

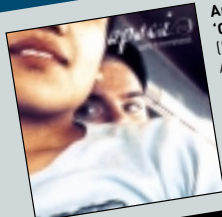


CYCLIC DEFROST

No. 7

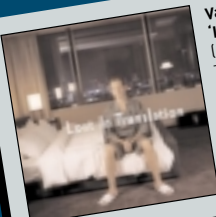
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Apsci
'Get It Twisted'
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Get It Twisted
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A startlingly original debut - marrying the operatic vocals of Sydney's Dana Diaz-Tutaan (Mother Tongues, Meta Bass N Breath) with NYC's MC/producer Ra Lamotta and Def Jux turntablist Big Wiz. On the brilliant Elefant Traks label.



Various
'Lost In Translation OST'
(per Norton)

The soundtrack to Sofia Coppola's stunning, award-winning film with a moody score by legendary My Bloody Valentine founder Kevin Shields. Features tracks from Air, Death In Vegas, Squarepusher, The Jesus And Mary Chain and MBV.



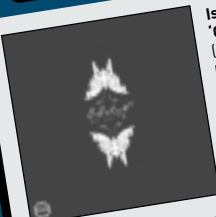
Music vs Physics
'Underscore'
& Mercy)

(Love & Mercy)
Picks up where 'Northside Perspective' left off; a beautiful merging of downbeat soundscapes with cinematic undertones. MVP are part of Melbourne's Symbiotic Collective. Ideal For fans of Anticon, Curse Ov Dialect and cLOUDDEAD.



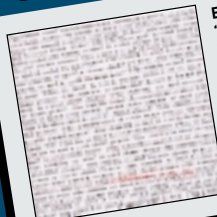
Mice Parade
'Obrigado Saudade'
(Fat Cat)

Multi-instrumentalist Adam Pierce pulls away from the experimental towards a more pop-oriented realm, melding together song, melody and rhythmic exploration. Exploding the possibilities of instrumental music. Features members of Múm, Him and Dylan Group.



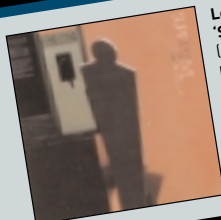
Isan
'Clockwork Menagerie'
(Music)

(Morr Music)
Made up of daydreams of
imaginary landscapes turned into
picture sounds, this beautiful
record is a soft harmonic wonder.
ISAN's music is created out of their
love and affinity with old machines.



Explosions In The Sky
'The Earth Is Not A Cold Dead Place'
(Bella Union)

(Bella Union)
Setting a new standard in bare-boned dynamic post-rock, this Austin-based fourtet delicately expand musical boundaries and create exhilaratingly beautiful music, interweaving melodies and rhythms to create one of the albums of the year.



Lesser
'Suppressive Acts I-X'
(Matador)

New from ex-member of A Minor Forest J Dörck. Fusing together metal and electronica and created by manipulating and re-using a base of 50 samples to create a squall of over-driven guitar, orgasmic grunts and drum 'n' bass rhythms.



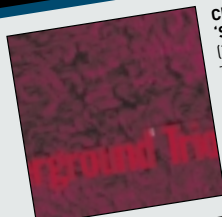
Dean Roberts
'Be Mine Tonight'
(Kranky)

Be Mine (Kranky)
An album filled with slow, heart wrenching songs using improvisational and electronica to push the dimensions of rock songs. Recorded in Italy, this is the first recording from this seminal New Zealand guitarist since 2000.



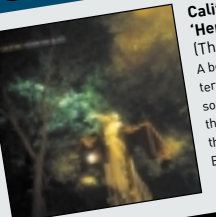
Various
'You are here'
(Accidental)

(Accidental)
A collection of tracks released by
Matthew Herbert's labels; Accidental,
Soundlike and Lifelike. Each provide a
forum for unknown artists, allowing
complete creative control. Includes
Matthew Herbert, The Soft Pink
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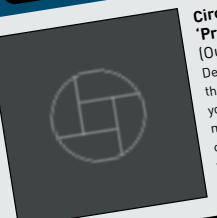
Chicago Underground Trio
'Glen'

These new compositions are a mixture of acoustic, electronic, and electro-acoustic music and were recorded, mastered and cut in just three remarkable days. Quite possibly this influential avant-jazz combo's finest work to date.



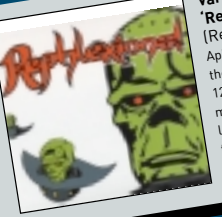
Califone
'Heron King Blues'
(with Bill Jockey)

Heron (Thrill Jockey)
A beautifully lush and patient masterpiece, combining the band's song-oriented qualities alongside their more spaced-out, ethereal thoughts. And with a dash of Reefheart.



Circlesquare
'Pre-Earthquake Anthem'
(Output)

Pre-Earthquake
[Output]
Debut release from Circlesquare, led by the highly acclaimed and controversial young Canadian artist March 21. A unique mix of brooding and pounding melancholy, bass-fuelled sensory exploration, withdrawn vocals and purest minimal electronic meltdown.



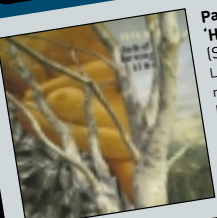
Various 'Rephlexions' (Rephlex)

Rephlexions
(Rephlex)
Aphex Twin's Rephlex Records release their new compilation in celebration of 12 years of being one of the world's most eccentric and influential electronic labels. Features contributions from Astrobotnia, Luke Vibert, Bogdan Raczynski and AFX himself.



**Diverse
'One AM'
(Farshot)**

A stellar release featuring production from RJD2, Prefuse-73, Madlib and Jeff Parker of Tortoise. Guest MCs include Lyrics Born (Latyrx), Jean Grae, Vast Aire (Cannibal Ox), and Prefuse-73. Australian-only bonus track: "Mos Def."



Papa M
'Hole Of Burning Alms'
(Spunk)

(Spunk) Living legend David Pajo has been a member of seminal outfits Slint, Palace Brothers and Tortoise. This essential collection of singles from 1995-2000 charts his similarly amazing solo career, and contains tracks previously unavailable on CD.

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EDITORIAL

Issue 7 is here. Another CD as well. This time it's an ambient work which should set you up for some interesting dreams if you listen at bedtime. There's also interviews with Pimmon, Triosk and Lawrence English as well as Animal Collective and Buck 65, plus all the regulars and a cover by animator/illustrator Steve Scott.

It's been an curious few months since our last issue. In the online field there's been so much movement in terms of internet file sharing and the explosion of iTunes, basically as a way of selling iPods. Apple had to remove their claim to 'being better for artists' from their advertising when it was revealed that the majority of the US\$0.99 went to the traditional owners – the major labels. And whilst lawyers were raiding the universities and ISPs here in Sydney and the offices of Kazaa and the RIAA in America continuing to go after end users two positive things happened. The first was Warp Records' Bleep.com experiment. Bleep.com is a low cost way of buying individual tracks from Warp's entire back catalogue. Almost everything is there including those rare and impossible to find vinyl tracks from AFX, Gescom and others, but best of all none of the tracks have any form of digital rights management. They are in standard MP3 format and properly tagged and encoded. There are no limits to the number of copies you can make, CDs you can burn, or devices you can use it on. It seems like Warp might actually 'trust' their fans. Now that's a novel idea isn't it? Further, it looks like Warp will extend this to other labels that they currently manage through their Warpmart online store. The other interesting news on the internet front was a report from Harvard University Professor Terry Fisher. Fisher's report suggests that if US broadband users were charged just US\$6 per month then not only copyright music but also Hollywood movies could be freely traded and delivered without digital rights management. Under such a system both the film and music industry would make more money than they currently make from traditional sale channels – even including the most skewed 'lost revenue' figure possible. Not only this, he contends that subsidiary industries would boom – blank media, and copying/playback device manufacturers as well, and artists could also be fairly compensated. It's an interesting theory. You can read about it at www.tfisher.org.

Anyway, before your music choices get locked down, get reading. We'll be back with Issue 8 in May.

Sebastian Chan & Dale Harrison
Editors.



www.cyclicdefrost.com

➕ Extended articles

⬇ Music downloads of featured artists

ISSUE 7 EXCLUSIVE WEB CONTENT:

Additional reviews,
Exclusive on-line giveaways



+ GREAT SCOTT!

Cover Designer

Interview with Steven Scott

by DH

Beginning design life by constructing car and butchers ads for a local paper, Steve first came to wider public attention with the video for the Telemetry Orchestra track 'Swingers International.' Idealistic and exciting times as they were, the mid-'90s heralded both the rise in electronic music as well as the appearance of vector animation applications such as Flash. 'Swingers...' captured that time perfectly – the loping break, synth horns and analogue squelch of the track was paired with campy spy-themed vector animations that were perfectly retro-futuristic. At a time when local releases were scarce and the scene was in its infancy, it was almost too classy not to be from overseas.

Since then he has created superlative film clips for Salmonella Dub and B(if)tek as well as countless flyers for 2SER (most notably the later Freaky Loops parties), Clan Analogue and others, as well as a number of notable CD designs.

A founding member of Telemetry Orchestra, musically he has also followed an idiosyncratic path. Originally members of the seminal collective Clan Analogue (with whom they released their first album) Telemetry Orchestra have now moved on the Silent label – a move made simple by virtue of their elegant avoidance of stylistic overtures and their willingness to change.



Indeed, their latest album *Children Stay Free* displays an easy languidity that disguises the complexity of the arrangements. A fact reflected in the *Yellow Submarine* inspired cover artwork, whose quirky lines belie the eminent craftsmanship on display.

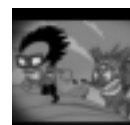
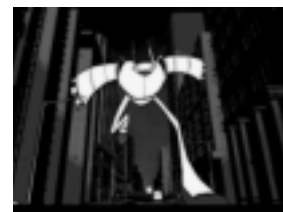
Despite his trips overseas to England and the sub-continent, and the impending schedule of work that he had amassed on his return, I managed to put several questions to Steven Scott about the relationship between graphic art and music.

Cyclic Defrost: Which is first in terms of inspiration: colour, shape, concept or form? Is it the same for music (with timbre being replacing colour)?

Steven Scott: Well everytime you draw something you are inspired by something new, but I guess its usually the concept that I start with. But I also tend to doodle a lot and you get into this weird zone where images just pop out. Music is different and the same. I usually play around with little musical ideas and if something grabs me then it can blossom out into a finished piece.

CD: Your work seems to proliferate with quirky vector humanoids – especially facially. Have you always been drawn to characters as a design approach? What is it about faces that so appeals?

SS: Well I started off wanting to make comics and tell stories, so I like creating characters. I like the fantastic and bizarre. Anything to avoid



the humdrum – there's something very enjoyable about drawing a human figure and warping the hell out of it. My friends have said that I draw the people around me, but it's an unconscious process. My girlfriend will often say 'you've just drawn so and so' but I'll always deny it.

CD: Are vectors the closest thing we as designers can get to creation (and therefore to playing God)? What's your current relationship with vector art?

SS: Err . . . No. Not sure if I feel godlike when drawing. If all goes well I feel like my body's just evaporated and I'm an eye attached to a pen – even though it sounds kind of macabre. As for my relationship with vector art, well it's passed the seven-year itch and is settling down, buying a house and paying off a huge mortgage. I guess I don't really care how an image is created as long as it hits you somewhere between the brain and the heart. If you look at an image and all you can think about is the technique then that's boring to me.

CD: The design of Telemetry Orchestra's first album was all angular lines, sans serif faces and blue/white sparseness, whereas the second album is delicious curves, warm colours and flowery type. Was this the subtle result of the addition of a new (female) member of the group (Charlotte) or was it something more deliberate?

SS: Yep, Charlotte did change what we were doing, but we also all got interested in making the music more organic. So I don't know if that's more feminine, but maybe it's more human! So when I did the cover I wanted to reflect this new music we were doing. Which is maybe softer,

more melodic. The idea behind that last cover was that this lone astronaut was exploring the moon as Jules Verne may have imagined it.

CD: What have been your three favourite design jobs and why?

SS: Well I cherish any job that gives me creative freedom. My faves would have to be the first Telemetry clip I did with Matt Willis. It was how I got into animation and I really got into this flow of Thunderbirds/James Bond imagery. It was like all my boyhood dreams about the future came tumbling out. The Salmonella Dub video clip I did for the song 'Problems' was great. I directed it, wrote it and animated it and really pushed myself in terms of animation. I'd been doing some clips using the technique of rota-scoping and I started to realise how limiting it is. So I wanted to do something looser and crazier. I've done loads of work for B(if)tek. They're always fun to do. I get to draw lots of women in outerspace. Also the last Telemetry Orchestra album, which was pretty effortless in terms of coming up with an idea and the execution. Just trying a different feel from what I usually do.

CD: Do you find there is a continuum between visual art and music, particularly when it comes to displaying a finished product (i.e. playing live/sending to print)?

SS: Well not really, playing live, you're in the moment. It can be joyful, maddening, crazy, scary but once it's finished it's over. Whereas with print it just hangs around, staring at you. It won't go away... I'm not even sure what I mean by that – I'm not sure if there is a link between drawing and making music. It comes from a different area of the brain. They do different things to you. Music surrounds you, envelops you. Good art sticks needles into your eyes and straight into the brain.



CD: Is there a difference in your attitude to making music vs pictures (i.e. do you see one as being more self expressive compared to the other)?

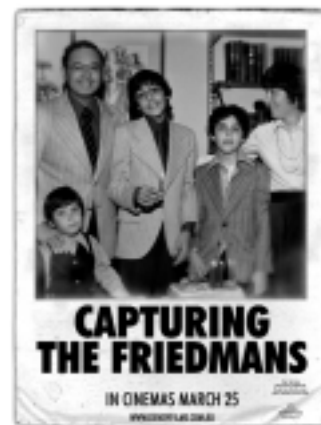
SS: Well I tend to veer towards music but if I do too much then I miss the drawing. Like a swinging pendulum. I've spent the last year drawing and animating and I'm now going crazy cos I'm not doing music. I guess drawing comes more easily to me than music so when I do something musical the high I get is incredible. I'll stay up for days on the buzz of it.

CD: As you work in one field do you find that strategies in the other (be it music vs design or vice versa) suggest themselves?

SS: The only thing that I find similar to both is the ability to turn off that critical part of your brain and just let the work come through you. I try not to edit or criticise at the beginning of a process because it just kills any spontaneity. In fact, at the moment I think that's what I'm really into, spontaneity and organicness. Like, you know, rolling around in a big grassy field.



For more on Steven Scott, see
www.stevescott.com.au



2004 OSCAR NOMINEE (Best Documentary)
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The Friedmans seem at first to be a typical family... until one Thanksgiving a police battering ram splinters their front door, officers rush into the house search every corner and seize boxes of the family's possessions. Arnold and his 18-year old son Jesse are both arrested. As the police pursue the investigation, and the community reacts, the fabric of the family begins to disintegrate, revealing disturbing questions about justice, community, family and ultimately - truth.

CAPTURING THE FRIEDMANS is a non-fiction feature film that explores the elusive nature of truth, through the prism of one of the strangest criminal cases in American history.

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



◀ MAD PROFESSOR

Pimmon

Interview with Paul Gough
by Tim Colman

Sydney's Paul Gough has been conducting abstract experiments with electronic sound since the late '80s. Not your average electronic producer, Gough spent the first part of his career working on commercial radio, most notably with the likes of John Laws and Alan Jones. Since then he's moved to ABC Radio working as an engineer. Covering a range of styles and moods, he is better known within the electronic community by the name of Pimmon – having released for a variety of labels including Japan's Meme, Portugal's Sirr Records, ERS in The Netherlands, Fat Cat in the UK and Kid606's Tigerbeat6 imprint. Also comfortable behind the mic, he hosts the weekly 'Quiet Space' on Radio National and 'Gough's Play Lunch' on FBI.

His most recent effort for Tigerbeat6, *Snaps*Crackles*Pops*, maintains the Pimmon style – manipulating samples beyond recognition, layering these into skeletal tracks, creating unique pieces of music which traverse minimal glitch, drone, noise and ambience – but it has also taken steps into beat and even pop territory.

'The fact is I'm an old bastard and I wanted to muck around. I use the word "pop" but in a very loose way,' explains Gough. 'I grew up listening to a lot of melodic popular music, which I still love and listen to a lot. I guess I wanted to take what I did and somehow embed it into that. It was something a bit more rhythmic, not necessarily accessible, but I think by nature when you make things more rhythmic, or you add more

melody, the listener will be drawn to it more than something that's just abstract.'

Despite the use of more melodic and rhythmic structures, *Snaps*Crackles*Pops* is far from pop in the orthodox sense – you certainly won't hear any of the tracks on commercial radio – but it begs the question; is this Gough's perverse take on the pop industry?

Gough replies. 'The word pop has changed so much. These days, from what I perceive, it seems to refer to Britney and that end of town. Whereas for me, I'm thinking more Go-Betweens, something with a melody like the Beach Boys, something catchy. I guess all I was trying to do was incorporate some melody and structure that people would recognise as being song-based.'

It's a structure that Gough's children have only recently picked up on; He explains, 'One of my sons is pretty familiar with weird music, he doesn't blink an eye if I play him something pretty fried up. But when he discovered 2DayFM he came to me and said, "Why don't you write some songs which have a verse, and a chorus?" It struck me that up until that point he hadn't figured out that was what a 'song' was all about.

Despite the romantic notion – *Snaps*Crackles*Pops* didn't arise from the 2DayFM-inspired pleas of a son. In fact Gough had been working on the project for a number of years: 'the idea for it had come up after *Electronic Tax Return*. [Kid606] was really happy with how that went off and said, "I really want to do a release." I was just figuring out what I wanted to do, and given the nature of the label I thought it was probably the vehicle where I'm more likely to send something that had beats on it.'

A departure from his previous efforts, Gough was unsure how the public or critics would react to the release. To his surprise the reactions were mostly positive. Even UK's *The*

Wire, a publication with the ability to make or break such a release, were supportive.

Despite the favourable press he still reserves some ire for music critics in general: 'I've read some positive reviews of my music where they say all this stuff and I sit there and start to laugh – I don't really imagine that's what the average listener would think. It's flattering; it's nice they said nice things. Of course, people need signposts. I just wish the signposts were a little more directional. The way some people write it's a bit like driving and seeing a signpost saying 'Dubbo – Dead Boring' instead of saying Dubbo has this, this and this.'

What type of signpost would he use to describe Pimmon? 'The things that tickle me the most are when people say they're not really sure what I'm doing,' answers Gough. 'It's as though they're perplexed attempting to categorise it. That's the best compliment I could get because it expresses the thought, "Well that's a bit different". I'd like to be thought to be a bit different, not just for difference sake, but because there's some thought in it.'

It is this relaxed attitude coupled with a unique musical vision that originally drew Gough and Tigerbeat6 (via label boss) Kid606 together to release *Snaps*Crackles*Pops*. Although the details are hazy, the record deal came about in an amazingly obscure turn of events.

'I got in contact with this person in Slovenia through friends in Sydney. This guy in Slovenia wrote to me and said, "I love your work. I'm going to do a two-hour real audio showcase of Pimmon". I was able to patch in and hear it at 6am. This guy was talking away and I couldn't understand anything except for the odd 'Pimmon'. He posted it on just about every email group and electronic website and I think Kid606 saw this and decided to listen and I think he (the Slovenian) may have given Kid606 a CDR of some of my work. Then I got an email from him saying "I heard your stuff. I want to do a swap with you". We swapped about five CDRs.'

This lead to Kid606 approaching Gough for the NWA remix project. It was something he was initially unsure about.

'I had to admit that I'd never really listened to their music,' remembers Gough. 'I wrote back and said, "I don't know if I'm your man, I don't really

listen to this kind of stuff.' I knew these were all brash young kids on Macs and I said, "I'm this thirty-something in Sydney who uses a PC". He wrote back, "That's why we love you, man."

Although most of his work now stems from that same PC, Gough has utilised a range of analogue and digital equipment to create his layered sound collages in the past, and the old equipment still gets a work out from time to time.

'I've got an old Korg MS-20 that I mess around with and occasionally sample into the PC,' explains Gough. 'There's a track on one of my earlier CDs where I'd fiddled around with this sound and it was beautiful. I jammed the power cord into it so it would just keep playing over and had a cup of tea. It sounds really lazy, but I had the basis for what I wanted so I just manipulated it in the studio as well as through the laptop. I also used to have this really old analogue desk. I was really familiar with it, so when it came to doing stuff, I'd just dump everything on it. I'd put a skeletal track on the multi-track and just overlay it. Some of my early stuff was done with an Eventide Harmonizer and I would process vinyl, old radio signals and old tapes then layer it together. It was a lot of fun, but these days I just do it virtually.'

Some Pimmon sounds and effects have even come from faulty programs, resulting in tracks emerging from the sounds emanating from the

"I'm this thirty-something in Sydney
who uses a PC". He wrote back,
"That's why we love you, man."

mundane experiences in life – everything from setting the table to catching a train.

'On *Secret Sleeping Birds* there's one track made from a cracked version of Spectral Delay,' says Gough. 'It had a fault, so rather than reading the sample it read the laptop mic. I was visiting my parents and I captured all these sounds of setting the table for dinner, my father saying, "Move that bloody thing off the table", and knives and forks going down. For some reason I foolishly loaded a proper copy and I've never been able to find the cracked one, which has really annoyed me.'

Pimmon tracks often emerge from short periods of immense creativity. Ask Gough how this happens and he's not entirely sure. It appears he's lost in a zone of obsessive creativity. There's a box of CDRs which have emerged from these periods, just waiting for the finishing touches.

Even when listening back to his own releases he has difficulty working out how some of the sounds

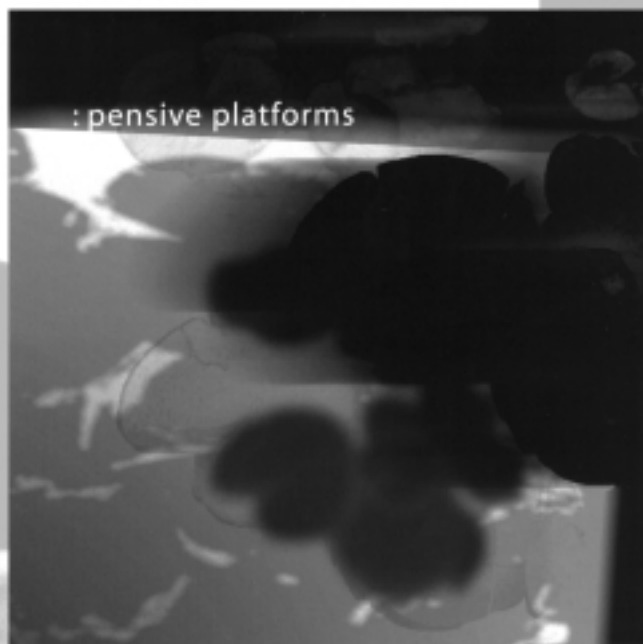
appeared. He explains, 'I remember sitting back afterwards and listening to it and thinking, "I really can't recall what I did, I don't know how I did it". It's this weird high. I've referred to myself as a mad professor, I get so engrossed in it.'

He often goes into these writing periods unsure where he'll end up. 'I don't go into writing with an idea. I start by listening to sounds, then pick up on things and say, "This is where I want to go". It might be something I think I'm going to be quiet and minimal but ends up being raucous and crazy. It's an intuitive thing, I follow the sound. Some sounds will work in combination and others won't. I like layering lots of different things so you get weird orbiting sounds that don't seem to match but if you take time to listen, you'll see they fall into a pattern and slowly fall out again.'

So is Pimmon a musician or an assembler of sounds? Gough himself is not sure – but as long as the end product is worthwhile it doesn't seem to bother him.

'I love music, I love sound. I see myself more as melting pot. It's somebody taking all these things and putting it in a structure. It's not academic. I listen to things over and over and get excited when I hear something I'm really happy with.'

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SONIC ARCANA

+ TWO LIVE CREW

◀ The Duplex Project / Cover CD

Interview with

Adam Zielonka and Tom Phillipson

by Bim Ricketson

Every two bit hack writer has done their article on the marvel of the internet in creating the 'global village' we now live in. We usually describe how people on either side of the world, through cheap instant email, can share ideas, build friendships and create a peaceful and understanding world for our children. In this magazine there have been numerous references to Australian artists remixing songs via emailed files or arranging distribution with kindly faceless Belgians, taking their music to a global audience, often resulting in more recognition overseas than at home.

Fortunately in this case the hackneyed 'music / internet' story has a new twist involving two cities, a pair of radio stations, one ISDN line and a couple of Hornsby natives in a long distance collaboration in which the limitations of technology were an integral part of the musical experience.

The Duplex Project, featured on the cover of this issue of *Cyclic Defrost*, is a remastered version of a live improvisation between Ray Diode (Adam Zielonka) in Sydney and Given (Tom Phillipson) in Germany, recorded in July last year through the financial assistance of the Buzz grant from the Australia Council.

Aiming to 'explore the dynamic of performance between two artists completely separated by distance' and to 'break down the divide between the audience and the artist by transforming the artist into the audience', the CD is an audio scape of minimal yet rich drones and static described by one listener as 'the end of the world' and by another as 'strudel'.

Tom Phillipson describes his music background as 'Kinda normal... I started going to warehouse parties in 1993 and from there started listening to 2SER. From listening I volunteered at the station and from volunteering I was exposed to a whole different side of music. It wasn't too much after that I started making music and about five years ago Dumphuck industries was born. I had always been interested in creative stuff and working on CDs was a perfect outlet. You spend 3-4 months creating, compiling and mastering a CD, then you send it off and a few weeks later you have 500 of them in your house. It's great, as opposed to painting or drawing where there is only one of the object, production means you can spend the time making something and then have a tangible object you can sell or give away and still have one for yourself.

'I am an untrained artist, in the sense that nearly all of the fields in which I fiddle I have had no training or education. Anyone who knows me will not be surprised when I say my main interest is building robots, but actually building one is a different thing altogether.'

Until recently Tom ran the Dumphuck label, now defunct other than being an outlet for his freelance design work. Tom's partner in the Duplex project, Adam Zielonka, is a member of house/soul/tech trio Alphatown, who were 'pivotal to Dumphuck and that whole adventure.'

Alphatown is a trio made up of Adam, with friends Luke Mynott and Andrew Maher. High school friends whose experiences within the early nineties warehouse rave scene left an 'indelible mark', they have been performing live as Alphatown for the past four years Sydney's

clubs and parties. 'The Alphatown live set is highly improvised,' enthuses Adam, 'we bounce off each other and the audience. Stylistically, we play a hybridised blend of soulful, bumpy electro-house with an infectious dancefloor sensibility. For us, good music of any variety is all about balancing the rough and the smooth – bittersweet flavours make for a more memorable experience. We try to create music with feeling.'

Adam's alter ego Ray Diode has a slightly more dubious background, raised on a diet of communist propaganda in Poland and long nights with nothing but the soothing tones of radio static as company. Now completing a master's degree in researching the effects of frequency static on his unconscious and hoping to decipher the messages that static has to tell him, Ray is 'fascinated and perplexed with the textural sounds of radio transmissions, telemetry readings and micro haus structures.' And 'thermos innards.'

The Duplex project was not their first musical collaboration. 'It was a mixture of a few ideas we had been playing with,' explains Tom, 'A few years ago I was producing a radio program called Aeon, which was very much in the same vein as Duplex. Occasionally we would experiment with the broadcasts, like calling in on the phone and then playing stuff down the phone line and putting it to air and experimenting with delayed feedback loops. From there, it was kinda logical



Tom, whose girlfriend worked at the German radio station Antennae Muenster, laid the ground work for the gig. 'The station is a commercial

commercial

"One little old German lady ask[ed] why were
broadcasting the end of the world"

w
had to physical

The performance was made possible through the high speed digital phone connection ISDN. 'ISDN is basically just a digital phone line,' describes Tom 'It allows you to connect to another studio via the line. It's pretty straightforward (in theory); you dial the number on the codec, it rings and connects, then as long as the studio is set up correctly, the number you are calling should just come up on the desk as a fader. Doesn't always work like that, as we found out... and having a German technician who doesn't speak much English made it kind of amusing/stressful.

‘The CD is a mashup of elements of live recordings from both sides of the broadcast glued together with tracks that for one reason or another didn’t sound as good on the DAT tapes. We rebuilt the set from scratch to reflect

the original set and then we cut up the recordings from the set and layered them into that mix. A lot of the set on the CD is the broadcast, but then there is also parts of it which just didn't sound as good due to the compression over the ISDN

we decided we had to physically mix them again to ensure we got a solid mix.

'In the end it's a seamless mix, there is no indication where the live stuff starts or ends as its all layered and mixed in. Just like a strudel, layer upon layer upon layer. Yum.'

An Australian broadcast time of 3am, combined with a tight turnaround between the successful grant application and performance made it difficult to promote the experiment. 'Promoting the event was kinda stressful because I was leaving Germany mid-July and we didn't actually get confirmation of the grant until mid-June, which meant we had under a month to pull it all together. We had all the press releases set up, and had tentatively booked some interviews, but as we didn't know until the last minute, it was hard to really co-ordinate anything effectively.'

'We were lucky to have the media officer of the Muenster City Council offer us help promoting it in Germany which did open a few doors for us. Alas as the broadcast in Sydney meant people had to wake up at 3am, so the coverage in Sydney wasn't too strong. Strangely enough the local paper up in Hornsby did a story on it as both Adam and I as we are both from the shire.'

'We had a few interesting calls [during the broadcast], including one little old German lady asking why were broadcasting the end of the world. As long as we can touch just that one person in that special way, it's all worth it.'

*** *The Duplex Project is
this month's cover CD*





Picture by Kathryn Thomas
TRIOSK L to R: Klumpes, Pike, Waples

THE THRICE OF THREEEDOM

Triosk

Interview with Laurence Pike
by Damian O'Keefe

One of the highlights of last year was the collaboration between local jazz trio Triosk, and German minimal producer Jan Jelinek on the album *1+3+1*. An unlikely venture conducted by unlikely people, it united two sides of the world and, seemingly, opposing ends of the same aesthetic.

Triosk formed with the idea of combining the three members' talents as jazz musicians with electronic elements including the use of micro-samples. The collaboration with Jelinek happened purely by accident, says Laurence Pike, drummer with the trio, 'I discovered Jan's music very much by chance. I was recording sound bytes off the radio late one night, and unknowingly sampled some pieces from his album *Loop-finding Jazz Records*. We based a couple of our early tunes around these samples, as they were perfect for the sound we were trying to achieve. Later when I found out what it was, I bought the album and became his number one super fan.'

'Adrian and I went to see Jan's gig in Sydney in November 2001, and we approached him after the show about what we had been doing with his music, if only to see if he was OK with it. I gave him a CD and my contact details, 3 weeks later he sent me an e-mail from Berlin and suggested we should record together. I told him to talk to my agent first of course...'

The resulting album, *1+3+1*, is an inspiring combination of Jelinek's trademark bleeps, tones and micro-audio processing and Triosk's unique

instrumentation and attitude. Despite the subtle nature of the music itself, there is an undercurrent of intensity throughout the album. 'I think both Jan Jelinek's and Triosk's music has this quality,' says Pike, 'It can float across the surface even though there is a lot happening in the cracks and underneath.' The listener merely has to decide whether they would like to explore the surface or delve into these darker cracks... or move between the two.

Adrian Klumpes' vibes swirl around looped tones (and vice versa) while Pike's drumming and percussion slowly builds in its focus or alternately stutters along in counterpoint to Ben Waples' smooth double bass. The subtle intensity comes from a feeling of tension between Triosk's free-flowing sound and the rigid sample-loops and clicks of Jelenik.

Pike acknowledges that the challenge of combining the improvisational aesthetic of jazz with otherwise highly-structured electronica is a significant intention for Triosk, 'Using turntables in a jazz improvisational way in Pivot (which Adrian and I also play in) really opened up the possibilities of improvising with other sound sources. I wanted to explore combining a more traditional jazz ensemble sound with electronic textures and improvising with both, with the electronic layers more or less being another improvising member in the overall group sound. I started to really identify with the more minimal, glitch and ambient electronic music, and felt that the 'chance' or 'found' nature of many

of its sounds seemed to have a natural link to the process of jazz improvising. I find it hard to say that we have a specific method, we try a lot of different things, and it's often hit and miss.'

The fact this challenge was conducted via air mail and e-mail seems bizarrely appropriate. In fact, Triosk and Jelinek have never spoken since their first and only meeting; the musical connection and understanding between the two parties would be sure to overload the circuits of Perfect Match's Dexter.

'The writing process was very natural, says Pike, elaborating on the process behind *1+3+1*, 'We just responded as best we could to the feeling of each track. I think I wrote 'Vibes/Pulse' for example, more or less from my first listening to the CD, many of the tracks we also just established a concept and left space for spontaneity and invention in the studio. We put down Jan's material as a stereo track and layered our parts on top. We spent two days recording. The first day we recorded everything for *1+3+1* and the second day we recorded material for another album of our own. About 15 tracks all up, it was a marathon session. We transferred the 2-inch tape onto digital and burnt all the files on CD and posted them to Berlin...There was always the element of not knowing what the final result was going to be at either end, which was very exciting. It made us focus on delivering whatever we thought the

I started to really identify with the more minimal, glitch and ambient electronic music, and felt that the 'chance' or 'found' nature of many of its sounds seemed to have a natural link to the process of jazz improvising.

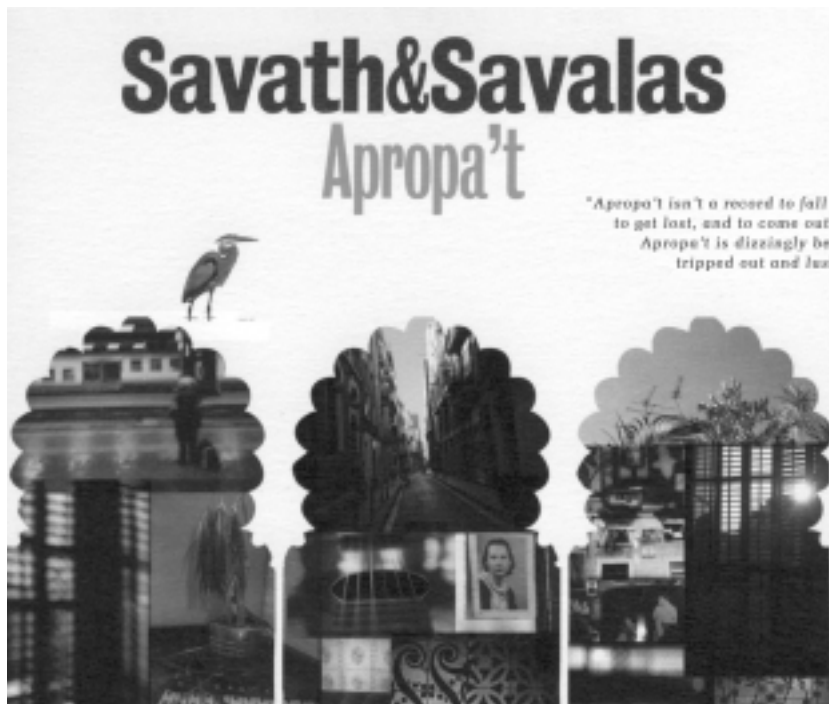
tracks needed best. From this perspective, I thought the mutual trust between Jan and ourselves was quite impressive. Jan then posted back some first drafts and we discussed very minor changes in the mix and ideas via e-mail until we were all happy.'

For Pike the biggest surprise was how true Jelinek stayed to Triosk's original recordings, something he appears to appreciate even more as a fan. 'I was really flattered by the fact Jan obviously liked what we added so much that he left most of it alone, and chose to enhance it instead of chopping it to bits... which I would have been fine with also.'

The challenges are far from over, though. Whilst both Triosk and Jelinek have independently been playing shows based on the material from *1+3+1*, there are plans to do some live shows together. As

enthusiastic as he is about this, Pike is still slightly unsure how this would work, not to mention a distinct lack of enthusiasm from potential promoters. 'Promoters are extremely hesitant to take on 4 people and lots of equipment, especially when they are accustomed to presenting one person and a laptop. I'm confident it will happen later in the year, and hopefully in Australia as well as Europe. I would like to think that we could present a really unique show, play material from the album, but also be highly spontaneous and interactive. I would also be very interested in doing some completely improvised sets and have Jan improvise textures and layers and live manipulations of the sound that the trio generates. This is ultimately how I would like to do all Triosk gigs, but we are still developing our methods as a trio, and we're often limited by only having six hands.' At least that adds to make one more than the album title!

1+3+1 is out now on ~scape through Inertia



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+ AN AGE OF DECADE-DANCE

LABEL PROFILE: Creative Vibes' 10th Anniversary

Interview with Peter Pasqual by Vaughan Healy

A good record store can sometimes resemble a support group for misanthropes. Every now and then, however, all the digging and competition can lead to something positive – just like in 1994 when three friends decided to set up their own distribution company. Peter and Heidi Pasqual and Gordon Henderson were sick of working for The Man and decided to start Creative Vibes.

'We used to work for a distributor, but there was so much music we wanted to buy for ourselves and it was costing us a bomb. So we thought if we wanted to feed our vinyl habit we may as well do something about it and bring in some of this music ourselves. We ended up quitting the distributor we were working for and started up a business in our bedroom. We thought, "If we bring in one copy and someone wants it, why not bring in five copies?" It went from five to ten to twenty. We went on building up to some labels doing 300 or 400 releases on vinyl and we were distributing to about 15 stores!'

Creative Vibes expanded from distribution into a fully-fledged record company in 1996 and began to sign, promote and release local artists. The financial rewards were immediate – Creative Vibes moved out of a Glebe bedroom into a plush 34th floor office in Australia Square in the Sydney CBD, and opened a London office under the guidance of law specialist George Butler. Moves were also made into Tokyo, New York, Paris and most famously in Riga, the Latvian capital, in an attempt to corner emerging markets in the former Soviet Union.

The decision to launch Creative Vibes as a label for local talent was easy. DJ Soup, AKA John Blake, was a vocalist and bass player in go-go band the Sydney Kings whose *Slam Dunk* EP has become another lost 1980s classic. Peter explains, 'our involvement with local artists came about when we signed DJ Soup. The company I was working with before had signed his band and did an EP with them, so releasing a solo DJ Soup album was a natural progression for me when Creative Vibes started. We firstly released the *Soup & Avene* EP in 1996, followed by the *Souperloops* album a year later. Looking back that was a ground-breaking album, the guy was doing a lot of cut-up and breaks stuff a long time before anyone else was, especially in Australia. He is

such a production genius and he was always ahead of his time in what he was doing.'

Listening back, the *Soup and Avene* EP still sounds hot, vastly superior to so much of the boring 'trip-hop' blah that got mad props on labels / brands like Mo'Wax. Unlucky for us, those early Creative Vibes releases remain obscure, getting limited release and exposure in a population having trouble with the difficult concept of instrumental, synthetic music. 'The thing was that radio here had not caught up. Triple J was so focused on doing rock stuff that when artists like Soup finally got some airplay, they weren't understood by the audience. But he is going to be doing music forever, so he will have his time one day. When that happens he will get the recognition he deserves.'

Creative Vibes have since continued their commitment to pushing local music alongside the imports, with their catalogue numbers creeping up to the magic 50 releases. Over that time, the *Evolutionary Vibes* compilations have acted as a showcase for the Creative Vibes sound. *Evolutionary Vibes Volume Five* is the latest, subtitled 'Winter of Our Discothèque - Summer Edition'. It's the first one for three years, the last one came out in 2000. I didn't want to do another one but I had so many one-off tracks that were so good, plus a lot of full artist albums coming up soon so I thought it would be good to introduce a lot of these artists to the public, to have a precursor to the albums coming out. I honestly didn't have any intentions doing one after number four but the tracks are just too good.'

Volume Five covers a huge stylistic area. 'This time round I have decided to put out as many different styles as possible and not stick to any one genre. The electronic music industry out here is so diverse, and if you are going to do a compilation which sounds just like the last one you are really not doing the scene any favours, so I really wanted to put out as wide a sound as possible. If I have offended people then tough luck, I don't put tracks on there to appease people.' Old timers Koolism snuggle next to new comers like Gotye, whose new solo album *Boardface* has been getting played in all the right places. 'Gotye has an amazing track which almost has a New Order-type feel. There's a new track from Ubin, whose album is coming out in March. There is also a track from Quoro, which is incredible. It really shows where hip-hop is going.'

Other projects lined up for Creative Vibes' 10th birthday include a Best Of, and the prequel remix album *Don't believe the hype, it's a prequel*. Word. The established Australian jazz and funk series *Respect Overdue* is also getting another instalment, with paperwork currently settling on Volume Three as I type. 'There is so much amazing Australian jazz music that got overlooked, which explains the title of *Respect Overdue*. There was no respect given to any of these guys when they released these albums, a lot of them sold next to nothing. By properly licensing these tracks and making sure the artists get paid is just our way of saying thank you.'

I ask Pete what forgotten slice of wax would get the Creative Vibes reissue treatment if he was King for a day. 'The album that we are trying to release is called *Eastern Horizons* by the Charlie Munro Quartet. It was recorded in 1967 and originally released on Philips. The guy was a genius. Equal to anything by Pharaoh Sanders or Alice Coltrane; it's an amazingly well written and thought out piece of work. But a lot of Australian-based artists never got a look in on the international markets.'

It would be a lie to suggest that the only music that Creative Vibes deal with is achingly cool European electronica and black dance music. Browsing through most of the dusty corners in a well-stocked store turns up music from across continents, genres and ages all distributed by Creative Vibes: difficult modern jazz

'There is so much amazing Australian jazz music that got overlooked...by properly licensing these tracks and making sure the artists get paid is just our way of saying thank you'

labels like New World and ECM, original bluegrass and vocal labels like Document, avant-gardists World Serpent, specialist European library music labels and loads of other stuff defying any sensible description. Pete agrees: 'Yeah, there is only a really small market for much of the stuff we do, things like the Sub Rosa label, which I hold close to my heart – we might only sell 25 copies of an album, but it's viable because then when something like Bill Laswell comes along we might crack 1000. We do a lot of labels because we adore them and feel that they should be represented out here, not because they sell.'

While accessing styles broader than Broadway, undoubtedly the Creative Vibes cash-cow remains modern and European. It is a company synonymous with contemporary occidental music. 'We are changing tack this year, I will be dealing with a lot of American labels to get their catalogue with us.'

People only think that of us because in the beginning we were doing a lot of French music, French hip-hop, house and funk. Things like St Germain, and we were the first ones to break Bob Sinclar, Super Discount, I.Cube, and stuff from F Communications, which did extremely well for us out here. Because we were getting such massive hits with that European stuff, people from that side of the world were talking and saying 'Look, Creative have done 10,000 of this, you should get them to work with you in Australia'. We became very Euro-centric after that, it was just the way it was going. I don't think we were conscious of the fact then, but now we will be branching out and you will see a lot more US labels being distributed, everything from jazz re-issues to electronic labels."

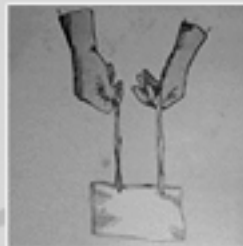
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MUSICAL DEMENTIA

Animal Collective

Interview with Panda Bear
by Bob Baker Fish

Here Comes the Indian from Brooklyn based quartet the Animal Collective was one of those amazing bolts from the blue you get from time to time, a disc that seemed to exist in a totally different time and space as all of its contemporaries. A twisted brew of off-kilter wailing and chaotic though melodic sounds, it seemed equally informed by psychedelia as rock, folk and pop, yet felt like a bizarre form of musical dementia, where everything had been taken apart and reassembled by some sincere yet very troubled minds.

Released early last year, its distinctive, astonishing and uniquely imaginative sounds prompted interest from English label Fat Cat (home to Sigur Ros and Múm) who, on the advice of David Grubbs checked out a live show and were so blown away by the outfit's exuberance and musical dexterity that they invited them over for an English tour. Fat Cat's enthusiasm even stretched as far as rescuing their two earlier works *Spirit They've Gone* *Spirit They've Vanished* and *Danse Mataneé* from distribution hell and releasing them as a two disc set. With stage monikers like Deaken, Avey Tare, Geologist and Panda Bear, everything about them is cloaked in a strange kind of psychedelic backwoods mystery. Not all participants play on each release, ensuring each album possesses its own unique personality. Whilst *Here Comes The Indian* exercises some of their more abrasive tendencies, their debut, featuring Avey Tare and Panda Bear, is a much more skewed psychedelic pop influenced outing, and 2003's *Campfire Songs* featured the Collective playing acoustically on a screen porch in Maryland. Whilst elements such as tone, structures and temperaments can differ dramatically between releases, their spirit of inventiveness and experimentation remain intact throughout.

'We've known each other for so long and been through a whole lot together so I think who we

are and what we think of things is inside all of us somewhere and somehow, and there isn't much need to talk about it,' offers Panda Bear when pressed about where this unique sonic approach sprang from. Responding via email during some downtime in New York, Panda has been friends and musical collaborators with the Collective since 1992, though it wasn't until 2000 that they came together under the Animal moniker, with the emphasis producing something new, even if it wasn't actually explicitly discussed. 'We all want to do something new and fresh and try and work as hard as we can and go as far as we can with everything we do, but I don't know that we've talked a whole lot about that. We try and move around a lot as far as styles and approaches and instruments and things like that are concerned but I suppose that's more to keep us excited than anything, and again there isn't much discussion of that sort of thing.

'There was one summer, it was my first summer living in New York, so I guess that was four years ago – that Avey and Geo Bresson and I would set up all sorts of things in Avey's room on Prince and more or less improvise together for

an hour or so and record it all,' he continues. 'Those tapes got stolen and I'm still upset for that. But I think much of what we do or at least our attitudes about music and our music come a lot from that summer together. We would use anything like plates and the door and anything we would touch because we'd constantly be around the room moving from one sound to the next. I suppose the freeness of those days has played out as a big inspiration for our attitudes.'

This freedom is also reflected in the revolving nature of the group, where the Animal Collective can refer to anything from one to four members or any configurations in between. The name Animal Collective came from a desire to label all their disparate projects, perhaps a recognition that whilst the sonics may vary, the approach and impulses behind them were linked. 'It was a way of talking about all of it all at once sort of like a big blanket name if you know what I mean,' states Panda. 'It's not my favorite to be perfectly honest because sometimes I'm afraid someone might think were stuck up a little and intellectual, and not that I think we're stupid but I don't think we're like that. Collective just sounds a little jaunty to me but it gets the job done I think.'



Each release is such a peculiar collision of ideas and influences. Whilst their debut was much more vocally based, with skewed though unmistakable song structures, echoes some of the folkier moments of a prepubescent Mercury Rev, elsewhere they touch upon all kinds of strange and conflicting influences. 'There are so many things that have pointed us in the directions we go so it's hard to gather them together,' offers Panda stating the obvious. 'I think most of them aren't so musical although lots of attitudes of musicians or artists in the past have inspired us to feel a certain way about what we do. The freeness I talked a bit about before from psychedelic or folk or music of the world like African music or something is in there for sure. All sorts of things. I think who we are as people and what's inside us has defined our music more than anything and we're all very different and into all sorts of different things, I guess that makes it even more difficult to say just where we're coming from. I like music that's very ritualistic, like to ward off spirits, or to heal somebody who's hurt – it's an expression of something very real and true and it has a purpose and that purpose is to be better in some form. I like that very much.'

Given the looseness of their structures and their refusal to operate within traditionally accepted forms, not to mention some of the abrasive squalls of sound, there is a common misapprehension that the Collective are simply giving into the moment and improvising aimlessly. After all how could they reproduce the rapturous energy and strange combinations of sounds? 'There isn't much improvisation at all, live or recorded,' clarifies Panda. 'It is an element of almost all the music though and it is very important to us to have that feeling of confusion. We all like that energy of moments very much. Avey sometimes says that the mood of a song is improvised and I think that's true for the most part. Sometimes when we were playing on stage and the crowd gets super rowdy then we get real rowdy so a song that isn't so aggressive will get that way.'

Consequently most of their new material comes from a combination of live jams and prepared parts that each member brings to Collective. 'It goes both ways,' states Panda. 'There's been times where lots of it comes from just playing together without anything in mind and there's times where we work with something very structured that comes from someone in the group. But what comes out at the finish is always fashioned and built in some way or another so we never wing it at all. I think some people think we do just shoot from the hip all the time but that's really not true at all. And it's not that I don't respect improvised forms of music but for us I think its only one part of a process to get where we'd like to go.'

Whilst much of the Collective's output is challenging structurally or emotionally, a yen for

I certainly wouldn't be the person I am now
if not for the last eight or so years making
music with my best friends.

extremely high-pitched textures has meant that they also have the propensity to be sonically challenging. Whilst you get the sense that many artists delight in tormenting their audience or at the very least making the listening experience a test of endurance, for Panda this couldn't be further from the truth. 'I don't think we ever mean to annoy anyone or drive them off at all,' he assures. 'Some of our songs or the records I can't listen to any more either because it's not what I'd like to hear any more. I suppose there is a fine line between challenging someone and driving them away. I'd hope to bring someone to a better place or a wiser place or a happier place or something with music, but I certainly wouldn't want to screw with them just for the sake of doing that.'

Panda's favourite album thus far is 2003's *Campfire Songs*, where the quartet retreated to a friend's porch in Maryland with only acoustic instruments and crooned and harmonized into the countryside. A calming album, on initial listens its relationship with some of their other more tempestuous outings may seem tenuous at best. It's only after a few listens that it becomes clear, its effects arriving more from the carefree joyful and natural expression of the players. 'It's the only one I listen to at all and it's very nice to go to sleep with,' Panda reveals. 'It's very pretty and moves slowly like I do when I go to sleep and I guess that's why it works well. The music is who we were at the time; how we were feeling, what we were excited about doing and where we were excited about being (in Maryland countryside and forests) and I think all the music works along those lines. That's how it fits with the rest, if you know what I mean.'

Beyond currently working on a new album tentatively due in spring as well as participating a couple of other mysterious projects and touring through the next three or four months, Panda appears a little overwhelmed by all of their commitments as their music continues to reach new audiences. Regardless, he remains energized and enthusiastic, conscious of the personal rewards that playing with the Collective brings. 'It feels very good to be working with people who are important to me on so many levels,' he offers. 'It's very hard work and it forces us through all sorts of things, I've learned more from my parts in the collective than anything else in my life. So I suppose it's how it changes who I am that gets me so excited. I certainly wouldn't be the person I am now if not for the last eight or so years making music with my best friends.'



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Buck 65

Interview with Rich Terfry
by Tim Colman

Rich Terfry, aka Buck 65, casts a unique shadow in the world of hip-hop. With seven albums under his belt the Nova Scotia native's abstract, bittersweet lyrics have yielded recently to a gruff delivery reminiscent of Tom Waites. Musically, the beatmaker in Buck 65 favours folk, jazz, blues and country – not your average hip-hop mixture – but Rich is not your average hip-hop figure. A baseball fanatic, he was once scouted by the New York Yankees, he's dropped rhymes for *Sesame Street* and has worked with a diverse array of artists ranging from the Anticon collective to the Beastie Boys. School music theory has given him experience in the tuba.

[Hip-hop] was like the next form of American folk music but it seems to have abandoned those roots ... I'd like to see more of a return to that but hip-hop's gotten really narrow and pre-occupied with some weird pursuits these days.

'I did study music in school when I was younger so I did learn theory and how to read music,' says Rich. 'I played tuba and drums for five years. As a strange as it might sound to have a background in the tuba it has served me well, at least a little bit.'

The tuba isn't very hip-hop. 'No, but neither is banjo and steel guitar and both those things are all over my album. Who's to say really, the way I feel is there are no limits.'

Buck 65's latest offering is 2003's *Talkin' Honky Blues*. Despite the absence of the tuba it's a mixed bag covering folk, reggae, jazz, blues, rock, even a track bearing a striking resemblance to Italian horror soundtrackers Goblin. Recorded in Paris, the album isn't as dark nor as abstract as previous efforts.

'I was in Paris looking for a change of scenery and some new inspiration,' states Rich. 'Just looking at new faces, meeting new people and having new experiences gave me a lot to write about. The city also conjured lots of inspiration and feelings of romance and whimsy, things like that,' he remembers, laughing.

'At the same time I felt like a lot of my musical tastes were beginning to change. I was spending a lot of time listening to old folk music, old jazz and old blues. I felt, to honest with you, that the last few records I had made before *Talkin' Honky Blues* were basically me making the same album

over and over again. I knew that I didn't want to do that again. I wanted to push myself a little further and see what I was really capable of. To push myself further as a musician or take steps towards being able to rightfully claim the title of 'songwriter.'

To claim the title 'songwriter' Terfry found himself picking up instruments like the guitar again and re-evaluating the way he used the sampler.

'I still use the sampler to make all my music but I use live instruments then process the sounds, sample them and chop them up,' he explains. 'I still really like that approach, using the sampler as a tool in the studio and as an instrument. But there's two major concerns I have with the method. One is that being on a major label the legality of samples becomes an issue. The other thing is that I really want to try and establish myself as a songwriter and for me to do that I can't just write lyrics, I have to write music as well. It was just a natural move to start using instruments and so on. I want to gain some sort of legitimacy out there in the world of music. If I'm just recycling other people's sounds that wouldn't really qualify me as a songwriter. I really endeavour to push myself in that way.'

Don't you think sampling is a valid form of songwriting? 'Unfortunately I don't think that the art-form of sampling is given the legitimacy that it deserves in the courts and by a lot of other musical people out there,' replies Rich. 'It's a tough issue, you could argue it either way. There's a lot of people who would say an important part of songwriting is sitting down at a piano or with a guitar and writing music and learning how to read music off a sheet. That's a whole other discipline that, strictly speaking, sampling is outside of. That's not to say it's not a legitimate artform but I don't know how neatly it fits in with the technical definition of songwriting.'

There's no doubt many are interested in Buck 65's approach to songwriting. In 2002, after five

independent releases, the Canadian arm of Warner Music signed him. Anyone afraid a lack of independence would result in a drop in quality would have been pleasantly surprised with 2002's *Square* – four tracks each clocking in at around 20 minutes.

'I was really happy the first album I did on a major label was a really challenging record because I know some people out there would have been really sceptical to see me coming out on a major, thinking compromises would be made,' says Terfry. 'I think all those fears were put to rest pretty quickly when people took one look at the album and saw how out-there it was.'

Still, it didn't stop the odd critic voicing a negative opinion about the move. 'I've certainly heard my fair share of shit-talking,' explains Rich. 'Unfortunately there's a lot of people out there who position themselves as some sort of authority on music and they have the say on what's right and what's just. Their opinions though aren't so much based on the music and whether it's any good – there's a whole separate agenda.'

'There's people who are sticklers for the whole lo-fi aesthetic or the idea that if it's not underground it's not special any more. People don't want to have to share with other people but I just like music that's good. I don't care where it comes from, what country or what label it's on. I have records in my collection that probably no one's ever heard of and then I've got other records amongst my favourites that are on big labels and everyone has in their collection. I wish everyone was the same but some people are really willing to dismiss you for reasons that have nothing to do with the music you make whatsoever. Obviously that's something I find frustrating.'

Shit-talkers aside, the move has meant Buck 65 is now able to concentrate solely on the music as the business side is all taken care of. His music can also reach places it was otherwise unavailable as he's no longer restricted by independent marketing techniques.

'When you're on an independent label, they're kind of genre specific, but a major label casts their net out wider which is what I wanted to do,' says Rich. 'I wanted to reach some people who like other kinds of music, to see if that would work. So far I can see they've been doing a really good job with that. I think there's still a long way to go but so far, all in all, I've been really pleased.'

With the promotion side covered and Paris as the backdrop, Rich decided it was time to bring his production up a notch. Discarding his former bedroom set-up he took the plunge into a studio.

'I thought it might be good to actually record in a somewhat proper studio,' he says. 'Every album I'd done before I'd just done in my bedroom on a four-track. It was a comfortable situation because it was a place that a friend of mine ran and I just had my friends in there. It wasn't some kind of fancy place by any stretch of the imagination. The place stunk, it had naked women on the walls, there were no windows. It was just as stinky as my apartment so it didn't feel to foreign to me.'

So you felt at home? 'Yeah, which was important to me. Being comfortable is much more important than going out and getting the best gear, the best producer and the best guitar player. I'd take comfort over that any day.'

Comfortable in his musical surroundings, Buck 65 then attempted to recapture the lost art of story-telling, an art he believes hip-hop has lost over the years.

'That's one of the things that excited me about that whole form in the first place,' says Rich. 'It really just kind of fell in line with a lot of folk tradition. It was like the next form of American folk music but it seems to have abandoned those roots in a lot of ways and I think that's really unfortunate. It's a tradition that I like to keep alive. I'd like to see more of a return to that but hip-hop's gotten really narrow and pre-occupied with some weird pursuits these days. I just feel I'm kind of out there doing my own thing. I don't really think too much about what to call [my music] or where it fits in or anything like that.'

His approach to lyrics and music definitely sit outside the traditional hip-hop framework. Attempting to pin point Buck 65 contemporaries or influences within the hip-hop world is often difficult.

'I don't see too many similarities between what I do and what just about anyone out there is doing,' states Terfry. 'That suits me fine. I'm not out there specifically doing something different from anyone else, I'm just trying to do my thing.'

'I don't know a whole lot of other hip-hop fans that are also huge fans of country music or are into classical music, like Danny Elfman or something like that. I wish that was the case, I would find that really exciting if I could find a hip-hop person who would be willing to engage in a conversation about Jacques Brell or something like that. I don't know too many people like that unfortunately. I don't think there's anything unusual about that but there are some people out there who think I'm some sort of freak because of that.'

That's not to say he hasn't attempted to bridge the hip-hop divide. Terfry has over the years collaborated with Biz Markie and the Beastie Boys, although the experience wasn't everything he had hoped for.

'It was interesting, like any experience it had its ups and downs,' says Rich. 'I know the Beastie Boys don't like white people making hip-hop music which is kind of ironic. So I found those guys to be nice enough gents on a personal level but then there were some musical things philosophically we couldn't see eye to eye on.'

Even collaborations with like-minded artists have not yielded satisfactory results. After working with Anticon early in his career Buck has since distanced himself from the collective, although not for any personal reasons.

'I would still count all those guys as friends, I saw them a week ago in New York, but the fact is with me living in France and those guys living in California it's not even feasible for us to try and work together,' explains Rich. 'I've come to the conclusion I kind of prefer being the lone wolf and being out there on my own. The danger you get into with a label like Anticon is they have a political agenda attached to them. That's a really dangerous thing because as soon as you really put your foot down on anything and start waving a flag, you start to divide people. I found there were a lot of people reacting negatively to Anticon and as soon as they saw that label they were turned off. I want people to judge me on my music alone and not associations or anything else. I felt it was best to go off and be on my own but those guys are still friends and I respect what they do.'

These experiences have meant Buck 65 isn't entirely comfortable with collaborations these days. While he does have a band he tours with his recent Sydney show was a one man affair, with Terfry handling DJ duties giving the audience his best stand-up comic routine.

'My experience collaborating with people hasn't been entirely positive so I've shied away from it over the last couple of years,' says Terfry. 'I prefer to just work on my own then you only have yourself to disappoint. I figure it's better that way.'



Talkin' Honky Blues is out on Warner see buck65.com for more



REVIEWS

LOCAL RELEASES

Will Guthrie

Building Blocks

(Antboy/ Synaesthesia)

For the last decade or so percussionist Will Guthrie has been a ubiquitous presence on the Melbourne improvised and jazz music scene. He can regularly be seen around town tinkering with his strange home made instruments, found objects and soundscapes with fellow improvisers at venues like the Make It Up Club (Planet Café) or even part of a greater ensemble such as with the Buckettrider Big Band. Each performance is markedly different, often utilising different tools, yet the one constant is an inventive sense of rhythm and the desire to continually push the boundaries of percussion, regardless of genre or expectations. *Building Blocks* is his second solo album and sees him fiddling around with percussion and electronics over three diverse tracks, one of

which is a live improvisation. The opener, 'Blanket', begins with a gentle meditative metallic drone that is slowly revealed to be the reverberations of a cymbal or gong. As the 19-minute plus piece progresses, Guthrie begins to build up the repetitive electronics, delicately enhancing and emphasising the staticy pitches via the odd fleck of a cymbal or basslike heavy rumbling. His tools are amplified percussion, motor based toys, delicate feedback, strange objects and apparently a record player. Whilst keeping everything ethereal and trancelike on the opening, Guthrie becomes much more haphazard and twitchy on 'Eleven', shaking rattling and scraping objects in front of repetitive electric buzzes and whirs. This is the virtual opposite of what you would expect from your average percussionist's solo album. There are pretty much no regular beats to be found. Guthrie instead opts for a more interesting sound design approach and creates interesting and challenging pieces that defy you to guess how they were constructed.

Bob Baker Fish

Earle, Guthrie & Sussmann *Bridges*

(Antboy/ Synaesthesia)

Earlier this year at Melbourne's Make It Up Club Will Guthrie collaborated with the Stasis Duo, an experimental electronic outfit that delight in manipulating dangerously pitched sine waves, via their emptied samplers to create tense but minimal tapes-tries of sound. Perhaps as a result of this meeting comes *Bridges*, still on the Antboy label. Rather than utilising their Stasis Duo moniker all participants use their real names, thus we have Guthrie on some of the most minimal percussion around, Mathew Earle on electronics and Adam Sussmann on prepared acoustic guitar, electric guitar and electronics. The opener, 'Bridges 1' builds up from odd bits of scraping into those intense higher than high neck tightening pitches that Stasis Duo seem to love, and at over 18 minutes is a difficult proposition. Yet if you can stand your bleeding ears it is blessed with some amazingly strange yet cohesive interplay between the trio. 'Bridges 2', the highlight of the disc, gets positively

science fiction thanks to the strange droning metal on metal, piercing electronics and Sussman's prepared acoustic guitar. Though it's overcome with bells, insistent drones and noise, Guthrie maintains a slow plodding pulse that effectively ties everything together. The last piece, imaginatively entitled 'Bridges 3' continues the trio's interplay between drones, buzzes and metallic tinkering, though introducing uncomfortable spasms of Sussman's electric guitar. *Bridges* is really a unique and innovative piece of work, and though many such as Toshimaru Nakamura are utilising some of the more difficult higher pitched tones, it's interesting to see them integrated into a group context which effectively removes them from the sterile sound art environment and opens them up to new musical possibilities.

Bob Baker Fish

Phil Bywater's Buried Treasure *Looking Up*

(Newmarket Music)

From other side of the sound world comes Phil Bywater's *Buried Treasure*, which allows Will Guthrie the opportunity to dip into some regular beats, jazz shuffling and work with some traditional instrumentalists. This outfit, comprised of an almost supergroup of some of our best and brightest local jazz musicians, is anything but traditional. Bywater himself, a renowned saxophonist, clarinettist, woodwind player and composer has previously been involved with the Adam Simmons Toy Band and Bomba and established this ensemble to give life to tunes, many of which they had been playing in various bands for five or six years. Blending jazz, swing, klezmer, funk and world music influences as divergent as African beats and Middle Eastern melodies, 'Buried Treasure', a sextet, features every-thing from double bass to vibraphone, marimba and xylophone and is an amazing showcase of each instrumentalists amazing talents, as well as Bywater's original approach to composition. This is a very classy and interesting take on jazz, created by some of the new guard, and needless to say Guthrie's percussion work is continuously inventive and involving. It also provides a jarring example of diversity of the Guthrie's musical travels.

Bob Baker Fish

MARCH 7
(electronic mashup)

DSICO (live)
Sub Bass Snarl
ollo

MARCH 14
(reggae & dub)

MARK O
Sir Robbo
Prince V
Clark Nova

MARCH 21
(electro & queertronica)

GEMMA & SEYMOUR BUTZ
Sleepy Robot
Kid Calmdown
Sub Bass Snarl

MARCH 28
(jazzy drum & bass & breaks)

UNCLE HO (live)
SHUEY
Sir Robbo
Prince V

APRIL 4
(dub house)

MEEM (live)
Sub Bass Snarl
Prince V

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LOCAL RELEASES continued

Western Grey
Glacial Erratic
 (Dr Jim)

'This cd must be listened to at high volume for best results, so that the minute intensity of this sonic collision shreds your aural senses,' offers percussionist Sean Baxter on the press release for Western Grey's debut album. Though initially it may seem strange that Baxter (Bucketrider/Lazy), who is operating here as a trio alongside guitarist David Brown (Candlesnuffer/ Bucket rider/ Lazy), and minimalist electronic composer Phillip Samartzis, would be offering the traditional rock cry of 'play it loud okay,' but there is something unmistakably jarring about *Glacial Erratic* at high volume. And that seems to be their primary intent. Incorporating analogue and electronic improvisations, Western Grey offer moments of extreme minimalism, Samartzis' gentle electro pitches and hums juxtaposed with a series of short improvised episodes of frenzied plucking, rubbing or scratching of guitar and fragments of found percussion. Initially the trio actually seem intent on highlighting the extreme contrasts within their palette, making little attempt to fuse together the ingredients. It's at times tense and difficult listening, but it is also music to actively listen to. There are no grooves, melodies or vocals, no handles to grab onto, rather these are sounds operating somewhere between a sparse stripped back world of sound design or scientific improvisation. Whilst the fourth cut, the twenty four minute 'Open Space' features some 'added environmental manipulation' from renowned English improviser Kaffe Mathews, for the remainder of the disc *Glacial Erratic* feels like the trio earnestly bunkered down clipping, clicking, spasming and exploring the size of the gulf between them. Interestingly that's not a bad thing at all.

Bob Baker Fish

Shaolin Wooden Men

A Binary Input to Flesh Antenna
 (PsyHarmonics)
 Taking their name from a kung fu training device popularised by countless Shaw Brothers films of the '70s, Australia's Shaolin Wooden Men's fourth studio release finds them moving further afield from their technologically influenced beginnings and extending upon the psychedelic trance rock of their more recent outings. Clocking in as a single 40-minute plus track, *A Binary Input to Flesh Antenna* is a strange disjointed and complex

journey. The expectation would be a steady rhythmic track slowly building in tension until some form of orgasmic payoff at the end, and whilst flirting with some of these expectations SWM have some other ideas. Often just as you've settled in behind the repetitious primal beat, the rug will be pulled from under you with only a dull rushing of electrics and a strange windswept sound which seems to act as a buffer between many of the parts. Comprised as a series of loosely connected parts or experiments in rhythm and avant garde soundscapes, much of *Binary Input to Flesh Antenna* feels improvised, concentrating more on exploring shifting dynamics, than as any stringently composed piece. In fact it's a little hard to know what to make of it as *Binary Input to Flesh Antenna* could almost be seen as a number of false starts, or rhythmic teasers before it finally kicks in around the twenty minute mark, and for the remainder of the piece holds the repetitive swamp beats over which soaring synthesized sounds squeal and screech over extra percussion. In the end the piece is left with a primal, trapped-in-the-jungle-with-cannibals feel, as the electronics claw rabidly at themselves, the beat slowly subsides and we are left with that infernal wind. Epic and exhausting.

Bob Baker Fish

Fraughman

Constant Decay
 (Extreme Electronics)

The blitzkrieg of noise shards that is 'XXX', the opening cut of *Constant Decay* ensures that if they missed the cover and title, listeners are under no allusions as to the content of this uncomfortable erratic and dark release. A scattergun of deep pounding and ominous beats tormented by difficult fragments of noise, *Constant Decay* is really four-to-the-floor intensity and chaos. The feel is lo-fi industrial instantaneity, furious often impenetrable drill and bass jackhammer like beats, the odd sample such as Drugstore Cowboy moaning about sickness pain and being a junky and swirls and torrents of electronics. At times it begins to become cohesive, however, if seems to be driven by an insatiable desire for carnage via percussion. At times it feels like a seedy backwater garage version of Ministry, somehow more terrifying and evil due to its raw and abusive nature. When the vocals come they're preceded by violent ear shattering screeches and sound like they come from Al Jourgensons demonic tonsils recorded in a wet sock on the 20 minute cut 'Dance with the Dead'. This is noisy evil territory. Prepare yourself.

Bob Baker Fish

Syndicate
The End
 (Bloody Fist)

When the opening track is titled 'Chaos and Mayhem' and there's a pentagram on the CD, it's not too difficult to see where things are headed. Sure it's dark, with moody repetitive atmospheres but the frenetic burst of drum and bass was entirely unexpected. This is definitely not a record to worship the dark prince by as this is a well crafted, dare I say classy assortment of crooked spazzed up frenetic beats and funky amphetamine rhythms. The first long player from Newcastle based brothers Warren and Gavin Burke, Syndicate is in their words a '70-odd minute wheeze of heavy cut and paste Amiga 600 breakbeat abuse.' What they don't say however, is what an all-encompassing monster of a work this is. For every twitchy rhythm and sample it's clear that a lot of time effort and care has been taken. In fact it's all tightly controlled and deftly constructed, rare and indeed difficult for a release so unrelentingly energetic. Featuring material recorded between the mid-'90s and 2003 it's amazing the continuity of the sounds and approach. It's undoubtedly dark, some of the beats literally boom and vibrate, though the kind of doom breakbeat on the optimistically titled 'The End' is also very engaging.

Bob Baker Fish

Apsci

Get it Twisted
 (Elefant Traks)

Who do these guys think they are? Trans-continental music vigilantes? Defenders of the brave new intent: Apsci mean business. New York, Manilla, Sydney, man, it's all the same in this digital cyberage, and *Get it Twisted* is music for the journey. Hip-hop for the modern age. Believe it. *Get it Twisted* swaps the grime of modern backpack hip-hop (actually, I am not supposed to call it backpack, so let's settle for east coast abstract non-commercial college hip-hop) for clean streamlined electros: first generation synthesis and clear, acute tonalities. Dana Diaz Tutaan's vocals soar above the rugged puns and eccentric metre of Raphael LaMotta. It's a record clearly from New York City: the ideas, the obtuseness, the elliptical electrical production, but it's also got an otherworld edge: maybe its Dana's voice, maybe it's the clarity in the beatz, but this is a record far greater than the sum of its parts. Really, really, really good.

Vaughan Healey

Ens

Warp & Weft
(Groovescooter/Creative Vibes)
Brisbane producer Ben Fairweather has delivered a very solid debut with this album under the name Ens. On the Groovescooter label, *Warp & Weft* is dark, edgy digital jazz that draws its influences from Cinematic Orchestra, Amon Tobin and probably Rob Mazurek's Chicago Underground Trio and the Grassy Knoll. Featuring the moody horn of Sloth, known best for his work with seminal Sydney hip hoppers Meta Bass & Breath, there are some wonderful moments on this smoky record. The two tracks featuring vocalists, Inga Liljeström, who has worked with The Baggsmen, and head-Groovescooter Georgie Zuzak, remain suitably abstract to keep the mood, and become more inviting with each listen. The only flaw in this is the flabbiness in the production of some of the drum sounds. This is particularly the case on 'Introvertusoso' which plods along like a mid '80s crime drama theme on a terribly dull kick sound. Otherwise a fine and most promising debut and worth seeking out.

Sebastian Chan

Bias B

In Bed with Bias
(Obese)

I remember picking up an album by a fella named Bias B named Beezwax back in 1998 and thinking that the album as a package was one of the most impressive Aussie releases I'd heard and seen. Fast forward almost six years – after countless cameo appearances and a Revolver MC battle title – and the veteran Melbourne MC finally releases album number two. As the years pass inevitably styles change, and Bias exhibits a developed rhyme flow, The result is enjoyable, particularly with the solid boom-bap production of the likes of Lazy Grey, Jase, Weapon X and Optamus. Interesting is the relaxing of the hostilities between the likes of Bias and Weapon X, both of whom represent vastly different approaches to hip-hop in Oz. Weapon X has been on the receiving end of harsh criticism over the years due to his use of American accent – rebuked religiously by most Australian MCs. His production skills are unquestionable though and they shine on the opening track 'Keep It Movin'. Bias' strengths lay in his humorous outlook and observations, although he's characterised by subject matter covering the all-important hip-hop lifestyle; wack MCs and his lack of luck with ladies. He has no trouble being self-deprecating, conceding he isn't the most talented MC, and also takes the piss out of himself with all too apparent ease. He contrasts this with some aggressive

battle rhymes, including the collab with Lazy Grey – in which Lazy shines, as can be expected. Another excellent track features Muphin, who returns the guest appearance role after Bias guested on Muphin's solo. The track feels a bit out of place in that it sits next to raucous Bias B tracks like 'Perver' and 'Nut Busta', and yet follows the same introspective themes as 'Sometimes' from Muphin's *More Than Music*. Nevertheless *In Bed With Bias* is a celebration of the larrikin, a subject close to the hearts of many Aussie hip-hop fans, but probably worth avoiding for those who prefer lyrics layered with deeper substance.

Tim Levinson

Music vs Physics

Underscore
(Love & Mercy/Inertia)
Like many of their Symbiotic compadres, Melbourne's Music vs Physics take hip-hop as a starting point (rather than an end) in their sonic adventures – typically ending up in altogether different territory. Surprisingly eschewing the live drums and rapped vocals of their live show *Underscore* is an almost wholly sample-based instrumental offering. According to the tantalising snippets of information on the somewhat twee cover, which are just enough to endearingly frustrate rather than illuminate, *Underscore* is the soundtrack to a lost film. Though it soon becomes apparent that the film never existed *Underscore* nevertheless manages to sonically evoke cinematic vistas through a collection of vignettes placed cosily around a couple of more developed 'songs', such as the siren call of 'Origin's Theme' and the smoky 'Post Op Alley Drop'. The strategy of performing a soundtrack to an imaginary film is an opportunity to present moody, textural flashes of colour rather than whole, finished tracks. *Underscore* succeeds in this – the seventeen tracks are almost wholly downtempo, minor affairs. They proceed, with the exception of a few tracks, with the languid grace and achingly simple beauty that is typically reserved for felines; samples slink and rub against beats like legs; delays purr and mew for attention; while ambient synth lines stretch out in sunny patches oblivious to the rest of the world. The perfect late night accompaniment. Dale Harrison

Morganics

Evolve

(Independent)

Addressing Morganics' work isn't the most simple task – his status as a founding member of the seminal Metabass, his formidable presence as a live performer and his commitment to education through youth and community work all contribute to a hip-hop CV that is seemingly without fault. Separating the music from the man is difficult, and critiquing an

album without addressing these points is a disservice. *Evolve* is Morganics' second solo album, and it builds creditably upon the groundwork laid in his self-titled debut – especially in terms of production. Again handled by Morganics, the beats are more solid – especially in the heavily syncopated Neptunes-ish tracks like 'Lift It'. Though they still possess the same idiosyncracies, they seem more relaxed, as though Morganics the producer has matured. As an MC and beatboxer of course, Morganics reached maturity a long time ago – and tracks that show his raw abilities such as 'Bringitbacktothebeatbox' are testament to the fact. His guests are well chosen and provide some of the highlights – Elf Tranzporter getting all Busta over 'Lift It' and Wire MC's bouncing flow on 'Lonely Night' both stand out. Lyrically, the album runs the full gamut of subject matter – from call outs to the various elements to the homeless imaginings of 'Lonely Night', to dancefloor callouts such as 'Bounce'. What takes the cake though is 'Phone Sex', possibly the strangest sex rap ever recorded, with Morganics waxing oozy about getting it on digitally. Call me a prude, but the visions elicited gave me a bit of a shudder.

Dale Harrison

Various

Straight from the Art
(Empirical/Warner)

2003 was the year that hip-hop finally broke through to a wider audience in Australia, as well as solidifying its place amongst Australian heads and, on a number of releases, coming closer than ever to uniting idea and outcome through stronger production. That *Straight from the Art* was released on Warner's is significant, but probably minor point in comparison. More important is whether the album itself succeeds in representing the current state of Australian hip-hop and whether as an album it's a coherent whole. Although it's far from flawless, *Straight from the Art* has at least succeeded on a number of levels: firstly, it manages to represent many of the disparate elements of Australian hip-hop (from post-code to (re)presentation); from the rougher edges of western Sydney's Cannibal Tribe to the crisp airiness of Hermitude's Blue Mountains. Secondly, the standard of work is passable on all fronts, with more than the occasional flash of brilliance; Sir Robbo's 'The Path' is a stomping monster ridden like a thoroughbred by MCs Hau, Ozi Batla and Urthboy, and the relentlessly intense strings

LOCAL RELEASES continued

of Layla's Maverick are only matched by her flows. Thirdly, it has a considerable female presence. Of course there's some lesser moments as well, and there's at least one track in there that's weaker than Jason Gillespie's groin, but that kinda hating is probably best left to the online forums. **Dale Harrison**

Liones

Liones

(Independent)

Brisbane MC Liones' debut is a strange, but ultimately beautiful, beast. More akin to the manticores – the mythical beast with a human head, the body of a lion and the tail of scorpion – than the lion to which her pseudonym refers. It's a collection of disparate elements that sometimes threaten to sting, sometimes elicit soft feline purrs and sometimes fix you with an intense stare. It all depends on how you approach it. With a burr in her voice and the occasional flow that recalls Martina, the yin to Tricky's yang on the classic *Maxinquaye*, and an opening salvo of tracks that could be straight outta mid-'90s Bristol – all big string pads, moody minor synth lines and single bass piano notes – this could well be passed off as derivative. But with repeated listens it becomes apparent that Liones' relaxed flow is borne from a quiet confidence rather than reticence, and that she is possessed of an uncanny ability to fill the sound palette without dominating it. Though the production is unorthodox in its hesitance to typical hip-hop syncopation (apart from the one Serreck banger) and the mix is a little too sparkly clean (especially in the vocals) it manages to compliment Liones' singular attitude and reluctance to play by the rules – including a writing pad that contains rhymes about graf writing as well as aromatherapy; money as well as reiki. With stylings, this mature debut sounds like nothing else released recently in oz hip-hop, and this is its biggest virtue, and unfortunately probably its greatest impediment.

Dale Harrison

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES

Utabi

Manchurian Candy
(ADAADAT/19-t)

The Japanese breakcore/idm scene is flourishing at the moment, with established artists like Com.a and brother Joseph Nothing being shown up by newcomers like Ove Naxx. Fledgeling English label ADAADAT co-released a split CD by Ove Naxx and Donna Summer last year, and hot on its heels comes a brilliant new CD from Utabi Hirokawa, crammed with references to just about every new style and approach being used in digital music at the moment. The album starts in fine fashion with a stuttering synth melody that keeps being further interrupted until another melody smooths things over. Cut-up-vocal hip-hop à la Machine Drum features on 'Kmoizcark Shoimse Back', while 'Three Tennies' is pure computer game pop, and on 'Turntable Utabied' the string-samples-with-beats remind one of RDJ-era Aphex Twin. The beautifully titled 'Yorange Peel' offsets digital vibes & pads with a sweet pitched-up vocal that recalls Sydney duo Ubin, and 'Wave Ladder' features a melody that wouldn't be out of place on a Mouse on Mars album. However, things start to get really interesting on 'Set Her Eyes Xochipilli', which ventures into a space mapped out by Animals on Wheels' more recent efforts: warm pads and electronic tablas are joined midway by acoustic guitar and organ. The fabulous closer 'Cassia Angustifolia', worth the price of admission alone. Live trombone (that Mouse on Mars influence again), melodeon, guitar and vocals jostle with breakneck beats and processing in an epic track that sums up everything that's good about the Japanese electronica scene.

Peter Hollo

Eight Frozen Modules

The Abduction of Barry
(Orthlorng Musork)

This is the third album from Eight Frozen Modules, the electronic project of LA-based Ken Gibson. *Random Activities and Broken Sunsets*, on Phthalo, established his sound: FM synthesis, heavy electronic beats verging on drill 'n' bass, and DSP processing galore. As with thought process disorder: [delusional malfunction] (also on Orthlorng Musork), there's a clear fascination with mental illness and multiple personalities here, which provides a convenient real-world counterpoint to the abstract and fragmentary music. Gibson has an ear for detail that's matched only by Richard Devine, and his command of the stereo field is exquisite. The music tumbles between nearly

danceable, complex electro and nearly indecipherable manic episodes. Even the latter are strangely compelling if you're on the right wavelength, though, a frame of mind more easily reached via the few glorious ambient tracks like 'Adversely Affected'. Once you're in 8FM's (admittedly rather disturbing) world, it all begins to make sense – it's like suddenly grasping all the 7/8 time signatures of Venetian Snares, a strange twist where 4/4 beats sound wrong in comparison. There are some odd time signatures on this album, and a track like 'Micro-Iconic Feature' has as much atmosphere and manic funk as a Venetian Snares track. 'Pay attention to Barry' is another scary ambient reprieve, whilst in 'Organ for God' one of the most righteous bassline riffs of recent times lumbers through a jungly glitchscape. If you let it into your head, *The Abduction of Barry* will re-wire your brain, just in time for the future to arrive.

Peter Hollo

Coppe

Nauru

(Mango & Sweet Rice)

Honolulu-based Japanese musician Coppe has been releasing her kooky music on her own Mango & Sweet Rice label for some years, courtesy of some very rich parents in Tokyo. But don't be fooled by the self-released rich kid biography – Coppe has some great muso friends (having collaborated with the likes of Kris Weston aka Thrash from the Orb and DJ Vadim), and is a musician of some inventiveness herself. The new album is co-produced by Nico, founder of UK drum 'n' bass label No U-Turn (although there's precious little jungle, tech-step or otherwise, to be found here), and features a lovely chiming remix by Plaid. Indeed, Coppe's vocals frequently recall Plaid collaborators Björk and Nicolette, although Tujiko Noriko would be another point of comparison. The atmosphere is generally dark and ambient, and the song structures unusual. Old jazz samples might float partially submerged in the mix, or a backmasked, echo-ridden flamenco guitar will struggle to materialise. Occasionally there's a world-music hippiness that verges on the cheesy, but not for long, as in the last track, where the guitars and tablas dissolve into beautiful

glitchy keyboard textures, for a blissed-out 4 minute fade that's worth the price of admission alone.

Peter Hollo

My Jazzy Child

Sada Soul
(Clapping Mings)
Damien Mings is *My Jazzy Child*, apparently well-known in Paris's electronica and experimental scenes, here presents his take on laptop folk (or folktronica), a 'genre' that is notable for artists' very individual approaches, from the Books to Four Tet, Matmos to Mice Parade. With the latest album for his *My Jazzy Child* project, Mings's main point of reference has been vocal pop music, with the Beach Boys and Robert Wyatt being clear influences among the clicks, cuts and acoustic guitars. Indeed, part of the charm of this music is the sound of a French person singing English lyrics. But while folk-pop informs much of the music here, Mings's experimentalism is never far away either. The two inform each other, making for accessible exploratory music of a high calibre. Highlights are the uncharacteristic crashing wall of distorted guitars on 'Morfler', the layered ambient vocals of 'Barcelona', and the demented glitch-funk pop of 'Shame On You, I Love You'. *Sada Soul* is an important entry in a musical field that's exciting precisely because it can't be pinned down.

Peter Hollo

Mice Parade

Obrigado Saudade
(Fat Cat/Inertia)
In the mid-'90s, Adam Pierce, drummer with the post-rock-with-vibraphones band Dylan Group and head honcho of the Bubblecore label, began to release solo albums under the anagrammatical name Mice Parade. As with the Dylan Group, Mice Parade melds live instruments with the temperament of electronica/breakbeat. The early albums were remarkable not only for his drumming (Pierce pretty much originated the live jungle thing), but also for the fact that he played every instrument, from acoustic guitar and Chinese zither to bass and drums, and of course vibes. Not only that, but each part on each track was recorded in one take, giving the music an exuberance of spirit not often found in electronica. More recently, Mice Parade went on tour in Europe with a full band, including Dylan Group, and Doug Scharin of Him. Turning Mice Parade into something different from the Dylan Group, and Doug Scharin of Him, is thus a great pleasure to find that the new album is, by and large, a return to the multi-take recordings of old. Kristin from Múm lends guest vocals to two tracks, and both Múm and Scharin appear, but the tracks are vintage Mice Parade. Fans will recognize the

11-minute 'Mystery Brethren' as a live cover of a Jim O'Rourke remix from the *Collaborations* album, complete with glitchy sampled vocals. Elsewhere, Pierce's own vocals lend indie-cred while washed-out distorted guitars can't help but recall *My Bloody Valentine*. All the trademarks are there, including viciously EQed distorted drums ('Here Today') – and Pierce's drumming is as phenomenal as ever.

Peter Hollo

FabriqueDecouleurs

Imite Moi
(Dorodine)
FabriqueDecouleurs experiment with extremities of sound, high-pitched frequencies, an industrial buzz-saw of statics, and dull roars of digital feedback. Everything about *Imite Moi* screams provocation and innovation, approaching working with these extreme and difficult sounds with the vigour and punk rock aesthetic akin to early Mego. It's abrasive to be sure, however the textures, body and structures of sounds are so fascinating that they effectively blot out all of the harshness. There's no doubt this is minority music – it's probably the minority of minority music, though the demented genius of its creator is readily apparent. This isn't clicks and cuts, working with sine waves or any known genre of music, these are sounds skirting the edges of genre. Part noise, part minimal, fully experimental and fully envelope pushing. At times it's so difficult it's almost instantaneously migraine-inducing, whilst during other moments silence is used as a sledgehammer. It's difficult, strange, provocative, hurtful and genius. Not recommended in one setting.

Bob Baker Fish

Max Richter

The Blue Notebooks
(Fat Cat/Inertia)
Fat Cat have been on a bit of a roll in the last twelve months. Each release moves out in a new direction, and on this second solo album from Max Richter the label heads further down a modern classical route first embarked upon with the superb Sylvain Chauveau album last year. Richter has worked with Future Sound Of London, as well as performing various classical works with his ensemble Piano Circus. *The Blue Notebooks* is a lush, ambient work of electronics, strings and piano with Tilda Swinton appearing at intermission points throughout the album to deliver selected passages of Kafka and Polish poet Czesław Miłosz accompanied by a typewriter – as if secretly eavesdropping a private diary. The eleven compositions on *The Blue Notebooks* work well together, creating a minor key headphone melancholy and the subtle eruptions of sampled sounds. Electronic synthesis builds an engrossing soundscape in which to absorb oneself. Although this had me digging out my old This Mortal Coil albums on 4AD for comparison, Richter's work is far more subtle and atmospheric.

Another excellent sonic adventure from the rotund felines.

Sebastian Chan

Horsepower Productions

To The Rescue
(Tempa)
If you were in Sydney on New Year's Eve you might have heard Canberra's DJ Calico rinsing out some tunes on the Tempa label. Through a big soundsystem the dubstep sound of Tempa gets the lower bowls emptied pretty quickly. This latest collection of tunes from the label's most well known trio, Horsepower Productions keeps the bottom-heavy focus. Unlike the grimmer sounds that have taken over the mediaspace occupied by post-garage music, Horsepower focus on delivering smooth, submarine dubs – shimmering rhythms, ghostly echoes and delays, and reggae chatter is more akin to JS Kane (Depth Charge) in style and selection than anyone else – and like Kane, their sound increasingly owes a debt to electro, although filtered through a lens of digital dub. The pick of this latest selection include 'Voodoo Spell', a dark winding descent into a comic book world complete with police sirens (and imagined black rain) and later a detuned sitar loop over some serious dread bass pulses; the rolling 'Marseilles Connection', a high pressure floor filler with ever increasing drum chatter.

Sebastian Chan

Lesser

Suppressive Acts I-X
(Matador/Remote Control)
Welcome to musclebound, tattooed electronica. This is electrics in a short black t-shirt with a pack of Marlboros tucked under the sleeve. And it begins with a blistering punk rock metal burst that makes you sit up and unquestionably offer the metal salute, before things start to get more violently electronic and rhythmic on later cuts. Lesser (aka J Doerck), has an extensive history in punk rock, even touring with a Minor Forest, before tiring of the scene and moving to San Francisco. These days his forte is aggressive experimental electronica, regularly collaborating with the likes of Kid 606, Matmos and Blevin Blechdom. He even toured with Björk

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES continued

on her Vespertine tour last year. Where these days experimental electronica can often retreat into the same old clicks and cuts, or violent incomprehensible aggression, Lesser offers a real alternative. The machismo of the mood. This isn't chaotic squalls of feedback; it's more about the strut. Ironically *Suppressive Acts* is actually carefully controlled and delicately constructed, actually quite ingenious in its skewed yet rhythmic logic. Whilst he receives some assistance from Matmos' Drew Daniel on one cut and Blevin Blechdom on another, the real revelation is Lesser's strange stuttering palette, combining fragmented elements of hip-hop, drill 'n' bass, abstract sound collages, apparently using and reutilising around 50 samples. Elsewhere the disc includes about 8 mp3s from his fake '80s band he recorded in 1995 which is filled with lame synths and simple structures (virtually the antithesis of *Suppressive Acts*), and some amazing fitting inducing videos of 'Intuit' live, 'gearhoundsuite' and 'Act IX who it is...6 months in the icebox'. These videos are simply jaw dropping, and if they weren't attached to such a distinctive and original album, they would be worth the price of admission alone.

Bob Baker Fish

Zbigniew Karkowski
Electro Statics
(Post Concrete)

Having previously explored facets of industrial, pop and experimental music over the last decade and a half, Karkowski's latest work is significant in that it is apparently the first in a decade that contains no computer-generated sounds. Consisting of incredibly dense waves of static electricity and white hot noise, it continues over the course of a single 42 minute track, leaving little room for an opening, at times picking up the faint lilt of human voices, though in the main remaining in a wash of impenetrable static. Recorded as a result of research developed on commission from Atelier de Creation Radiophonique at Maison Radio in France, Paris, *Electro Statics* is incredibly difficult listening that requires much persistence. Utilising detuned shortwave radio signals, scanner, antenna, static electricity and white noise, Karkowski has woven a dense somewhat uncomfortable tapestry of sound. Interestingly

from approximately the half hour mark all the static washes away and the listener is left with a gentle brooding hum, which after the harshness of the static feels warm, earthy and welcome. As this develops and begins to gently and hypnotically oscillate despite your apprehension it's impossible not to be engaged. **Bob Baker Fish**

Asmus Tietchens
Menge
(Mille Plateaux/Inertia)

It's amazing the ability of Tietchens to harness the small digital shards of sound and allow them to haphazardly trickle out of his laptop, perhaps in an attempt to disguise their mechanical origin. Thanks to its seemingly random use of the same digital sounds over and over it effectively mimics the sounds of nature, sounding more like the endless dripping of water after a rainstorm than any kind of digitally-constructed avant electronic sound piece. In fact it's all surprisingly quite hypnotic and gentle, with the first two fifteen minutes plus pieces constructed from a similar sound palette. By the third cut 'Teilmenge 31', Tietchens enters more familiar abstract electronic territory, creating a tense atmospheric almost cinematic sound that feels at odds with the light natural tranquillity of the earlier tracks. As a series of dark hues envelop the piece, only to recede a second later, Tietchens occasionally imbues the piece with a similar more sharper edged piece of electrics from the first two cuts, further adding to the tension. The fourth and final cut, the ten-minute plus 'Teilmenge 25A' is a return to the similar haphazard high pitches of the earlier cuts. Ultimately it's fairly austere work, where trying to find traces of humanity within the cool digital façade is pretty hard work.

Bob Baker Fish

Various Artists
Rephlexions
(Rephlex/Inertia)

It's a doubled edged sword. Thanks to the fact that Grant Wilson Claridge hooked up with a bloke named Richard D James and started a record label 12 years ago, in most people's eyes Rephlex will always exist in the vast all consuming shadow of Aphex Twin. Whilst in terms of creativity and individualism this bodes well for the artists on the roster, folks have at times experienced difficulty separating the AFX myth from the Rephlex label. And this is further exacerbated by a series of hijinks and jokes from the label, regularly alluding that every second new signing being indeed James under a new moniker. Without doubt there are links to the Aphex sound with parts of the disc existing within that vague and beautiful electronic scattered drum and bass

frenzy contrasted by smooth ambience and a bassline to die for. This is where some of the more familiar artists call home, such as Cyclob, Bogdan Raczyński, Luke Vibert, and have been seriously working on expanding their roster. This is where artists like Ensemble, who produce warm gentle childlike globs of malformed sound come in, or Slipper, with a distinctively jazz vibe, Gentle People's late night dreamy post cocktail whispers or Global Goon's indie math pop. In fact once you dig beyond the preconceptions you find that this disc has little to do with the Aphex sound and more to do with his approach. Rephlexions suggests that the one proviso for being part of the Rephlex family is producing original distinctive music regardless of the genre. All of the music on Rephlexions is without a doubt strange yet highly individual, often existing well outside fads or movements. What makes this all possible is that Rephlex itself is the movement, fostering and encouraging these artists to embrace weirdness and to go where creativity takes them. And of course this brilliant exercise in self indulgence is all made viable by a buxom bearded ginger dude with a scream that curdles milk. But for the purposes of this review lets call him Medici.

Bob Baker Fish

Diplodocus
Epistemology Suite
(Big Dada/Creative Vibes)

Diplo is a US producer DJ and part of the crew behind the Hollertronix nights in Philadelphia. With his cohort Low Budget, Diplo released an amusing live mix tape on Turntable Lab's Money Studies label last year titled *Never Scared* – a crazy mashup of dirty south, hip hop and jiggy beats crossed with '80s pop and oddities like Björk, New Order and Art Ensemble of Chicago. What made the mix special was that it was compiled strictly on turntables rather than using computers and samplers. Now Diplo is signed to Big Dada and has been busy finishing his upcoming album and in the meantime has released this splendid 12". The *Asmacks* together shuddering, clattering, quick time side is the four part 'Epistemology Suite' which smacks together shuddering, clattering, quick time staccato beats with some well selected rare groove samples – '60s soul, Southern blues, folk rock and dusty funk. On the flip is the mournful 'Summer's Gonna Hurt You' which rolls on a sorrowful bassline and some sweet melancholy. Keep an eye out for the new album and try to track down his mixes on Turntable Lab.

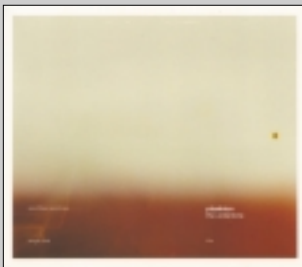
Sebastian Chan

Comatone - One Into One Out



"Cut is a heavy star-lifter of a track, a spaceship cruising deep space, smooth, dark and cool with real weight and presence . . . My personal favourite is Toy-music-box jingles over crunching bassline and a drum machine wound up tight, with massive attack and the decay so extended it sounds like a door creaking.

Plankton - The Undertone



Comatone is not a musician afraid of experimenting, and more often than not it really works . . . overall I rate it highly . . . "
(www.inthemix.com Nov 2003.)

"The execution is exceptional"
(Chloe Sasson, Metro, SMH, Oct 2003)

Album of the week 3PBS October 2003
Feature album FBI December 2003

"It's a beautiful record"
(Fenella Kernebone, Triple J, Soundlab)

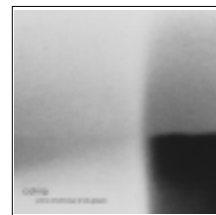
" . . . it doesn't suffer from the lack of passion or inaccessibility that can characterise a lot of these kinds of clever-trouser bands. A very courageous and impressive debut. 4.5 out of 5"
(The Brag, Nov 3, 2003.)

"The Undertone mixes electronics and live instrumentation into an intensely beautiful and at times unsettling collage"
(Lawrence English, Time Off, Nov 2003).

" . . . when they slow down and become more gentle, darker and moody . . . they really begin to distinguish themselves."
(Bob Baker Fish, Inpress, Nov 2003)

"Both short and extended pieces are gently controlled and without indulgence and have sufficient ideas to captivate and/or soothe for the hour-plus journey."
(Paris Pompor, Metro, SMH, Jan 2004)

Catnip Pink And Blue And Green EP



"This will strike hard and fast for the lovers of bands such as The Sundays or Cardigans but offering some neat tricks not yet exposed by either . . . "
(<http://www.cumbersome.net>)

"Catnip have a dreamy smoothness about them, something that is instantly captivating and wholesomely beautiful."
(<http://www.ozmusicproject.net>)

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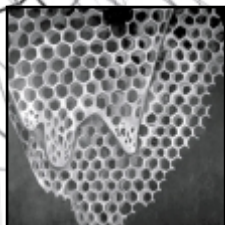


couchblip! distribution

some new releases to tickle your lobes

Keep an eye out in your local store for the following upcoming releases

Dabrye - Game Over (featuring Jay Dee & Phat Kat), Lusine - Flat, Kiln - Sunbox, Proem - Socially Inept, Mr Projectile - Sinking, Machine Drum - Half the Battle 3, Ilkæ - Remixer, Deceptikon - Lost Subject + more



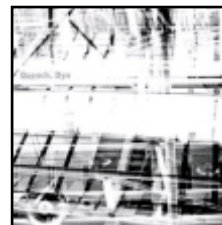
Telefon Tel Aviv
Map of What is Effortless (Hefty)
Crackling electronic textures merge with moody soulful vocals and simmering acoustic rhythms - a followup to *Fahrenheit Fair* Enough that exceeds expectations and defies categorization



Aphilas
Instrumentally III (Merck)
Merck's newest addition from Finland presents some jazz based instrumental hip-hop with a heavy emphasis on melody. Head nodding digitized clip-hop that you can only expect from the label that has pioneered this style



Deru
Pushing Soil (Delikatessen)
Lusine ICL, LoGrey Beam, Xela and Ginormous deconstruct and re-assemble Deru's critically acclaimed album on Neo Ouija *Pushing air*. Beautiful flowing and touching electronica - the perfect garnish for any listening environment



Quench
Dyn (u-cover)
The brothers Funck (previously released on Warp, Skam, Arcola & Toytronic) join together as Quench for this u-cover release- Futuristic grooves and electronic warmth combine with experimental yet inspired driven beats and emotional tunes



Various
MD8 (n5md)
n5md has aurally conjoined new artists with veterans of the experimental electronica genre. MD8 features rare and unreleased tracks from quench, gimmik, gridlock, spark, vesna, headphone science, vcam + more. Out now on CD not MD

Couchblip! also distributes Worm Interface, Hefty, Merck, Ghostly International, Ann Aimee, Civik, Colony, Delikatessen, Eastern Developments, Hymen, Inventing Zero, Neo Ouija, n5md, Pause_2, Plop, Shaped Harmonics, Six Records, Snake Eyes, Skylab Operations, Spasticated, sp.aRK, Statler & Waldorf, Romz, Tundra Music, U-cover+ more

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INTERNATIONAL RELEASES continued

Kerrier District

s/t

(Rephlex/Inertia)

Luke Vibert pumps out yet another retro release. Following hot on the heels of his acid flashback album for Warp, *YosephH*, and his junglist rave smashers as Amen Andrews, he goes even further back in time to plunder the vaults of something approximating disco crossed with early Detroit house/techno. *Kerrier District* is much less identifiable as a Vibert production than his other flashbacks throughout along with those slapback beats occasionally. The opener, 'Let's Dance And Freak' is the standout track with a prevailing early '80s wistful synth and burbling analogue bass that could have been anyone from Juan Atkins to an early Glasgow Underground b-side. Other tracks are closer to S'Express with liberal use of classic samples, walking bass, handclaps, cowbells. You get the picture. Still, it's a bit more than a simple re-hash of old themes, and worth lending a nostalgic ear to.

Sebastian Chan

Depth Affect

Mesquin Eye

(Autres Directions)

Autres Directions is a CDR label based in Nantes, France. Their releases are put out in limited quantities and then offered freely, complete with artwork, on their website (www.autresdirections.net/inmusic). The label's focus has so far been closest aligned to a melodious indietronica, infused with DSP and chopped samples. Although unmastered a lot of the tracks available are of excellent quality. This is the label's third release and is a three track EP of low key indietronica crossed with elements of fractured hip-hop from two twenty year old producers. The opening and title track 'Mesquin Eye' is the pick of the trio and also gets the remix treatment from Melodium. Melodium's debut EP on Autres Directions was the label's first release and along with this is well worth downloading.

Sebastian Chan

Two Lone Swordsmen

Peppered With Spastic Magic
(Rotters Golf Club)

Andy Weatherall and Keith Tenniswood's TLS have never really found the broader popularity of Sabres Of Paradise or Weatherall's early production and remix work for Primal Scream and My Bloody Valentine again. Weatherall's work with pop artists that launched his career continues unabated but despite this they have continued to push out cold, dark electro cuts and melancholy IDM-influenced hip-hop beats on both Warp and their own Rotters Golf Club and countless remixes. *Peppered With Spastic Magic* collects together some of their best remixes of the last 8 years. The trademark stripped back bleak electro is best represented here on the remixes of Luke Slater's 'All Exhale', an instrumental dub of St Etienne's 'Heart Failed', whilst Tenniswood's solo influences (as the more break-oriented Radioactive Man) takes over on the remix of Force Legato's 'System' and can be heard in the rinsin' bass drops of Slam's 'Visions'. The best material on this compilation is from the slow ghostly hip-hop beats of their Calexico remix, their dub of Alter Ego's 'Mescal', and strangely an edgy dub of Star Sailor's 'Good Souls' which glistens with dampness – like a tentative journey into a deep subterranean passage.

Sebastian Chan

Hella

The Devil Isn't Red
(5MC)

If there has been a trend in rock that has overshadowed the habitual pairing of definite article and monosyllabic word to designate band names (I'm so glad The The is already taken) it's the emergence of the power duo pairing of guitar and drums. Hella are mercifully missing 'the' from their nomenclature, and thankfully owe more sonically to the Japanese duo Ruins than The White Stripes – before we even start they get two big ticks. Frenetic and seemingly without form, Hella sound like the Menstruation Sisters' buck-toothed state school dropout second cousins – all gangly arms and redneck attitudes and minus the pretensions to 'art'. The eleven tracks that make up the 33 minutes of *The Devil Isn't Red* are either like a series of outtakes taken from that point in a rehearsal when the singer and bass player leave the studio for a smoke, leaving the drummer and

guitar player to swap instruments and thrash away, or a sloppily edited melange of drum and guitar tracks from some lost '80s hardcore album. They're that good. In their resistance to repetition and restraint they succeed in appealing to a completely 'other' level of musicality – one akin to the watching violent sports highlights – and despite broken bones and rules they emerge victorious.

Dale Harrison

Open Thought

Force of Life
(Earshot/Inertia)

Possessed of one of the most pleasing voices and softest accents in hip-hop – ex-Metabass MC Baba has a uniquely empathic attitude to hip-hop – as well as impeccable freestyle and beatbox skills. Accompanied by DJ Center and multi-instrumentalist and beatboxer Yako they form Open Thought, and their debut *Force of Life* is a refreshing change to the spitting-on-boombap orthodoxy that typically emerges from New York. In fact it's a positively reflective album, or should that be reflectively reflective? Even the uptempo tracks are delivered with an understated languor – as though the beats are happily stoned and stumbling around the studio wearied of only the warmest hues; the lovely jazz keys, rimshots and ethnic percussion of 'No Need to Wait' challenges for lushest moment until it's pipped at the post by the muted horn sample and brittle beats accompanying Baba's heartfelt and astute rhyme on 'Black Music' – but most heartfelt is the wet-delay guitar of 'War Poem' and the way it cushions Baba's part-desperate, part-despairing flow as he tells a story of domestic ill. Despite the weight of pretty moments they manage to avoid ever resorting to filligree or contrivance – the tracks on the whole are elegantly simple – akin to a canvass prepared with a wash of colour – allowing Baba and the soloists to fill in the details with more direct brush strokes. A lovely album. Dale Harrison

DVD REVIEWS

DJ Shadow & Cut Chemist

Freeze
(Stomp)

The original Brainfreeze tour by DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist is now legendary, especially with the recreation of the vibe with the *Brainfreeze* mix CD, an unparalleled assault of the funk 45s in a hip-hop aesthetic. It's spawned many a bootleg, including endless collections of the tracks used in the DJ set in their full splendour. For those of us not fortunate to have witnessed the pair perform the idea live, we now see a great DVD release called *Freeze*, which is a newly revised and performed version of the original in its entirety. It's a great opportunity to see the masters at work, clearly showing their skills with the humble 45. There's even some home footage of rehearsals thrown in, to really drive home the amount of practice and dedication both DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist put into the project. The only downside is the sound quality, quite poor in my books, but it does add to the historic nature of the DVD, and 'what you see is what you get' ethic, no camera tricks, no overdubs, all live. The extras included on the DVD are great too, highlights from the supporting DJs Marvski, Dante, Nu-Mark and Z-Trip, scenes from the Future Primitive 45 Sessions in San Francisco, and the photo gallery, discography for both DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, and its an all-region release. Not too easy to find in this country, but worth hunting down on the net. **Wayne Stronell**

Volatile Media

(Lovebytes)
The first thing that strikes you about this DVD release is the lush Designers Republic packaging, which always amazes. This release compiles new digital film and multimedia work specially commissioned by Lovebytes, together with 20 episodes of the Butler Brothers acclaimed animated series *Workgroup Alpha*, first shown on Channel 4 in the UK. The all-region disc contains works by Terre Thaemlitz (which gives the release its R rating),

Steve Hawley, Alex Peverett, People Like Us and the Butler Brothers, all quite varied and abstract, to quote People Like Us, 'we edit life'. That's exactly what the majority of images are, from life, but edited, pixelated, in a cut-and-paste ethic of early collage/montage fused with modern electronic soundscapes. The DVD-Rom disc contains the 'Workgroup Alpha' animated series, Freeform and Matt Pyke's interactive work 'Free Factory', and selected highlights from past Lovebytes festivals. Lovebytes is a digital arts organization which explores the cultural and creative potential of new technology, having first subjected the world to a double CD of audio derived from software specifically designed to create the sounds, and the software itself, quite revolutionary for its time. A great document for anyone interested in digital media and sound design, and so rare to find such work all on one disc.

Wayne Stronell

Ninja Tune – Zen TV

(Ninja Tune/Inertia)

It has taken Ninja Tune over a decade to get around to releasing a best of compilation so it's not surprising that *Zen* is split into three parts – a traditional double disc best of, a double disc of best remixes, and this, a DVD containing all the music videos made for the label. Ninja are to be heartily commended for going for a completist approach by putting everything on the DVD rather than opting for an easier and shorter highlights release. As a result there are more than a few videos that have dated, and others that are neither musically or visually interesting. Nevertheless, the label's early cut-and-paste aesthetic that has been so influential is well represented with five Coldcut videos stretching back to 1997 as well as Hexstatic's 'Ninja Tune' which still raises a smile. Of the rest, mostly low budget affairs, there are some excellent highlights – Monkus's beautiful simple animations for Kid Koala stand out along with Alex Rutterford's hyper-detailed computer work for Mr Scruff; Riz Maslen's (Neotropic) Super8 work on her own 'Sunflower Girl'; and a subtle re-edit of the Sesame Street classic with the Pointer Sisters, 'The Number Count'. Strangely the clips are not in chronological order, and the ordering seems almost completely random. Maybe that's why there is also a video cut up of the videos by Hexstatic and a 'gallery' mode in the extras.

Sebastian Chan

The Work Of Michel Gondry

(Directors Label)

Of the three Directors Label retrospectives (Cunningham, Jonze, Gondry), this is by far the strongest – both in volume of material covered, and in purpose. The Cunningham retrospective reveals him as a hermetic perfectionist who was too critical of his early work to agree to include any of the rarer music videos he has worked on, whilst the Jonze collection was, perhaps as is Jonze nature, rather scattered and directionless. On the other hand, the Gondry collection is excellent. Not only does it contain some of the best of Gondry's music videos it is most notable for its specially commissioned 'extra', a two part, 75 minute dissection of the work by Gondry himself. This piece is charming for its directness and playfulness with Gondry speaking to camera about his ideas behind each video and revealing some of the production secrets – sensibly and offers the best means of understanding the progression in his work. Common themes of childhood fantasy, imagination, and synaesthesia run through the videos which include major works from Björk, Chemical Brothers, The White Stripes, the Foo Fighters' amazing 'Everlong', Cibbo Matto's palindromic 'Sugar Water', as well as a stack of Gondry's own band Oui Oui and various short films and commercials. All these make this Directors Label compilation one of the most worthwhile music video collections available.

Sebastian Chan





SLEEVE REVIEWS

Sleeve Design by Alex Crowfoot



Muslimgauze

Re-mixs [sic] volume 1 & 2

(Soleilmoon 2003)

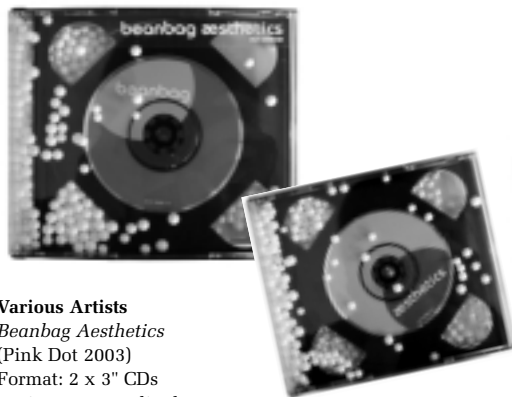
Format: 2 x CD

Designer: Plazm

Last issue I mentioned being disappointed in a Muslimgauze release (a review that appeared only in the web version of *Cyclic*). Soleilmoon have redeemed themselves with this one, a re-release of remixes by Bryn Jones (Muslimgauze) that have been out of print for seven years. It comes in a 26cm by 13cm folder covered in fur, looking like Chewbacca's fair Swedish cousin came to an untimely end. The folder is held together by a 4cm paper band, printed with several versions of the word Muslimgauze, artfully hand-painted and reversed in white and grey. Slide the band off and the folder opens to reveal glossy black printed card. One half is just black, the other has the two CDs attached with black plastic fixtures. The CDs are also black, with the same hand-paint-

ed treatment of 'Muslimgauze.'

This runs right across the panel, from the card onto the CDs and off again. And it lines up perfectly, a sign of good craftsmanship. On this panel are also brief copyright details in typically restrained typography. The discs also feature their respective titles in minimal white type. In the spine, the limited edition number is handwritten. The packaging doesn't appear to be covered in fur for any reason other than for aesthetic effect – which it certainly has, when combined with the stark black and white. The sublime and the ridiculous, together at last. It's beautifully made as well as designed, and is completely impossible to store with your other CDs.



Various Artists

Beanbag Aesthetics
(Pink Dot 2003)

Format: 2 x 3" CDs
Designer: Uncredited

The music here reminds me of a car journey I once took in the US with an industrial-strength bong-head who had a huge collection of odd and rare vinyl. He played me mix tapes he'd made with three decks; three tracks running at once, some spun by hand, others at the wrong speed. It was similarly mind-bending. Anyway, a new genre is proclaimed here, and the CD packaging is suitably distanced from the norm. An old-style thick double CD case in black and clear plastic has a clear plastic sticker on the front with white type: the CD name and catalogue number set in ITC Bauhaus. The box is filled with polystyrene bean-bag filler which has a side effect that will give stoners hours of fun – the static means that when you touch the box the balls move. Stop sniggering. One CD is printed in red with a cropped circle in orange containing the word 'beanbag.' The other is similar, in green and beige, with the word 'aesthetics'. The design here seems to reference '70s design, in keeping with the lounge-music-through-a-head-blender. The standard black tray has cutout sections so the overall effect is quite graphic. A small card insert tells the story of the music genre's birth, and lists the tracks. The consistent use of Bauhaus keeps the look lean: simple and unfussy, albeit with tight leading. The track titles are quite revealing as well as being funny, from 'we have obsolete technology' to 'big chins as a sign of good breeding' via 'dole rage' and 'gated community spirit.' I like the way the CD takes a standard pack and uses it in a new way. It makes a feature of a box that would normally just be the carrying device for the design content – a booklet and the CDs. It's an example of how a good idea can make much more of less.



The Great Ereat Doddodo

Untitled
(Self-release 2003)

Format: CDR

Designer: Uncredited

It doesn't get much more hand-made than this. The front is made from a piece of silver wrapping paper printed with solid stripes in that eighties favourite, dusty pink. A seriously distressed octopus/intestine creature is rendered in crenellated black lines. This is printed on a clear sticker that's stuck to the pink-striped paper. Another sticker features the title in heavy Helvetica. The back cover is a blank piece of blue tissue paper. This is then stapled together – all the way round, so you have to rip it to get to the CD. Not just any old staples, but metallic green, magenta, yellow and blue ones. The CDR has another clear sticker on it with another illustrated character in jagged lines, this time clenching its fist and yelling. Inside is a bright orange piece of paper, hand-cut into curves. On it, in black, the artist name in the same type as the cover and a hand-drawn illustration of a figure holding a microphone whose head is an explosion of viscera, and whose back has a large hole exposing its innards. The track numbers and times are scattered in various sizes of heavy Helvetica/Ariel. On the back are the contact details and a series of joined cartoon figures, wailing and tumbling their way across the paper. A unique aesthetic, somehow very 'now,' and as eccentric as the music on it.



Leibe ist Cool

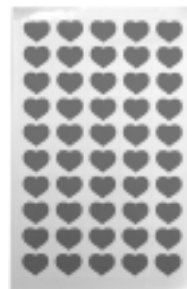
Du und ich
(Self-release
2003)

Format: CDR

Designer:

Uncredited

This is the first example of a made-to-order CD I have come across. Leibe ist cool consist of a Berlin couple who fell in love and decided that love is so great they'd make a record about it. The CD comes with a printed sheet telling their story, set in a techno vernacular typeface in red and blue. The CDR is slipped into a hand-made white fabric circular pocket. One side has a label sewn onto it, the kind mums used to sew into the necks of their kids' clothes so they wouldn't lose them at school. Embroidered in red is a heart and the name 'Leibe ist cool.' The reverse features a clear plastic disc sewn onto the sleeve which contains a circular print of the track listing and credits in red and black. The typography here is a little heavy, a couple of points smaller would do the trick, but it's nicely understated all the same. The CDR has a printed label in white with black a red type. Again, a slightly lighter touch typographically would give it a slight lift. Completing the package is sheet of heart stickers. Overall it projects a kind of sophisticated innocence. Musically it's a mix minimal, insistent and slightly spooky techno with a splash of mellow house. Have a look at www.liebeistcool.de and marvel at the thanks page – the innocence fades a little, too. I can think of some local artists who could do with that level of sponsorship. Fact: you can also buy a red-striped wristband with a Donald Duck football medallion attached to it called 'That's Donald!'



SLEEVE REVIEWS ³⁰

Sleeve Design by Alex Crowfoot



Hafler Trio

How to Slice a Loaf of Bread

(Phonometrography 2003)

Format: 3 x CD

Designer: The Man Behind the Curtain

Hafler Trio and Autechre

Ae3o & h3ae

(Phonometrography 2003)

Format: 2 x CD ('3" things embedded in 5" things')

Designer: The Man Behind the Curtain

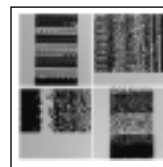
These first two releases on Phonometrography are intricate examples of careful creation. Both are encased in custom die-cut folders made of thick, textured white stock. A matte silver paper band closes them, with a red paper seal embossed with the record label logo, positioned to cover the closing flap of the folder. The Hafler Trio release opens to reveal a card featuring details of a live performance – presumably this is a document of it – set in a decidedly eccentric typeface. Next comes a booklet, the removable cover of which is printed with a photo of a notebook containing geometrical designs. A large piece of concertina-

folded thick card forms the booklet inside, with the text of what appears to be an interview set in Caslon Italic around more photos of notebook spreads. Next another folder in the same thick stock, embossed with the record label logo, contains eight black and white images printed on card, most of them murky, but they seem to be from the live event. Next is an ingenious die-cut booklet, in plain white, with tabs

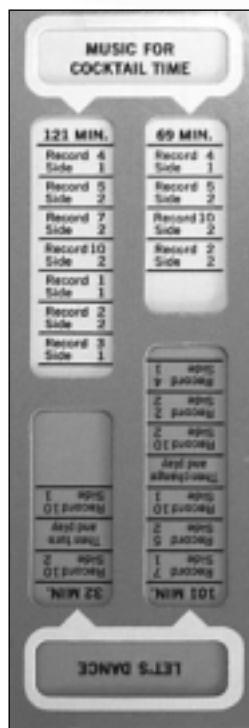
The cover of The Hafler Trio/Autechre release is printed with the titles in a grey sans serif, an ornate ampersand ghosted behind. It opens to reveal a three-panel die cut gatefold sleeve, all in the same thick white textured stock as '...Bread.' The cover of this sleeve is traced with lines of script type. One the left and right of the gatefold a fold of Japanese paper encases each CD. Both of these are 3" embedded in 5". The typography of the outer sleeve is repeated here, in black and grey, with beautifully quirky copyright details. In the centre are ten square pieces of tracing paper, each printed with a different blurred black and white geometric image. Some of these are reminiscent of DNA. All are like strange x-rays. Both these releases allow for plenty of space, not only graphically but for interpretation, or the creation of meaning. No explanation is given, it's up to the viewer to make their own sense – or not, if you



cut into its pages. A CD is mounted on each page, attached with a white foam dot. Each CD features a different geometric form, reversed out of black. Because there is no white base under the black, all lines are in silver – and the black has a lustre to it caused by its translucence. This also means that you see 'rainbows' in the black as you would on a plain silver CD.



choose. They certainly feel precious, almost worthy of white gloves. They also feel both contemporary and timeless, steering well clear of graphic trends. Personally, I have a dislike for the typeface used on the Hafler Trio release but it's there to complete the quirky impression.



(Reader's Digest 1965)

Format: 10 x 12" vinyl LPs plus bonus record!

Designer: Uncredited

If you thought the chillout compilation was a recent phenomenon, here's the evidence to the contrary. But do the morass of contemporary easy listening CDs come with a die cut Pleasure Programmer to match the music to your every mood? No they do not. According to an 'expert statistician' (as opposed to a completely crap one I suppose) you can devise up to 2,216,288 Pleasure Programmes. You can be playing this set to your grave. The sturdy box comes in at 3.5 kilos when fully laden with vinyl and promotional gumph for the umpteenth other Reader's Digest boxed sets to tantalise suburban America. The cover of the box features a soft-focus doe-eyed babe on one side and tasteful textured teal on the rest of it. Out slides another box, in white, with handy flip-down quick-reference track listing, with the record numbers printed in matching teal. Noice. The 10 albums each use the same organic texture, in a different colour, from beige to mint. Looking closely the texture could even be a photo of a doily. And it's all 'Recorded in the MAGNIFICENT NEW DYNAGROOVE SOUND.'





LAWRENCE ENGLISH SELECTS

In conversation with Sebastian Chan

EVERYONE HAS THOSE SPECIAL RECORDS THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES, AND THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS JUST TEENAGE SONGS. THE MOST MEMORABLE MUSIC MAKES AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION, MORE THAN JUST A 'DOPE BEAT' OR A 'HOT DSP EFFECT'. THIS ISSUE'S SELECTS COMES FROM BRISBANE.

The reputation of Brisbane even in musical output would not immediately bring avant-turntablism to mind. Indeed, in terms of electronic music Brisbane's close proximity to what was the trance mecca of the late 1990s, Byron Bay, would tend to indicate that all things fractal may be more the case. However, along with DJ Sheep, who runs the Australian outpost of Bomb (responsible for the *Return Of The DJ* series), Lawrence English has been quietly carving out a niche for experimental electronics and turntable manipulation. For the past few years Lawrence has been curating a monthly event called Fabrique at the Brisbane Powerhouse and running his boutique CD label, ::Room 40:: (formerly Horrorshow) which has its sleeve design done by fellow Brisbanites, Rinzen. From afar Lawrence seems a pretty serious guy, but up close he is better known for his penchant for acting out bad taste Michael Jackson jokes and general pranksterism.

Ornette Coleman

Free Jazz

(Atlantic, 1961)

I can't really explain what I felt when I first heard this album. I'd just come out of a long period listening to pretty straight electronic music and some metal and hearing Coleman's double quartet literally blew my head off. It was so free, so uninhibited and so frantic, it really took my breath away. I was amazed to hear how the instruments fitted together and how random acts of the musicians created this very unusual interaction and complimentary feel in the music. While most of the improvising I participate in isn't quite as fiery as this, there have been moments with my Ubique Trio that have come close to me sensing what these musicians must have felt working together during that session.

"I still look back fondly on slamming giant pieces of metal together and grinding sparks into the audience"

Public Enemy

Fear Of A Black Planet

(Def Jam, 1990)

There's a lot of contention of which is 'the' PE record and to be honest I think it may well just come down to what you got into first. For me *Fear Of A Black Planet* was the first record that really made me think about the power of lyrics and word-play and the possibilities to convey a message directly or indirectly through sound and words. I still am impressed by the way the record plays out, each of the tracks fit well into the next and there's a real sense of narrative and journey over the course of the record.

Nine Inch Nails

Pretty Hate Machine

(TVT, 1989)

I think was the first album I heard that really got me thinking about the link between electronics and acoustics. It's a killer album for your teenage years and I'm sure it fuelled my angsty times at school. It's also one heck of a great pop album, even though most people seem to disagree with me on this – it's got the full dynamic. At the time I really listened to this album I was playing in a whole lot of industrial bands, and I still look back fondly on slamming giant pieces of metal together and grinding sparks into the audience. As for a favourite track I'd say that'd have to be 'Sin' – but not the version from the record, the live version from the 'Solid Gold Hell' bootleg recorded somewhere in Europe – Chris Vrenna's playing on that was remarkable! There were industrial clubs in Brisbane, in fact I ran a quasi-industrial night with some great folks Marky and Deanna called Club Mondo... but I never was a dancer...

Young MC
'Bust A Move'
(Delicious Vinyl, 1988)

This song was instrumental in leading me to my wife, Becks, who incidentally I've been with for the better part of half my life. It was during this song at a school dance that I approached a friend of hers and before long the letter writing that was so common between our schools (both were single sex), led me to hook up with Becks and the rest is history really, in that fourteen years later we're still together, now married, and we still laugh every time 'Bust A Move' makes its way onto *Rage* or even better Saturday morning TV. Who would have thought Young MC would leave a lasting mark on someone's life? Ironical when you think about the lyrics too!

DJ Olive
Sleep
(theAgriculture, 2002)

I've always been a very big admirer of DJ Olive's work. On his first trip to Oz in 2001, he brought down a wad of CDRs of his newly completed ambient record *Sleep* – designed to help him and his friends chill out (and literally sleep) following 9/11. To this day, it is a record I can come back to again and again. It's an excellent exercise in sleep music and its integrated style means the listener is sub-

merged deeply into the ebb and flow of the record. This style of mixing track into each other was something that influenced the way I constructed *Calm* and along with some of Biosphere's records, *Sleep* was a major conceptual influence for that first I/O record.

Fennesz
Endless Summer
(Mego, 2001)

Apart from thinking that Brian Wilson was certainly onto a winning idea with his *Endless Summer* concept, this record by Fennesz was one of the first lap-top records that I heard that really made me realise the possibilities of combining processing with acoustic instruments. Fennesz is a great guitarist and a fine composer and this record shows off both of his talents. I was impressed with how much emotion he was able to create on this record and no matter how abstract the sound sources seemed, there's not a moment on the record which is clichéd or impersonal.

Luc Ferrari
Presque Rien Avec Filles/Heterozygote
(1989/1963)

Discovering Luc Ferrari's work and these two compositions particularly really helped focus my work with field recordings and concrete composition. Just about all his pieces are enjoyable exploratory works

– they have a real sense of narrative, invented or otherwise. Ferrari has a wicked sense of humour that makes some of his works come off as playful, but there's also a very serious side to his compositions. He's really able to use textures to create emotions in his works and I've always found that to be impressive about his output. He's also one of the composers from that generation still very much embracing new techniques and collaborating with numerous musicians.

Cliff Martinez
Solaris OST
(Trauma, 2002)

Coming across the soundtrack well before seeing the film, Martinez's work for the flawed US remake of *Solaris* is easily one of the strongest and most engaging film scores I've heard in ages! Everytime I listen to it, especially if I'm out in public, it really effects how I view the world. It's a very powerful piece of work...what's funny about this record is I don't actually know how I found out about it, but since then I've collected most of his available recordings for the archive here.



Melatonin : Mediations On Sound
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Dear Degrassi,

'What ever happened to Short Round from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom?'

D Petch

Boy oh boy, I had to trawl long and hard through the virtual deserts of forgotten actors in order to extract any information about Short Round, who goes by a number of names, including Jonathan Ke Quan, Key Huy-Quan, Huy Quan Ke, Jonathan Quan and Ke Huy Quan. While this seems like a lot of names, I'm sure most of them are due to the fact that a lot of 'Westerners' don't bother to find out the order South-East Asian names should go in, and therefore they throw them at the page hoping something will stick. Only people like Madonna and well, me, can afford to go by a single name. Although it comes at a price. Just the other day I heard that Roseanne has returned to being called Roseanne Barr because she found it so frustrating trying to explain to banks and other such institutions that she didn't have a surname. I know her pain, but I digress.

While we are on the subject of names, has anyone else realised the irony that Steven Spielberg should receive such acclaim for the epic *Schindler's List*, portraying the terrible plight of Jews during the Holocaust, and yet he is quite happy to name a main character 'Short Round' in a film made only a decade earlier? I find the name as offensive as Mickey Rooney playing a prosthetically buck-toothed Japanese photographer in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Upon further research, however, I discovered that 'Short Round' was actually that of the screenwriters' dog. Since Indiana was named after George Lucas' dog and Willie after Spielberg's, I guess there is a pattern. I still find it horribly inappropriate though.

For all you trainspotters out there, the night club in the opening of *Temple of Doom* is called 'Club Obi Wan'. Also a rather major screw up occurs in the film when Harrison Ford refers to Quan as Data, but of course anyone who was a kid in the '80s doesn't need to be reminded that that was Quan's character's name in *The Goonies*. This is odd considering *Doom* was made before *The Goonies* where he was the child of many gadgets which had a varying degree of success saving the other kids. including Corey Feldman, with whom he would later work. Who knows, perhaps he got on the pipe with him which might account for his absence from the big screen for a number of years.

Or perhaps that could be better attributed to his work on television. First stop was his starring role in *Together We Stand*, which was a phenomenally unsuccessful show. Remember that episode of *The Brady Bunch* where some friends of the Bradys' adopt a little boy and he convinces his new parents that they should also adopt his other two friends but they happen to be, shock, horror, black and Asian? Well, I do. Neighbours grumble, but ultimately the family live happily ever after and deface a book with the Three Musketeers in it by colouring in one brown and another yellow. (Don't ask me how or why I remember these things.) Sherwood Schwartz, the creator of *The Brady Bunch*, tried to sell this episode as a pilot, but failed until the mid-'80s when he convinced Elliott Gould to head the family. The show was pulled after just six episodes and Gould was so ashamed of his involvement that he not only had some of the episodes shelved, never to reach the light of a cathode ray tube, but also had his character killed off before they exhumed the show with a new title, *Nothing Is Easy*. I recall catching one of those six rare episodes during a non-ratings period and let's just say that his recurring cameo in *Friends* is a vast step up! Other than that, Quan had a guest role in the weekly horror show *Tales from the Crypt*, which was pretty forgettable, and is said to have done a stint on *Head of the Class*, but I don't ever recall seeing him. He did manage to score the supporting role of Kim in 1992's *Encino Man*, but whether this could be considered an achievement is still to be determined. After all, it is a Pauly Shore movie.

Despite being Vietnamese it is said that Quan speaks Cantonese and Mandarin fluently, which has

helped him to achieve minor 'success' in the Hong Kong film industry. By that, I mean he has had some bit-parts in some reputedly shocking films, but hey, I'm sure they covered a month's rent. These include 1991's *Breathing Fire*, which has plot as flimsy as a porno, with kickboxing sequences instead of sex to flesh the film out. 2001's *Second Time Around* sounds more interesting at least, although all the reviews I could find said that about half the English subtitles are missing, which should make for some interesting viewing and make the far-fetched plot even more difficult to understand. To save you the trouble I'll give you the gist: think the gambling sub-plot from *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, but in Vegas, meets *Galaxy Quest*, and throw in a bit of the unlikely romance from *Out of Sight*. Get the picture? I thought you wouldn't.

Somewhere along the way Quan graduated from the University of Southern California School of Cinema Television. This prepared him for the behind the scenes roles as Producer, Director of Photography and Editor of *Voodoo*, starring ex-Goonie cohort Corey Feldman as Andy Chadway, an unlikely (given his age) college student who gets lured into a Voodoo cult fraternity. While I'm a Feldman fan, there are just things you can't bring yourself to see, and this film is one of them. I think I'd cry the same way I did when a co-worker told me that Duran Duran were supporting Robbie Williams.

It hasn't been all low-rent accommodation with peeling wood panelling for Quan though, as he was the Stunt Coordinator for the *X-Men* movie back in 2000. But if he wants to get his profile up there again, he's going to have to do what Steve Guttenberg did and create his own 'fan site'. The only fan page for Quan I could find was possibly the lamest I've ever seen, so much so that it is even shorter than its article and the FAQs are mainly answered with those three magic words 'I don't know'. If you don't believe me, see for yourself: www.angelfire.com/ab/horizons/.



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