nothing short of captivating.

"I had to find my own thing. On organ, it would be very easy to get up and just hold down a bunch of octaves and fifths, throw in a few semi-tones, create some nice beating frequencies, all nice and slow, and yeah, it sounds great. But I don't want to get up and play Palestine, Lucier or Niblock covers, you know?

"The part that you are talking about simply uses the top left and the top right of the instrument – it has these shutters, kind of like venetian blinds, which reveal the pipe room behind the instrument," he continues. "So all I'm doing in that section is moving both sets of these shutters very slowly in and out – opening and closing these massive doors, so all of the psycho-acoustic activity and freaky doubling and everything, it's just purely from reflections in the room."

Recently, Pateras completed the soundtrack to the feature film *Errors of the Human Body*,

featuring Rik Mayall and directed by Australian-born German resident Eron Sheean. The film is a thriller set inside the world of genetic engineering, and Pateras' score is sparse, electro-acoustic, minimal and haunting, utilising the likes of prepared piano, electronics, organs, violins, violas, and clarinets.

"The instruments were based around the idea of three trios (wind/brass, strings, percussion/piano) with the idea they would be all connected with a fourth, singular element – the analogue synth," he offers. "I felt this was a compelling strategy for orchestration."

Pateras has a history with Sheean, having previously scored his short films, but this project was still a journey into the unknown.

"I tried to watch as many films with interesting music as I could, starting with Philip Brophy's *100 Modern Soundtracks* book. I also went to him for lessons. I think, as a practitioner, educator, theorist and writer in film sound, that guy is unsurpassed. It was very inspiring. I went back to all the films that I really love the soundtracks to and re-watched them. I read a lot of interviews with Walter Murch; also, Morricone, Hermann, Takemitsu and Quincy Jones. I studied the orchestration – Jack Nitzsche as well. In the end it became sadly apparent that a lot of the stuff being made today was really not very good, or again, just trades on the ideas of previous people who came up with themselves. The names



I mention represent a pocket of resistance that made a powerful and unique contribution. Most other 'edgy' instrumental ideas or orchestrations in cinema music are simply plundered dilutions from great pieces written for the concert hall. Ninety nine point nine per cent of film composers are parasites, and not in an interesting way."

Amidst the darkness and intrigue of *Errors of the Human Body*, Pateras produced this incredible, frantic piece of dance music called *XIU*, the one track that the onscreen action dictated.

"The rest was written for the script, and placed by the director. In this sense, the process was very different to your usual edit-driven scores, which often manifest in clinical, audio-visual synchronicity."

Originally, the production wanted to license something. However, Pateras elected to have a go at it, and despite his protests to the contrary, the

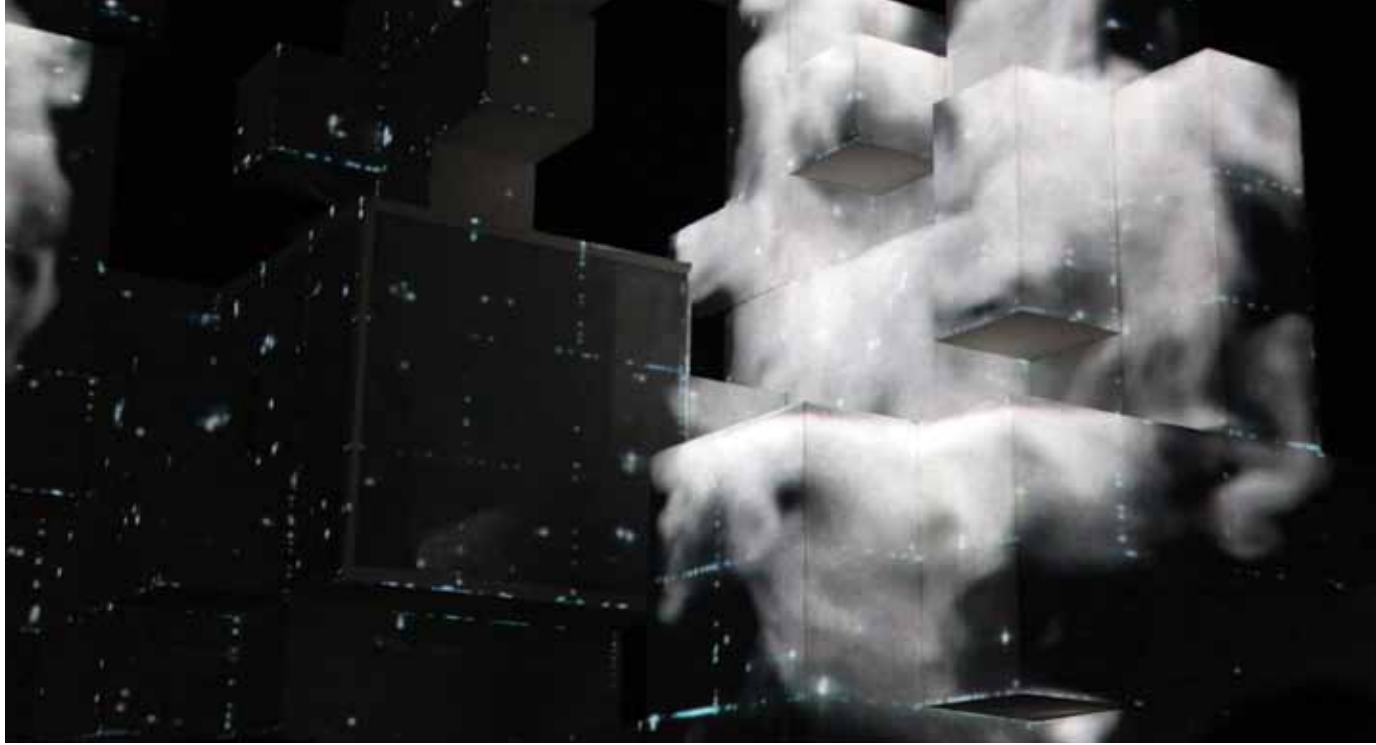
results are incredible.

"The club track was based on drum stems from the PIVIXI Gravissima sessions, from the last track 'Masso-Dissco'. I find it's a lot easier not to be lame if you don't use libraries – you have a million times better chance of coming up with a unique overall sound. But maybe it is just lame house music in the end... I don't know... the hand claps are pretty shit – but at least it's my shit!"

This soundtrack has put Pateras into some very unfamiliar territory, with a rather brutal review in *The Wire* suggesting the music doesn't stand on its own without images (it does), and the club track has 'chase scene' written all over it (there's no chase scene in the film). Then, on the other side, the distributors of the film have chosen to shelve Pateras' score for the trailer, suggesting it's not emotionally connected enough to the film. Instead, they've used the exact kind of unimaginative, banal electronica that Pateras rails against.

"Maybe, when commercial reality hits, some of my philosophies don't apply," he ponders diplomatically, before chuckling to himself, "but man, film music is just another form of sonic lubrication for the nightmare of Capitalism. Like advertising, it sells a homogenised idea or representation. I don't want to get up in the morning and think about what a tub of margarine should sound like!"

CD



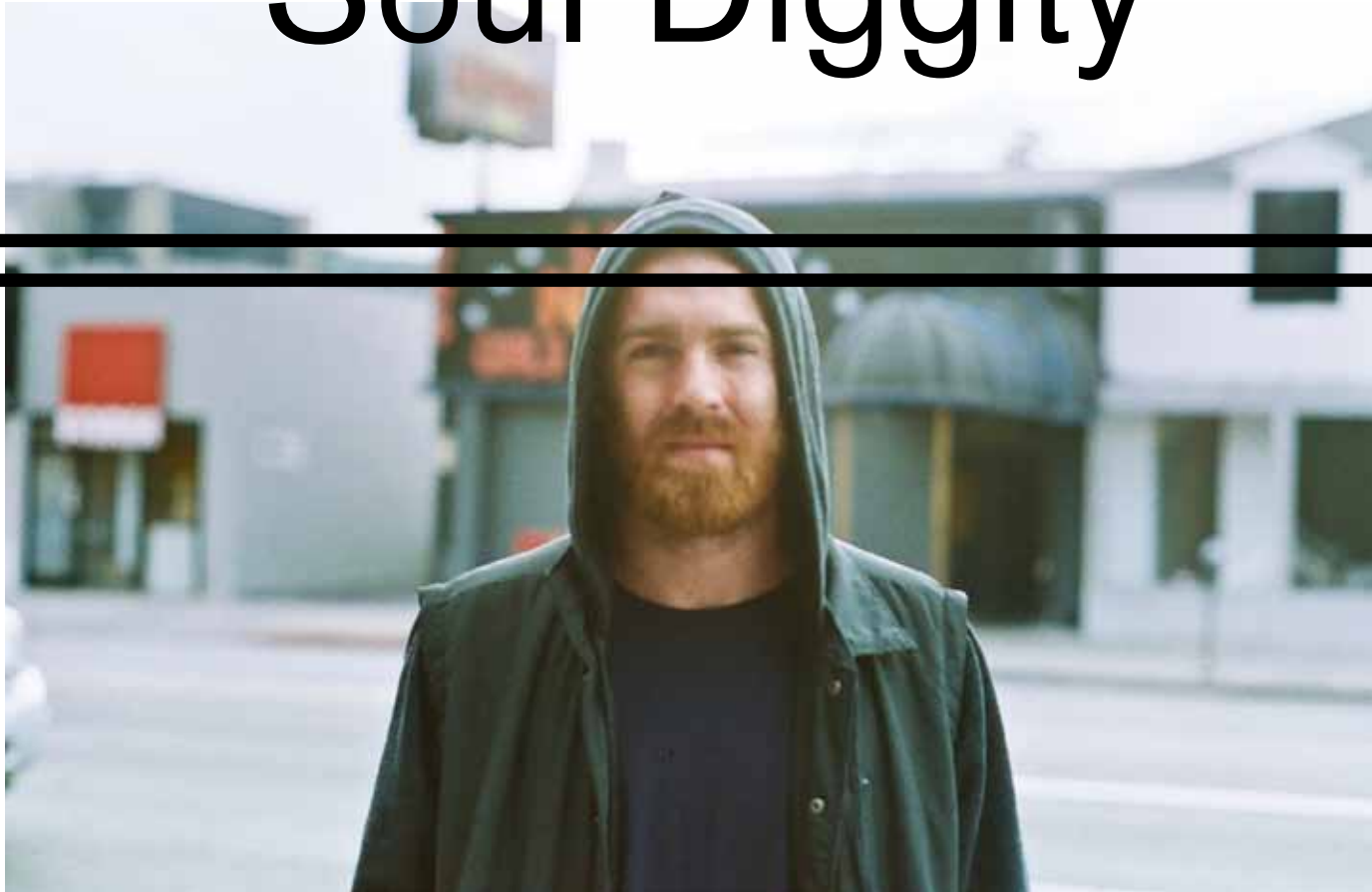
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Sonar 2012





Soul Diggity



Local
Chet Faker
By Joshua Millar

Most musicians have a story behind their sound. Whether it starts in local scenes, stems from a reaction to popular genres or movements, or is a nostalgic nod to music from the past, this narrative is an undeniable characteristic of artistic integrity. Melbourne native Nick Murphy, known to the world as the beard-clad and smooth-singing Chet Faker, is a prime example of an artist with one such tale.

Murphy's story is his attempt to find a harmonious relationship between polar opposites. Maintaining a balance extends far beyond just amalgamating influences, something he takes into account both in the performance of his music and his views of it as a sustainable art form to outlast any single movement or well-hyped genre du jour.

Drawing from both his acoustic background and heavy involvement in the deep house and techno

scene of Melbourne, Murphy describes his on-and-off devotion to these respective forms as playing a big role in the creation of his sound. "I had for so long been swapping between being obsessed with playing live and just playing with my guitar and singing my songs, working on the simplicity of just the guitar and the chords ... then I would go through phases where I was obsessed with electronic music and production on the computer and all of the options and sounds that you can come up with."

Murphy's sound, while being an amalgamation of distinct and clear-cut influences, is difficult to describe. Calling it electronic doesn't seem to cover all of its intricacies, particularly his stunning vocal abilities, and labelling it as alternative seems just as fruitless. This dilemma is clearly one not new

to him, as he tells me with a laugh. “Well sooner or later I’m going to have to learn how to answer that question. I mean I call it soul, but I think that’s wishful thinking, but I’m still quite happy to keep calling it soul.”

Undoubtedly this ‘soulfulness’ is ever-present in Murphy’s music, the way his voice bleeds through the smooth electronic compositions, creating one of the most unique sounds of any current musician. Early attempts at labelling his own music by genre on Soundcloud only further reinforced Murphy’s definition of ‘soul’, although directly addressing an element that is sure to be key to much of his appeal. “For a while there I felt like I was either writing something that was smooth and sexy or really chilled out and it puts you to sleep, so I got this ‘sleep/sex’ thing started. I’m aware that they’re both not real genres, but maybe I should just say that: ‘sleep’ and ‘sex’, it’s a crossover between sleep and sex.” Whilst perhaps being a fairly ambiguous attempt at genre definition, it may also be the most accurate to describe a sound so new and appealing.

The song that kick-started his musical career as Chet Faker, the famous cover of the ‘90s R&B jam ‘No Diggity’ by Blackstreet, may be responsible for both the shaping of his music and the way in which it is both perceived and received by the listener. “I played this bar in Melbourne and I got

home at about 3:33 am, I’d had too many Red Bulls or too much soft drink, so I was kind of buzzing.” He introduces the story as one that he has had to tell countless times, but still with a reminiscent interest. “I just basically sat there and wrote it from scratch in about four hours. I did the whole beat first, and it wasn’t like ‘I’m going to do a cover of No Diggity’, I was just working on a beat. Then I finished the beat and it was there, but I was delirious and so wasn’t really paying any attention to the fact that I didn’t want to put any vocals onto it, I was just doing, I was thinking about. ‘No Diggity’ was kind of stuck in my head and I just started singing that, and it sat on top of the beat really well.”

Undoubtedly an odd choice of a song to cover, it seemed to not only kick-start his career as Chet Faker, but also radically helped shape his sound. “I kind of put that out just on Facebook and YouTube for my friends ... looking back on it the next day or a week later I was like ‘Oh yeah, that’s actually a sound I’m really comfortable with and would like to keep doing’.”

It has also turned out to be a sound that is appealing to audiences all across the world. With the cover hitting number one on the online music aggregator Hype Machine, receiving thousands of streams online, and being both played and touted by radio DJs across the globe, it truly puts into

perspective the way that his music has managed to disseminate to all corners of the globe.

In elaborating on the way that Murphy came to find his ‘soul’ sound, he reflects on the nature of it being unexpected. While he had been going back and forth between two distinct styles for some

“For a while there I felt like I was either writing something that was smooth and sexy or really chilled out and it puts you to sleep”

time, the manner in which the two gelled was something he had not anticipated. “It was definitely unexpected, I think that’s what happens with a lot of musicians though, I think they stumble across what works for them. As a muso you work hard enough that sooner or later you fall into your own,

it becomes this combination of all the ideas and techniques that you’ve got. I think my head just kind of clicked and I found a style I was happy with ... I was always very conscious of wanting to find a sound I could call my own or just try and make it as mine as much as possible.”

A distinctive sound is one that Murphy has achieved for from the very beginning, referencing what can be described as modern musical ‘movements’ that he loves but actively tries to separate himself from creatively. “In all my songs the vocals are often super clean ... I didn’t want to just be part of the whole ‘chillwave’ movement, even though I love all that stuff, I wanted to try and do my own style. I think I was just trying to find a balance that I was happy with.”

The truly rapid nature in which his music has gained popularity is no more evident than in his history of live performances. “I mean technically we’ve played more shows in Texas than in Australia,” he tells me. “It’s been a bit ridiculous really, it’s not something that I’ve asked for, but at the same time the opportunities are so good and you can’t really say no to them. If I had the power to plan out the way things go I certainly wouldn’t have picked our sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth gigs to be at Texas for SXSW.”

On further talk of his experience at SXSW, it seems as though he relished its atmosphere as

opposed to the stock-standard festivals in Australia. “It’s a bit different to the festivals I’ve been to, you know, not everyone’s there to get absolutely wasted,” he elaborates, “people are there to actually find artists. I had people coming up to me after my shows and asking me to write down the names of songs and where they can find my music.”

His live performance comes in two ways; solo, or with a band that consists of a drummer, bass player and guitarist. Obviously the difference in instrumentation would have an effect on the respective forms of performance, not only for the audience, but also for the performers, something he definitely takes into consideration. “They’re really different. It kind of depends on what mood I’m in, it’s always more fun sharing a stage with people, because if the crowd is really vibing you can look at someone that you’re playing with and enjoy it together. A lot of experiences are a lot richer when you share them with someone. But having said that, the solo ones are really nice because I can just take my time and can change things on the fly and not confuse the shit out of my band members, because it’s just me. You know, if I’m playing the shows solo I might as well do what I’m happy with.”

This recognition extends further to the way in which he perceives his own music; while viewing

it as ‘soul’, he holds a unique understanding for the way in which it is accepted by the listener. Murphy is able to create music that he finds incredibly satisfying and representative of himself as a musician, while also being adored by fans the world over. It’s not something common to many contemporary musicians. “Yeah it’s cool... I think I’m particularly lucky that the sound I’m making fits into everything now. I mean maybe it’s because of my age and the fact that I grew up in the ‘90s and I’m getting all the same cultural influences that everyone is getting. That’s not to say that, although electronic music is what I really love, it’s not the kind of music that I want to make forever.”

It’s very easy to say that big things can be expected from Murphy in the future, especially when taking into consideration his achievements in only one year under the moniker of Chet Faker; however, it is important to consider his music in the context within which it exists, as well as Murphy’s own aspirations and relations with his work as a musician. In acknowledging that his rapid success is in part owing to his cultural influences being similar to those of many of his listeners, as well as his recognition of the fleeting successes and constraining stigmas attached to the internet’s hyped genres, he allows himself to see and leave room for the development of his music within the grand scheme of things.

A Bedroom Community in Reykjavík

International
Bedroom Community
by Tony Mitchell

Bedroom Community is a highly unusual label. Based on the outskirts of Reykjavík, it currently involves a roster of six musicians: Nico Muhly, Sam Amidon and Puzzle Muteson, who all reside in the USA, two Icelanders, label founder Valgeir Sigurðsson and composer-conductor Daniel Bjarnason, and a transplanted Australian, Ben

Frost, who moved to Iceland in 2005 after a visit to Valgeir’s studio in 2003. The label’s musical identity is difficult to pinpoint, as it ranges from Frost’s noise-oriented *Theory of Machines*, the title track of which was included on Mary-Anne Hobbs’ 2008 dubstep compilation *Evangeline*, to acoustic folk albums by Amidon and Muteson, and classical

albums by Muhly and Bjarnason.

The latter's highly dramatic *Processions* involves the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bjarnason, along with the harp and percussion duo Harpverk. Then there's Frost and Bjarnason's highly experimental collaboration *Solaris*, commissioned by the Unsound Festival in Crakow, Poland, which is run by another Australian, Mat Schultz. Shultz invited Frost and the Necks to the 2009 festival, before commissioning *Solaris* for the 50th Anniversary of the book by Crakow sci-fi writer Stanislaw Lem. Mentored by Brian Eno under the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative in 2010, Frost, together with Bjarnason, workshopped the highly restrained and subdued score for *Solaris* in Cracow with the Sinfonietta Cracovia, then developed it further in Reykjavik. After performing and recording it in Cracow, they performed it at Unsound New York in April 2011, with a barefoot Frost on guitar and laptop and Bjarnason on prepared piano. There's a chance it will be restaged in Australia in 2013.

Besides being label founder and head producer, the quiet and modest Valgeir was Björk's main studio engineer from 1998 to 2006, and has produced a slew of other Icelandic artists such as Múm, Slowblow, rappers Quarashi and troubadour Megas, as well as Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's 2006 album *The Letting Go*. He has also released two albums of his own music, 2007's *Ekvilíbríum*

and the 2009 film soundtrack *Draumalandið* (*Dreamland*): music for a documentary by Andri Snaer Magnason about the devastation of the Icelandic countryside and natural resources by US company Alcoa and the Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Project, at the behest of the pre-Kreppa (economic meltdown) Icelandic government. This included input from Muhly, Bjarnason, Frost and Amidon, who sings a powerful, glitched-up Icelandic folksong, 'Gryllukvaeði'. This year a documentary about Bedroom Community was released, *Everything Everywhere All The Time*, directed by Pierre-Alain Giraud, featuring Valgeir, Sam, Ben and Nico's 2009 Whale Watching tour around Europe, as well as their work in the studio. (Available at Icelandic Cinema Online, as is *Dreamland*.)

Breiðholt (literally 'wide hill') is the closest thing that Reykjavík has to an 'old school ghetto'. A dormitory suburb (or bedroom community) situated in the south-eastern part of the city, a half-hour bus ride from the centre of town, it was built between 1967 and 1982 to provide cheap housing for low-income working class people, who by 1983 numbered 15,000 (Iceland's total population is about 320,000). That included 15 per cent of the country's single-parent families. Since 2000 it has also attracted the highest proportion of non-Icelandic immigrants in the country.

The upside was that more than 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Breiðholt were under 22, and in



Ben Frost - “I still to this day read things about Theory of Machines being about the sound of glaciers ripping apart, and most of it was conceived in an apartment in Chinatown in the middle of Melbourne!”

the late '70s, Iceland's punk scene was emerging. A local youth centre started organising RykkRokk, an annual outdoor rock concert. There were also a lot of empty garages where bands could rehearse, including the Sugarcubes. Later houses were also leased to artists and musicians, which was how Valgeir's Greenhouse Studios came into being. When it became a record label in 2006, Bedroom Community seemed a logical name, both in the sense of its satellite location, and because the musicians on the label were a virtual community. Ben takes up the story, with assistance from Valgeir:

BF: The runner up to the name Bedroom Community was Slaughterhouse Records ... I don't think we'd have the careers we have today if we'd called it that!

TM: But Greenhouse Studio's been going since 1997?

VS: Yes, 15 years now, and the label sort of grew into the studio rather than out of the studio. We were working here and using the studio, and we

had music we were recording and collaborating on, so it made sense to create the label, as none of us was really on a label at the time. The first album we released was Nico's *Speaks Volumes*. Then very soon after came *Theory of Machines*.

BF: The bones of that album were there before I moved to Iceland. To be perfectly honest, a lot of the pieces I wasn't really sure about until we started to work together, and then everything started to make a lot more sense. Which is pretty telling of most of the things we've done.

VS: I remember when you gave me the demos for *Theory of Machines* and another CD, and I took them both on a drive, and I came back and said 'I'm not sure about this one, but this one here is going'. And the other one was your band project, wasn't it?

BF: And in many ways, that was a turning point. At that point it could have really gone either way for me. It was a pretty critical point when you made that call, and nudged me more towards one than the other, and I think it's definitely the braver choice.

T M: Valgeir, you've described yourself as an

'upptökustjóri' or 'director of recording', rather than a producer ...

VS: Right. The word doesn't mean producer, it has more to do with directing, like a theatre director. A record producer has this historical thing that a lot of people don't really understand, because in most other lines of work it's more connected with the financial side of things. It's the same in French, 'realisateur' is more like a director.

BF: The process of recording now is more about capturing the bones of a song, or the bones of an artist, or composition, and then the actual process of producing the recording is really in the mix. That's when the record starts, because you can really rearrange the whole thing. It's a far more post-production way of working than it used to be. When you take that into account, when Valgeir gets credited as the 'mix engineer', it's laughable, in terms of what was there in the beginning and where it ends up.

TM: One of the distinctive things about this label is that it seems to combine classical, electronic, noise, ambient, folk and even some pop. It goes across the whole spectrum in a way that's quite unique.

VS: I think that's more to do with the personalities involved rather than any overall shape. This comes from us liking what the other does, and having an opinion, and being respectful, and sharing, and also something to do with how listening habits have changed too. We're all interested in these different

types of music, and we just don't see a reason to limit it. For me it's more exciting, the contrast.

BF: I agree. The thing I keep coming back to about this general consensus is that it all fits together somehow, against the odds - it's not really a tangible thing. I think a lot of it comes down to the fact that it all goes through these hands, this house and this studio. The history of the record label is that it was a studio, and the reason we had a record label was we had enough money to pay for microphones and an engineer, and pay for a building. While my record *By The Throat* might be in a very different category of music as far as the listener is concerned, the fundamental fact is the piano you hear on that record is the same piano you hear on Sam's record, and on Nico's record, and it has gone through the same microphones and the same pre-amp, recorded by the same person, and I think there's something to be said for that.

VS: And the fact that everything has the same purpose, goes through the same ears and the same tape, shaped by our same collective – we all sign off on it.

TM: So you can say that there's a Bedroom Community sound?

VS: I think you can definitely say that. The records are coming from such different places, I think, and that helps them come together as a coherent body of work. Even though, at least for me, it's very important that everything has a strong individuality to it.



BF: At the same time there's a lot of freedom in that. You can rest easy that no matter how far it goes, it's still going to fit. *Solaris* is a very interesting example. It's the first time, at least for me, that we did a big chunk of the record outside the studio. We recorded the strings in Cracow. But having said that, Valgeir was there, and we were all there, and in some ways I think the big struggle with that record was making it feel like ours again. Pulling it back into shape. There were elements of

it that just didn't feel like mine, didn't feel like ours. It felt a bit foreign actually. It was partly a practical thing – it's much cheaper for us to go there rather than 28 people come here. It was also a great studio. We did the premiere performance of it on a Saturday and then we recorded it on the Monday.

TM: How did you connect it with the Tarkovsky film?

BF: We just sort of watched it and responded to it in a very offhand, unprepared way. In fact I think

the first time Daniel saw it he had a piano in front of him.

TM: Another thing I've noticed is that you're releasing a lot of your stuff on vinyl ...

VS: That's the future! It seems to be something that people are interested in, and it's the best format if you like to have an object in your hands. We're trying to do as much as we can on vinyl now.

TM: Just looking around the record shops in Reykjavik, it seems there's a lot of your records on vinyl, compared to other people's.

VS: I was in London last week and I went into Rough Trade, near Brick Lane, and I don't know where to begin to look for things any more. I was wandering around the store, and I was at least going to check if they had our records, and I couldn't find anything. It's all broken down into sections, and I didn't know what they call this music! I finally saw they had *Solaris* on a listening post – I wouldn't have known how to find it otherwise. I just want a Bedroom Community shelf!

BF: Labels are now almost more important than genres. There was a radio interview a friend sent me the link for with John Schaefer on WMRC, nothing to do with us or me, and he used the adjective 'Bedroom Community' when describing this guy's music – 'very Bedroom Community'!

VS: I'd like to know what that means!

TM: So you've got your own genre now? Nico is a classical composer, and so is Daniel.

VS: Yes, in the pen and paper sense, of writing

scores. And also in the sense of providing a structure around which things work – it's like an orchestra commissions a piece. It's more in Daniel's and Nico's world than perhaps in mine or Ben's. And then at the other end you have someone singing and playing the guitar, but it still knits together.

TM: With the *Dreamland* project, were you commissioned to do that?

VS: It was a film score, so yes, I was asked to do that, and I wanted to make an album, so I used the film to make something worthy of a release. The music in the film was quite different from the release – I had to trim it, and edit it down, make space for dialogue. But I ignored that in the writing process, I did whatever I wanted to do, and then took away what was in the way.

TM: You've said that there's not really a music industry here in Iceland.

VS: No, I don't think there is one. There are a lot of people here and all they do is make music, but there's not really a domestic market. Everyone is looking for opportunities outside Iceland, even when they start off. But you also have local bands that just play together, and don't have any profile outside Iceland.

BF: Everybody has their local troubadour, their local Bob Dylan, and everyone who's over a certain age listens to that guy. That exists in every country, I think. But it seems to me that Iceland has a very high ration of exporting the exceptions to the rule rather than the norm. I think that here, in terms

of the history of Icelandic music, Sigur Rós is not really typical of Icelandic music.

TM: Whereas Megas, who's probably completely unknown outside Iceland, is a troubadour, and he even sounds like Bob Dylan.

BF: But sings in Icelandic ...

VS: ... and has been very influential on everyone who grows up here, but doesn't really mean very much outside Iceland. He was really the first one to do what he was doing, so he really paved the way for others. I think it's a tradition that goes back to literature, which was very much what he was inspired by, sort of twisting it a little, and showing it in a different light, that no one had really dared to do before.

BF: Iceland's too small to have a music scene. There's probably a lot to be said for the nature of Icelandic music as having a particular sound in that there's too few people. If you're a good guitarist, or a good drummer, you're never just going to be in one band in Iceland. You can't play every week in the same band because every person in town will have seen you.

VS: And maybe that partly has to do with our ignoring these boundaries between classical or experimental music. We're all involved in various things here and it's close – Daniel is conducting at the opera. People in the classical world come here and do sessions – it goes back and forth like that.

BF: It really comes down to the fact that it's too small to specialise. It forces collaboration.

TM: Something that always comes up is the influence of the landscape ...

VS: I think wherever you are and you grow up and what you're surrounded by – books and landscape – it all gets into your blood somehow. I don't know how that translates into music – maybe someone who listens to the music and then looks at the landscape or the other way around will make the connection. I don't think any of us looks out the window and thinks 'I'll be inspired by the view'. So maybe it's a more complicated path.

TM: The *Dreamland* project dealt directly with landscape.

VS: That music was responding to those landscapes being destroyed and demolished and abused and sold off to corporations, so the music is about the land and the landscape.

BF: And very successfully too. I think that for me that's the most Icelandic music on the Bedroom Community label.

VS: It's propaganda! It's definitely taking the side of protecting, and looking beyond just selling off the landscape. So it's taking a clear view of the subject, and at the same time pointing out things that have been going on throughout history. And the music was there to help the viewer to understand this a bit more immediately, and maybe have a stronger emotional response to the film.

TM: *By the Throat* made me think of landscape somehow...

BF: That was a funny one. It amused me no end.

people talked about glaciers, and how dark it was. I wrote most of it here in the summer in 2009, when the sun doesn't go down! I don't even think landscape is the right word. There's an atmosphere there that's pretty palpable for sure. Landscapes and records, I have a particularly funny relationship with these statements about music, especially that now I'm on this side of it. I still to this day read things about *Theory of Machines* being about the sound of glaciers ripping apart, and most of it was conceived in an apartment in Chinatown in the middle of Melbourne! Maybe it's totally accurate, as by that point my head was already here, or at least Iceland was on my mind a great deal, back in 2004 and 2005.

TM: Do you feel you still have connections with Australia? You've become Icelandic in a way, you speak Icelandic ...

BF: I've been here a long time! I certainly feel very at home here.

TM: The *Solaris* project got some funding from the Australia Council.

BF: It did. It was basically a research and development grant, which I used for a great portion of *Solaris*, which was a huge help. It was an expensive project! In that way the Australian tax payers were very good to me. Hopefully in some way that is making a contribution.

TM: What motivated you to come here in the first place?

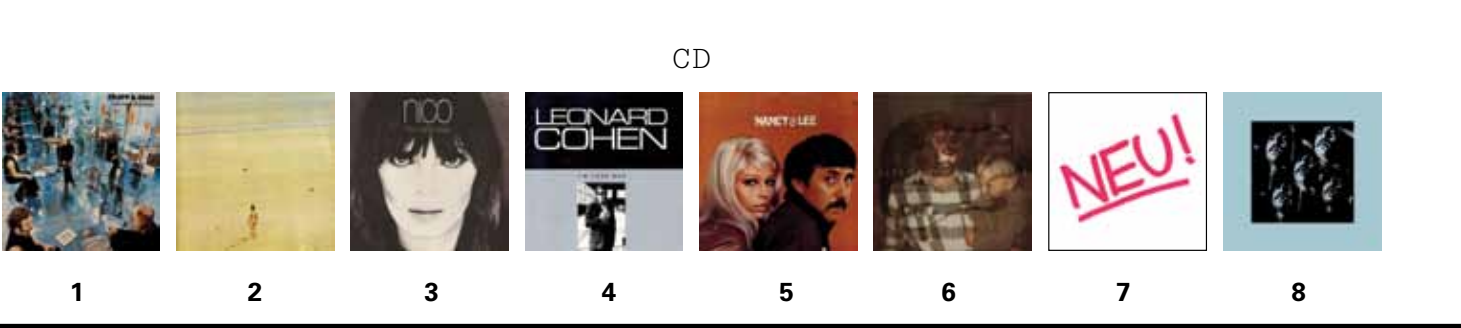
BF: It was really very simple. I came here to visit

Valgeir, and I felt at home, so I moved here. That's pretty much the gist of it. The more elaborate, complicated answer is that we worked very well together. Valgeir's been my mentor, collaborator and best friend for a long time now. It seems much more dramatic now when I think about it, but at the time it was really easy. I suppose my life was probably less complicated at that stage – no kids, or mortgages or anything – and at that stage it made sense. It's where I felt I needed to go to get where I was, so I moved here, and the rest is history.

<http://bedroomcommunity.net/>

Special thanks to Hildur Maral Hamiðsdóttir.





Kell Derrig-Hall is this issue's cover designer. He's also a singer and songwriter who releases music under the name The Singing Skies. In the past he has played with experimental drone duo Moonmilk and helmed the Tuff Puffin cassette label, which released tapes by Garbage and the Flowers and Derrig-Hall's previous solo project Tired Hands. These are his favourite record sleeves of all time.

1 Fripp and Eno - *No Pussyfooting*

This cover is hilarious and wonderful. The picture of Eno and Fripp playing nudie cards in a mirrored room is perfect for the sounds they were making. It's really playful but if you fold out the gatefold of the vinyl it's the

same room reflected for ever. Infinite cheekiness. They were making big bold statements with sound that felt like they could go on forever. It's one of my favourite records and it was a huge influence on Moonmilk's music.

2 Jean Claude Vannier - *L'Enfant Assassin Des Mouches "Insolitudes"*

This is a cinematic record by a man that arranged lots of wonderful french records for people like Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin and Françoise Hardy. On the cover it's just a naked man standing on a beach (I think it's Jean Claude?), while on the inside cover he seems to have fashioned some underwear from seaweed. He's in the middle of nowhere, exposed and feeling the elements. A perfect image for psychedelic soundscapes that

come at you from all angles.

3 Nico - *The Marble Index*

I went through a period where I couldn't listen to any music with singing in it. This is one of the albums that got me right back into singing. Nico sounds like she's tapping into some kind of ancient sorrow and John Cale's arrangements just swim around her in a way that I've never heard anywhere else. I get really lost in this album particularly if I listen with headphones. At the core there is something really sad about it. It's also an especially heavy picture of Nico on the cover if you think about her music and her life when you're looking at it. To me she looks like she's facing off against something that we can't see.

4 Leonard Cohen - *I'm Your Man*

One of my favourite singers



eating a banana in a suit. This cover is nice because he seems to be taking the piss out of himself and what people expect of him. Lyrically he never wastes a breath, but there's some really funny one liners in there as well. I like that this shot picks up on the humour in his lyrics.

5 Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood - *Nancy and Lee*

This is a pretty cheesy cover I suppose but there's something really great about it. They both have a really distinctive look in very different ways. I saw a documentary about them performing in Vegas recently. They had this huge production and it sounded really wild. Lee and Nancy seemed like really good pals that were just hanging out and being really honest in front of the camera. Maybe it's their friendship that makes this cover work where a similar shot could have looked horrible. Then again it could be the orange.

6 Alps - *Alps Of New South Wails*

Chris Hearn who makes music under Alps is a good friend that I don't see

as much as I should. Chris writes really catchy, personal songs. The cover with him wearing a mask and holding his son is a really striking image. It's also a good sort of summary of what he does. Which is put the stuff that really matters to him into music in the most no nonsense way possible. "Here's my kid. Here's my music" It's a great record and a great image.

7 Neu! - *Neu!*

This cover is so simple yet so effective. This record is expansive and beautiful but somehow it always sounds like they're taking their time. For music that is so groove based it's very unpredictable. I think Neu manage to cover a lot of territory in a way that feels very natural. The cover makes a lot of sense because anything could be going on inside and when I listen to Neu I do feel like anything and everything is happening. In a funny way there's also not much happening at all, I love it.

8 Jim Sullivan - *UFO*

Jim Sullivan wrote this set of beautiful introspective folk songs and recorded them with the Wrecking Crew, who were the session band for productions by Lee Hazlewood, Phil Spector and The Beach Boys. The production is very cinematic but everything hinges on his voice which is quite fragile. This record taps into something heartbreaking and profound for me. Jim's lyrics pose a lot of existential questions and he's always surrounded by these grand arrangements. It sounds like he's trying to figure things out but is overwhelmed by the size of the world and the universe. The cover is a collage of a single photo of Jim looking up, copied and arranged around and over the top of himself. One person exploring in multiple variations of his own identity and the world around him, with that urgent look on his face. It's huge. Oh, and the drumming.... holy shit!

cyclic selects



Stewart Copeland
– *Rumble Fish: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*

The first album I was ever given was The Beatles’ *Rock ‘n’ Roll Music Volumes 1 & 2*. Then it was 10CC’s *Bloody Tourists* on the back of their whitebread reggae hit ‘Dreadlock Holiday’. The first album I ever bought was Blondie’s *Parallel Lines*. Putting those three together made me bound to go crazy for The Police. (That’s something I’ve only just realised while writing. I also remember going to see The Police in 1983 with Oren Ambarchi wearing a canary yellow Exacto windcheater, both of us suffering through a then-unknown Bryan Adams. Wild times.) Drummer Stewart Copeland had a seriously infectious solo

power-pop project called Klark Kent I was way into, where he played all the instruments, so I picked up his soundtrack to Francis Ford-Coppola’s arty film for the novel *Rumble Fish*. I hadn’t seen the film prior and I’m glad I hadn’t as it’s sparingly used and its presence fairly low, but listening without the visuals it had this simultaneous wild urgency and meditateness that completely overwhelmed me - at the time was truly ecstatic listening for me. Maybe I’d find its virtuosity a little embarrassing now, but at the time I thought I was listening to something bordering on symphonic and his kitchen-sink approach to instrumentation made me giddy and I was hypnotised by it. The Police got a little boring for me after that point.

NoMeansNo – *Wrong Fugazi – In On The Killtaker*
I always hated the simplistic, dismissive points of view on hardcore – nihilistic and angry. Volume was never much of a leveler. The best was full of humour and passion; a proclamation of life in the positive in the face of indifference. NoMeansNo’s worldview was as elastic as their playing, bursting with raw feeling and thumping vibrancy. It was like they turbo-charged the outsider/geek irony of Devo for the Dead Kennedys generation. One of the most incredible live bands I’ve ever seen, you always left their shows thoroughly cleansed. Ditto Fugazi – their recordings were like the menu and the live show the meal. Their unashamed sense of invention

and communion in a supposedly alienating sonic landscape and their mix of direction and intensity is for me an unparalleled canon of inspiration. Their great example was not so much about how punk could affect people, but how people could affect punk itself - with new twists included.

Talk Talk – *Laughing Stock*
I had a road trip tape featuring twin obsessions towards the end of 1991. One side was Nirvana’s *Nevermind*, the other Laughing Stock. *Nevermind* was then the perfect encapsulation of a sound I’d been in the thick of for quite a while, but *Laughing Stock* was a new realm for me altogether. Here was a band turning over on their synth-pop past, taking new influence and inspiration into something unique, and similarly this was a big touchstone for me. I am quite sure I’d heard nothing like it previously, but it felt like large, unheralded parts

of musical history was being beautifully distilled into this one album when I first listened. Moreover, it was the magnetic sense of ambience and pastoral vision that was altogether new to me; intimacy in sound as opposed to lyricism and it led me to compositional approaches from Satie to Can and my constant interest in experimental pursuit not separate from emotion.

John Coltrane – *A Love Supreme*
Working with music, sometimes it’s hard to switch off from an analytical way of listening. My brain tends to constantly whirl that way when I’m tuned into something, but jazz tends to still be for me a more raw form of listening enjoyment. No matter how many times I’ve listened to it, it’s still very much that way with *A Love Supreme*, even though it was one of the earlier jazz records I picked up

on and is now written about constantly with deep reverence. I didn’t have a lot of friends into jazz at the time, so I would often go to jazz gigs by myself which probably helped my pure enjoyment of it being removed from the social aspect of live shows. The fire at the heart of *A Love Supreme* is something startling and unknown to me – I have no real idea where it comes from and I don’t really care to know – though it’s a feeling that resonates through me in anticipation of the next thing to come along and stun me.

The Triffids – *Born Sandy Devotional*
Many Saturday mornings I’d spend in grubby second-hand record stores before meeting up with friends. I felt really out of place and there was no one to talk to about music as you might do at other stores but I was compelled to spend what little money I had discovering things

I may not otherwise have. Most places had nothing in any sort of order and so it didn't often make sense to look for something in particular (as you might do these days online), but rather there was the thrill of the chase. A kind of treasure hunt. I'm sure this is how I came to discover The Triffids, as little by little and for a few dollars each time I'd continue to collect their work, slowly absorbing an album for periods until I came across the next one. I was pretty attracted to their earthy and stark covers – in the '80s mainstream so much else seemed lavish by comparison - and that for me became a pretty good indicator for what was inside. The Triffids made me feel both at home but still transported somewhere else – such was their entwined sense of place and dreaming that defined their rich, evocative music.

Public Enemy – ***It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back***

Before this album was released, I'd sit at my desk doing homework waiting for 'Don't Believe The Hype' to come on the radio. No matter how many times it did, it took me by surprise each time. I still think it's got the greatest beat of all time – stealth by funk. I was taken captive each time, and I'm sure that's how Public Enemy wanted it to in their words "teach the bourgeois and rock the boulevards".

Elvis Costello and the Attractions – ***Armed Forces***

I really love how Elvis Costello used pop music by deception, to write about deception. I interviewed Costello when his collaboration with Burt Bacharach had come out and he bemoaned the fact that people had thought it an odd pairing when the influence of someone

like Bacharach had been there all along. The dramatic scales and time shifts tightly wound into the songs on Armed Forces I'd come to relate to the arrangements of Brill Building's songwriters and the like, but back when I first heard it, the matching lyrical wordplay was a real sucker punch for me. 'Oliver's Army' was all over the radio at the time and it must have been weird for our parents to hear us bopping and singing along to the chorus: "And I would rather be anywhere else/than here today". Before then, pop music to me was much closer to 'Yummy Yummy Yummy I've Got Love In My Tummy'. After hearing the Elvis Costello version, I came to understand the other side of life pretty quickly – all hooks, lines and sinkers.

Andrew Khedoori runs the Preservation record label.
Visit **preservation.com.au**

