



ISSUE 5 FREE IN AUSTRALIA

THE
MAGAZINE
OF
THE
FUTURE

new music for discerning ears...



Various
Ants Farm Aphids
 [Symbiotic]
 New sounds from Melbourne, this quality collection features tracks from the creative minds of Curse Ov Dialect, Tzu, Music vs Physics and the Symbiotic collective.



Various
Staedtitz 4
 (~Scape)
 The final edition of this groundbreaking series. #4 delves into funk & soul influenced minimalism. Feat. Jan Jelinek, Safety Scissors, Akufen, Thomas Fehlmann, Daniel Bell.



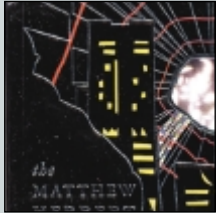
Vladislav Delay
Naima
 [Staubgold]
 Superb, previously out of print, live companion piece to the acclaimed 'Anima' album. Highlights from the Ars Electronic festival, combined into one extraordinary single track.



Meteorites
Dub The Mighty Dragon
 (Rise Robots Rise)
 Electronic dancehall funk, crafty pop and hip hop rhythms created by Max Turner [Puppetmastaz] and Marcus Rossknecht. Delivered with charm, wit and effortless cool.



Kevin Blechdom
Bitches Without Britches
 [Chicks On Speed]
 A refreshing, unorthodox mixture of laptop production, banjo songwriting, strange noises & explicit lyrics. Adventurous music with a message, and still a lot of fun.



Matthew Herbert Big Band
Goodbye Swingtime
 [Accidental]
 Combining the best electronic production with the elite of the UK jazz scene, Herbert records with a 16 piece jazz band at Abbey Road studios.



Colleen
Everyone Alive Wants Answers
 [Leaf]
 Cecile Schott's haunting debut. Full of magical details; naïve instrumentals filled with warmth, melody and soul, played on broken music box, glockenspiel & guitar.



The Bug
Pressure
 [Rephlex]
 An exhilarating, bassbin blowing, mutant ragga/dancehall/techno mash up. A physically brutal, psychologically deep, low-end feast for non-conformist dancefloor fiends.



Hermitude
Alleys To Valleys
 [Elefant Traks]
 Sydney duo Hermitude reignite the possibilities of beat production with this downtempo wonder. A sound collage of the highest order, featuring rhythmically to reveal latent members of The Herd.



Growing
The Sky's Run Into The Sea
 [Kranky]
 Guitars, bass and electronics creating rows of ascending and descending intervals of noise and silence, moving rhythmically to reveal latent harmonies and dynamics.



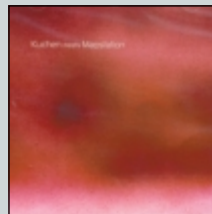
Sixtoo
Antagonist Survival Kit
 [Vertical Form]
 Taut, paranoid lyrics over a wonderfully crafted sonic terrain, blending samples, acoustic instruments and a subsoil of beats. A journey into hip-hop's alternative depths.



Deepchild
What's Going Wrong?
 [The Hive Label]
 Sydney producer Deepchild travels deeper into organic electro-soul, nu-dub and glitch-house with his hand-crafted beats, creating a warm and sensual world.



Various
Motion
 [Preservation]
 22 of Australia's premier electronic and experimental artists collected on two discs. Includes Oren Ambarchi, Pimmon, Tim Koch, Clue To Kalo, Pretty Boy Crossover, Minit + more.



Various
Kuchen meets Mapstation
 [Karaoke Kalk]
 Stunning collaboration between Merial Barham and Stefan Schneider [To Rococo Rot]. A gorgeous record that melds organic and sampled sounds, percussion and voices.



Oren Ambarchi / Martin Ng
Vigil
 [Quecksilber]
 An enigmatic tapestry of pulsing, shimmering and shifting sound, representing a subtle and compelling realignment of eastern and western minimalist traditions.

These releases all available now in good record stores // distributed by

Inertia distribution // 02 9698 0111 // www.inertia-music.com // info@inertia-music.com



CYCLIC DEFROST



ISSUE 5 CONTENTS

- 4 **ALEX CROWFOOT**
by Bim Ricketson
- 8 **TELEMETRY ORCHESTRA**
by Matt Levinson
- 10 **B(If)TEK**
by Angela Stengal
- 12 **MOTION/PRESERVATION**
by Sebastian Chan
- 14 **DÉLIRE**
by Gavin Ross
- 16 **MOBILE DJING IN AUSTRALIA**
by Chloé Sasson
- 18 **DARRIN VERHAGEN**
by Bob Baker Fish
- 20 **JOHN JACOBS RETROSPECTIVE**
by Vaughan Healey
- 24 **EASTERN FLAVA**
by Vaughan Healey
- 26 **MR LIF**
by Ozi Batla
- 28 **REVIEWS**
- 36 **MUTEK & SONAR** by Sebastian Chan
- 38 **SLEEVE REVIEWS** by Alex Crowfoot
- 40 **SELECTS: ANDREW PEKLER**
by Sebastian Chan
- 42 **DEAR DEGRASSI**

www.cyclicdefrost.com

log in...stay frosty

- + Extended articles
- ▶ Music downloads of featured artists

ISSUE 5 EXCLUSIVE WEB CONTENT

Additional reviews
Exclusive on-line giveaways
MP3s of selected artists

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our much delayed fifth edition. This issue is our 'veterans' edition, so put on your Grosbys, shuffle over to your comfy chair, turn on the wireless, pour yourself some port and settle back. Inside you will find interviews with Melbourne's Darrin Verhagen who has built a reputation for his dark and cinematic works and is currently writing music for theatre; Sydney-based media artist/activist John Jacobs; and the man who can claim to be responsible for the beginnings of mobile disco in Australia, Andrew Noble. There's also stories on B(if)tek, Delire, Telemetry Orchestra, community radio veteran Andrew Khedoori, as well as Mr Lif, Andrew Pekler and more on the influence of South Asian music on pop.

Not only that, the website now contains a glimpse in to our own past with the Year Zero issues of *Cyclic Defrost* (1998-2000) online as PDFs. For those of you outside of Sydney this is a chance to see the photocopy zine that was a precursor to this mag, and

at the same time pick up some tips on homemade dreadlocking and cookie baking courtesy of some of the Sydney crew – and a whole lot more Dear Degrassi.

The next issue will feature a free CD as a joint venture between Noise, SBS Radio and Cyclic Defrost and should be out in October. Put an advance order in at your record store as these will go very quickly!

And keep October 3,4,5 marked in your diary to travel to Newcastle in NSW. It has come around to Sound Summit time and the rest of the This Is Not Art festival which includes Electrofringe and the National Young Writers Festival. If you enjoy what is in Cyclic Defrost then these events are the place to be for all electronic musicians, media artists, zine makers, and generally creative people. Maybe we will see you there.

Sebastian Chan & Dale Harrison
Editors

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Sebastian Chan

Art Director & Co-Editor
Dale Harrison

Sub Editor
Aparna Khopkar

Advertising
Sebastian Chan

Advertising Rates
download at <www.cyclicdefrost.com>



Distribution
Inertia Distribution
<www.inertia-music.com>

Printing
Torch Publishing

Web Programming
Giv Parvaneh, Gbique <www.gbique.com>

Web Design
Luke Elwin, Gbique <www.gbique.com>

Web Hosting
Blueskyhost <www.blueskyhost.com>

Guest Cover Design
Alex Crowfoot

Issue 5 Contributors
Chloé Sasson, Jordan Spence, Peter Hollo, Bim Ricketson, Angela Stengal, Vaughan Healy, Alex Crowfoot, Serena Armstrong, Bob Baker Fish, Benjamin Millar, Matt Levinson, Ozi Batla, Gavin Ross, Wayne Stronell

Thank You
Sharon Pinney at DFAIT Canada and AIR/MMF Music Travel Grants, S1E Montreal, Alain & Lucinda at Mutek, Nick, Ash and Ruby at Inertia, Natalie at Torch Publishing, Giv and Luke at Gbique, Chris Bell at Blueskyhost, all the advertisers.

We welcome your contributions and contact

CYCLIC DEFROST MAGAZINE
PO Box a2073
Sydney South
NSW 1235 Australia

www.cyclicdefrost.com
info@cyclicdefrost.com

ISSUE 5 DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 27, 2003

Stockists

NSW: BPM, So Music, Disc, Red Eye, Reefer Records, Mall Music, Victory Music, Metropolis, Freestyle, Good Groove, Museum Of Contemporary Art, Reachin, Recycled Records, Parade Music, Blockbeats Music, Music Bizarre (Lismore), Velvet Fog (Katoomba), Bloody Fist (Newcastle)

VIC: Synaesthesia, Substrata, Raouls, Gaslight, Central Station, Record Collectors Corner, Greville, Readings, Polyester, Second Spin Tech, Kent St Records, Northside

QLD: Rockinghorse, Butter Beats, Sunflower, Skinny's, Goober Warming, Chinatown Music, Victory (Surfers Paradise)

SA: Big Star, B Sharp, Uni Records

WA: Dada's, 78's, Mills, Central Station, Planet Video

TAS: Aroma, Ruffcutt, CD Centre, Wills Music

ACT: Landspeed

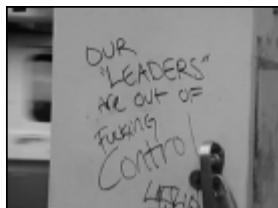
NT: Casuarina

If your store doesn't carry *Cyclic Defrost* then get them to order it from Inertia Distribution

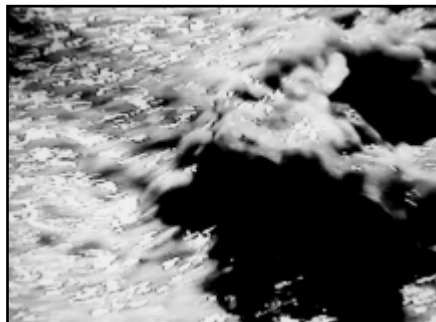
The views contained herein are not necessarily the views of the publisher nor the staff of *Cyclic Defrost*. Copyright remains with the authors and/or *Cyclic Defrost*.

A New Audiences project, assisted by the Australia Council, the Federal Government's art funding and advisory body, through its Audience and Market Development Division.





Assorted video stills



OLLOVER THE WORLD

Cover Design

Interview with Alex Crowfoot
by Bim Ricketson

Balancing commercial and creative design is an ongoing struggle for Alex Crowfoot, one half of ollo and this month's cover designer. That, and of course, sleeping in.

'I am totally crap at getting to work on time. I don't think I fully wake up until about 10am,' begins Crowfoot. 'The paradox of design is that most people go into it driven by a need for creativity and expression, but the reality is you are answering to someone else's economic imperatives, so there will always be a tension there. I've never worked directly for an ad agency but I have done corporate work. The inspiring briefs rarely pay very well. Cultural institutions are a bit more cashed up, and some businesses have a more developed understanding of what interesting design can do for them. I think maybe Melbourne has more opportunities than Sydney in that way.'

'It's important to be realistic about why you're in the industry and what it is you want to do. There's a certain satisfaction in getting something nice through on a corporate job, but it's a very different process to the design I really enjoy. With corporate work there can be other satisfac-

tions; for instance, I've been involved in getting a large company to switch to non-chlorine bleached paper.'

'Basically the way I do it is pay the rent with branding and corporate work, which can be borderline for my sense of ethics. I do more creative design on the side, which makes life a bit hectic. The theory is that this becomes a bigger part of my income, but in practice it's not really working. I think the only solution is to totally commit to only accepting jobs you really want to do. I'd love a project where I had carte blanche. I haven't yet had the opportunity to do what I think I am capable of. It is slightly different for me though, because the time I could spend chasing interesting work is probably spent making music.'

'It's a difficult balance, because the work isn't always there when I need it financially, but I am also extremely lucky in that just about enough seems to come my way. I always expect to have to get out there and sell myself but that hasn't hap-

pened yet. It may also be an explanation for why I don't get the creative jobs I crave very often!

Crowfoot, uncertain if he has a defining 'style' of design, approaches each job differently. 'I use my own photography a fair bit and there is a modernist influence in a lot of what I do. I got into the Swiss thing for a while and went grid crazy. I used to do a lot more illustration but I haven't been taking the time recently. I know I try to steer clear of what's cool this week, because it's not really about thinking for yourself. Having said that, designers always work within evolving parameters, mainly because it's hard to find a client who will accept something that looks totally different, even on jobs like CD artwork.'

Nature, painting, sculpture, old packaging, vernacular design, old records, accidental meanings and mistakes, films, novels, music and urban environments are all inspiration to draw from. 'As for designers, anyone who does something new or surprising, or has a great idea, or makes me smile, or shows me something in a new way. People more talented than me — a looong list. At the moment, Eh? Non-Format, M/M, Rinzen, SOPP, Wozencroft, and a whole bunch of other people whose names I can't remember.'

For this month's cover Crowfoot chose to use a video still, a medium that has been interesting him a lot recently. 'I've become interested in the particular qualities of digital video,' he explains. 'Many digital technologies gain a lot in accessibility and are very enabling, but there's often a serious loss in quality (unless it's high-end) that is played down by the companies producing and promoting them. With digital cameras there is an inelegant inability to deal with light sometimes — highlights bleach out to white very quickly. Initially I was put off by that, but then I realised that I could use this defect.'

'In terms of the visual concept, it's very simple. I wanted to put the frost back into *Cyclic Defrost*, especially considering it's a winter issue. The fractured type is icy, but I used red for a hot/cool contrast with the image. I chose the video frame and then to some extent let that dictate the layout.'

Video also provides an interesting crossover medium between design and performing live as ollo, with videos integrated with gigs. 'I started the video work to accompany the music, but the time pressures are incredible, so I'm invariably dissatisfied with what I produce because it's not as focussed as I'd like it to be. The first video piece I did the night before a gig in about three hours.'

'I'm now at the point where I would like to work the other way around: write some music to accompany video pieces I have a concept for, but I would need an arts grant to get enough time. Also, with both design and music, I don't get too tied up in software and new tools; I'd rather spend the time producing work. Both need a little time for play and experimentation.'

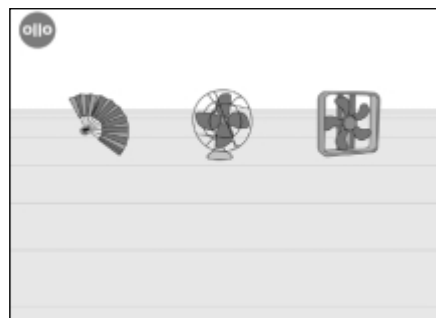


ollo T-shirt, CD artwork and website (below)

Crowfoot has recently returned from (another) trip overseas, playing gigs, shooting videos and generally being inspired by all manner of things European. 'The trip was great, if exhausting at times. We ended up going to Denmark, Holland, Spain, the UK, Switzerland, Germany and Austria. ollo played gigs in Amsterdam, London, Zurich, Basel, Berlin and finally one in Vienna. We got to show the video work in Amsterdam and at one of the London gigs. One of Riz Maslen's (Neotropic) mates is a filmmaker and she had some very nice things to say, so I was well chuffed. A shame that it was only shown at two gigs because I think it adds a lot to the ollo show.'

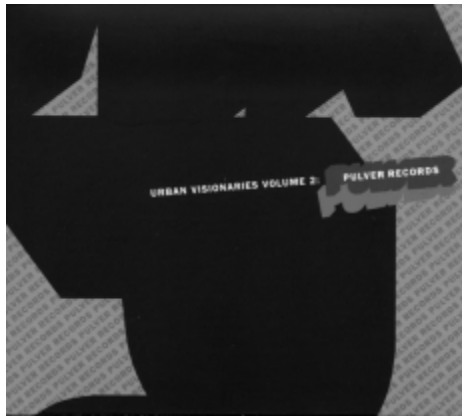
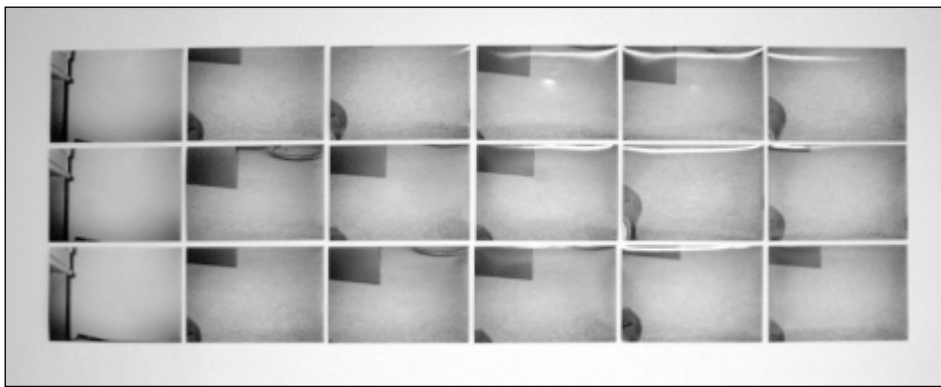
'You can't move in Denmark without seeing lots of amazing object design. There was quite a lot of inspiring design and installation stuff at Sonar in Barcelona. They had a retrospective of their output over the last ten years. One year consisted of all these cheesy family portraits, but everyone in the shots had pissed themselves. Very funny. And Barcelona generally — so much in that city has flair, even some of the tourist knick-knacks. It's everywhere in Barcelona, from the almost hallucinatory Gaudi architecture through to the graffiti. It's not just tags, which are somehow more vital anyway, but there is real artistic expression, often with political comment.'

'Zurich was great. It oozes design, that city, even its free street press. There is one called *Forecast* and

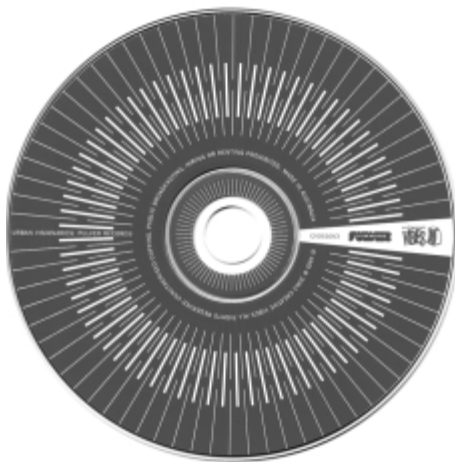


Typeface designs





CD art for Urban Visionaries Vol2 (Pulver Records)



the standard of design is amazing, and interesting without being pretentious. There's a Swiss hiphop mag that's really well done too. I gathered a few interesting magazines which are somewhere at sea on their way here, so I can't give you any more detail.

I saw the Wolfgang Tillmans exhibition at the Tate which was probably the most inspiring thing I saw. A great range of work, and he totally broke out of the formality of the gallery space, with lots of pieces stuck to the wall with sticky-tape. I also saw the Bridget Reilly retrospective. It was very interesting to see the progression in her work, but hard to look at more than about three paintings without wanting to vomit: they are truly vertiginous. It's not very often you see paintings that are such a physical experience.

Another thing that was inspiring, or amusing anyway, was reading some signs from an English language perspective. Holland is really good fun in that way, lots of unintentional meanings, and Barcelona too — like the family video store called Video Bum Stop.

We also met performance artists, musicians, designers, event organisers, guerrilla marketers, film-makers, artists, but if I go on about it'll sound like even more of a huge wank than it already does!

Asking Crowfoot to describe his perfect design client, he concedes his expectations are very high. 'They'd have a bottomless wallet and a liking for the phrase, "I trust you, do whatever you think is right. In fact, invent your own project if you like." They would publish books and amazing design artefacts and would have an environmental and political activist wing. They would allow me time to develop a concept to maturity and give me the budget to produce it properly. They would pay me so well that I could take three months off to write a new album, work for them a bit, then take a month to do some video work. Then go on holiday. Pretty realistic.'

Optimism about the power of design to make a positive impact is one thing that Crowfoot believes is realistic, agreeing that design can, to some extent,

With digital cameras there is an inelegant inability to deal with light sometimes — highlights bleach out to white very quickly. Initially I was put off by that, but then I realised that I could use this defect.

change the world. 'Yes, in many ways, but not as much as we'd like to think. It really depends on the designer and the message. Design can continue to help fuck up our planet if designers don't hurry up and start being a bit more thoughtful and responsible about what they do, including myself of course. Environmentally for one (Is that varnish recyclable? Do you really need that much packaging?), and working ethically for another. Designers can have a fair bit of influence with clients that is wasted; it's time it changed.

I am sick to bloody death of consumer culture and in this profession we're totally tied to it. I avoid advertising and the media and I'm trying to train myself to consume less...stuff. But I think you can always use your position at work to change things for the better. You just have to want to, and to be aware of what's in your sphere of influence. And you can always plant seeds of change even if you can't do it yourself. A conscious designer can push important issues up several agendas.'

ollo's Sleeper is out now on Creative Vibes. Alex Crowfoot is also our sleeve reviewer – see page 38.



HAR MAR SUPERSTAR You Can Feel Me

LOUD. LASCIVIOUS. UN-FUCKING-BELIEVABLE.

Who ever said suburban Minnesota white boys can't rock your fuck? Foremost, Har Mar Superstar is an entertainer. Sent from above bearing unrequited soul and multihued briefs, the portly Casanova's rhythms have allowed Minnesota's Sean Tillmann the opportunity to throb his way into our heads, hearts, and pants. Not a fan? You will be.



ADULT. Anxiety Always

Anxiety Rules! Finally, the new album 'Anxiety Always' from Detroit's premier paranoids ADULT. is here. Saturated with assured tension and nonchalant panic, 'Anxiety Always' is dance punk music for the mutants. GRAMMATICAL TIP #1 FOR USING THE BAND NAME ADULT.: ADULT. is always spelled with a period (full stop) at the end, even in the middle of a sentence. For example: I think the band ADULT. rule.



BARBARA MORGENSTERN Nichts Muss

OUT NOW- Produced with Berlin's own dubmeister Pole, with a little help from Thomas Fehlmann, Nichts Muss is a prime cut of teutonic electronic beauty; exquisite German pop music which will catapult Barbara into her own orbit, way beyond Indietronics or other typical electronic vocal music.



ENON Hocus-Pocus

Don't let your ears deceive you, don't let your fears receive you...this is not a threat or an orange alert, neither a percoset nor a Cert. These are just the plain facts as we know them to be...Take them as you wish or cast them out to sea...

Enon takes influences and chops them up, adds a little spice, makes a fine puree, and serves it to you with a smile. Combining elements of Tom Tom Club, Love, early Cure, and, with a flash of Japanese pop and punk esthetic, Enon sticks them together like some kind of artful mix tape a friend would make you. Bridging gaps. Jumping genres. Blending styles. But let's not get too scientific about this...Enon is a pop band with a fully loaded clip and a cocked smirk.



MOGWAI Happy Songs For Happy People

It is without doubt Mogwai's most ambitious record to date; cinematic and panoramic in its scope; and saturated in melody. Mogwai prove to the slower-witted that rock need not be a constricting doctrine. Instead, it is revealed as a license to explore an infinite library of possibilities, a kind of music which always benefits from being stretched, challenged, subverted, reinvented.





ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES

Telemetry Orchestra

Interview with Steven Scott, Gavin Angus-Leppan & Charlotte Whittingham
by Matt Levinson

Sydney's mid-90s live scene provides a suitably stark backdrop for this story's beginning. Venues were shutting down, live bands were falling at the feet of the DJ, and glass-eyed punters were giving their all to the pokie machine. Formed in response to this environment, the Clan Analogue collective allowed a range of musicians and artists some much needed space to develop. Their influence is borne in the number of similar multimedia collectives now springing up around the country. Inspired by the likes of King Tubby, Milton Glasser, Kraftwerk, Ivor Cutler and Nancy Sinatra, and with back-grounds in psychadelic noise and electronics, it's little wonder that Telemetry Orchestra's excellent debut *Living Better Electrically* turned up on the Clan label.

Despite stacking compilations with a range of side projects, including Entertainment Unit, alphabug, Marsprojekt and Negative America, Telemetry's own output has been scarce since their debut dropped in 1998. But the intervening years have been fruitful. They have returned with increased musical maturity and a noticeable change in direction (though one that's not too surprising if you were looking for clues). In the new album, *Children Stay Free*, you can hear influences as diverse as the French Chanson scene of the 60s (via Stereolab), Smog's alt country and the atmospheric warmth of Air or Plone.

The clearest change from *Living Better* is new member Charlotte Whittingham's enchanting voice. Joining Gavin Angus-Leppan and Steven Scott (Andrew Jones left the band several years ago), her vocals and programming skills have proven a critical turning point. Gavin comments, 'Charlotte has a very strong melodic bent. It's no coincidence that she joined the band at a time when we were moving towards exploring melody more, though the common ground has always been that the music forms around a kernel which is the characteristic of a sound, its technological fingerprint, its aura. That's something we all love, and Charlotte's augmented that.'

Fellow Sydney producer Nerve Agent commented in *Mu Magazine* in 1998 that 'using a computer to make music is not an end, or a goal. It's just a way to realise your desires.' I like the idea that a lot of Telemetry's music appears to aim for a different response than your usual electronics. Steve's response is straight to the point. 'It felt to me that a lot of music in the electronic sphere was more interested in the idea of innovation than making you react in your guts and heart. For instance that whole laptop/glitch music scene is fucking dull; it's music to be played in art galleries to people in black. I think a lot of people are realising that just because you write with the aid of a computer doesn't mean it has to sound like the computer wrote it.'

Gavin responds a little more poetically, 'I think that computers are like a kind of memory for the musical amnesiac. Apparently, when Inuit carvers are deciding what figure to carve from a piece of rock, they hold it, turn it over, see what it's shape and feel suggest, what it "wants" to be. I like that idea for sound, being able to hold to a fragment or phrase or sample, examine it really closely, turn it over, look at it from all angles and see what it wants to become. Computers let you do that.'

Australia's electronic scene has undergone a pretty solid resurgence in recent years.

Interesting acts and labels are doing well on their own principles: Surgery in Adelaide, Symbiotic System in Melbourne and Elefant Traks in Sydney. In many ways, Clan Analogue paved the way for these groups. Established in response to the extreme lack of support for anything electronic in early '90s Australia, Clan became an influential collective of up to 200 artists, musicians, designers and programmers. They've released work from such disparate artists as Atone, Infusion, Southend, Sheriff Lindo, B(if)tek and Nerve Agent.

In a 1998 interview with *Mu Magazine*, Gavin described the early years with Clan saying that, 'electronic music seemed to open up to us as genre straight-jackets exploded at the seams'. He went on, 'I don't know if capitalism will allow anything to remain at cottage industry level for long, it remains to be seen. I suppose Clan's security lies in the fact that it's not about money.'

Five years later and Steve reflects, 'Clan has been a great experience for all of us. It gave us the opportunity to play gigs and force us to get out there and face the real world. All these new labels are just proof of how vibrant the electronic/hip hop/dance/experimental music scene is in Australia, as is probably recognised more overseas than it is here.'

'Volunteer organisations like Clan seem to have energy in waves, depending on commitment and skills,' Charlotte remarks. 'Gordon [Finlayson, Clan label manager] was a major force and he left for London, which probably had some impact.' Since he left in 2002, there's been a clear decline in output, with the label only surfacing for Pretty Boy Crossover's last EP. Discussing their departure from the label, Gavin said, 'I still feel an affinity with Clan from the ideological point of view, but musically we've moved away from their aesthetic range. The camaraderie of a collective can be very inspiring, and there was a lot of great cross-pollination that went on. The bulk of what we do now just doesn't fit in with the events and the releases so well any more.' Steve continues, 'I think Clan is actually at a point where it will either get a lot of new blood or will slowly fade away. It's hard to say, but there are two new albums coming out this year so that may be a good sign.'

Telemetry have now moved across to the expanding Silent Recordings stable. 'We liked what they were doing,' says Steve, 'and they liked what we were doing. It's been around for a few years and has released excellent records by Prop, Coda and Tracky Dax — nice company to be amongst.'

That label change appears to have paralleled a move away from the crunchy Clan electronic beats to a more indie-flavoured sound that's not at all out of place on Silent. *Children Stay Free* seems more polished than previous albums, with a real warmth and soul that carries right through. Gavin agrees,

'There's been a development which has been unplanned, unspoken and not particularly deliberate, though it's something we're pleased about. One of the great things about being in a band, as opposed to being a solo producer, is that there is so much influencing and inspiring going on. It's like how the ouija board pointer moves as if on its own accord, and sometimes it's that spooky. This is an album with vocals and songs. A lot has flowed from that. The warmth of the sound is what we've always pursued. We want to make music which envelopes people, takes them on a ride to a warm place, through some unusual landscapes and textures.'

Many of the most interesting Australian electronic artists are making similar moves — Clue to Kalo and Pretty Boy Crossover are some of the more prominent. Is it a move away from the rigorous world of electronics towards a freer, messier, melancholic, risky style of music? Or is it, especially in the case of Telemetry, a move back to a more innocent world — one that conjures feelings of 60s pop and filmic whimsy?

'I think we've always loved the sound of pop going slightly strange and experimental,' Steve comments. 'That's what made bands like My Bloody Valentine, Public Enemy, and The Beatles so great. They were pushing the boundaries and at the same time you could sing along! Same thing with the new album by Maniotoba, there's a great joyful experimentation going on there. So for me, this is a great thing because its music that reaches out to people and excites them about the possibilities of creativity, life and all that stuff!' From a different perspective, Charlotte says, 'I hate to admit it, but I'm a bit of a romantic. I love old cinema — old soundtracks are very inspirational: the quality of the sound and the way the production has created something evocative, like the production on any recording — leaving its mark.'

Gavin links the two saying, 'There's been a breaking down of those boundaries, and that's great. All genres are at risk of becoming stagnant after a while. The polarised way of viewing electronic music and rock is like a musical apartheid. It pays too much homage to the origins, and not enough to the future possibilities. Musically, we love to play around in

'I think we've always loved the sound of pop going slightly strange and experimental,'

the tidal pools. You find some beautiful relics and flotsam.'

From dilapidated Sydney warehouses to national tours, Telemetry's live sets have consistently impressed crowds. Clan Analogue's focus on getting live acts into clubs and venues traditionally dominated by the DJ was important, as was the background of Australian bands paying their dues on the road. 'We made a decision that the live show needed to work as an event for someone who had never heard the tracks, and have an immediacy and an impact,' Gavin says. 'We recruited George T. and reworked some of the new tracks for our live performance in quite different ways. It's something that's still developing. Most importantly for us, it's just so much fresher and more fun to really go live, and I think the response we've had has justified the hard work.'

In closing, Gavin comments that, 'for me, making music is an extension of the way you make things when you're a kid. It's led by the simplest of sensual pleasures, and the excitement of watching things take form. There is an innocence about it I wouldn't want to lose.' Steve agrees, 'Making music is the best drug known to humanity, that moment when you're creating a piece of music is just so exhilarating. When I'm writing I find myself in this incredible delirium. I stay up for days! I hope people listen to it and get something out of it emotionally, physically, whatever.'

*Children Stay Free is out on
Silent Recordings.*



+ HIGH STEAKS

▶ B(if)tek

Interview with Nicole Skeltys
& Kate Crawford
by Angela Stengel



The B(if)tek girls have accomplished a lot since the early nineties, when they first fell in love with Clan Analogue's music whilst living in Canberra. Nicole Skeltys was playing in a crossover electronic indie band called Area 51 when they were asked to play at a Clan Analogue gig. 'I was totally blown away by the quality and freshness and innovation of the music. It was like a religious experience, I went home that night and couldn't sleep. The next weekend I drove all the way to Sydney to catch another Clan gig at the University of New South Wales, and I knew then that I had found my destiny: I was going to be a geek noodler. After that I just started spending all my money on black boxes — I've never stopped. I ditched my live band, hooked up with Kate and the rest is history.'

Kate Crawford, the other half of B(if)tek, converted to electronic music because of Clan Analogue as well. 'I'd been fascinated with electronic music ever since I heard *Trans-Europe Express* on a primary school excursion to Braidwood. I bought a lot of vinyl, read a great deal about what was happening with electronic music in Europe, and eventually stumbled across Clan Analogue at one of their early Sydney gigs. Like Nicole, I was blown away by what I heard.

Through the people I met that night, I heard about the nascent Canberra chapter of Clan Analogue, and I started collecting machines. I fell in love early on with the Roland System 100 (which has featured on most albums I've written since) and started jamming with the likes of Bo and Tim, also known as Dark Network. Then Nicole and I wrote a few tracks, released an album or three, and here we are.'

Here they are with their third release as part of the B(if)tek empire. This album goes a step further than their previous albums as it includes a limited edition bonus disc of remixes by Australian and international artists. Scanner, Pretty Boy Crossover and Clue to Kalo are among the twelve artists who have seriously messed with some of the tracks — which is just how B(if)tek like it.

'I find the traditional idea of 'remixing' fairly limited,' Kate says as she starts to explain why the remixes were included with this album.

'Most of the time, remixes are treated as some kind of follow-up act, a way to extend the life of a track, or a tool to reach different markets. Instead of this approach, we wanted to work on something more collaborative, with our favourite local and overseas artists, which would be an integral part of the album — a creatively different approach, particularly with people who understand where we are coming from musically. The delight was that everyone we asked agreed to be a part of the project, so we have people like Scanner, Kahn and Monolake and all the super-talented locals we love, like Clue to Kalo, Qua, Architecture in Helsinki, Frost, Lawrence English, the Telemetry folk, the ever-incredible Dark Network, and there are so many others.'

B(if)tek's new album, *Frequencies Will Move Together*, is a concept album of sorts. With a focus on low frequency sounds, the B(if)tek girls had to go adventuring to find suitable bassy noises to sample. 'Finding the right cat was very difficult,' says Kate. 'We had to record and sample dozens before we found one that purred at the right frequency...Most people with good hearing can't detect sounds over 16 or 18 kilohertz, but they can detect very low sounds (infrasound) between one and 20 hertz if they're loud enough,' explains Kate. 'There are always rumours about acoustic weapons — guns that can fire 'audio bullets' of low frequencies and

cause feelings of panic, disorientation or vomiting in victims — but what we were far more interested in are the purported therapeutic effects of low frequencies. Some recent research indicates that the sound of cats purring can speed up the rates of healing, and low throbbing sounds that emulate the sound inside the womb produce instant sensations of calm and security.'

After doing some research, Kate and Nicole went in search of low frequency sounds that they could record and then turn into their own special musical style. 'We began a series of field recordings of natural and mechanical sources of sub-bass: helicopters, electricity sub stations, trains, cats, anything that produced that distinctive feeling in us. However, there's only so much in the low hertz range you can hear on basic home systems. So for this album, we took those recordings and incorporated them into multi-layered tracks. In some cases, we emulated the sounds on our range of analogue synths, or buried them deep under the tracks,' remarks Kate. 'It's like catching a glimpse of something out of the corner of your ear!'

Many sounds used on the album came from their collection of field recordings which were made in the U.S. and Europe as well as Melbourne. Nicole points out that sometimes it was the more musically orientated machines that produced just the sounds they were looking for. 'Interestingly, some of the beautiful, subby eruptions from our ancient synths (like the System 700) produced sounds that evoked just as deep and far away journeys as any excursion to the outer limits of the galaxy would have.'

Once the sounds were collected, work could begin on the tracks. The album opens with "Guide and Receive", a spectral delight of echoing beats and sliding melody lines. In this track, and throughout the album, B(if)tek display their superb stereo sound placement skills — sounds drift effortlessly between the left and right speakers and from high in the mix to only just there. "Faded Blue" is a beautifully cruisy track with a head-nodding break, swirly synths and a somewhat odd monologue from an English woman to 'James'. "Afternoon On The Porch" is a perfect title for the track with the earlier mentioned purring cat. 48 seconds of deep, rhythmic purring and subtle chimes in the background make it possible to zoom right in to the cat's perspective from the porch.

'Because the album is quite dark and often slow and atmospheric, it links with our first album, *Subvocal Theme Park*, which is where we got most of our dedicated fans (both here and in Europe). But *Frequencies Will Move Together* also has some sparse electro numbers, which links it with *2020*, so there are continuities there,' says Nicole. 'At the end of the day, we write what speaks to us and what moves us, and we just hope that people into B(if)tek will come along for the ride. For example, there is

I was totally blown away by the quality and freshness and innovation of the music. It was like a religious experience, I went home that night and couldn't sleep. The next weekend I drove all the way to Sydney to catch another Clan gig at the University of New South Wales, and I knew then that I had found my destiny:

one track on *Frequencies Will Move Together* that is literally just 11 minutes of subtly modulating sub-bass drone. We have played it live twice, and scads of people have come up after the gig to tell us that was their favourite track! So we believe there are many people on our wavelength, no matter how 'challenging' it might be.'

Kate agrees that their previous two albums had been equally challenging for the listener. 'In actual fact, the second half of *2020* was all quite slow, strange and lyric-free, ending with a glitch track composed entirely from the hiss sounds produced by our machines after we switched off the inputs — hardly the stuff of easily-palatable-pop. People who enjoy our music also like the fact that we have a broad range, and we like to produce albums that start you in one place, and then lead you down windy paths to end up somewhere quite unexpected. *Frequencies Will Move Together* follows that pattern, but the overall mood is more melancholic and ambient. This was a very emotional album for us to write, and we think it's the best thing we've done to date.'

B(if)tek's reign over the world goes much further than just making music. Another pastime of theirs is encouraging others to subvert dominant media and engage in electronic art forms through their annual W.I.N.K. (Wired Innovative Naughty Kids) awards. 'The WINK Awards are a high priority for us — the

crown of the B(if)tek empire' says Kate, (over)extending my own empire analogy. 'We dreamt up the idea a few years ago, as we were discussing the bland, uber-commercial nature of most awards ceremonies. In essence, industry awards are often about who sells the most product, or who has the largest marketing budget. The cutting-edge electronic artists we admired were not being heralded in any way. So we decided it was time to stop complaining and do something about it. We scraped together our savings, and decided we could just afford to give away two thousand dollars to an artist who generated brilliant electronic work in any medium that also had a subversive message (or a social conscience, which is even rarer these days). Thus the WINK awards were born. It's become a very popular event in Melbourne, with all kinds of artists from around the country coming together and forming their own networks.'

Nicole goes on to further promote this industry night of nights. 'They're a major highlight of the year for us. They take a huge amount of time and effort, but it's always great fun. This is the third year running for the WINKs, and we're hoping it will be bigger than ever: that's a hint to all video artists, online artists, unsigned musicians, machine modifiers and general media subversives to get their entries in to the biftek.com site!'

Last year's winners of the Subverting the Dominant Paradigm Award were The Dole Army (www.dolearmy.org) and We Are All Boat People (www.boat-people.org). The naughty kids at The Dole Army exposed tabloid current affairs programmes to be both gullible and biased when they sold them the fictitious story of 'dole-bludgers' living in the sewers of Melbourne. We Are Not Boat People famously lit up the Sydney Opera House (and many other sites) with an image of a Tall Ship and the words 'Boat People' underneath. 'Both groups take very different approaches to getting their ideas out there, but both were splendid, brave and effective. These are the people who inspire us!'

It's also easy to see that the people who inspire them are those who work around them, such as the artists included on the remix album. 'Our inspirations are many and varied. At the moment, I'm really enjoying the wave of new artists making complex, delicate music like Clue to Kalo, Qua, Alex Davies and Lawrence English. Then there are the fabulous mash-up kids like Dsico and everyone on the *Ministry of Shit* compilation. But if you want to know who is really knocking our socks off musically, just look at all the artists we worked with on the *Frequencies Will Move Together* album — it's a line-up of people we love.'

Frequencies Will Move Together is out now on *Subvocal* through *Inertia*





MOTION OF SOUND

Motion Compilation/Preservation Label

Interview with Andrew Khedoori
by Sebastian Chan

Andrew Khedoori has been into music ever since I met him at university back in 1991. A group of us used to sit in the coffee shop and argue about indie rock and the then emerging electronic scene around early rave in Sydney. Since then he has worked for Shock Records before ending up as music director at Sydney's peak community radio station 2SER, where he had been doing a weekly show called 'Methodology' since forever. He is also one of the people behind the Preservation label which has just released a double CD compilation of Australian electronic music and should be previously known to readers for Sun, experimental guitarist Oren Ambarchi's 'pop' project.

'The indie scene was definitely my bunch of friends back then at uni time and where I spent a lot of time socially, but I was always scurrying along the fringes of all sorts of sounds before uni- versity by any means possible: relatives' record collections, second-hand stores where I could take a punt on something without much cash outlay, and radio. I've always flicked around the dial like I would a telly; it really is the medium of imagination when done properly. Somewhere along the line I got in deeper with certain musical strands — maybe not so much electronic as I was always big on beats, especially hiphop — but more experimental stuff...Being in Australia, I guess things filter across a little slower and I think musicians copped this too and started incorporating different, more obtuse stuff into the mix.

'I remember when I started work at Shock Records, back in 1995 (ironically, I probably got a job on the back of their success with The Offspring and they had to expand) and somebody ordered the first Tortoise album on spec...I was pretty much sucked right in. They reminded me of something like Slint crossed with The Necks. I'd been into The Necks for a long time, and it was great to see what they were doing filter through to a younger audience locally, as well as folks making music, and I always wished it would catch on locally rather than seeing just

another crop of cookie-cutter bands trying to blow on the ashes of the whole Nirvana/grunge jag. The indie thing got so blurred with the mainstream that the real alternative started to come from music-making again, and there were small labels cropping up to reflect that, and that's what became exciting, and still is.'

Andrew started working at 2SER as the music producer in 2002 after the station had gone through a period of reinvention and restructuring. The station has been pivotal in the development of local scenes and in many cases in the only place to hear diverse specialist music on the airwaves. 'A community station like 2SER can find so many lively examples of all forms of music on the local front — I don't mean necessarily innovative, just imaginative and creative. Hopefully a station like 2SER builds on that, exposes it and gets it out there to let people know what else is around other than that which is propped up by big money and so on.

2SER exists in a large metropolitan city — there's room for everyone and the goal here is not to create some kind of dynamic contradiction to anyone else, but to offer some kind of alternative. And I think we're just becoming part of the cultural experience of the city along with all the other things you can do in town. The impact we're having has become greater probably because we've been able to get out there more and let people know we're around. Community stations like us in general are getting more pro-active — not being "too community", if you know what I mean. It's great when you see someone play to a packed house and you know you're the only place you can hear them. It means you're getting out there for all the right reasons.'

2SER feeds into a community that is supported by a range of musical infrastructure: regular events like Impermanent Audio, Frigid; and annual summer camps like What is Music and

Electrofringe/Sound Summit, the whole This Is Not Art nexus. Andrew explains, 'one of the Electrofringe nights last year (2002) featured some of the artists on *Motion* all in a row — Pimmon, Minit and Magmafinder. A couple of us were taking it all in and at the time we'd also had the vibe to work individually with some folks but that gig turned our heads around to idea of banding people together, I guess in the kind of unifying way Sound Summit itself does — representing territories of sound en masse so to speak. Artists were pretty much selected through what we'd seen and been listening to, so the bulk of it came together pretty quickly. Then we looked at spreading the scope of it from there with some more 'calculated' choices — people who we still like but weren't in the immediate realm of things we had in mind when first assembling the thing.

'We thought we'd try and get some cohesiveness to it all with the motion idea, asking everybody to compose a track based on some idea or guiding principles of motion. It's a very open-ended brief really — just giving people something to focus on, and we never thought it would turn out narrowly because of everybody's disparate approaches and sound sources. It got people excited about the prospect and potential of the compilation too, as opposed to just sending something in the mail that had been lying around on the hard drive.

'Candlesnuffer's track has surprised a lot of people by straying outside his usual fare and he'd mentioned to me how happy he was with the result and the challenge of putting it together with the concept in mind. Minit's beautiful track was pretty much made to order. They've never made anything that short before (11 minutes) but it still works wonderfully and we're able to showcase them along with a whole bunch of people they should stand alongside. It gives people an opportunity to take a little dip in before going the whole distance too, and I think that's a worthy thing.

'There was one contributor who dropped out, feeling in the end that a comp of this sort of stuff actually got away from the fire and guts of experi-

I've always flicked around the dial like I would a telly; it really is the medium of imagination when done properly.

mental and electronic works and that such an artist's work should stand alone. Full respect to his thoughts but no one's been compromised here and I think it's a great representation of each artist as well as the territory, and I think if you want to explore that territory deeper, find more converts if you like. I love the fact that Alan Lamb's atmospheric field recordings sit next to a brooding Clue To Kalo track and don't see it as a great leap from one to the other.

'To that end, *Motion* itself might be 'crosstalk', but that may just be self-evident in a project bringing together Australian artists who are exploring and extending the language of electronic music with their chosen set of tools. Everybody had an idea of who was in at some point and no-one got snobby about who was on there. If anything, a lot of hardcore experimentalists are gravitating towards more overtly pop and melodic sound strands, not necessarily merely to subvert it. Things are always mutating and there'll always be naysayers in that regard — maybe it should just be old school and new school, not old school versus new school.

'In putting *Motion* together as well as working at 2SER, I've been privileged to some wonderful support networks, whereas in some of my travels I've been faced with more of a club mentality. I've never seen that club mentality work out in the long run for anyone.'

*Motion is out on
Preservation
through Inertia.*

CLAN ANALOGUE RECORDINGS
presents



A COLLECTION OF LOW-BIT-RATE
ELECTRONIC EXPERIMENTS

featuring

PBXO
TWO4K
KAZUMICHI GRIME
DEEPCHILD
DISCO STU
DARK NETWORK

& many more



ALSO CHECK OUT THE NEW FULL LENGTH
ALBUM FROM DARK NETWORK 'LATE SET'

*both cds available in september 2003
through creative vibes.*

WWW.CLANANALOGUE.ORG

+ CALAMITOUS FREQUENCIES

Délire

Interview with Julian Oliver
by Gavin Ross

In a chaotic world full of sonically-static environments drowned in digital bliss, the music of Délire detonates, and shards of sound that are beyond glitch-noise, beyond formulaic laptop ramblings, spread over the landscape, infusing all surroundings with a virulent strain of calamitous frequencies. Julian Oliver has used his knowledge as a software developer and his passion for graphical gameplay to give birth to compositions that can exist within, and give life to, the microbit world. He has been working with software for the last six years, and has been involved in various electronic composition practices since around 1995.

'In the mid-nineties I became absolutely taken with the plastic possibilities of sound design in data-space,' he explains. 'Previously I had explored and made electronically amplified stethoscopes, VLF radio devices and various other electronic and non-electronic objects. But I could never work with them for more than a few shows. They all developed into bad habits, centred around the object and their spectacle. I suppose I realized early on that I wanted to have a very flexible context for designing the conditions for both sound propagation and the sounds themselves.

The cult of laptop music itself never appealed to me; if I could design and build instruments as flexibly out of 'real' stuff I would have done so. Anyway, it is important to remember that 'sound' does not happen inside computers. The phenomenon of sound occurs at the point where there are changes in air-pressure...in this sense, the laptop artist is engaged in the project of being able to complexify the ways in which sound can actually propagate. I like this relationship I have with sound, and look forward to greater and greater depths of complexity in my data-space for this reason.' The culmination of all of Julian's experimental work in the last few years is *Diaspora*, his first full-length album, released on the Synaesthesia label.

'I had been meaning to make *Diaspora* for some years; I wanted to make an uncompromising album that selfishly explored my own need for cataclysmic atmospheres, hiss 'n' blitz and

rapid shifts in velocity. I wanted also to produce an album that conveyed a lot of my favourite moments in game play and science fiction. Continued computer use has evolved me, which in turn of course informs the way I compose.

The first preview of the album was displayed in a track titled "Idiot Savant vs. The Centre Of Effort", which was on a disc named *Strewth!*, a compilation of various Australian experimental artists released by Synaesthesia in 2002. 'When *Strewth!* was being put together, Mark Harwood, of Synaesthesia Records, was aware that the track was a part of a larger project. In many ways that was the seed of *Diaspora* as it came to be.' When listening to *Diaspora* in its entirety, it is impossible to keep your imagination from conjuring up wild, bit-rate images. It is, in a sense, a very atmospheric and visual record.

Included on the disc are two short QuickTime video pieces that Julian created himself. It begs the question: which comes first: the sound or the visual aspects of the track? 'Currently I build various conditions for the triggering and manipulation of audio into the game environment, which is then sent over a network to another computer running Miller Puckette's 'Pure Data',' he explains of the process. 'Whatever happens in the game becomes 'control data' for the processing of audio in 'Pure Data': head rotation, player location, weapon state, player state. The actual samples themselves are in many ways arbitrary, as they are reworked as a function of play. I really



like the revision of 'playing music' that games offer. 'Qthoth' on the CD is a deep modification of the Half-Life engine and was made in 2000. The other video is an abstraction of a multi-user interface we (at SelectParks, a group that Julian works with) were playing around with in the studio.'

Even though *Diaspora* stands alone on its own original feet, there are several influences that do rise to the surface if one listens closely. 'The name of the album is a clue, albeit an obscure one. *Diaspora* is a book by Greg Egan. He's a kind of 'ficto-physicist', writing hard science fiction that traverses many different scales of agency, states of embodiment and temporal domains. Though my album is not a strict impression of this book, many of the ideas did bubble through into the compositional process. Much of what I composed for *Diaspora* also relates to the kind of games I want to be playing in the future, especially in the emerging field sound based games.'

Although the debut album took a long time to come to fruition, we won't have to wait too long at all for the next project, in whatever form it may take. 'I have another album on the way, though it's early days yet. I am hoping to move into more software-based releases — DVDs and also audio that is produced in a more immediate fashion, now that I am a better performer on my own software.

'Right now I'm working for a research institute in Sweden. From here I'll move Belgium to work on a project with South Australian Nik Gaffney (foam/Farmers Manual). The rest of the year includes a few shows in Spain, South Africa and around Scandinavia. Hiaz, Martin Ng (Farmers Manual/GATTGATT) and I are working on a project next year. I've looked forward to this for some time!

'Where the Délire project is concerned, I hope one day that it will become an organisation of its own, with several collaborators all contributing to the output. Right now there are a few developers I'd love to work with and at some stage I'd very much like to do a synapse-splitting duo with (Mego's) Florian Hecker. I have several non-sound based games in production, though with all the amazing facilities here, and the plethora of recording studios, I will be beginning another new project soon. It involves using 'Almost Intelligent' software bots as a 'band' that can perform on their own songs. They may not look so humanoid however...'

Check out the *Cyclic Defrost* website for more info on *Délire's* live show setup and recent tour to Europe with the *Synaesthesia* gang.



FULL FATHOM FIVE

NEW ALBUM SIDES OUT NOW



ON TOUR

AUG 1 THE ZOO, Brisbane with ponyloaf
AUG 2 GREAT NORTHERN, Byron Bay with ponyloaf
AUG 8 THE HOPETOWN, Sydney with telemetry orchestra

VALVE LIVING WITH NAIVETY
www.consume.com.au



JOHNNY CONQUEST

are Simon Taylor, Michael Horsham and Martin Green and as part of the globally known TOMATO multi media group have completed projects as diverse as videos for Underworld and Merz.

uptown
for the
americas



MESSER CHUPS Black Black Magic
DJ ME DJ YOU Can you see the Music
TROST Trost - ALL OUT NOW
Plus coming soon... DARTH VEGAS,
MOCKY & GONZALES

NOW OUT NOW OUT NOW OUT NOW OUT NOW

CURSE OVDIALECT

(LOST IN THE REAL SKY)



(ON TOUR)
[SAT 2 AUG]
MINKE, Adel
[SAT 16 AUG]
EVELYN, Melb
[THUR 21 AUG]
SPANISH CLUB
Sydney
[FRI 22 AUG]
RICS, Brisbane
[SAT 23 AUG]
4ZZZ POST
RADIO THON
JUBILEE
HOTEL, Bris



LOST... IN THE REAL SKY
DEBUT ALBUM NOW



CONSUME, ROCK & FMA presents

www.gold-chains-worldwide.com
www.fmrecords.com.au
www.consume.com.au



GOLD CHAINS

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR YOUNG MISS AUSTRALIA TOUR 2003

AND **BUTTERFINGERS** PLUS GUESTS

WED 17 SEPT THE ZOO BRISBANE

THUR 18 SEPT ELEC TROPICA CAIRNS

FRI 19 SEPT CANDYS APARTMENT SYDNEY

SAT 20 SEPT THE CORNER MELBOURNE

SUN 21 SEPT ENIGMA ADELAIDE

YOUNG MISS AMERICA INSTORES NOW FEATURING NADA & THE GAME

MOBILE FUN TECHNOLOGY

Mobile DJing in Australia

Interview with Andrew Noble
by Chloé Sasson

Most of today's DJs today probably think that they have a pretty cool job. Playing their favourite tunes to teens and trainspotters, crate digging and vinyl spinning. But DJs are a dime a dozen now. Everyone 'buys it on vinyl', and plays the decks at parties. A pair of Technics are in the bedroom next to the TV — even your parents know what a DJ is (playing all that 'techno' stuff). But imagine if you were the person who brought the idea of a mobile disc jockey to Australia. Now that would be cool.

Andrew Noble has dibbs on being the person responsible for bringing the mobile disco to Australia. It's a claim he's willing to argue...but at this stage, noone has come forward to defend the title.

For Andrew, the story begins in London, way back in 1969 when the mobile DJ was quite a commonplace thing. Out at a party, Noble found that the evening's music source was not a stereo, but a guy in the corner with two turntables, playing vinyl to the crowd.

'This sparked an idea,' he recalls. 'I had recently been on a ski holiday in Austria and the only music in the ski village was a heavy metal English band that no one would dance to. As a keen skier I saw the opportunity to buy a mobile disco and take it to Austria or Switzerland so I could ski during the day, and earn money providing good music at night.'

Not surprisingly, the idea wasn't quick to take off. After contacting nearly a hundred ski resorts with his idea, noone bit. 'So I decided I had to buy a set [of turntables] and personally take it back to the Tyrolean village I had holidayed in —

and show them what a mobile disco could offer.

'I bought an old second hand mobile disco set and a wide selection of records...and set off in my Kombi van to Austria. I gained a contract for the winter season in a hotel and various pensions in the village. I played the music that was popular in London at the time; the revival of rock and roll, the great dance music of Credence Clearwater, Crosby Stills and Nash, plus the new revival in rock and English pop music. This music really got everyone up and dancing, compared to the band of the previous season that most simply walked out on.'

And the feedback was fabulous. From the Swiss Alps, Noble scored his next job, playing on a cruise ship to the Canary Islands, then it was a ferry run on the North Sea, and another winter in Austria. Then Noble knew he had hit the big time. A free trip to Australia.

'I arrived back in Australia in Melbourne in 1972 and was the first [person] to professionally begin mobile discos in Australia. Then Moby Disc started soon after in Sydney.'

The initial reaction was what you'd expect for



a novelty act. People really weren't used to it. As Noble explains, '[the music of that time] was very heavy [Janice Joplin, Jimmy Hendrix, etc.], and as much as people liked listening to this music they did not dance to it.'

But this was a time of change. In the early 1970s, entertainment at parties was all about live bands or the jukebox. As the popularity of the mobile disco grew, so too did the displacement of these previous forms of entertainment. 'Both the jukebox and bands suffered at the time,' agrees Noble, 'although I was more aware of replacing party bands than jukeboxes. 'But,' he continues, 'the increasing popularity of the mobile disco and decreasing popularity of party bands in the early '70s was due to a number of factors. One was that discos were cheaper; but at the time, the mobile disco was better at getting people up and dancing.'

'Bands at the time presented less entertainment value and a very casual, unenthusiastic, lack-lustre approach to entertainment. With the competition of mobile discos I felt the bands lifted their game and put more effort into their entertainment presentation. I find it hard to compare a mobile DJ to a jukebox because the mobile DJ can project a personality and choreograph the presentation of music that is more in competition with a band than a jukebox.'

Over in New York, the first signs of disco were emerging. A paradigm shift that would go on to shake the foundations of night time music entertainment, Andrew's mobile introduction was almost inevitable. 'I started the mobile disco at a stage when music was changing,' he concedes, 'and I feel I had a sensitivity to what music got people up and dancing, at the risk that some of the get-up-and-dance music of the '70s was very pop 'n' bop, bubble-gum, middle-of-the-road popular bands out of London.'

But it's more about the records. Playing good tunes was exactly what the jukebox did, but without the fancy clothes. As any DJ would know, the aim of the game is to keep people dancing. 'To me the aim of good dancing music as a DJ is to be sensitive to the mood of the party and to choose each record ahead so the party continues to rock. A part of keeping people dancing is to create good upbeat



dance music but before everyone is exhausted to also slow it to soft cuddly numbers and then jazz it up to the upbeat tempo again. It is very satisfying to a DJ to feel in control of the crowd and to create a great party atmosphere.'

One thing you could do with a jukebox was request your favourite tune. Not so much with DJs. 'I did not rely on requests because I felt confident that I could sense the mood of the crowd,' Andrew tells me. 'It was more important to be playing to the crowd than fulfilling the request of one or two individuals. I often found if I fulfilled peoples' requests it led to people leaving the dance floor. If I had any request if I felt it wasn't right for the crowd that night I would say I didn't have it so it didn't spoil the mood.'

There's no doubt that Andrew's introduction of the mobile disco had a profound effect on Australia's entertainment scene. According to Noble, 'the mobile disco culture has probably had a

ANDREW'S TOP 5+1 DISCO TUNES

'Maggie May'

Rod Stewart

'American Pie'

Don Mclean

'Hot August Night'

Neil Diamond

'Gloria'

Laura Branigan

'Nutbush City Limits'

Tina Turner

'Eagle Rock'

Daddy Cool

direct effect on the party bands but less effect on the music bands. Over the years the mobile discos have promoted and paid royalties to the music bands. Discos have provided choice in good music for a party night and often a greater variety and choice of music than many bands could provide. However during that time there were some excellent party bands. I believe the competition generated by the mobile disco scene has helped to create more entertaining party bands.'



FRiGiD

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 Oilo.

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

COMING SOON:
DAT POLITICS (FRANCE)
MONOLAKE (GERMANY)

+ WITCH DIRECTION

Darrin Verhagen/Shinjuku Thief/Dorobo Records

Interview with Darrin Verhagen

by Bob Baker Fish

Every Wednesday, Darrin Verhagen's place of work is Peril Underground, a record store cum dungeon situated down a seedy laneway beside the Elizabeth St McDonalds in Melbourne, where all the street kids hang out. It's a space shared by a tattooist and a fetish clothing stall, so whilst getting your tats touched up and riffling for new dog collars and gimp masks, you can get your fix of Merzbow, Muslingauze, Nine Inch Nails or whatever dark ambient or experimental tunes take your fancy. At 10am Peril is strangely active, and as I walk down the dangerously steep steps Verhagen shoots a sheepish grin and offers that it's usually dead quiet at this time of the day. It's Murphy's law. So while he gets down to some serious mail ordering with a couple of enthusiastic Goth fans, I have a browse and begin to set up.

Verhagen is perhaps better known via his Shinjuku Thief moniker, a dark, gothic orchestral project he began in 1992, with François and Charles Tetaz. Their first album, *Bloody Tourist*, a tribal, ambient melange of jazz, rock, noise and funk sounds was seen by many at the time as a stab at the exploitative chill-out/world music market. These days it's difficult to know how to treat it, given that its label, Extreme records, has deleted it. The follow up, *The Scribbler*, released on Verhagen's own Dorobo records was more in a post classical, Michael Nyman, Phillip Glass, minimalist vein and whilst Charles opted out, François assisted with a lot of the arrangements. For the third album, *The Witch Hammer*, Verhagen was on his own, captivated by gothic hysteria, at the beginning of a trilogy of work for which he is best known. Verhagen's *Witch* odyssey began by stumbling across the *Malleus Malleficarum*, the Inquisitors handbook from the 16th Century in which the church laid out the philosophical aspects of witchcraft, as well as their so called solution.

'I found it incredibly rich,' remembers Verhagen. 'Over and above all the supernatural components, which are imbedded within that. Also just doing more research and finding the churches backflips associated with how they dealt with the concept of something like the devil and whether he exists — saying "no he doesn't exist," and then saying "his biggest trick is convincing us he doesn't exist," and doing the same thing with witchcraft. It's more looking at the politics of what the church was doing at the time, but then, from a purely thematic point of view, seeing that as an incredibly rich and fertile ground for musical exploration. Then on the

other stream coming at the same time, was an interest in exploring a hip-hop style of construction with a classical sound palette. So looking at everything being sample based with small samples piecing together every track.'

Utilising stand-alone samplers Verhagen pieced together sounds from his classical music collection on *The Witch Hammer*, as at the time he didn't have any instruments with which he could convincingly construct orchestral work.

'Once I started working in that territory I had so much fun exploring that musical world and conceptual world,' he remembers. 'At that stage when I did *The Witch Hammer* I had no idea that it was going to be a trilogy, and it was rather naïve probably, but I had no idea that it would appeal so much to the gothic set, which was really stupid if I thought about it.'

The Witch Hammer was followed by *The Witch Hunter* in 1995, another dark, filmic, atmospheric work. However it wasn't until seven years later that Verhagen finally brought a close to the trilogy, with the bleak violent and bombastic textures of *The Witch Haven*, one of his most cinematic and realised works.

'Half of *The Witch Haven* was written eight years ago,' he reports. 'It was still done using the same equipment I had for *The Witch Hammer* and *The Witch Hunter*, but parts of it were recontextualising existing tracks to a particular sound world, other parts were written from scratch, and they were done using my new set-up where I've actually got a decent orchestra in a box now, where I can write my own music for that, rather than relying on sample loops and that sort of stuff.'

Shinjuku Thief's latest release is *Medea*, a rich orchestral soundscape released on Verhagen's



Dorobo label earlier this year. Imbued with dark, haunting tones, disembodied female moans, savage bursts of sonic violence, disintegrating ghostly chorals and a cinematic flair reminiscent of his earlier Shinjuku Thief work, *Medea* is a bleak and daunting document that was commissioned as the soundtrack for the Euripides play of the same name, directed by Daniel Slusser as part of the Melbourne Festival.

'When Daniel first started talking about *Medea*, the production was going to be quite experimental,' Verhagen offers. 'Musically we were talking about it being bordered by a few touchstones, in particular Merzbow, Michelle Schion's Requiem, and Diamanda Galas. With those touchstones in mind and also the idea of it being quite an experimental confronting production, I decided to ground the work in a fairly austere, arcane and musical world. I wanted to have a musical element, which was quite traditional, that would give the director licence to push out all of the other aspects of the production, in terms of the staging and the lighting as well as the content itself. Hence the employment of chorals device and a fairly traditional orchestral sound palette and that sort of thing.'

Given his extensive experience in working in theatre and dance, Verhagen regularly employs the use of musical touchstones as a path to a shared vision, to ensure that both he and the director are working off a similar musical palette. Interestingly he feels this enhances rather than inhibits the creation of new or innovative sounds.

'I've always been slightly suspicious of the experimental tag that gets chucked on a lot of musicians, myself included,' he declares, 'given that generally speaking most of the people work-

ing in the experimental realm are drawing on very definite traditions, and I don't see that as necessarily being constraining. Particularly when you're working in theatre it can be very useful to draw on those sorts of touchstones as some sort of shorthand.'

Whether it be via his work as Shinjuku Thief or the more techno orientated Shinjuku Filth, Verhagen possesses the unique ability to accept commissions from dance, theatre or film, and yet still retain and develop his distinctive sound. In the past he has worked with the Handspan Theatre Company, Chunky Move, and whilst at Playbox he is listed in the Teledex as Dr Evil. The result is that with each commission he is able to successfully integrate his desire for development, with the considerations of each particular project, such as his use of chorals in *Medea*, a technique he had only vaguely flirted with via samples on some his earlier Shinjuku Thief material. Here he actually took two hours of footage of the actress who played Medea, Evelyn Crape, screaming, singing and wailing before chopping the sounds up and utilising his favourite parts as the basis for many of the more affecting tracks that appear on the album.

Though it's not all commissioned work. Verhagen somehow finds time to create music under his own name. By and large, this is personal music that never seems to have an outlet on a commission level. Describing it as much more 'minimal, contemplative,

delicate, unstable and abstract,' it is music that doesn't draw on those grand cinematic or dramatic traditions of his Shinjuku Thief material. It can be found on his solo album *Hydra* or on *Grain*, the album he shares with other iconoclastic electro-acoustic artists Phillip Samartzis, Pimmon and David Brown.

'Generally the more minimal, delicate work I put under my own name,' states Verhagen, 'just to avoid scaring the people. I think it's about clarity. I mean, initially I thought everyone would want to come along for the ride. If they're interested in one aspect of what I put out they might be interested in the others, but the market (sorry to use the phrase) is a lot more fractured and specific than that, and a lot of the time I find that the people who have the Shinjuku Thief stuff really don't care for the more abstract, minimal, delicate material. And that's fine. They can still potentially listen to a Darrin Verhagen album if they want to and see if they like it, but at least they've been warned they're not going to get something that follows the path that Shinjuku Thief's previous catalogue had done.'

Verhagen currently has a few projects on the boil. An SBS documentary in which he is working against type, producing light breezy material; a project written by Andrew Bovell (*Lantana*) for the Sydney Theatre Company entitled *Holy Day*; and a Hans Christian Anderson fairytale called *Snow Queen* for the Adelaide Theatre Company, which fuses Victorian fairytale ideas with 20th Century

computer game technology. For this project he has to write four songs for four a cappella voices. He will also be working on the sounds for a dance film by Sue Healey as well as *Ice 9*, a Playstation game, which delights him endlessly.

'The more I listened to computer game music the more excited I got, given that I was hearing so little that I found really interesting or good. It's certainly changed over the last couple of years, but a lot of the material is written by people who come from a computer game background, and they're not really bringing across the rich potential that exists in the cinematic tradition, and applying that to the games, and hence a lot of it was using quite naff, cheesy sounds. Musically it wasn't particularly dynamic or interesting. The idea of doing a James Bond meets Prodigy sound score for this thrilled me no end, it was just great.'

Aside from this Verhagen also has hopes of completing a three CD set in the near future, comprised of material encased in a metal box, called *black*. One disc will be minimal, delicate, electro-acoustic, glitchy stuff, another will be dark ambient and the third will be noise. Though, like much of his personal music, depending on commissions there is always the tendency for it to be pushed aside.

For more on Darrin Verhagen's label Dorobo, visit cyclicdefrost.com.

WINNER
Best Cinematography - Stockholm Film Festival
Best Actress - BAFTA Awards, Scotland 2002

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Toronto, Chicago, Edinburgh, San Sebastián,
Cannes, Stockholm & Melbourne Film Festivals

WINNER
Best Film - Directors Fortnight Cannes 2002
Prix de la Jeunesse - Cannes 2002

samantha morton is

morvernallar

the new film from Lynne Ramsay
based on the novel by Alan Warner

IN CINEMAS AUGUST 14
Melbourne : Nova Brisbane : Dendy
Sydney : Dendy Newtown, Palace Verona

Soundtrack features Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, Can, Stereolab
Available through Creative Vibes

"Euphoric, strange and unforgettable"

Scottish Daily Mail

DENDY
A DENDY FILMS RELEASE



+ A PIRATE TREASURE

John Jacobs Retrospective

Interview with John Jacobs
by Vaughan Healey

For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. That boring Newtonian standard you learnt in high school could apply to humanity as much as science. There is a constant tug-o-war between people and the institutions that civilize us. So for every phenomenon like, say, peer-to-peer file sharing there are corporate and legislative attempts to shut it down. And those times when business tries to erode our collective decency, or for those attacks on civil liberties (or foreign countries), people come together and try to keep those monoliths in check.

Activism and protest is a process with no clear beginning or end: people pose arguments, those ideas infect other people and the process repeats itself. Change is made through people working together, through groups and collective effort. However, those unions are constructed through the actions of individuals, progressive artists and thinkers who explore new possibilities in both political and musical arrangements.

John Jacobs has been an important part of argumentative thinking: through groups like the Jellyheads and Vibetribes, techno agitators Non Bossy Posse, video manipulators Subvertigo, and

currently 'The Night Air' — a weekly radio program on Radio National. These are projects that have evolved and fed off and into each other, providing ideas and momentum extending beyond the powering down of amplifiers at the end of a protest.

Cyclic Defrost: Tell us a bit about what was happening in outside the Sydney Stock Exchange in 1988, with the Media Liberation Front

John Jacobs: At the time there was a lot of debate around the ownership of media as Alan Bond was attracting a lot of money and investing in lots of media companies. I was working at Radio Skid Row and JJJ at the time, and me and some colleagues felt like we wanted to comment on it. We got together and dreamt up this fake organisation: the Media Liberation Front (MLF). We felt a bit of a spoof, a media splash, would be a good way to go. We put out a press release, hired a generator and some guitar amps, dressed up in silly costumes and printed a leaflet which had the words of the songs that we were going to sing which were commenting on the situation...

When we started making our music, the city

officials weren't so onto that sort of stuff at that stage, so they took a long time to respond to it, which was great. It enabled us to get a whole set out and a lot of lunchtime people were there. We were handing out our lyrics that were talking about media ownership and we had good fun with big posters with 'Alan Bond: Wanted for Crimes in Chile' across them, because he had lots of investment in Chile with his conservative friends there.

We had a generator but we were actually able to plug into a wall, which would be under lock and key today. When the security guards actually came we moved into the public space and they had to get the police involved to shut it down. By that stage, there was a media circus and lots of cameras. Then we could have a dialogue with the police person who was trying to stop us from doing what we were doing. We were talking about how they were silencing the voice of the public and this is allegorical to the whole Alan Bond situation. The poor policeman — he didn't have any media theory and didn't really know what to say, he was quite stumped! Tony Collins, who was our media spokesperson, managed to score a lot of points there on-camera, putting the point of view out to the people in a fun reclaim-the-streets kind of way.

CD: What would you try differently for the same sort of stunt today?

JJ: Well, then we were playing punk music and shouting lyrics with loud guitars, so that is immediately alienating to lots of people; it's very angry. I think these days, if I tried to do an Action, it would be more mainstream in our cultural presentation, trying to really connect with the people. I think that giving out the leaflets was a good idea, but to provide true entertainment for them and then to say through the back of that 'this can be the building of something different,' or 'we can draw your attention to something different, but let's have fun first.'

CD: That seems to have become very important in protests: activists trying not to alienate the public.

JJ: Because the public are alienated from themselves already. You have to bridge across to them and make a connection straight away.

CD: But it's often not enough just to be doing stunts, you have to really engage with hearts and minds.

JJ: But a stunt can be good just to break through. I think a good one at the moment is the Women in Black protest. It's not really a stunt, and it's

not entertainment, they are just women in black clothing standing with one simple sign. By being silent and not saying anything at all, except for providing a small spectacle. It really gets to people, because they are used to a big sound system or funny street puppets or noise. This is such a contrast. I think we have to try all things at once — shock, happiness and disorientation to break through.

CD: Is it harder to get people's attention because we are so saturated with stimulation?

JJ: You could say it's harder, but it's also more than that. Old tactics have to be re-vamped at all times because everyone looking at everything going on. If you want to break through and do something different, you've got to work out where the fault lines are, and they are always there, and kind of shift them a little bit, but always keep your eyes open. So is it getting harder? I don't think so, it's always been a challenge.

CD: So how did the MLF develop into the other groups: Jellyheads, Subvertigo, Non Bossy Posse?

JJ: All we were trying to do was have some fun and say something, and that was through punk music. As soon as disco tuned into techno, we thought 'Better get onto this!' That was the crack — you could put words onto the frequencies and your mes-

sage becomes very clear. There was a lot of cut-up suddenly appearing in popular culture so it was a real opportunity to put media detouring into a form that was available for everyone, and that they could enjoy in a party context. When we started working in the early 1990s, people really wanted to come and see it. It wasn't like punk, screaming from the edges; suddenly mainstream culture was saying, 'let's dance together!' When we started we had some samplers and equipment and hooked up with DJ Morphism, whose famous quote is 'reggae saved me from heavy metal'.

CD: What about the video stuff?

JJ: As things were changing all the time you just took the tools to hand, so we were doing video cut-ups and dubbing them onto the end of hire tapes, but that wasn't really getting out to anyone. Suddenly, dance parties had big video screens so we thought, 'What happens if we put words or bits of the news, or ads, or our own footage we've created, and make a news broadcast at a party?'

CD: When you were doing this, there was a lot of overtly political new techno music happening with groups like Consolidated and what was happening in the UK, things like the On U Sound...

JJ: The whole soundsystem thing was very exciting. We were interested in Jamaican street parties,

soundsystems and the community based events that were being generated around sound systems. That's what we were doing with Jellyheads in a way. Not in a very informed way, but that was part of the process.

CD: So this was happening at the Jellyheads warehouse in Chippendale and RSR fundraisers in late 1991?

JJ: The council didn't really know what we were doing and didn't know how to shut us down. They thought if they could cause a riot that would be a good excuse to get us to shut down, so the cops raided and caused a riot. The cops came on stage at the peak of punk band Toe to Toe playing and there were 300 really tanked up and raging punks there. They just came in with the dog squad...

So eventually we got shut down. That was okay though, because although we didn't have a venue, we had a sound system and we sort of had an idea: techno. People come to this stuff and enjoy themselves, so after that Sydney Park became the venue. Vibetribes was the group that formed out of the demise of Jellyheads, and they started putting on free parties there. There wasn't any venue for the more freaky fringe dance stuff to happen, so this was a point where a lot of people were coming together and got to hear a lot of different other stuff.



I.AUDIO
<http://laudible.net/impaud>

SYDNEY

8pm Fri 12 Sept – \$15 / 12 / 10

Taku Sugimoto (Tokyo)

Brendan Walls

Robbie Avenaim & Jim Denley & Joel Stern

Peter Blamey & Matthew Earle

& Philip Samartzis

8pm Sat 13 Sept – \$15 / 12 / 10

Ami Yoshida (Tokyo)

Scott Horscroft

Oren Ambarchi & Martin Ng

Arek Gulbenkoglul & Adam Sussmann

Bookings: ph 9698 7235,
boxoffice@performancespace.com.au

Performance Space
 199 Cleveland Street, Redfern
<http://www.performancespace.com.au>

I.AUDIO is a series of listening events featuring Taku Sugimoto (guitarist and influential improviser) and Ami Yoshida (vocalist & winner of the Golden Nica at Ars Electronica 2003) and musicians from NSW and VIC.

MELBOURNE

8pm Wed 17 Sept – \$10 / 8

Taku Sugimoto (Tokyo)

Robin Fox

Natasha Anderson & Jim Denley

Oren Ambarchi & Philip Samartzis

& Joel Stern

8pm Thurs 18 Sept – \$10 / 8

Ami Yoshida (Tokyo)

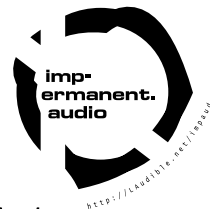
Scott Horscroft

Arek & Will Guthrie

Sean Baxter & David Brown

& Anthony Pateras

Footscray Community Arts Centre
 45 Moreland St, Footscray
<http://www.fcarts.org.au/>



CD: Is it fair to say that those movements were confined to the inner city: art school wankers, gay and lesbians — things that are held in suspicion by the suburbs. Was there any thought of doing anything outside of that inner-city clique?

JJ: Hip-hop was the key for that, but we didn't have that key. And as much as we talk about a 'social movement', really it's about people having fun and entertaining themselves; that's what people come to this with. You might have a progressive agenda and you might think that you are a revolutionary, but really you're just a person who wants an enjoyable life.

CD: And DIY was a big part of it — building equipment?

JJ: Yes, and the parties as well. I was fortunate enough to have a bit of a blend of skills, one of which wasn't music, which kind of helped in a way! I was the lead guitarist in the band but couldn't play a note. I had it open tuned so I could make a chord by barring one finger across the neck, and I had all the notes written so I could see what I was doing. After that, it was great to make techno music, just made by machines. I can relate well to machines, and drum machines and samplers were a good and easy way to do it.

CD: What about the Wheelie bin sound system?

JJ: Originally, I had a big movers' trolley that had a big lead acid car battery and a car sound system on it. We also had things like TVs in prams, when we were doing the Community Activist TV stuff in Newtown, so there were antecedents there.

The wheelie bin was perfect. It's light, well balanced, has handles, looks innocuous, and you can find them on any street corner. They are plastic so they are easy to work with — you just carve it with a knife and it's kind of the right shape to make into a speaker.

I was making speaker boxes for the back of my bike, and I was kind of baffled by science, trying to make a good sounding speaker, with the right sonic stiffness and heaviness. I was coming up with stuff that would almost tip my bike over as I tried to ride along. I had cops pulling me over telling me that I had to turn my sound system off, and I would ask them 'Under what law? No one else is complaining.' The bin gets used all over the place: Reclaim the Streets, today it is at a GM protest.

CD: Politically, things today seem to be worse than ever. There is more state oppression and less community power. What can you say about that?

JJ: We're not heading towards a police state, that's just what they want you to think.

CD: What about the anti-war demos: that collective effort amounted to nothing.

JJ: I don't like it when people say, 'We are going this way,' because this has been happening for a long time, it's constant. Yes, there is a lot of bad stuff going down but let's remember: in the First World War, there were also thousands of people marching in the streets against it. The Workers of the World were framed up in Sydney for arson and went to jail.

I do think that there's hope. It's very important to not get too negative, because that is used as a tool to keep us down. I am reading a book that mentions Julius Caesar talking about the 'pacification' of Gaul. People think of doublespeak as a new invention with media manipulation, but bad ideas have been happening for a long time. And they are the same bad ideas; it's not as if the forces of evil are coming up with new shit. What we have to do is keep community memory alive. Keep a memory of how they have been bad, but also all the good techniques that are available to us — things like the wheelie bin.

CD: So what do you think should be an artistic response to what is happening?

JJ: Stay informed, be critical, be positive, entertain and educate. Draw parallels and show how things have happened before. Show how things can be so ridiculous — how Ruddock is a corpse on legs, show how John Howard is a lying bastard. These are simple things that anyone can connect with.

CD: Has community memory been lost? Look at the peace march. It was amazing for the diversity, but it shouldn't have been amazing, because it's evidence of people from all over and their similar thinking. Are we just disconnected from that sort of community memory?

JJ: To counter that, we just have to keep connecting. I like to surf the net, and put some weird shit in Google, and you will find that stuff is actually happening somewhere. Go there and look and support what they are doing. Just try to connect with people. Next time you go to a party, talk to someone. If you think the music is crap, tell them and you might be surprised what they have in their music collection.

CD: So far, what we have been talking about are the sorts of things that are happening across the world. What do you think are the particularly Australian questions we face?

JJ: It's how we sit as a colony, and how we sit with recent arrivals. Our relationship with the big powers right now: how we're in Asia but we think we are really European.

CD: Is that colonialist deference to larger powers part of our national character? How do you get over it?

JJ: By celebrating local initiatives, by making cross-cultural connections to break the one way flow of energy, and documenting what we do. For example, if I had a choice between an Australian accent or American accent, I would always choose the Australian when choosing a voice sample to add to the mix. If I have a choice between a man and a woman, I use the woman. They are the big currents we are talking about, so let's use the counter-currents and swim against the stream. Those are very do-able things, but the pressure is always against you.

So now, I am trying a non-dancefloor act, kind of like radio in a venue because dancing is one thing, and thinking is another, and they are not necessarily connected. I'm looking around for material to use and it's not easy. There is a lot of good material out there, like independent American and European films, but I want Australian voices. When confronted with the choice between strong material and not-so-strong material, it's hard to make the choice to go with the not-so-strong but politically correct. I think that's something that plagues political art with the emphasis on the message and not on the delivery. You appear a bit half-arsed, or a bit dorky, or a bit pointy-headed or bleeding heart. It's hard work to go somewhere strong and powerful with a clear voice because Australians don't sound totally confident. Listen to Australian hip-hop and it's hard to find really a blasting and clear lyric: it's always a bit hidden and mumbled. It's like we are not comfortable with the Australian accent.

CD: How did 'The Night Air' happen?

JJ: The idea behind this one is that it's a remix show. It's something I have wanted to do for a long time. They used to let me do a show called 'The Works' late at night on JJJ, before it got nationalised, which was a cut-up show; making a new story out of the bits and pieces, a collage. So now we have convinced people it would be a good idea to have something similar on Radio National and we have 'The Night Air'.

CD: The cut-up aesthetic is very enduring, it's been around for ages but it has really taken off over the last couple of years. The tools have become cheaper, and it's easier to do.

JJ: It's so easy to copy now. People have wanted to work like this for years — Negativland, Burroughs, Sergei Eisenstein cutting up film, right back to the Dadaists. It's so easy to do and it's not necessarily the intellectuals or those with a political vision doing it. Anyone who has got a computer that is halfway decent is laughing themselves silly bringing two different tracks together. That really pushes the

creative spur on: untrained people making things. You hear some of the weirdest combinations, and initially go, 'you can't do that,' but after three bars you go, 'I love it!!' Of course, mainstream culture has pricked up its ears and is doing two things about it: they are trying to stop it, and they are also trying to sell it back to us.

They keep running those rear-guard actions with stories about kids getting arrested at universities, but you can't interview these kids, no-one is talking to the media. Is anyone getting arrested or fined? I don't think so. The other side is that they are madly trying to sell the aesthetic back to the public. The monoliths are slowly starting to fall apart.

CD: Do you think that Kylie doing a mash-up actually promotes it? Do kids who wouldn't hear about it otherwise get turned onto it?

JJ: Definitely. On the one hand it shows people who don't have access to the underground media what to do, and on the other hand it shuts off the back-end and forces people to shuffle along a bit further and make things a bit wilder and crazier.

The other thing to mention is the challenge Madonna put out to the file-sharing community. People thought they were downloading her new album, but instead were only downloading her voice asking, 'What the fuck do you think you are doing?' She did it in a bad, unfriendly way and it generated a lot of bad energy. Then people started remixing that file, so now there is a whole scene of 'what-the-fuck-do-you-think-you-are-doing' tracks. A lot of creative energy was devoted to that. It forced the debate, and she used the tools of filesharing to debate the matter. And she was asking a question, making people think about what they were doing. 'What are we doing? Let's think about what are we doing.'

CD: You can never really anticipate how people are going to use technology, or how technology will affect us as people take it and exploit it in unusual ways.

JJ: That's the greatest technology we have: the human mind. It's a bottomless pit of creativity, and there is always another combination lurking in there. There's no more new music, but there's always a new idea of configuring that music. But we have to keep moving and changing it up.

CD: So what sort of ideas do you work with in 'The Night Air'? What are you trying to prove?

JJ: That you can draw connections, and you can bring disparate elements together to tell a new story. I like taking characters out of documentaries or dramas and putting them in other pieces. What happens then? Radio is about imagination. Because there's no picture there, you have to invent all this other stuff, so the listener's mind is opened in a way

Stay informed, be critical, be positive, entertain and educate. Draw parallels and show how things have happened before. Show how things can be so ridiculous — how Ruddock is a corpse on legs, show how John Howard is a lying bastard. These are simple things that anyone can connect with.



Nonbossyposse

that it isn't in a visual medium. The audience wants to be entertained and involved, so if you give them little puzzles and conundrums to be solved, repeating leitmotifs, then they make sense of it. Other producers work a bit differently, but I like to be a bit psychaedelic and surreal and open-ended. A good ally in the process is space: giving the listener the gap where no one is talking.

CD: The complete opposite of commercial radio that has constant voice and noise, accentuated by the amount of audio compression. The ultimate taboo on commercial radio is not swearing or treason, it's dead air.

JJ: They hate the listener, and they hate their brains. They don't want the listener to do anything for themselves.

CD: Do you think that the aural space corresponds to mental space?

JJ: Absolutely, it's the mind of the listener. It's sort of what the dancefloor is like: you need that space. That space isn't necessarily dead air, it could be instrumental. In contrast to other radio documentaries, I'm not trying to tell too many stories; I'm trying to give people little windows to tell their own stories. It's like a train tearing along outside and you get glimpses through windows into peoples houses and what is in there, and then the gaps between peoples houses.

CD: So if you suddenly had unlimited resources for a radio project, what would you be doing?

JJ: There was an amazing program on Italian television called *The Blob* that was very inspiring. Even the use of the name got my nerve ends tingling! It was television, live feeds as well as the whole week of that broadcaster's tapes all edited together. They must have had plenty of people to do this, enough editors to churn through all that stuff. I would like to have all of the Radio National output remixed into a half-hour, and have enough people to do in it a sensible way. At the moment we only have two people making 'The Night Air'; we do what we can, but it's always a bit of a shadow of what it could be.

I would like the ABC have a frequency dedicated to mashing up the media. In a different legal framework it would be great for everything available, all media outputs, to be remixed into one slot. That's what I want and it's not quite happening yet, but it will when someone knows how to program it and market it properly, something like an internet place where you can go and there is a kind of chaotic, edited, portal that brings together lots of text and visuals and sound that is a sort of freefalling cut-up...We do say that 'The Night Air' is radio for the Google age. That's where people's heads are at.

'The Night Air' is unlike anything on the wireless. For 90 minutes on Sunday night [8:30pm], Radio National becomes decidedly non-linear. 'The Night Air' is orchestrated around themes and ideas, with sounds and dialogue liberated from conventional form. Conversations are created between people and sounds in loose stereo documents and each weekly subject is explored with a unique stethoscope. It might get called 'post-modernist', but it's not. In the synaesthetic approach of 'The Night Air' lies the ultimate, modernist, radio democracy. It is purist radio that treats all material as texture, where there are no demarcations between voice, music, silence and sound. It's the also most visual radio you will ever experience.

The Night Air is on Radio National on Sunday Nights from 8.30 - 11.00pm



*Punjabi MC:
From Coventry to Jay-Z in
five short years*

EASTERN FLAVA

Pop music and the East

by Vaughan Healey

There's nothing new in the charts. How many times have you heard that? How about, 'Pop music is mass-produced rubbish.' Familiar? It's a truism to say that pop music is predictable, but once in a while the boundary between safe and experimental gets very blurry. Right now, in August 2003, we are hearing one of those particular moments. The total commercial triumph of a most unusual union: east meets west.

Sampling the exotic other is nothing new. Traces run right back to composers like Ravel and Debussy through to the 1950s exotica mania of Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman and beyond. Over the last thirty years or so 'world music' has become a genre in its own right. Portable recording equipment allowed scores of anthropologists to hightail it to the third world, while back in the west, labels like Peter Gabriel's Real World released traditional music as well as developing a post-modern fusion aesthetic.

In recent pop history, most people know songs like Eric B & Rakim's 'Paid In Full', remixed in 1988 by Coldcut who cut and pasted Israeli singer Ofra Haza's exotic Levantine vocals over the classic Soul Searchers b-boy break. The same gimmick was used by M.A.R.R.S. in their club hit 'Pump up the Volume'. Through the 1980s

and 1990s artists as diverse as Natacha Atlas, Talvin Singh and Muslimgauze also tried to navigate the orientalist gulf. However, for all the promise of a musical settlement between the east and west these were lonely crusades at best, and corny novelty records at worst.

Of course, there were also popstars working from the inside looking out. In the early 1990s, Apache Indian was the pin-up boy for the Punjabi diaspora with a commercial blend of ragga-bhangra. Bally Sagoo was signed to Sony on the strength of his fusion of Bollywood film standards with hiphop and pop dance. Bhangra music evolved as a form but never managed to crossover to a larger cultural arena.

But in 2001, everything changed. The Timbaland produced Missy Elliot track 'Get Yr Freak On' energised commercial hiphop from denim suits and hackneyed grooves to front-line avant-garde. Dirty South futurism was well established before that, but it took the earth-shattering success of 'Get Yr Freak On' for many people to take notice. It was one of those rare songs that managed to be utterly radical and utterly popular at the same time; exactly how pop music should be.

Timbaland is without equal and is still reinventing those funky Timbo licks. First off, there was the C&W, Eminem, Bubba Sparks, followed

by Ms. Jade with the ill minimal 'Big Head', and then Lil' Kim with 'The Jump Off'. More recently, Timbo has been recording tracks with new Beatclub signing Raje Shwari. 'Indian Style' is an astounding, straight-up 100 beats per minute bhangra track with Shwari flipping between Hindi and English. Shwari first appeared on 'The Bounce', a Timbaland produced track on Jay Z's *Blueprint II* LP, singing a refrain from the Bollywood film *Khalnayak*.

It didn't take long for other beat makers to take the pulse of a music community jumping to eastern hiphop fusion. Roc-a-Fella producer Just Blaze had a worldwide smash last year with Cam'ron's 'Oh Boy', this was followed up with the Erick Sermon hit 'React'. The story goes that the beat was on a demo tape for a couple of years before the E and Redman got hold of it. Their 'Whatever she said / then I'm that' counterpoint to the disembodied female Hindi vocal sounds hell funky, but the call and response doesn't make much sense in translation — she is actually singing. 'If someone wants to commit suicide, what can you do?'

The DJ Quick produced Truth Hurts hit single 'Addictive' was built around a song from a 20-year-old Bollywood soundtrack with a vocal lick from Indian songstress Lata Mangeshkar. It was an effective combination reminiscent of 'Paid In Full' from 14 years earlier; and in the video, when Rakim swaggers down the stairs in his bald glory he even drops the same opening line: 'Thinkin' of a master plan...' 'Addictive' was another commercial success but DJ Quick and executive producer Dr. Dre faced a \$500 million

lawsuit when it was discovered that they had used the samples without permission.

Across the Atlantic, sub-continental funk is old news. Catch a train west from London's Paddington and the expensive Victorian real estate is gradually replaced by anonymous post-war sprawl. As the train rolls into Southall the first thing you notice is complicated Punjabi lettering on the signage. Urbanised, second and third generation Anglo-Asian music fans have long been aware of the cultural ferment in places like West London and the north of England. One of the tracks riding the current wave has been a long time coming. Panjabi MC first mashed bhangra with the Knightrider theme over five years ago. 'Mundian to Bach Ke', or 'Beware the Boys', appeared on the Coventry-born producer's self titled 1998 album. In one of those rare acts of collective spontaneity, it saw a revival around 12 months ago by UK garage and hip-hop DJs, and received a major label release soon after. The loose Jay Z version on MTV today has been a worldwide hit, making the Jigga-man even richer, and focusing some long deserved attention onto a massive underground and international scene.

Asian fusion has grown up as a self-contained unit, totally outside the Western spotlight. Producers like B21, the Kray Twins, Rishi Rich and Tigerstyle flip comfortably between hip-hop, vocal pop, garage, dancehall and Bollywood beats. For a local barometer of Desi strength, check one of the nights hosted by Sydney's Masala Mix crew. Way back in 1996 Masala Mix started broadcasting the developing bhangra sounds on Monday nights on Sydney's 2SER. Their regular Sydney club nights are packed with glamorous medicine undergrads grooving to the new mashed up sounds.

The mystifying laboratories of dancehall reggae have long looked to the east for new and exotic cues, but lately have turned out some extreme music in a manner only possible by mentalist Jamaican producers. In 1993 Sly & Robbie produced the rhythm behind Chaka Demus & Pliers' subtle lovers-rock ballad 'Murder She Wrote' with unique Indian flavour. Last year, the same Drums and Bass masters turned out the 'Tabla' rhythm — a simple track based around a tabla and vocal loop. This was a strong beat, but nothing could have prepared us for what was to come next: the 'Diwali'.

Steve Marsden AKA 'Lenky' was well known for his signature techy hip-hop vibe: tracks with filter sweeps and squelching basslines that were polished to a finer lustre than most other dancehall reggae. He turned everything on its head halfway through last year with the Diwali — an unstoppable melange of propulsive handclaps, vocal loops, eastern scales and one hit bass. The rhythm was a dancehall hit, with Bounty Killer's 'Sufferer', T.O.K.'s 'Galang Gal', and Tanya Stephens' 'Touch Me No More' just three of the dozen or so different

When will it end? Not yet. Just when you thought that eastern riffs were becoming the played out domain of second-rate bandwag-ners and car commercials, the incomparable Neptunes step forward with not one, but two jaw-dropping tracks of eastern invasion.

vocal versions that originally came out. Soon after the first devastating wave of Diwali tracks, song-jay-of-the-moment Sean Paul recorded 'Get Busy' on the same cut. Fresh after the global exposure of 'Gimme The Light', the world was ready and waiting for another radical chart winner. Today, 'Get Busy' has reached saturation levels on radio and television, and there are more Diwali cuts on their way. Wayne Wonders 'No Letting Go' recently peaked at number 3 on the UK singles chart. This charming version shows off Wayne's vocal range with a melodic emphasis on the chorus and rare lyrical sincerity.

The Diwali just keeps on going. From New York comes Lumidee's 'Never Leave You (Uh-Oooh)', an off-key vocal track built around an edited and clipped Diwali. This is an ultra-slick, ultra-minimal, muted, gated Diwali bastard half-sister, which is causing waves on both sides of the Atlantic for the Spanish Harlem native. There are already remixes with 50 Cent, Busta and Fabolous, the Diwali making the unusual migration from dancehall to hip-hop beat. The track is bizarre, but infectious like SARS. You have been warned. Uh Oooh, Uh Oooh.

R Kelly's beats are favourites across the Caribbean and his reputation was established with the many dancehall versions of his 'Fiesta' rhythm. His recent *Chocolate Factory* LP features 'Snake', a heavy dancehall rhythm coated with Lothario soul vocals and arabesque flute loops. The video is a montage of Bedouin tents and belly dancers, making the sexed-up loverman come off as a New Jack Swing Lawrence in Arabia. Predictably, 'Snake' has been versioned into another Eastern dancehall rhythm, the 'Baghdad'. Sounding the farthest east yet is another orientalist dancehall beat: the slamming, Shams produced, 'Tai Chi' rhythm.

When will it end? Not yet. Just when you thought that eastern riffs were becoming the played out domain of second-rate bandwagoners and car commercials, the incomparable Neptunes step forward with not one, but two jaw-dropping tracks of eastern invasion. Nas' 'The Flyest' is a simple but effective

groove built around a delicate Indian vocal sample; while Kardinal Offishall's 'Belly Dancer' is the Neptunes at their most devastating with slamming, discordant beats built over ascending near-east instrumental loops. The genius twins have left dinky melodies far behind — it's grindin' meets nothin' in a Baghdad black-market.

Transatlantic currents in pop music move in similar directions but the thermals driving them are vastly different. Emerging Desi-beats are a quantisation of the urban migrant experience; Anglo-Asian music fans trying to merge the pre-modern and the post-modern. On the other hand, hip-hop (and Jamaica) looks to the east through invention driven by necessity. The east is grist for the bump and grind of hip-hop's mill, with beat makers being the latest in a long line of westerners exploiting exotic resources, reducing 'the east' to a convenient soubriquet for Tokyo, Istanbul and everything between.

As much as I hate to say it, bhangra and dancehall records have no real place in the Australian pop music psyche. What we are seeing is a wonderful confabulation of a few fortunate producers with the right sound at the right time. A three dimensional space opened up by the fluky coincidence of novelty, imagination and era. The east has always played a large part in the mind of the west, but perhaps in 2003 the Orient feels closer than ever — albeit through the filters of pop music and Fox News.

Is the west ready for foreign languages and weird music? More importantly, is a sacred cow like hip-hop ready for foreign languages and pop music? Only the most po-faced realists bury music in dogmatic gravitas and purist rhetoric. Fuck that. The exciting stuff sits uneasily on the edge of music and public consciousness, straddling forms but still infecting people's skulls. After all, as anyone will tell you, music is about bringing people together.

The genesis of this foreign exchange lies in club tracks churning through sounds and styles, trying to stay fresh and keep people dancing. But these thrilling tracks have also crossed over into the mass market. This little footnote in pop culture history is a testament to the radical creativity of mainstream casual music listeners, as well as the vision and talent of producers searching for the perfect beat; warriors firing breaks of shock and awe, weapons of mass entertainment. The creative struggle to keep people dancing and heads nodding is a battle against isolation as much as against orthodoxy.

The next time you hear someone bitch about boring and predictable pop music, flip some eastern flavour and remind them that in even the most counterfeit democracy of them all, the music charts, there can be moments of breathtaking revolution.



THE MEANING OF LIF

Interview with Mr Lif

by Ozi Batla

With the release of *Emergency Rations*, Mr Lif's instantly recognisable nasal tones and intelligent wordplay have set him apart from the majority. His defiantly conscious stance evokes the educator's poise of Chuck D, his effortless flows a less blunted Q-Tip, his choice of beats grant him a seat at the front of the class at the experimental new school.

Hailing from Boston, his presence in the local hip-hop scene dated back to 1994. Many of his experiences from around that time are touched on in his anthem 'New Man Theme'. They include scraping together money for demo recordings, sleeping on floors and ultimately dropping out of university. 'Did I make the right decision? Well my folks don't think so...' Hopefully they have come to their senses, as Lif has gone from strength to strength, touring the US and establishing himself as one of the most conscious of his generation. His one-man show was born out of necessity.

'I now live in California and my original DJ Fakts One lives in Boston still, so it's usually just me going from state to state with that record bag

of mine...I kinda like it. Shakespeare back in the day used to show up...all the players would be there and he'd just hand out the scripts...'

At Mr Lif's shows around the country this year, you would have seen a local backing up on the turntables. In Sydney, DJ Bonez was handed Lif's well-travelled record bag to interpret, and all over the US and the rest of the world, Lif has played dozens of gigs with different DJs. It is indicative of his approach to lyrics and making music in general.

'The only way you can translate your life experiences is to speak on them openly, so it depends on what you use your music for...at the moment it's all about the 'semi-sensitive thug', whereas my music is my therapy.'

Lif's reflective lyrics and original flows are right at home within the Def Jux family. His music is intellectual yet captivating, blending skills and content to the point of being mesmerising. Along with Aesop Rock, Slug and El P himself, he is a part of the next generation of emcees with a deep foundation in the conventional art of rhyme who then flip it with adventurous lyrics, beats and song structures. No surprise then that there is a feeling of mutual respect amongst the labelmates.

'Basically Def Jux is running shit in the states. El P has done such a great job with the label — I am so proud of El P, as a best friend and as a business associate. The label stands for something positive — everyone is doing something very unique in their own right but there's something cohesive overall.'

Lif's take on positivity is not immediately gratifying. It is based more in the belief that hip-hop can be a catalyst for radical thought than the typical 'I say hey, you say etc.', approach taken by some of his contemporaries, be they mainstream or underground. It is bizarre to think that his stance sets him so far apart, given that only ten years ago there was knowledge being dropped on the regular. It was in that dynamic climate that his foundations in hip-hop were laid, while at university in Boston.

'I went to college in 93 and look at what came out: *Black Moon*, *Enter the Stage*, *Blue Mind State*, *Enter the 36 Chambers*, *Midnight Marauders*...then in 94: *Sun Rises in the East*, *Come Clean*, *Return of the Boombox*, *Hard to Earn*, *Word Life*, *Illmatic*...it was overwhelming.'

Lif's enthusiasm is infectious, and like the heroes he rollcalls, he too can hold a party down. Despite opening his Sydney set with a blistering anti-war tirade, he flipped it with his next skit, tripping on stage and receiving a call from his mom. It was attention-grabbing and entertaining, and won over most of the audience with its innocence. Lif is all too aware of the need to balance the head with the hips — check his club-esque anthem 'New Man Theme' for proof.

'No-one wants to be preached to. I'm making observations; it's a method of catharsis. I like to share that with people. I made a point after making albums as dense as *I-Phantom* and *Emergency Rations* of doing something different. The last song I made was a party song with Dave Clarke (UK techno producer) but there's still some commentary...it's about dancing and party-

ing to shake away the stresses of the struggle...let people bug out, then hit them with the a cappella to let people know there is a mission statement.'

From *Emergency Rations* to *EarthCrusher*, Mr Lif's mission statement is clear. Out of the conspicuous silence and embarrassing hypocrisies of hip-hop 2003, Lif speaks from an unswervingly sane perspective with a voice that represents a large and mostly unheard sector of US society. From outside it is difficult to comprehend the pressure of conformity in modern day USA.

'It's a scary time, people have called the Def Jux office and slandered me...there's a couple of crazy motherfuckers who think George Bush is Jesus. But what I mostly get is a couple of hundred people a show who seem appreciative. That far outweighs a couple of loonies who think the government is actually working for the people. I've heard that the American government put me on a list of artists that they don't want speaking out against the war, but fuck 'em. It's my right to speak and I'll make plenty more songs providing commentary about what I feel is going on.'

After listening to Lif's observations in rhyme, the fact that more emcees are not speaking their mind is all the more ridiculous. The million untold stories that hip-hop opened for us are now in their tens of millions, with a million more headz on top of that — should we be asking 'What happened?' We are yet to hear Paris' new album *Sonic Jihad*, PE are off

the map temporarily, Sage Francis is — well, underground...most of the mainstream stay heavily coded. Mr Lif is not totally pessimistic about that main game.

'On the major label circuit, Nas is holding it down. 'I Can' is a powerful image of a positive black man, empowering kids of all backgrounds in a time that is especially dogmatic — corporations targeting young minds with logo recognition and product consumption. I tip my hat to Nas, he's the rapper who made it all make sense in 94.'

And there's still a glimmer of hope if even one popular figure with integrity stays positive. For Lif and his associates, even starting to reach an audience like Nas' means touring North America and beyond with their record bags. Lif's one-man show is a play on the EveryMan, or EveryPerson, better said. Maintaining empathy with his audience is as crucial as the complex message of unity itself. It is a strong message, but ideally it will hit a wide audience.

'Touring, I wish I saw more diversity, in terms of colour but also gender. My music seems to attract a lot of males still. It sometimes feels like the black artist is fading into obscurity on the underground tip. Maybe because I'm always touring with El and RJ and I'm the only black artist. Same with the audiences, but as we get more press, we get more diversity. I got some publicity in some mags that a read mostly by an audience of colour (XXL, Vibe), and I've got some recognition from that, which is impor-

I mostly get...a couple of hundred people a show who seem appreciative. That far outweighs a couple of loonies who think the government is actually working for the people.

tant. I don't want to feel like my music alienates anyone, and I don't want to have to make a song about relationships to get women to shows.'

Hopefully the audience for Mr Lif's original and skilful music will continue to grow, and as it does, more people may click to his ultimately unifying message. Based in the raw politics of the early 90s, his content is balanced with a very 21st century appreciation of the hook. His sense of urgency in the face of growing chaos and discontent is very real, but is comfortably supported by his head nodding flow. And in the end, even if his message fails to reach us, we can still dance to it in the rubble of modern life.

Mr Lif's I Phantom is out now through Definitive Jux

synaesthesia

records • cds

Level one 28 block place Melbourne ph: 96633551
www.synrecords.com info@synrecords.com

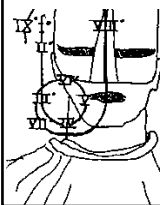
4 new synaesthesia label releases:

DÉLIRE: Diaspora CD (Avant electronics, whooshes, wisps, creaks, buzzes, drones and crashes) "Delire created his own world, with only vague connections to our own virtual explorations, he has processed sounds from computer game synthesis and somehow reconceptualized them into at turns, menacing, subdued, psychotic and atmospheric sounds from a genre that may not even properly exist yet." - In Press

ANTHONY PATERAS & ROBIN FOX : Coagulate CD
(2 parts comedy, 1 part violence) "A bold and challenging exercise in electroacoustic improvisation but one that succeeds due to the resourcefulness, imagination, and sensitivity of its creators" - stylusmagazine.com

SNACKLOR: It would have lived here CD

"Snacklor obviously pay close attention to detail and the result of their patience is nothing short of beautiful." Brainwashed .com / "This enormously varied but consistently beautiful disc testifies to the vibrancy of contemporary Antipodean soundart" - The Wire



HECKER: 2 track 12"

File under: Acid / Punk / Computer Music: 3 audio tracks and 6 locked grooves. Hyper-violent and extreme angular audio designed to dismantle perception and disorientate the listener.

NEXT: PARMEGIANI / SAMARTZIS Immersion split 12"

LATER: BAXTER / BROWN / PATERAS Trio CD

meem
the big
hoo-hah

the superb new album
by meem. warm disco &
bass driven funk. it's
music that has been
tested & loved. it's a
party album with soul.
the big hoo-hah is
available now in all
good record stores.
distributed by inertia.

non
label

Inertia



limited edition cotton & felt cd pouch available now. only 500 made. get one before they sell out for full discography, upcoming gigs & other interesting info see www.meem.org

REVIEWS

LOCAL RELEASES

Pimmon

*snaps*crackles*pops*

(Tigerbeat6, 2003)

So Paul Pimmon's long-awaited 'beats' album is finally out. Previous to this release we've only heard beats in a handful of Pimmon tracks (on the fabulous 'In Conjola Mode' 7" for instance). Admittedly not all these tracks have beats, but it's still something of a change of pace. The interesting thing is that Pimmon's signature sound – myriad samples and loops from archival radio tapes and other sources slowed down and digitally processed – is completely comfortable sitting in the perhaps more constrained environment of beats and bar-lines. 'No Jazz for Jokers' loops a chugging percussive guitar riff (maybe?) in an almost Jamaican groove, before what sounds like a sped-up squawking saxophone loop (in a perfectly inappropriate key) is dropped over the top. It's jaunty and catchy and head-nodding. 'Frosty Pink' loops and poses along with all sorts of squelches and burps – one's reminded of the '80s electronic experiments of fellow Sydneysiders Severed Heads, Scattered Order *et al.* RTW: Sound of a Finished Kiss' recalls Fennesz's guitar-drenched textures, with a clicking rhythm deep in the mix. This sets the tone for most of the rest of the CD. The final track ('The Sacred Dance of Mimi Lush') begins as a melody with back-masked beats, which are gradually drawn into a whirlpool of delays, everything feeding back on itself while a mournful machine bangs away in the background... And, delightfully, just as the crescendo's reached its peak, it all drops away and the melody restates itself for a final twirl across the ballroom. **Peter Hollo**

Shinjuku Thief

Medea

(Dorobo)

Performed at the Melbourne Festival in October last year, Melbourne-based electronic artist Darrin Verhagen's soundtrack to Euripides' *Medea*, a horrifying tale of a woman's vengeance, are dark, menacing and imbued with a deep sense of foreboding. The opening track 'Lachrymosa/The Moan is Loss' manages to be simultaneously haunting and terrifying, a subdued soundscape that builds into a disembodied female moan, which sets an unmistakable tone for the rest of the piece. 'City of the Future' begins with disintegrating chorals, before degenerating into a post-apocalyptic wasteland, featuring vengeful laughter, dull rumblings and evocative drones. Verhagen's self-described gothic orchestral

soundscape, refuses to let you escape, one minute building in intensity and volume on Un-think, depicting a chaotic, violent hellish world, whilst beginning reflective and quite orchestral on the next Sailing without a map. In fact Verhagen's sounds possess such violence, passion, form and suggestion that visuals don't feel necessary. Removing the sounds from their original context not only allows us a certain clarity to hear what they are articulating, but also allows us to engage an old friend to flesh them out. The imagination. And from this moment on, the journey gets considerably darker.

Bob Baker Fish

Oren Ambarchi and Martin Ng

Vigil

(Quecksilber/Inertia)

Oren Ambarchi's contemplative electro-acoustic works are becoming a fixture in the micro-sound/glitch world, and here he is joined in an album of sparse textures by avant-garde turntablist (and Sydney heart surgeon) Martin Ng. It's not clear from the packaging what the two musicians are playing, but this obscurity is part of the aesthetic. The first movement of 'Vigil' starts with 5 minutes of a long, repeated sine wave. Gradually distortions and other sounds begin to appear around the edges and half-way through a surprising silence between tones is interrupted by the sine wave returning, louder and distorted in pitch, until it eventually settles. The overall effect is as if one is listening to unnaturally stretched wind chimes. 'Vigil' then proceeds for two more movements, and the process of attenuation and distortion continues. A little more motion is introduced in the second movement, and strange processed speech is occasionally audible... Ambarchi & Ng are masters at controlled sound, so when the distortion and feedback peaks into something louder, it's really quite shocking. The third movement, at under 5 minutes, is almost a postscript, with more of the same, but chimes and cymbals more evident as real sounds. The final audio track on the CD is another work, entitled 'When Love Comes Back to Haunt You'; polyphonic sine waves, sweeping harmonics (reminiscent of Eastern throat-singing) and a clearer overall shape to the piece make for a beautiful depth in the sound – a definite highlight. But perhaps more engaging and accessible than these tracks are the two videos also featured on this CD, created by Tina Frank (who is responsible for most of the Mego label's artwork). Abstract shapes come gradually in and out of focus and change in time in a completely complimentary manner with the music. **Peter Hollo**

Various Artists

Nocturnal Emissions

(Silent Recordings)

Well, we all know what 'nocturnal emissions' are don't we? The opening track, 'Move with Me' by Shapeshifter (featuring Lady 6) is damn near perfect. Tight, albeit simple beats are melded with supersexy velvet vocals delivering summery, love-driven lyrics. Deepchild's following track, 'Conspiracies in a Quiet Room' is so perfectly matched that it segues seamlessly from the previous track before developing into a more intricate, rhythm-driven, bass-rich wonder. This excellent start leads to a less involving middle, and the compilation doesn't regain steam until Soundlab's 'Normalize This' and Coda's beat and bass driven 'Holy City', a track which shows just how far have progressed. A good compilation always has that delightful moment when it delivers the treasure seeker gold: a shockingly good musical group that you've somehow overlooked, and in this case it's Tonemeister's 'Trinity' that strikes a chord with its weird but effective mix of technology and tribal/spaced out techtronica. *Nocturnal Emissions* is a melange of rich acoustic sounds, romantic melodies and jazzy accompaniments, with beats that turn out to be just that little bit unexpected. **Serena Armstrong**

Anthony Pateras & Robin Fox

Coagulate

(Synaesthesia)

The Melbourne based duo of Fox and Pateras have become quite renowned over the last couple of years via their strange, though entertaining improvisational electro acoustic performances, in which Fox utilises Pateras as his sound source, and in real time treats and manipulates him electronically. Utilising discarded piano frames, contact mics, undisclosed objects, and vintage synths that are then deconstructed/enhanced/disturbed via Fox's computer processing, the resultant sounds are a strange often ill fitting mesh between the two worlds. Sounding like an army of hysterical midgets trapped in a tub of rapidly setting glue, 'Vox erratum' echoes Patton's *Adult Themes for Voice* with its vocally engineered spits, spats, growls, grunts and garbled verbal nonsense, though differs via the odd electronic spasm or treated vocal, courtesy of Fox. Elsewhere there are sparse industrial tamperings, which descend into lush buzzes of static and what may be Pateras sawing at piano wires on '44 Degree Splinter', frenetic spasms of electronics, voice and strange objects on the harsh and unfortunate 'Cranking the Dwarf'. What the duo create on *Coagulate*, which incidentally refers to the



process of changing fluid into a thickening mass, is their own language of sound – their own distinctive thickened mass, that through odd shudders, spastic blasts of distortion and brooding Zen-like drones is unlike anything else around. **Bob Baker Fish**

Délire

Diaspora

(Synaesthesia)

Initial listens find it hard to work out where to place this local purveyor of electrics and peculiar sounds. Perhaps somewhere alongside prominent Austrians Hecker, General Magic or the rest of the digital noise, shards and laptop gurus from the Mego stable. Avant electronics, whooshes, wisps, creaks, buzzes, drones and crashes, all clean and polished cascade into solidified precarious structures, layers, swirls, schizophrenic fragments and bursts. Sound vague? Sound confused? Sound odd? Well yeah, good. It's only during *rink* and *qthoth*, the two QuickTime movies that all the connections begin to form and the project begins to make a semblance of sense. A disjointed game figure in a virtual environment, perhaps a fragmented video game,

that spasms and spluts along with the music. It's here you realise the depth of this musical feat, the unexpected almost mathematical logic and precision of this project. Not only has Délire created his own world, with only vague connections to our own virtual explorations, he has processed sounds from computer game synthesis and somehow reconceptualized them into at turns, menacing, subdued, psychotic and atmospheric sounds from a genre that may not even properly exist yet. **Bob Baker Fish**

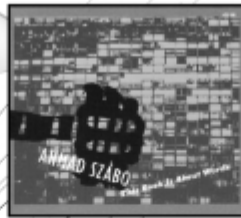
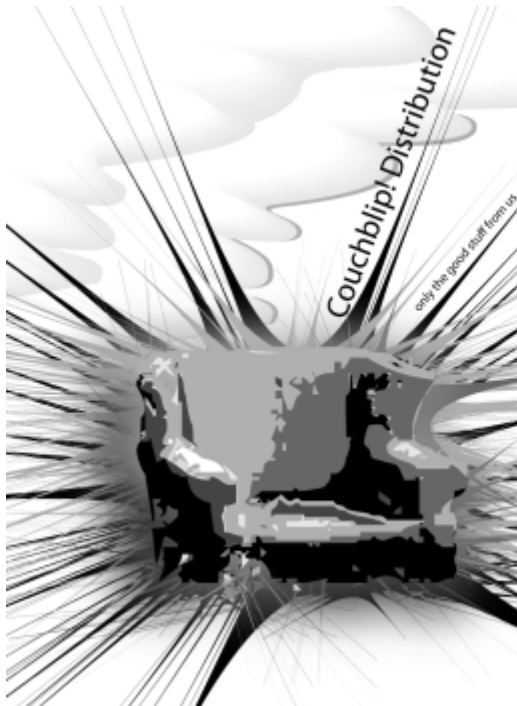
Snawklor

It Would Have Lived Here

(Synaesthesia)

The Melbourne based abstract electronic duo of Dylan Krasevac and Nathan Gray are back with their second album in what seems like six months, though in reality it is probably closer to a year. It seems so recent thanks to the impact of their debut, *Rushes*, a peculiar electronic journey pitched somewhere between the inner circuitry of the trusty laptop and field recordings of a bubbling soft drink or the gentle reverberations of a metal on metal. *It Would Have Lived Here* is the perfect extension of

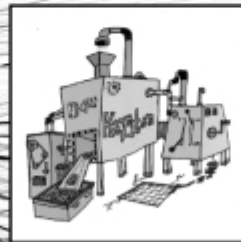
Rushes. Combining samples, field recordings, and more peculiar snatches of sound, it finds Snawklor more restrained, at times ambient, content to bask in the warm drones of cuts like the amazingly hypnotic 11 minutes plus of 'War In The Trees', or become all glitchy, sticky and abstract on its follow up 'Nocturgical'. It's gentle, unexpected and most of all patient, the duo allowing themselves plenty of space and creating a unique emotional resonance. Utilising numerous field recordings including the sounds of a babbling brook, Snawklor remix the world around them, altering the emphasis, the order, the meaning of their surroundings. What's interesting is that just when you think it's all coming together into some kind of abstract funky piece, Snawklor pull back, teetering on the edge of cohesiveness – almost teasing the listener with their off-kilter nature. It's work that exists on the cutting edge of sound, whilst still feeling innocent and full of hope. It's also music unlike anything that you will here either here or overseas and as a result is well worth searching out. **Bob Baker Fish**



Ahmad Szabo

This Book is about Words

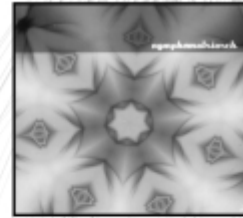
"Supple, acoustic and electro-ambient compositions on Eastern Developments - the upstart imprint spearheaded by Prefuse 73"



Karsten Pflum

Tracks

"Warm interface returns with the poignant and achingly beautiful sounds of Denmark's Jacob Madsen"



Venetian Snare & Hecate

Nymphomatriarc

"Cutting-edge drill beats, raucous noise and tempestuous breaks - destined to corrode your soul"



Various

Merck Mix 2 - Summer 2003

"36 tracks of Merck goodness from melodious instrumental hip-hop to clipped up and rubbed down electronica"

REVIEWS

Nightswimmer

And A Crescent Half Lit The Sky

(Shahnameh)

Brooding in the dark half-lit swells of sound where atmospheres and electronics collide, local artist Nightswimmer continues his personal trawl through the evocative and dreamy shadows of contemporary electronica. Offering tightly structured, gentle yet highly emotive sounds on his debut EP and 2001's sublime *Can the Mechanical Be Beautiful*, Nightswimmer has loosened up here, developed upon his approach, escaped his comfort zone and blurred some of the sharper contours of his sounds. Equal parts smooth downtempo groove, evocative ambient drawl, heavily sedated experimental electronica, and hypnotic dub, Nightswimmer again exudes a carelessness ability to seamlessly assimilate his sounds into his own distinctive brew. Where *And the Crescent Half Lit the Sky* differs from previous outings is his willingness to rely on less uniform structures, and to give some of his more left field tendencies an airing, which not only provides for greater diversity, more surprisingly makes for a much smoother album. Utilising real instruments such as bass, guitar, mandolin and trombone, alongside the programming, Nightswimmer also steps out with Dan Tu, a Vietnamese 4 stringed instrument, adding an exotic world music feel to his sounds. Another welcome development are the breathless vocals of Mimi Iakovidis on 'Underneath the Cloud Cover', as are the warm electronically-treated bagpipe drones of waiting for almond eyes, a tonal beatless cut that could never have found a home on previous albums. *And the Crescent Half Lit the Sky* marks a major development or perhaps refinement in Nightswimmer's approach, whilst remaining true to his past, this time he has cast his pail wider and in doing so produced a lasting work of poise and beauty. **Bob Baker Fish**

B(if)tek

Frequencies Will Move Together

(SubVocal/Inertia)

Having left their major label deal with Sony this latest album, a double album if you count the remix disc, is a welcome return to form. In many ways this record contains just as many pop elements as 2020 but they lurk behind soft vocoder vocals and moments straight out of Chris & Cosey's 1984 album *Songs Of Love & Lust*. Playful melodies, rounded analogue synths and laidback electro beats dominate the first half of the album, with the second half being taken up by more exotic ambient experiments with sub bass sounds. The obvious pop song 'Read

To Me' immediately brought the phrase 'intelligensia dance music' to mind. On the second CD B(if)tek handed their tracks over to their friends to remix with varying results. The Emergency and Architecture In Helsinki play up the 80s elements with horrifying results whilst better mixes come from Lawrence English, with an uncharacteristically ambient acid sound circa 1993, and Clue To Kalo who introduces a Kevin Shields-like haze to 'Faded Blue' and outshines the internationals Scanner, Khan and Monolake. **Sebastian Chan**

John Chantler

Monoke

(::Room40::)

John Chantler is originally from Brisbane but has spent the last few years in Misho-Cho, a small rural Japanese town outside of Osaka. From there he has run his record label, Inventing Zero, and written music. Some of this output has ended up on this debut album for Lawrence English's ::Room 40:: label. The Japanese influence reaches only as far as the title, *Monoke* (after Studio Ghibli's epic anime Princess Monoke), as the album covers a kind of hinterland between IDM and post-rock, suffused with warm drones, minor key synths and loping metal drums. The highlights are 'Play Play' with its lumbering, almost mutant skank and midnight slumber drone melodies, and 'Parts Plastic 1+2' which breaks down to a heavily effected guitar outro. Again packaged in amazing Rinzen-made custom sleeves, this is another strong release on ::Room40::: **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

Motion: Movement in Australian Sound

(Preservation/Inertia)

It would be a cliché to start this review with a glib statement about Australian artists being able to 'match it' with the rest of the world, not to mention inaccurate. With names such as Pimmon, Alan Lamb, Clue To Kalo and Oren Ambarchi gracing the back cover of this double CD adventure, you would be forgiven for assuming that it's an international compilation that just happens to have Australian artists en masse, such is their respective standing in their sonic fields. Add to this the fact that each of the submitted tracks deal with the specific theme of 'motion' and you have an intriguing and ultimately rewarding document of the various undercurrents (pun intended) existing in Australian music and sound art. The interpretations of the theme vary from the obvious (Chris Smith's 'Plates Shift' with its slowly creaking tectonic guitars) to the absurd

(Sue Harding's 'Dot Matrix' utilises the sound of a dot matrix printer in action) and from the obscure (Minit's lovely 11 minute 'Ijmuiden') to the sublime (Alan Lamb's field recordings of desert powerlines in 'Fragment of the Outback' are strangely uplifting in their evanescent rumblings). Of course, with twenty two tracks stretched across two hours there's always going to be the odd disagreeable moment, but despite this (and perhaps because of it) *Motion* marks a significant point in Australian music. **DH**

Curse Ov Dialect

Lost In The Real Sky

(Valve/Mush)

Melbourne's Curse Ov Dialect have been one of the most interesting Australian hip-hop crews for several years now. Originally working with Ollie Olsen, their early shows had more in common in terms of theatrics with Throbbing Gristle than anything hip-hop, and perhaps fortunately they existed and grew outside of the politics of Melbourne's hip-hop scenes. Then came the whole Anticon/Clouddead wave and suddenly weird hip-hop was all in vogue (albeit for a short while). In 2001, Curse were signed to US label Mush, home to Clouddead, and *Lost In The Real Sky* is the outcome of this exciting partnership. Having seen Curse live it's difficult to imagine it working well on record, their first self-released album lacked the dynamism of their shows, but on *Lost In The Real Sky* they have managed to make a record that not only captures the spirit and energy of their live sets, but also has audible lyrics (!). Whilst everything radiates a strong psychaesthetic surrealism, at the core there are strong anti-racist, multiculturalist themes – which give the record a very specific Australian-ness. Likewise the beats are drawn from literally everywhere – Arabic, mediaeval English, and of course traditional Macedonian. At the helm of production, Pasobionic's immense skills (often buried in a live mix) are proudly on show. Having seen this record in the shelves of Hardwax in Berlin with a 'recommended' sticker on it, is a great sign that Australian hip hop can be both unique and global – regardless what the haters in the US reckon. **Sebastian Chan**

REVIEWS

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES

CYCLIC DEFROST



Messer Chups

Black Black Magic

(Valve/Solnze)

Far from hiding behind Mother Russia's apron strings, these St Petersburg natives have developed a voracious appetite for all things Western – at least up until the 1950s. Things get off to a strange start when Messer Chups paddles out into a Batman-flavoured surf break in 'Agent Tremolo'. The bikini-clad pool party being held at the 'Barbara Brylska Hotel' that follows soon takes on a dark note when a flamboyantly weeping woman gives it a voyeuristic edge. The rusty glockenspiel giving 'Lo-Fi Woman' its impetus washes nicely over a double-bass dance and you realise here that what appeared to be a melting pot of primarily West Coast American culture is actually being underpinned by a thoroughly pervasive Russian folk influence. It soaks everything from here on, the essential port melding the whole musical trifle. The rest of the album provides one dreamily moment after another, a matryoshka or Babushka doll bursting with surprise after delicately illustrated surprise. It could all be quite kitsch, albeit high kitsch, but there is something about the craft with which Oleg Gitarkin, the brains and driving force behind Messer Chups, has assembled this work that makes it much more than that. The sound is filmic in that it is highly evocative of all that made 50s cinema the treat it is, yet with the Communist 'threat' turned deliciously on its head you start to realise how many levels are at work here. Many such realisations eventually dawn and reward repeat spins. Alternatively, grab a daiquiri, a Playboy bunny or two and get twisting by that pool. **Benjamin Millar**

Kuchen Meets Mapstation

Kuchen Meets Mapstation

(Karaoke Kalk)

Delicate, otherworldly, organic electronica, courtesy of former Pale Saints vocalist Meriel Barham (Kuchen) and Stefan Schneider (Mapstation) On Kuchen meets Mapstation sound is either samples – rather than flat, unbelievable synthesis of instruments – or it is synthesized adventure, where synthesis represents creation rather than substandard replication. Beautifully considered and delightfully paced, the opening track 'Primary' displays this duo's penchant for combining divine synthesized sounds with engaging rhythms. 'Your Bonjours' introduces the voice to what is predominantly an instrumental affair, using repetitive sampling of a short phrase in the same style as Steve Reich's 'It's Gonna Rain', but with markedly different effect. The

delightful 'Bound' takes a fragmented instrumental riff, using it to suggest further alteration and repetition. A play with the structure of the work introduces tinny, buzzy sounds (think industrial space invaders) making your ears perk after the smoothness of the preceding tracks. *Kuchen meets Mapstation* displays a pure inventiveness, attention to detail and a natural proclivity for creating perfectly shaped sounds. **Serena Armstrong**

Rob the Viking

Beats to Pillage and Conquer By

(Battle Axe)

Minus the capacity for communication that an MC brings – both in terms of literal meaning and subtler non-verbal cues – hiphop instrumentals tend to sound hollow and unfinished. Though there are notable exceptions, many hiphop producers simply lay down a loop and rely on the MC to provide colour and tension, thus reducing the instrumentals (in particular those that accompany vocal cuts on 12"s) to mere blank canvasses. Obversely, producers such as DJ Shadow fill the sonic spectrum to the point that only the bravest of MCs attempt to navigate their terrain. Despite his hurly burly name, Rob the Viking dextrously treads a middle path between two poles and in doing so provides a set of tense, melodically rich and rhythmically diverse instrumentals that serve equally well as listening material as well as points of departure for those that are lyrically inclined. As part of the Battle Axe stable and a part time member of Swollen Members, Rob the Viking is no stranger to dark and foreboding beats, and though tracks like 'She's Always Right' with its Janis Joplin-like vocal refrain and haunting piano arpeggio are wrapped in a blanket of melancholy, they retain an air of prettiness that is easy to underestimate. Sensitive piano motifs appear on nearly every track, and many of the beats, including the album closer 'Move it Up' have a quaintness and deftness of touch that is compelling. It really begs the question where the title came from, as these beats are less pillage and conquer than caress and fondle. **DH**

Trost

Trost

(Valve)

With disturbing traces of Perry Como tarted up with a go-go twist, 'The Sound of Your Eyes' is a seductive entrée into the seedy little world of Kwikeast Annika Trost. One half of the wine-soaked (often literally) German shock-schlock outfit Cobra Killer, Trost's self-titled outing is a burlesque wonderland

of barely-contained energy squeezed into a bent and erratic corset. The looping brassy drama of 'Can of Nowhere' and defiant insistency of 'Bleeding Knee' are civil enough but soon pummelled away by the rhino charge of 'Douchebag', a fuzzy, boomy, Atari Teenage Riot of a glitchfest. Elsewhere nursery rhyme childishness belieing a lurking anti-innocence collides with 30s German Cabaret (2030 that is) and whipped cream and cherry sass leave Machine Gun Fellatio looking like Sunday School teachers. Trost's wonderfully weird solo outing is an alarmingly refreshing take on the musical form. With able assistance from Patric Catani and Jasmin Tabatabai, she inhabits a realm not too distant from that of New York City shock-queen Peaches (with whom Cobra Killer briefly toured circa Big Day Out 2002) only with greater panache and discrete musical sense. Delivering 14 tracks in 30 minutes, Trost is loath to linger, cracking the 3-minute mark just once. Nevertheless, and with a due nod to the deftly crafted mix by FM Einheit of Einsturzende Neubauten, it has to be said that trash never smelt so good. **Benjamin Millar**

Kevin Blechdom

Bitches without Britches

(Chicks on Speed/Inertia)

Though Kevin Blechdom's live shows late last year left me bemused, they failed to nourish me musically – it seemed to be a one-joke show relying on the farce of combining banjo, twin laptops and piss-take songs. I left the gigs thinking I'd witnessed the post-millennial Weird Al Yankovic. How wrong I was – *Bitches without Britches* has single-handedly renewed my faltering interest in music, with its twin prongs of biting wit and inspired musicianship – and I now regret not realising the genius hidden inside that banjo clutching freckled red head. Though on the surface she shares commonalities in method with labelmates Chicks on Speed, Kevin Blechdom's world is far kookier, yet far more subtle, and possessed of a knowing naivety that belies the complexities of her arrangements, not to mention her satire. Though difficult to take in at first due to the thick strokes with which she coats her canvas (and her perverse sense of humour) there is magic in the musical detail and Blechdom's strangely affecting world view (which seems to be poised somewhere between Frank Zappa and Mel Brooks). Accompanied by her intricate productions and more than competent banjo playing, not to mention her underrated voice, songs such as the gorgeously sensuous 'Gutterball', the glitchabilly of 'Interspecies

REVIEWS

Love' and a cover of, ahem... 'Private Dancer' sparkle like a teenage crush. Despite all this praise for details, when it comes down to the nitty gritty – and let's face it, there's plenty of nit and grit in *Bitches*, it would be nothing without the brilliance of Blechdom's songwriting – tracks twist and turn seemingly at random – yet at every twist there's a thrilling point of interest, be it a to-die-for vocal inflection, astounding bass burp or ooh-err turn of phrase. Oh, and don't forget to check the liner notes for an even greater spiral into debauchery. **DH**

Yoshimi & Yuka

Flower With No Color
(Ipecac)

The legend is as follows: Yoshimi P-We from Japanese underground weirdos the Boredoms and Yuka Honda from cute American/ Japanese duo Cibo Matto drove up Mt Ikoma in Japan with a truckload of toy instruments. When they got to the top they started playing and recorded the results. When they finished they took the results to a studio and recorded some overdubs. In total the whole process took seven days. What they were left with was one of the most relaxed, joyful and innocent bouts of improvisation around. If you're a fan of the Boredoms you might be familiar with their brand of jungle – that's lions and tigers not burnt out English drum and bass heads. They also have a penchant for loose childlike improvisations, and whilst in the past it had a tendency to come across dense and freeform, *Flower with No Color* maintains a gentle sense of structure. With nervous Eastern melodies and a Zen-like patience, woody percussion mixes in with bamboo flutes, whistles, pianos, the odd wail or moan, and the very prominent sounds of birds happily chirping in the trees. Yoshimi and Yuka produce a strange form of hypnotic sweetness, their sounds feeling at one with nature, sincere and stripped down to the core. This is beautiful and different, its raw freeform nature producing an almost tribal/ spiritual feel. It's heartfelt personal music that can't help but lighten the soul of everyone who comes in contact with it. **Bob Baker Fish**

Plumblin

Circles
(Hydrogen Dukebox)

Everything about Plumblin screams restraint and purpose, as *Circles* is one of those obscure yet captivating little projects which despite its beauty and intent feels destined to be overlooked. That's perhaps because this New York based artist is creating music well outside current trends. For Plumblin,

the music isn't about movements, it's about movement – with *Circles* apparently conceived whilst getting all existential and contemplating the state of the universe during a cross-country jaunt. Whilst the music is clearly very personal, Plumblin maintains strict structures, coaxing deep warm rhythmic throbs from synths in place of beats, over-using repetition to hypnotic effect and generally keeping everything smooth gentle and rhythmic, in a soft sensual kind of way. Even when the human voice comes into play it's clipped, stripped of meaning and carefully inserted into the tune, and treated just like every other instrument. With all tracks entitled 'Circle', and numbered 1-10, it seems like there's an odd kind of artistic pretentiousness afoot, however with each track so obviously linked, and the sounds so minimal and calming it actually makes sense in a subconscious, transcendental way. This music is uplifting. Forget your head, Plumblin makes music for your soul. **Bob Baker Fish**

Kid Koala

Some Of My Best Friends Are DJs
(Ninja Tune)

Clocking in at just 35 minutes this is the no-non-sense new album from Montreal-based turntablist Kid Koala. This brevity is excusable because of the cute *Nufonia Must Fall* comic novel that he has also just released, and the fact that like a mixtape, this record is best listened to in one sitting, rather than a series of individual 'tracks'. Dixieland jazz, American folk and blues, Pacific exotica and spoken word are all cut up and manipulated over Fat Albert breakbeats. Unlike Q-Bert's high speed futuristic Wave Twisters or DJ Shadow's precision sampling it's very raw with rough pitch bends and scratch inaccuracies being preserved adding a certain edginess and endearing wobbliness to the album.

Sebastian Chan

Zongamin

Self-titled
(XL)

This is the work of one man, Japan-born / London-based, illustrator / musician zongamin Susumu Mukai. It's a short album, just over 43 minutes in length (actually just the right length for a vinyl LP, but short for a CD). The twelve tracks are mostly low-level instrumental funk with an 80s post-punky-poppy twist. The individual tracks are varied in form and sound, but are held together by a sense of kitsch, fun and loose groove. Zongamin navigates the space between electronic and acoustic sounds well, and defines a large aural space through overdriven drum

machines, hand percussion, sampled beats and funky guitar and bass riffs. Zongamin uses pop structures to propel the songs along and avoids repetition through subtle changes in atmosphere and texture within and between songs. Zongamin could as easily rock dance-floors or living rooms: its just got that right amount of ambiguity to be groovy but weightless, funky but light. The obvious 80s riffs and licks are pulled off without seeming ostentatious, obvious or overbearing. There are abstract textural and tonal commonalities throughout the record, but the most immediate feature is the variety of short instrumental vignettes with vastly diverse roots and timbre. Zongamin is a quite subtle record of forced funk and is both vaguely satisfying and mystifying. **Vaughan Healey**

Dizzee Rascal

Boy In Da Corner
(XL)

Dizzee Rascal is the 18 year old badboy genius who gets knifed in Ayia Napa one week and Mercury nominations the next. With credentials like that, its no wonder that the electronic music critic cognoscenti have been creaming themselves over this record. The most extraordinary characteristic of this album is the almost complete absence of sustain (Sustain is the part of a sound that hangs in the air after a note has been played): almost every sound is attack or decay; a hit, a stab, or impact. These sonic qualities are the logical conclusion of the last few years of UK Garage. Dizzee Rascal's beats are the rubbery and elliptical derivatives of UKG circa 2003, but he has expanded set tempos and turned dancefloor tracks into dark minimal narratives with characteristic tense and squawking MC delivery. This is an album composed from halting vocals, bass-stabs, percussive hits, cocked guns, pizzicato strings, tics and spasms. Decay, attack, hits and stabs make the record and they also shape Dizzee Rascal's lyrical environment. The anthemic single 'Fix Up, Look Sharp' (built around Billy Squier's Big Beat break) is straight and plain UK hip-hop. Other cuts like 'Stop Dat' and 'I Luv U' (the initial single that broke through the garage scene) are aggressive, dislocated and fast bassline tracks. The remaining tracks are the tactile and grimy residue somewhere between perverted bassline garage and hip-hop bounce. The tempos don't really clock in as fast or slow but are elastic, downshifted rhythms with a disjointed sense of pace and metre. More often than not, it's Dizzee's flow that provides the rhythmic foundation absent from the beats; lines are punctuated by regular rhymes and his anxious manner. Check the last 60 seconds of 'Jus a Rascal'



and he sounds more like Korn's Jonathon Davis than any UKG geeza. Rhythms are built around dancehall kickdrum patterns, ska riffs or hiphop choruses, but it's a largely new and idiosyncratic topography. This is a dark and unconventional record with remarkable originality, clarity and spirit.

Vaughan Healey

The Rootsman

New Testament

(Meteosound)

Having been a pivotal player in the UK digi-dub/new dub scene for nearly a decade, *New Testament* is somewhat of a departure for Bradford's Rootsman. Though his productions have never strayed into droll reenactments of past dub glories and paint-by-numbers skanks as some of contemporaries have, the current release forges a new path that lies somewhere between dancehall, hiphop and downtempo. Although at first the productions lack the jaw dropping audacity of contemporary dancehall (and seem to suffer for it) and are largely devoid of any wizardry on the boards, it's with repeated listens that the glassy rhythms heat up in

sympathy with their respective vocalists, who are the real stars here. Thirteen vocalists feature across the eleven rhythms (two of which are versioned by other vocalists). Dayjah opens the album with her beautifully affecting and curiously flat-sounding voice, smoothly riding an arpeggiated guitar and shuffling hiphop beat. Other highlights include Determine's 'Let's Be Friends' with its playful delivery (and change for the normally rootsy Determine), and Daddy Freddy's frantic chanting on 'Live Forever'. Although it never quite ignites, *New Testament* simmers away comfortably occasionally showering sparks of brilliance. **DH**

Vytear

The Great Rubber Audio

(g25productions)

Vytear's knows the score. Rhythmically complex, melodic electronic music isn't hard to come by, but there's a distinct sense of fun in Vytear's gear that makes it a cut above. For instance on 'Out Clean', a wah-wah synth line meanders around beats which gradually become more frenetic, with jungle's amen crunchiness joining in until the synth becomes a

funky bassline... This recalls the best of Luke Vibert's amen-infused junglisms (joyfully continuing in his latest incarnation, Amen Andrews). There's a pervading musicality throughout, so even the beats hop around in a melodic fashion. Cute jaunty melodies poke their heads in, often jostling for space and cutting in for one or two bars in the middle of something else. Apart from the odd excursion into ambience, Vytear's interested in the frenetic beats, and whether they're pure cut up breaks or the more recent DSP-effected beats (think Funkstörung on speed), they hit the spot without ever taking away from the melodic content. **Peter Hollo**

Luke Vibert

Amen Andrews Vol 1 & 2

(Rephlex)

Interestingly in the last few months there's been a big upswing in interest in early jungle. That 1993/4 sound of mashed up amens, crazy time stretching and ragga vocals has moved back into favour with Soundmurderer's mix CD on Tigerbeat6 (reviewed in issue 4) and a series of new records on Planet M who have also decided to license a retrospective of



AN EAR PIMP MUSIC COMPILATION

AW-T CHOO

available at:
reefer records
326 crown st surry hills
spank records
403 bourke st surry hills
warped records
14 bayswater rd kings cross
contact ear pimp thru:
www.reeferrecords.com

12 strange new musics by:

Christa Hughes & The Maestro Surgeons

Rantzen & Spinoglio, Non-Bossy Posse

SodomSonic, Kid & Khan vs Cherry 2000

Mark Murphy, Cherry 2000, Raycie Puttycat



distribution by www.clevage.biz

REVIEWS

veteran producer Remarc as well as Rephlex putting out noise/junglist DJ Scud's Ambush compilation.

Here are the first of a series of five old skool EPs from Luke Vibert which are all crashing amens and classic samples from that 'ardkore period. Seven dancefloor cuts over two 12"s, so authentic you can almost smell the Vicks in the air. BYO glowsticks.

Sebastian Chan

Esmerine

If Only A Sweet Surrender

To The Nights To Come Be True

(Resonant)

The Godspeed You! Black Emperor nexus must be one of the most productive around at the moment. There are so many side projects each with their own variation on a core of themes of isolation, alienation and melancholy. Esmerine is the least wordy of the side projects, and is a duo of Bruce Cawdron and Beckie Foon who are also part of Set Fire To Flames and A Silver Mt Zion. Pretty much stripped back to cello and marimba with minimal percussion, the Esmerine project has much more in common with minimalist modern classical music than art-rock. All eight tracks carry a certain sadness, a sound-tracked melancholy, that makes this a beautiful and contemplative listening experience, and further proof that Godspeed's side projects manage to be both quantity and quality. **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

Brutal Police Menace

(Broklyn Beats/Synaesthesia)

Brooklyn's Broklyn Beats have been putting out a series of nasty 7"s for a while now exploring the noisy end of breakbeat. *Brutal Police Menace* is a collection of appropriately harsh tracks targeting police violence around the world. Garth Vader opens the compilation with the upfront 'Pig Pop' which revolves around a reggae sample 'run citizen run run / the policeman has got a gun' before exploding into a distorted amen mash up. Elsewhere things are slower, dark and grim – Nettle's 'The End Of Public Space' is effectively claustrophobic and Huge Voodoo's 'NYPD Blues' uses Mike Ladd's manic freestyle on the end of a telephone. With the world collapsing around us this sort of punk/industrial throwback is likely to be more significant than the cocooning effects laptop electronic music, and as the liner notes from label owners Criterion & Heather write; 'a little engagement with the real world... would do wonders for a whole sub-culture too obsessed with conceptual abstraction and its own minutiae'. I concur. **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

150

(K7)

Germany's K7 label has become a real mish mash of genres and styles. Beginning as a label releasing mix-videos such as the 3Lux and then X Mix Series, with their computer generated imagery over then then bustling German acid, the label is now home to artists as diverse as Kruder & Dorfmeister, Funkstörung, Ursula Rucker, Swayzak and A Guy Called Gerald, as well as being the label behind the extremely popular DJ Kicks mix CD series. So to celebrate their 150th release the label has put out a triple pack compilation of two CDs and one DVD. The CDs contain a raft of tracks from artists on their roster with a skew towards tracks that have been previously hard to find on CD. Amongst the stand-outs are Jamie Lidell's fabulous 'cover' of Herbert's 'The Audience', Nicolette's ancient 'No Government' and Playgroup's deadpan cover of Depeche Mode's 'Behind The Wheel'. The first CD shows off the more loungey cocktail bar end of the roster opening strongly with Ursula Rucker's 'Supa Sista' but sliding into gentrification territory towards the end, the second disc is better and dirtier ending in a hip hop vein with interstellar funk from Mike Ladd and The Slits' Ari UP guesting with Terranova. The third part of the package, a DVD, contains 13 of K7's music videos including Herbert's 'Suddenly', dubiously over-sexed videos from Tosca and Peace Orchestra, and the Designer's Republic's splendid clip for Funkstörung's 'Grammy Winners' which is like an animated DR portfolio. Given the diversity of K7 the compilation as a whole unit holds together surprisingly well, and the bonus DVD is a treat given the almost impossibility of seeing any of the clips on local television. **Sebastian Chan**

Alex Cortex

Inward CTRL

(Ann Aimee/Couchblip)

Here's a throwback to the prime of the early 90s electronic music scene. Alex Cortex's *Inward CTRL* harks back to that golden age of Detroit-influenced electronic listening music, way before it all changed with Autechre's *Tri Repetae* and Oval's *Systemisch*. Melodies disappeared in favour of complex beat programming, DSP effects, and digital abstraction. Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Volume I*, the two *Artificial Intelligence* compilations, all were carried by palatial melodic sequences and straight forward analogue beats that owed a lot to mid-80s Detroit's crystal synths and 808 beats. Numerous little boutique labels like

Op:Art, Iridial and others pushed this on until about 1994. So on to Alex Cortex's *Inward CTRL*. Twenty four untitled tracks, mostly short ideas that run for two minutes or so, that revolve around those same melodic sequences – simple, un-difficult music and lovely listening for a night in, or the sunrise comedown. **Sebastian Chan**

Broadcast

HaHa Sound

(Warp)

Broadcast stick out like a sore thumb on Warp roster but with the way things have been heading with electronic music fusing with indie in recent years (Berlin's Morr Music especially), perhaps their time has finally arrived. *HaHa Sound* is a spectacular record – fairground melodies, analogue electronics, superbly recorded drums, and Trish Keenan's exquisitely icy crystalline voice – all come together in a strange carnivalesque late Sixties pop haze. Indeed except for the Krautrock drive of 'Pendulum', the rhythms are straight from the fairground. There are moments where this record echoes the Pale Saints, 4AD's early 90s arty shoegazers, but listening to this repeatedly in recent weeks the most remarkable feature of the album is its recording and mastering. The subtle grain of Keenan's voice is brought prominently into the mix, the electronics, bass and guitars fill every other nook and cranny of the stereo space, and the drum-kit sounds like it is in the room with you. **Sebastian Chan**

Desormais

I Am Broken And Remade

(Intr_Version)

Splendidly packaged in the unique custom hand stitched sleeves that Intr_Version are becoming known for, this is he second full length album from Mitchell Akiyama's project with Joshua Treble. Titled *I Am Broken And Remade* each track glistens with thousands of tiny sound fragments. Full of chopped and processed guitars, cello, multi-tracked voice, this record's closest reference points would be Fennesz's *Endless Summer* and fellow Canadian Tim Hecker, although it is closer in density and atmosphere to Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Micro-edits of samples swarm and buzz with fragments of plucked instruments coming together to create randomised music box melodies, 'No Mysteries Can Be Tolerated' thrusts along on a sequence of heavy processed drums until the track slowly dissolves, whilst 'Under A Watching Sky' unravels intersecting drones. A fantastic record that reveals more with each listen – headphones essential. **Sebastian Chan**



DVD RELEASES

The Cinematic Orchestra

The Man With A Movie Camera
(Ninja Tune)

J Swincoe and friends were invited by the organisers of the Porto European City of Culture 2000 to score a soundtrack for the 1929 Russia silent film by Dziga Vertov, *The Man With A Movie Camera*. The result was a resounding success and is documented in this release. Dziga Vertov's avant garde silent film was a milestone for its time, using radical editing techniques and cinematic pyrotechnics to portray a typical day in Moscow. The film opens with his manifesto, outlining his idea of the film as an 'experiment', his search for an 'absolute language of cinema' and his wish to step outside theatrical conventions and to create cinema that had its own 'rhythm'. He builds on the man/machine relationship with multiple exposures of workers overlaid with images of machines, day-to-day events such as a woman sewing meshed with a woman feeding film into an editing machine. He makes us look at mundane objects and events in a different way, because he takes the camera where we cannot go, up smoke stacks, and under train tracks. J Swincoe's score captures the mood of the film perfectly, using some ideas realised in their last album *Everyday*, but mostly new material. It's their finest release yet, showing a maturity usually reserved for the jazz masters. The DVD is packed with extras that really make this a very special release, a short doco on the making of the film, the original super 8 version of 'All That You Give', the Cinematic Orchestra live at Cargo in London 2002, the video edit of 'Man With A Movie Camera', as well as a gallery, biographies and web links. Amazing. **Wayne Stronell**

OneDotZero

Adventures In Moving Image
(onedotzero)

To coincide with the seventh onedotzero digital film festival at London's ICA this May, this compelling debut DVD was released showcasing the best from the last seven years. Every form of digital film production is covered here, from cg to flash, live action to motion graphics, club visuals to music promos. The short film format continues to shine with the popularity of the many short film festivals around the globe, and this collection proves that the digital realm has something to offer. 16 films are included, 4 of which are music promos for Plaid, FC Kahuna, Fluid and Prefuse 73. 'Itsu' by Plaid, created by the Plex Collective is a highlight, a disturbing vision of a corporate world gone mad. Other highlights include Jake Knight's *Salaryman 6*, an award winning live-action short, the menacing undertones of Unit9's *Full Moon Safari*, and the sensitive tale of a boy and his robot in Shynola's *The Littlest Robo*. The stories are unique, the imagery powerful, packaged as an art piece. It is such a rarity to find films of such calibre all in one place, and on DVD. Some may find it expensive for 60 minutes of material, but it is an amazing showcase of some of the most diverse and creative digital short filmmakers around. I can't wait for the next one. **Wayne Stronell**

Chris Morris

Jam
(BBC Films)

British comedian Chris Morris put together a radio series called *Blue Jam* in the late 90s of which excerpts were released on CD by Warp. A TV version of the sketches was commissioned by the BBC and was screened in 2000. This is the sort of material that could never get an airing here in Australia. It is too bleak, dark, and at times downright disturbing. The title sequence for episode one where a man ties a rope around his neck then to the back of his car, sets the car going and waits as the rope unravels in a bizarre suicide attempt. Just as the rope reaches its end the car crashes into another car and the man is 'saved'. Cue maniacal laughter, you get the picture. Throughout *Jam*'s 6 episodes, Morris displays a twisted *schaedenfreude* – and whilst not all the sketches work, those that do over the several hours of DVD here are both disturbing and funny. The television repair man who has filled a couple's TV set with lizards, the jilted man feeding himself through a woodchipper to get back at his ex, the godfather who has to step in to prevent his godson from being molested, or the porn star who gets the 'gush' and dies, there are situations here that are truly bizarre. This sense of disorientation is enhanced by frame rates dropping and colours mutating and the overall grey graininess. The double DVD pack even includes the 'late night' version of the series *Jaaam* which is basically exactly the same as *Jam* except about 30% slower... add to this the amusing DVD extras like the 'miniaturised' version and you get a truly surreal package. Recommended for the disturbed. **Sebastian Chan**

BlueSkyHost
weather-proof web hosting

- personal and professional service
- e-commerce, IM and SMS solutions
- linux and windows based servers
- PHP / Perl / ASP / mySQL et al.
- flexible limits and contracts
- electronic music friendly
- domain name specialists
- affordable pricing

sales@blueskyhost.com
1300 655 086

psyco
Records
Underground Vinyl Specialist

Looking for quality,
innovative and original
Electronic Music?

Techno
Electro
Hardtek
Ghetto-tech
Minimal House

www.psycorecords.com
For further enquiries contact marshall@psycorecords.com 02 95 654 654

Motion
Movement
in Australian
Sound

Limited edition
Double CD
22 tracks
Special price

including:
Alan Lamb
Oren Ambarchi
Pretty Boy Crossover
Pimmon
Clue To Kalo
Minit
Qua

Out now on
Preservation
through Inertia

➕ Preservation



EVENT REVIEWS: AN ENDLESS SUMMER

by Sebastian Chan

There is something very exciting about summer, especially in countries where the winters are particularly cold; summer brings everyone out of their shell. Streets overflow with life, and cultures that were in hibernation burn twice as bright. *Cyclic Defrost* was fortunate enough to attend Mutek in Montreal and Sonar in Barcelona. These events have become important international markers of the cities in which they take place. In the case of Sonar this had been planned from the beginning — a resuscitative project for a post-Olympic Barcelona.

MUTEK

Montreal, on the other hand, had been becoming a hub for artists on Canada's east coast for quite a while. The history of Mutek stretches back to when Daniel Langlois, owner of cinema special effects company SoftImage (think *Jurassic Park*) decided to sell up his stock and set up a major independent arthouse cinema complex and new media post-production house in Montreal. Ex-Centris now provides a venue for Mutek's more experimental events, office space, and continues to be a major sponsor of the festival. Like Sonar, which received major support from the Barcelona City Council and the two daytime venues, the MACBA and CCCB, these sorts of specialist events require serious investment. But this investment pays off handsomely.

This year, Mutek developed beyond its previous reputation for laptop-focussed performances by including artists as diverse as Coil, Oren Ambarchi & Martin Ng, Richie Hawtin, Sixtoo, and Senor Coconut. Spread over five days and nights, the festival felt as if it was the focus of the city. Spend a few days at Mutek, and the importance of this event to the local music — especially that of Montreal — becomes obvious. Partially as a result of Mutek, Montreal has become a hub for many artists in Canada lured here by the ludicrously low rents and its proximity to New York and Europe. Montreal has also proved irresistible to Ninja Tune and Force Inc who chose to set up their North American offices here rather than in the more expensive cities of the USA. The 3000 or so people who attend Mutek are drawn from all over with many of the creative artists in Canada and North America making the trip, along with journalists, festival organisers and labels from Europe and as far away as Brazil, Chile and Japan.

During the daytime Mutek had a series of forums on the state of electronic music with speakers from major independent distributors as well as labels and artists from across America and Europe. These daytime forums act as a giant meeting place for labels and artists wanting to do business deals, organise tours, or just pass on promotional stock.

In many respects, the issues faced by Canadian producers are the same as those faced in Australia. Despite the close proximity of the USA, Canadian artists struggle with getting releases out beyond the borders of their own cities. The exception to this is Windsor, the city

on the Canadian side of the border from Detroit. Distribution and touring hassles dominate as a result of the enormous geographical expanse of Canada, coupled with a small population (only slightly greater than that of Australia).

At night Mutek opened out to three venues but with no clashing shows, a godsend at this sort of event. One event would finish and the next would start further up the road. This approach allowed for smaller experimental acts to perform in more intimate venues whilst the larger uptempo shows (Senor Coconut, Coil, Richie Hawtin) took over a large theatre-style space. Each show had good representation from local Canadian acts, and the level of production was excellent — certainly making Mutek a much sought after gig for locals. The picks of 2003 were Coil's spectacular multimedia performance, organic visuals pulsing over their drones and tones, Oren Ambarchi, Martin Ng and Tina Frank's engrossing display of audio and visual minimalism, and the mysterious festival closer: a long eight player laptop jam with Dan Bell, Richie Hawtin, Monolake and others.

SONAR

Compared to Mutek, Sonar is enormous. Compressed to three days and three nights Sonar is relentless and all consuming. There were film screenings including the Warp Films programme

that recently screened in Melbourne, sound art installations including one from Francisco Lopez, a record fair, industry talks. And then there were the choices: five daytime stages and three nighttime arenas meant that clashes were inevitable and choices had to be made. The vibe for the daytime events reminded me a lot of Sydney's Vibes On A Summers Day in its heyday (circa 1995), except being in Spain, no one wears hats (despite the scorching sun) and hence a refreshing lack of stupid cowboy hats. Unfortunately, also being Spain, the mullet was ever present on both boys and girls.

Apart from the spectacular Matthew Herbert Big Band concert, which almost perfectly demonstrated the integration of electronics and traditional big band players, and Bjork's monstrous audio and video show complete with pyrotechnics, the highlights lay in the smaller acts. Yellow Magic Orchestra veteran Harumi Hosono's Sktech Show project, Jaga Jazzist, Anticon's Themselves, and The Meteorites.

In its tenth year Sonar appears to be pretty healthy and the complaints of it becoming 'too commercial' are not really justified — except for the endless promotions from the event's sponsors. But the Sonar experience in Barcelona is not just confined to the official Sonar entertainment. During the first days of Sonar, the Wrong Festival took place at the other end of town with noisy cut up and plunderphonic artists like Donna Summer, Hrvastki, and

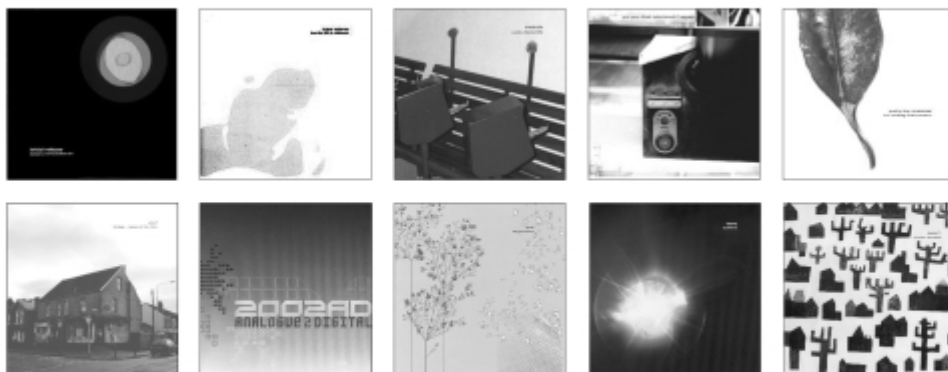
DJ/Rupture playing in a small bar. In the last two years Wrong had been highly praised but this year the new venue and terrible PA made it difficult to enjoy.

On the other hand, the Versus Festival had two amazing venues — one, a converted medieval church (with amazing acoustics), featured Karsten Pflumm and other melodic IDM artists, and the other, an old theatre, had everything from a Kompakt showcase through to Mitchell Akiyama and Aoki Takamasa. The sheer volumes of people that come to Barcelona for Sonar make this kind of event possible and viable. Most importantly these events demonstrate the healthiness of Sonar as an event — these are not so much competitors as symbiotic events, mopping up the crowd who don't want to go to the more commercial nighttime artists.

These two events represent the upper levels of what electronic music festivals can be. There is little compromise in quality and the levels of production were quite amazing, and there is no doubt both Mutek and Sonar are of great benefit to the cities in which they take place, well beyond sheer tourism. The southern hemisphere badly needs an event like these instead of our wall-to-wall rock festivals that dominate the summer.



www.surgeryrecords.com.au/shop/



coming soon

QUA 'painting monsters on clouds' (surge0011CD)

PRETTY BOY CROSSOVER 'the way that it ends is the way it began' (surge0012CD)

SURGE

Inertia



Above: Jewel case from Pure's *Low*

Below: Kozo Inada's *D []* jewel case

SLEEVE REVIEWS:

Sleeve Design by Alex Crowfoot

Fresh back from a trawl around Europe, this issue we look at two fine specimens of innovation from the Staalplaat shop in Amsterdam. That place is like a repository of unusual sleeve design. If you're ever in the area check it out... for a few hours. Also, a limited edition from Adelaide that was handed to us in Berlin of all places. Plus Mogwai, because it's something that might actually be available in most places, and it's odd. If anyone wants to send me sleeves of upcoming releases to review, please feel free. Europe has trashed the budget.



Pure
Low

(Staalplaat Records 2003)

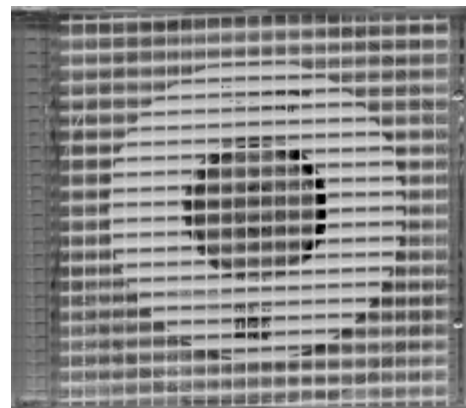
Format: Standard CD

Designer: uncredited

An exercise in aesthetics, the only idea here is in taking the standard jewel case into uncharted territory. Dispensing entirely with printed matter, the artist name and tracklisting are moulded or printed in clear plastic on the cover of the case.

Interestingly, this requires physical interaction with the CD to render it readable — it can only be read when light hits the cover at a certain angle. The same technique is used on the back of the case for record company and artist contact details. Sparse additional information includes 'saved to disk between 98-00' and 'made in Austria'.

Sheets of fine copper mesh are cut to fit to the front of the case and the tray. This has the effect of a veil; you can see hints of the CD through it. Hold it up to the light and it already looks transparent. I like the way this release interacts with light. The CD itself is printed with a metallic copper, flecked with an even spatter of white dots and flecks. The design certainly manages to transcend the confines of the humble jewel case. For some reason the phrase 'handcrafted industrial minimalism' seems appropriate for this aesthetic.



Kozo Inada

D []

(Staalplaat Records 2003)

Format: Standard CD

Designer: uncredited

In the same series as *Pure* comes Kozo Inada — certainly from the same designer, too. The same clear plastic embossing of type is used on the case. I wish I knew how they did it; it opens up all sorts of possibilities for tactile interaction with a standard retail-friendly jewel case, especially if some imagery was created using the same technique.

Here, it's the same minimal informational type — looks like VAG Rundschrift, type freaks — but the entire jewel case is a clear acid yellow. A yellow plastic mesh is inserted into the tray and cover. The CD itself is one-third transparent acid yellow, two-thirds solid yellow. Artist name and title appear in black Helvetica. The yellow plastic has a superb side effect, which is that the edge of the CD appears to glow like fluoro paint under UV lights when removed from the case.



Mogwai

Happy Songs for Happy People
(Pias Recordings 2003)

Format: Standard CD

Designer: Cover: Uncontrollable Urge

Layout: Divine Inc

The overall effect of this sleeve is high-gloss yet lo-fi. It's all printed on shiny silver card. The 4-page booklet is an even shinier silver on the inside. The front and the back of the booklet are printed with a band of green at the top and a band of red at the bottom. They look hand-drawn, as does the type, adding a nice organic contrast. The name 'Mogwai' sits centred in red, rendered in a cheesy script face.

At the right of the cover sits the letter F, reversed in white out of black. The 'F' is part of the album title, *Happy Songs For Happy People*. The remainder of the title appears on the back of the booklet in hand-drawn italic sans serif. All of this fits perfectly with Mogwai's approach, coming in from the left, like their famously fantastic song titles.

The tray is plain silver, while the back cover is a plain tracklisting and credits in black on silver. The CD is also plain silver, except for the standard title, artist, label logo and copyright notice, which appear in black.

Also on the CD, in black, is a 'painted' edge, which has the effect of blunting of the CD, with a few tiny 'paint' splatters. An unexpected aesthetic that steps well away from the norm and oozes a lack of convention, within its context, that other bands can only dream of. Interesting that there are two design credits though...



Inch Time

To Eat Flowers and Not be Afraid
(Self-release 2003)

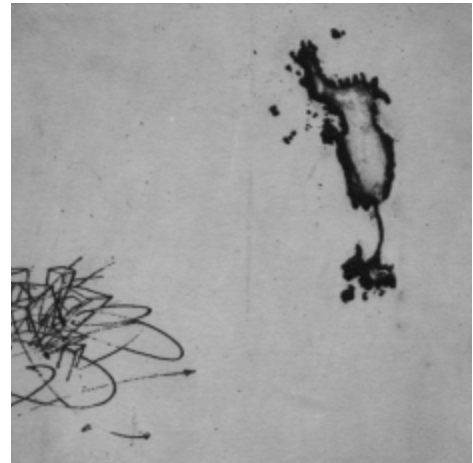
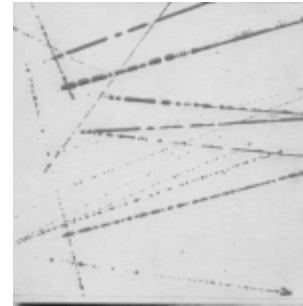
Format: Mini CD

Designer: Roy Ananda

Three plastic envelopes each contain the CD, track listing, and a set of four signed and numbered intaglio prints. The CD itself is blank. The tracklisting card uses the same print technique, so the type, set in Times, has a lovely organic feel, as it sits in deep blue on a watercolour wash.

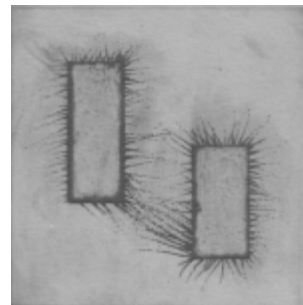
The four abstract prints perhaps don't fit together successfully as a set, but individually they are remarkable, with a lot of charm and an appealing delicacy. Each interprets both the title and the music of one of the main four tracks on the EP. 'A Voyage' (in shades of blue) seems to be leaving the chaos of the city at its edge, with an organic shape that could be an aerial view of an island as its focus. 'A Rainbow' has no trace of its namesake, instead two earthy rectangles sprout energetic 'hairs'. 'A Feeling' in a muted red of passion, seems to present exactly that, although it could also be interpreted as a landscape reflected in still water. 'A Walk' zigzags energetically across its small square canvas in a poppy red. A beautiful limited edition of 50 with equally beautiful music that deserves a wider audience.

Check cyclicdefrost.com for colour sleeve images



Details from intaglio prints in *Inch Time's* *To Eat Flowers and Not Be Afraid*.

Clockwise from above left: *A Feeling*; *A Walk*; *A Voyage*; *A Rainbow*





ANDREW PECKLER SELECTS

by Sebastian Chan

EVERYONE HAS THOSE SPECIAL RECORDS THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES. AND THEY AREN'T ALWAYS JUST TEENAGE SONGS. THE MOST MEMORABLE MUSIC MAKES AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION, MORE THAN JUST A 'DOPE BEAT' OR A 'HOT DSP EFFECT'.

Raised on a diet of heavy metal in California but born in the Soviet Union, Andrew Pekler lives in Berlin working on three current projects. The first of these is his solo eponymous work for ~scape, which plays with late '60s jazz textures and sweet laptop electronics. The second album is due late in 2003. Then there is his involvement in Bergheim 34, an electronic four piece pop project for Klang Elektronik, and an as yet untitled rock project whose early demos sound a little like early '80s The Fall with the vocal nonsense of Kool Keith. Or maybe you remember his lo-fi electronics as Sad Rockets for US label Matador? Whatever it is, his record collection is both large and eclectic, and strictly vinyl. The only CD players he owns are a broken Discman in the kitchen that refuses to play the second half of any CD, and the CD drive in his PowerBook.

Led Zeppelin

Led Zeppelin III
(Atlantic, 1970)

First heard: 1986

This was the first Zeppelin that I got hold of and it wasn't really what I had expected — at 12 years old I was surprised. It wasn't as hard as I had been afraid it would be, which made it much more accessible to my twelve year old ears. *III* has a lot of country-esque and folk rock tracks and the melancholy mood caught my ear and resonated with my transition from childhood to teenage years. I was ready to rock...after that it was all Black Sabbath and Slayer.

Black Sabbath

Master Of Reality
(Warner 1971)

First heard: 1987

This album is a lesson in the power of the riff. It's like a textbook. It was at this time I started playing guitar, and this was the first record I could play along with and imagine myself rocking it on stage. I had already read *Hammer Of The Gods* (the Zeppelin biography) and seen *The Song Remains The Same*. I wanted the learjet and all the rockstar trappings...I was filling a notebook with titles of future songs I might write, and of imaginary discographies of my future career. My best friend Jason was going to be our drummer.

Shannon Burg

This Mixtape She Made For Me When I Was
(Maxell, 1989)

First heard: 1989

To this date, this is still the most important mix tape anyone has ever made me. It was the first time I was hopelessly in love with someone, despite the fact she was three years older. Shannon had a far more advanced musical education than me, and her tape led my curiosity to discover other things. On the tape were Velvet Underground, Jonathon Richmond, Bauhaus, The Cure etc, and because our little fling ended unpleasantly, there are some things like The Cure I absolutely hate now. And others like certain Velvet Underground and Bauhaus tracks that still bring a tear to my eye.

Thinking about this tape reminds me of a time when it was possible to get totally caught up in music. These days it's hard to get so emotionally involved in music because we are totally surrounded by it. And for the most part the presentation is very generic whereas on a mixtape everything is carefully selected.

Jimmy Cliff

The Harder They Come
(Island, 1973)

First heard: 1990

I was 16, the next girl after Shannon, also called Shannon (Biddy). She was a hippie reggae chick, smoked pot, and hung out with older people who weren't at school anymore. I was trying to pick up clues from her tastes and behaviour so I could manoeuvre into her field of vision. She was going up to Santa Cruz to a reggae concert one night and I was like 'yeah I heard about that, maybe I'll see you there,' (but of course I had no idea). I scrounged money from my friends and managed to hitchhike up to the show and ended up seeing Ziggy Marley and Yellowman.

I knew nothing about reggae at all except that I hated it — but I knew the girl was there. The concert was packed and I was walking around through the crowd and everyone was smoking dope. Joints were being passed around and I was getting more and more stoned wandering around trying to find her. I finally found her and she was dancing and kissing this big tanned surfer guy. She turned around and said, 'Hey, good you could make it.' It was late, my parents didn't know where I was, and I

had no money to get home. There was nothing left to do other than to try and enjoy the rest of concert, and it was then I realised that reggae was pretty good. Especially to dance to stoned. I learnt a lot about reggae, girls, and life that night. When I got home at 3a.m. hitchhiking back, I was in total shit with my folks. I couldn't go out for a month, and so I bought the Jimmy Cliff tape.

Timmy Thomas

Why Can't We Live Together?

(Mojo, 1971)

First heard: 1997

Unlike any other soul record there is no backing band on this. It's just a first generation drum machine and Thomas playing the organ and singing. You just imagine this totally solitary soul guy. One-man entertainer style. It's a very minimalist record — just the voice, organ and drum box — its like Suicide — except soul. The record is very moving especially because it is clearly the work of just one person. Timmy Thomas is the next Shuggie Otis.

To Rococo Rot

To Rococo Rot

(Kitty Yo, 1997)

First heard :1997

I heard this record shortly after I came to Germany. Until then I had not really heard or liked any electronic music. The people I was meeting had much

broader music collections to me, they had both rock and electronic music, and they had lived through rave also. I had a lot to catch up on and felt I had a lot to learn — I was impressed by their ability to like both party music and 'serious' music. In the US I was surrounded by people who were much more tribal — very teenage. Provincial Germany (Heidelberg) is not like provincial US — things are much closer.

On the *To Rococo Rot* album, the songs were very simple and each just had one mood. It was also being played by a band and showed me that its not an either-or world — drums or drum machines. I got my first four track around this time and started working alone trying to find combinations of bass drums that would be compelling. Six years later I actually met one of the guys. My current Bergheim 34 project is with some of these people I first met.

John Coltrane

At Birdland

(Impulse 1964)

First heard: 1992

Two of the five tracks ('Afro Blue', 'Alabama') are two of the most amazing pieces I have heard. Breathtaking and heart breaking, very simple melodies and ideas but played extravagantly. There is one moment when the saxophone comes back in on 'Afro Blue' — just one held note — that is stunning. Every time I would catch a plane somewhere I

would cue it up so when we would take off, the moment we left the ground, that saxophone bit would come in. It's not just music about music, it is music about life. Listening to this recording has become ritualistic — not everyday, but a touchstone I can come back to remind myself about the power of music to transport you.

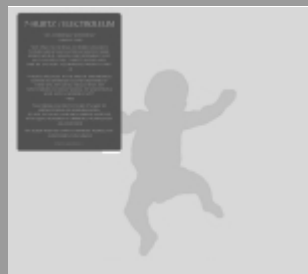
Oval

Systemisch

(Mille Plateaux, 1994)

This record is interesting because it is extremely abstract music that also manages to be accessible and convey deep emotion. The technical concept of skipping/glitch is aesthetically sound (even though now it has been done to death), at its root it was subversive (wrong sounds put in the foreground), but it's not this that makes it interesting. Instead the record touches me more than most other 'glitch' artists because of some inner mystery it contains. When I was making the first ~scape album I was still quite excited by the idea of glitch because the sounds aren't weighed down by meaning, however now the glitch is itself coded — people know what it is, and how to react to it. The point though, is to find something that resonates emotionally — something that theory cannot do.

new output from OUTPUT*



7 Hurtz

'Electroleum'

"real, soulful and downright sexy...shows that both men and machines can work in perfect harmony ★★★★★" DJ



Playgroup

'Playgroup'

"Thick with sex and so wet with funk, it drips" Paper



Various

'Output Recordings Vol 2

"one of the most interesting innovative and consistently good labels around...you need this album ★★★★★" Update



Colder

'Again'

"stark dubby industrial pop offering genuine originality, a quality album from the label du jour" Music Week

***suited for both dancefloor and home listening**



These fine releases available now in good record stores everywhere // distributed by

Inertia distribution // 02 9698 0111 // www.inertia-music.com // info@inertia-music.com



Inertia

DEAR DEGRASSI

A REGULAR DOSE OF IRREGULAR POP CULTURE

Self improvement is a great thing, but it often leads to friends and loved ones asking probing questions. Can't I just learn German for the hell of it? It appears not — I need reasons for it. OK, here goes: compound words rock, I already use the prefix 'uber' more than a native English speaker ordinarily should, and the television in Germany is so unbelievably good, with repeats of '80s TV shows spawning religious cults organised around programmes such as *Das A-Team*. Nuff said.

Dear Degrassi,
Do you believe in those space aliens called Greys?
Starchild Alpha 7

I know that the likes of Q-Bert have made little grey men and anal probes all the rage, but they are so far off the mark it isn't funny! Anybody knows that space aliens aren't smooth skinned, they're furry. They're more partial to eating domestic felines than they were with interfering with the integrity of one's backside. And they weren't named after their skin colour at all (thank god, or they would have been called Rusties), instead they are named 'Alien Life Form', which of course, has to be shortened to ALF the same way that ET was an acronym for Extra Terrestrial. This was always a bit of mystery though, seeing as ALF's real name was actually Gordon Shumway, but ALF seems to suit this sassy, midget, bipedal, camel puppet a whole lot more than Gordon ever did.

The reasoning behind ALF's presence on earth appears to draw upon two epic tales that have played an important role in the shaping of western culture; the stories being those of *Superman* and *Gilligan's Island*. In fact, a homage to the Minnow's crew was paid in the episode "The Ballad of Gilligan's Island". ALF lost control of his spaceship and crashed into the garage of a suburban garage in Southern California owned by the Tanner family. Unlike Gilligan and his gang though, even if ALF had stopped helping himself to the contents of the

Tanner's refrigerator long enough to repair his alien craft, there was nowhere to go back to. Planet Melmac had blown up leaving ALF as an ambassador to the rest of the universe...and what a statesman and orator he was. And so, like Superman, he was forced to live on earth in absence of his home planet, except ALF's Fortress of Solitude was the family garage.

The premise behind just about every episode was that ALF made wisecracks about the Tanners and foibles of the human race whilst avoiding the Alien Task Force (a far cry from *The X-Files*' Mulder and Sculley) and the Tanners' nosy, practically live-in neighbours, the Ochmoneks. (While we're on the subject, why must every sit-com seem to have a character like *Hey Dad*'s Nudge...who is really just another incarnation of Eddie Haskell from *Leave It to Beaver*?) ALF had to be kept as secret as Mr Snuffulupagus...that was before the writers of *Sesame Street* thought it was a good idea to franchise the Snuffulupaguses and prove to the humans that Big Bird wasn't suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Mayhem ensued.

Willie Tanner, played by Max Wright, bore a modest resemblance to a West Coast version of Woody Allen — the glasses and neuroses were there, but since it was a PG show, airing at prime family time, he wasn't as hung up about sex. Though come to mention it, there was something about Kate Tanner's (Anne Schedeen) gravity defying rosetta-fringed mega-mullet that must have got him a little randy. A third child, Eric, was added to the Tanner family towards the end of the series...strangely coinciding with the actress' real-life pregnancy and giving the show a last ditch shot in the arm similar to the addition of Andy Keaton on *Family Ties*. (Very poor messages to younger viewers about birth control on both counts, I feel.) The Tanner kids were a little lacklustre though — Brian Tanner (Benji Gregory) was in dire need of the hutzpah of *ET*'s Elliot (any credit he received for appearing on *The A-Team* is negated by a two episode stint on *Punky Brewster*),



SOME ALF FAST FACTS FOR Y'ALL:

- Liz Sheridan who played Raquel Ochmonek not only played Jerry Seinfeld's mother in the 90s, but was also James Dean's 'girlfriend' at the time of his death. I use the word girlfriend tentatively because if *Hollywood Babylon* is to be believed, then Liz was really just a cover for Jimmy's penchant for having men that might best be described as 'rough trade' stubbing cigarettes out on his body. Each to their own, I guess.
- ALF spawned two animated series: *ALF* and *ALF Tales*, and one made for television movie — *Project: ALF*. Except *ALF* remained so popular in Germany that it was renamed *ALF – Der Film* and released in cinemas. Considering that *ALF* was rated as the third popular cult series in Germany it seemed like a good idea at the time... but it's modest box office takings (a mere DM250,000) demonstrated that this wisecracking fur ball was better suited to the small screen.
- One of the writers, Jerry Stahl, was such a huge drug addict that his life prompted the filming of *Permanent Midnight*. Perhaps this explains the airing of the episode where ALF became addicted to eating cotton - or maybe it was simply Reagan Administration 'Just Say No' propaganda.

and whiney Lynn (Andrea Elson) was certainly not in the Alyssa Milano league. This was apparent when she popped up in the "One Flew Over the Empty Nest" episode of *Who's the Boss*?

One of the great debates of my school playground was 'ALF — puppet or midget in a suit?' I know the highlight of each show for me was that little bit in the credits where ALF put down his video camera to chase Lucky, the family cat, and you saw the rarely seen bottom half of his body running out of the room. There's something about fat, furry legs that makes my icy heart melt. Actually, most of the time ALF was a puppet, voiced by producer and creator Paul Fusco. In the first season and part of the second one, a three-foot midget by the name of Mihaly 'Michu' Meszaros donned the ALF suit. But in later series, the animatronic boom of the mid-to-late eighties forced this small of stature actor to pursue other thespian ideals.

For more ALF Fast Facts, visit
www.cyclidefro.com





THREE days OCTOBER 3,4,5 NEWCASTLE

\$5 PER SESSION / LIMITED capacity

www.soundsummit.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION & SCHEDULE

WORKSHOPS AND FORUMS ON:

Running an independent label

Being a self-releasing artist

Sampling and
beat production

DJ technologies

Freestyle techniques

Audio processing and
programming

Improving live performances

Understanding royalties

Budgeting for a release

Demo feedback forum

Featuring speakers from independent
electronic and hip hop labels, production
crews and music media across Australia.

INTERNATIONAL GUESTS INCLUDE:

Sutekh

(Context/Mille Plateaux)

Machine Drum

(Merck)

Janek Schaefer

(Fat Cat)

DJ Olive

(theAgriculture)

COM.A

(Tigerbeat6/Romz, Japan)

Dabrye

(Ghostly/Eastern
Developments, USA)

with more to be announced shortly.

OCTOBER 11 & 12 - SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE STUDIO SHOWCASES

One-off collaborations
between international and
local artists

Janek Schaefer, DJ Olive & Lawrence English
David Miller & Lawrence Pike
Machine Drum, Sense & Tim Koch

Dabrye
Sutekh
plus more to be announced

THE STUDIO, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Limited tickets at
www.sydneyoperahouse.com

Sound Summit is a part of This Is Not Art
(incorporating Electrofringe, National Young Writers
Festival, Radioactive, Student Media and
Critical Animals).

Sound Summit is a MusicNSW
project funded by the Australia
Council For The Arts and NSW
Ministry For The Arts.





!K7 150 out now

Available as a very special felt covered 2xCD plus DVD, 4xLP Box. Featuring tracks and videos by
**A GUY CALLED GERALD > EARL ZINGER > FUNKSTORUNG
GHOST CAULDRON > HERBERT > KRUDER & DORFMEISTER
> MIKE LADD > NICK HOLDER > NICOLETTE > PEACE
ORCHESTRA > PLAYGROUP > PRINCESS SUPERSTAR >
RAE & CHRISTIAN > RECLOOSE > SHANTEL > SPACEK
> SMITH & MIGHTY > SWAYZAK > TERRANOVA > TIGA
TOSCA > URSULA RUCKER > VIKTER DUPLAIX > > > >**



OUT SOON 'PEACE IS TOUGH' TERRANOVA
distributed by creative vibes www.cvibes.com www.k7.com

