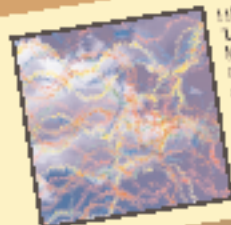


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Issue Eight.
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Louder Than Now!

Noise PI

Destined to be one of the most talked about albums (and arrival of 2016), this 8 piece live electro punk rock masterpiece of noise is the machine turn music on its ear [Again]. A serious experiment in getting down.



Various Artists Delivery Room

Live!

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Max Richter The Blue Notebooks

h 30701

Max Richter's work of contemporary chamber music is a musical masterpiece that rivals composers like Beethoven and John Cage. His latest work, The Blue Notebooks, is a collection of short European works from 1998 and 2000.



Thee Silver Mountain Boys Pretty Little Ughing Pae EP

(Cassette)

Originally sold at shows during A Silver Mountain Boys tour. The four songs make a tape and a vinyl collection. The songs are motivated by the history and tragic history of the mountain and culture.



Vladislav Delay Demol Tracks

(Remix)

A collection of remixes by Mike Plante and Peter Dinklage. Vladislav Delay's electronic producer remixes with the debut for his new label. Vladislav Delay's remixes are a collection of 13 remix tracks.



High Pass Filter Soft Adventure

(High Pass Filter)

The first true LP by HPP, one of Australia's most innovative bands. Recorded in dub, HPP employs high, guitars, keyboards, turntables, brass, bass, vocals, tracks and more instrumentation to create a masterpiece.



Pretty Boy Crossover Always Oiled

(Sensory Project)

New compilation from PBC, featuring new LPs, EPs, and more. Combining new and old material, they create a new, dynamic, and exciting sound. The best of PBC, PBC, PBC, and PBC.



Doctor Rockit The Unnecessary History Of...

(Accidental)

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Loscil First Narrows

(Kronos)

The most organic Loscil album to date. Sampled instruments and live recordings, processed and programmed to create a tapestry of textures, sounds, and feelings. Deep, atmospheric, warm and fluid.



Nonplace Artists Difficult Easy Listening

(Nonplace)

A collection of songs with a wide range of styles, from pure live instrumentation to advanced programming. Includes 15 tracks from the album, and more.



Squidgusher Ultraviolet

(Warp)

The incredible Tony Jackson returns with the follow-up to 'The Plastic'. 'Ultraviolet' is a prime example of the band's dark, moody, and atmospheric sound. It's a masterpiece of electronic music.



Telefon Tel Aviv Map Of What Is Effortless

(Hefst)

A collection of songs with a wide range of styles, from pure live instrumentation to advanced programming. Includes 15 tracks from the album, and more.



Einstürzende Neubauten Perpetuum Mobile

(Bored)

Einsteine and Neubauten to study that space between 'real' and 'ideal' and 'the' best, drawing on the concept of the 'perpetuum mobile' and the concept of the 'perpetuum mobile'.



Luke Vibert Kenner District

(Replica)

Luke Vibert's new album 'Kenner District' is a collection of songs with a wide range of styles, from pure live instrumentation to advanced programming. Includes 15 tracks from the album, and more.



Various Artists Futurism Ain't She To Me

(KID)

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memory of Paul Rodwell.

ISSUE 8 CONTENTS

- 4 **COVER DESIGNER: MARK GOWING**
by Bim Ricketson
- 6 **PURDY**
by Sebastian Chan
- 10 **CITY CITY CITY**
by Bob Baker Fish
- 11 **ANTHONY PATERAS**
by Bob Baker Fish
- 14 **PABLO DALI**
by melinda Taylor
- 16 **COLDCUT**
by Clark Nova
- 18 **LALI PUNA**
by Peter Hollo
- 20 **TORTOISE**
by Matt Levinson
- 23 **MP3 AESTHETICS**
by Vaughan Healy
- 26 **MUSIC REVIEWS**
- 38 **SLEEVE REVIEWS**
by Alex Crowfoot
- 40 **SELECTS: MUSIC VS PHYSICS**
by Dale Harrison
- 42 **DEAR DEGRASSI**

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 8 and the end of our second year. It has been a
upward curve since Sonar last year, and *Cyclic Defrost* is back at Sonar
this year and continuing to build connections with Europe. Good
Australian electronic music has been starting to spread more broadly
overseas and the next couple of months sees the number of Australian
acts overseas growing substantially.

This issue's cover art is by Sydney-based graphic designer Mark
Gowing, whose logos and other work should be familiar to a lot of
Sydney locals. Inside you'll find interviews with the old guard – Kevin
Purdy, Coldcut, Tortoise's Jeff Parker, as well as the spring chickens –
Perth's IDM youngster Pablo Dali, Melbourne post-rockers City City
City, Lali Puna and Anthony Pateras. After the continual hectoring
about MP3 politics in previous issues, one of our writers, Vaughan
Healey finally got hold of an iPod for a fortnight and went about trying
to learn the art of iPod krumping, and Degrassi gives solid holiday tips.
By the time you've waded through those in this 44 page bumper issue,
you'll come to the treasure chest of reviews and this issue's sleeve
design look at embossing.

There's so much that couldn't fit in this issue, including an even
greater number of reviews – some for some very important releases
that just couldn't be squeezed in. We're trying to add those to the
online version over the next month or so, and some will run in the
next issue. Our other news for this issue is that *Cyclic Defrost* has
received some additional funding from the Australia Council for the
Arts to help us keep our advertising rates down and continue for
another 4 issues. Also, we will be putting out a double CD compilation
in early 2005 for which there will be a call for submissions on the
website and in issue 9 (September). Get in touch, Issue 9 is up next.

Sebastian Chan & Dale Harrison

Editors



+ Extended articles

◀ Downloads of featured artists

ISSUE 8 EXCLUSIVE WEB CONTENT:

reviews of Koji Asano, Backfeed Slumber,
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A New Audiences project,
assisted by the Australia Council, the
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through its Audience and Market Development Division.



LOGO RHYTHMIC EQUATIONS

Cover Designer
Interview with Mark Gowing
by Bim Ricketson

Escaping from the cold wind into a big old warehouse in Redfern, I'm struck by the size of Mark Gowing's studio, which he has all to himself. 'I just like having the space,' he shrugs. Recent photographs are piled in neat stacks on generous bare desks, a retro digital clock tells the wrong time and a pad of hand sketches lies beside a couple of immaculate Macs. An impressive and inviting workplace.

Mark Gowing, designer of this issue's front cover, got a very early start as a working designer, leaving school at 16 to work as a junior at children's book publisher Scholastic. 'As a kid I was fascinated by logos and typefaces and I used to copy them from magazines with textas. My grandfather told me that what I was doing was called commercial art (as it was at the time), and that there was a part of commercial art called typography. My head started spinning at the idea of designing logos and typefaces as a job. So that was it. I knew what I wanted and went after it. I never really liked school, so uni was never on the cards – I just couldn't wait to get started. I did work experience at Scholastic when I was 15 and was offered the full-time position after volunteering there in my holidays.

'The job was assisting the marketing art director in a then one-man studio. Within four years the studio grew to eight people and I received all my training from the art director, Peter Lee. I stayed at Scholastic for seven years, and in that time worked as art director for the Book Club, Software and Trade divisions. I then took a job at Next Media as art director of Hyper Magazine. I chose this job as the magazine was a culture-based computer games publication and allowed me to explore and experiment with design and type in ways I had only dreamed of at Scholastic. After four years working on various publications and freelancing for the music industry, I left to start my own business.'

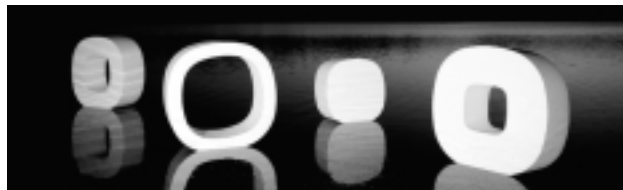
Gowing's business now has an impressive range of clients and media, most of it culture or arts based. His work ranges from corporate identities and packaging to film campaigns, record covers and photography. In his office I am shown a sample of recent work, much of it recognisable and all of it quality. Responding to my compliment Mark shrugs again. 'Thanks, I do try. A couple of years ago I decided I didn't just want to design, I want to be good.'

The first outstanding thing I spot in Mark's portfolio is a hand-made compendium for Hopscotch Films. In keeping with the company's commitment to 'real' films, Mark used fabrics and found materials that related to each of the distribution company's upcoming films, and each of the 150 copies is individually handmade. Accompanying a photograph and synopsis of Good Bye Lenin!, for example, is some flocked wallpaper and a page from a German novel. It

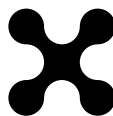
took Mark and a bunch of friends and work experience students many weeks and piles of materials to create, and although he drew no fee from the project, it has led to an strong relationship with Hopscotch, and Mark now designs campaigns for all their films. Especially proud of the posters for Spellbound and Raising Victor Vargas, Mark has also sold the designs of some of these campaigns overseas. 'Money for nothing,' he says.

Mark also developed the distinctive Hopscotch corporate identity and this year developed that into a live promo for cinemas. Deliberately avoiding the mega, 3D, animated, aural extravaganzas of other cinema promos, this is simply the Hopscotch logo filmed as neon, sitting in an urban park. Simple, real and a point of difference. Also immediately recognisable to Cyclic readers are his corporate identities for Sydney's 2SER and Inertia Distribution, both of which have had recent updates and additions.

Mark's has also designed artwork for a number of releases in the last few years, including for trip hoppers Lino, chart topper Groove Terminator, indie rockers Big Heavy Stuff and compilations of his own Preservation label. 'I started working with the music industry through my contacts at Rolling Stone Magazine when I was at Next Media,' he says 'I always wanted to design record covers. I guess as a designer I saw it as a way to somehow contribute to my love of music. From there it just snowballed.' Before long Mark found himself designing for a major label – but he soon found they weren't nearly as receptive to cutting edge ideas as perhaps their European or American counterparts were. Although lucrative financially, Mark moved away from the frustrating majors for a number of years and is only now considering putting his hand up again. 'Four years later, perhaps attitudes have changed,' he says hopefully.



Amrap



2ser
107.3



Glen
Street
Theatre

Hopscotch



Inertia

*Clockwise from Left:
Film poster for
Spellbound, Live &
Direct CD cover.*

*Photography for Glen
Street Theatre.*

*Above: a selection of
Mark's logo designs*

Much more satisfying are the record covers he does for Preservation Records, which he co-runs with Andrew Khedoori. 'I met Andrew about six years ago through mutual friends. Andrew had worked at a few record labels, was then a freelance music writer and is now the music director at 2SER. Andrew came to my house one day with a copy of a beautiful recording by Sun, made up of Oren Ambarchi and Chris Townend. When we found out that Sun were having trouble finding a label we decided to form a label and put it out.

'Preservation is still evolving and is becoming a good home for project-based works that might not be financially viable at other labels. We have very few boundaries on the kind of music that we will release. We look for artistry and a uniqueness that will make a recording interesting. In the past we have released what might be classed as pop, avant-garde, electronic and folk. We have another folk record on the horizon and an electronic piece in the works. Andrew and I make most of the decisions together. Andrew handles what you might call A&R and publicity while, I handle a lot of the business management as well as the creative direction.'

'So far we have released work by Sun and a remix disc of Sun featuring Mapstation, Pimmon, Tom Recchion, Rafael Toral, Hrvatski, Norbert Möslang and Christoph Heemann. Last year saw the release of Rand and Holland and the Motion compilation of 22 Australian experimental and avant-garde musicians that included Candlesnuffer, Pimmon, Qua, Joyce Hinterding, Ray Diode, Oren Ambarchi, Clue to Kalo and Pretty Boy Crossover. This year we have released a record by American folk/electronic

"I am always inspired by purity and
a dedication to the execution of
concept through the simplest form."

artist Tara Jane O'Neil. We are currently working with Grand Salvo on a release for mid-year.'

For the cover of *Cyclic Defrost*, Mark wanted to create something that represented what interested him about design on a more experimental level. 'Because there is no real brief or guidelines, I was able to let go of the usual strategic design goals and set more aesthetic ones. The photograph is one of my own. It is a field solar panels in Switzerland. I like the sort of super-technology/brave new world tone of this place. The pattern printed over it is a coded typeface that I have been working on lately. When text is set in the coded typeface it becomes more of a pattern than legible copy. It can still be deciphered – the cover pattern reads "Cyclic Defrost Magazine, Issue 8, Free". I find this random pattern generation interesting as the design is driven by specific content and meaning, but the result seems purely aesthetic.

'The coded type is locked into a perfect square controlled by the magazine proportions. This system immediately removes the freedom to mess around with free-form ideas, shapes or layouts. I also limited myself to a very small colour palette, with the only criteria being that the pattern and type lift

cleanly off the picture beneath. The type in the top left corner hints at the content of the pattern as they utilise the same colours. The combination of the pattern and photograph is based on nothing but tone. There is no real meaning except for an overall sense of technology. The matching of the angles is pure coincidence.'

'I am always inspired by purity and a dedication to the execution of concept through the simplest form. Aesthetically, I am excited by art. Especially within a record cover context. Modern art is a constant inspiration when attempting to express musical content. Finding the heart of a musical piece is the same process as viewing a piece of art and embracing its meaning – the two are one in the same.

'My first objective is always to create an exchange between the medium and the audience.

'For most of my work I like to use a kind of arbitrary decision making theory: existing constraints need to be embraced and new ones invented to minimise the number of aesthetic decisions. I like the design process to work like some natural law of inevitability: build in sufficient constraints and it designs itself. However, a lot of record cover design is a different process. I find that the packaging for a recording is best approached as a material extension of the music and is sometimes closer to art than it is to design. The best results are tonal and largely intangible in a conceptual or design sense.'



33 ARTISTS MARK GOWING LISTENS TO WHEN DESIGNING:

Smog, A Silver Mt Zion, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Prince Billy, Brian Eno, Brokeback, Clue to Kalo, Colleen, Do Make Say Think, Domenico De Clario, Duke Ellington, Gene Clark, Gillian Welch, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Grand Salvo, Iron and Wine, Jackie-O MotherFucker, Jim O'Rourke, John Coltrane, Judee Sill, Marvin Gaye, My Morning Jacket, Neil Young, Original Harmony Ridge Creek Dippers, Radiohead, Richard Buckner, Savath and Savalas, Sigur Rós, Songs: Ohia, Sufjan Stevens, Susumu Yakota, The Rectifiers, Wilco.



Three moments in Kevolution. **Left:** with Sir Robbo as Tooth; **Above and Right:** Circa Madroom



+ PURDY LI'L THANG

Kevin Purdy
Interview with Kevin Purdy
by Sebastian Chan

Kevin Purdy has been around forever. Oscillating between Sydney and Melbourne he is probably best known at the moment for his psych-rock influenced sampladelica, for his solo Purdy project and as a core member of Sydney three-piece Tooth. He is a self-taught multi-instrumentalist, as much a blues guitarist as a ProTools boffin. His musical career stretches way back to the late '70s playing with some of the seminal Australian post-punk and avant-rock outfits throughout the '80s, including the predecessor to legendary Sydney band Box The Jesuit. Purdy's story is one of coincidence, constant experimentation and a commitment to following your own path.

THE MADROOM YEARS (EARLY '80S)

The story begins in Sydney in the late '70s. Kevin explains, 'I was a bit of a late starter due to the fact that every band I was in from the age of 11 broke up before they played their first gig. I was living the rock n' roll dream in my head. I'd been playing some pretty mean drums since I was about ten, plus collecting records, and generally being a manic music nut. It wasn't till 1979 that I found a notice in a music store from Brian Hall who was looking for other musicians with

similar musical tastes – Eno, Velvet Underground, post punky stuff. Brian had a Tascam PortaStudio, Roland Jupiter 6 and a Dr Rhythm, could play guitar, bass and keyboard quite well and was a very unusual. As it turned out, he didn't really want to play live... he'd only played once in a car park in Sydney's Bankstown. Brian was really a classic bedroom boffin beat head, mixed with a bit of Phil Spector/Brian Wilson. When combined with my take on things, it produced some very curious results. Most of it was never released but we did put out a cassette album under the name Aural Indifference, titled *The Sound of Indifference*, and a 7" on the M2 label which was a version of "California Dreaming".

'Between us we spent thousands of hours in his studio, doing all sorts of cut-up post punk, poppy, Factory Records-style stuff, that made its way into many households in inner city Sydney. Meanwhile I hooked up with what was to become Madroom, the precursor to Box The Jesuit. Back then Goose had flaming red hair and was still known as a journo around town. Suzie, his girlfriend wanted to be part of the band so she was given a keyboard with the letters of the notes written on corresponding keys. There was also bassist Paul Koff and his girlfriend Karen, she wanted to sing, but was made manager... that was a scary mistake. That left our very own 'Keith Levene' [Public Image Ltd], Gary Taylor, on guitar. We rehearsed for about nine months, working through everything from Stooges and Velvet covers, to our own Joy Division/Echo & The Bunnymen/Roxy Music-inspired originals.

'We ended up recording three tracks and releasing them independently as *The Cruelty of Beauty*, a reversal of the Louis Nowra book, *The Beauty of Cruelty*. It was launched at our first gig ever, at the Exit club, which is now Candy's Apartment, possibly the most re-named venue in the history of Sydney. The place was packed. Double J (before it became Triple J) had been making a big fuss about it – we were their darlings for a while, until we got too weird. That's where former Double J presenter Tim Ritchie came into it for us. He loved the weird shit and we couldn't get weird enough for him. Tim was a big supporter and friend and even managed us for a couple of weeks.

'Madroom went through lots of changes. I began bashing things apart from drums, like chairs and cookie tins, doing backing yelps and mumbles, running homemade tape loops and slasher guitar. We organised many happenings, complete with performance art, Russian films, oil lightshows and other craziness. We had hooked up with others like Tex Perkins and Lachlan McLeod, Peter Reid and Stu Spasm, who had an ever-changing variety of bands, some of which I was in, such as Chicken Holder, Leather Moustache, Thug, Salamander Jim, and Moist.

'Madroom was a regular act at the Strawberry Hills Hotel, the Trade Union Club, the Yugal Soccer Club, Behind Enemy Lines and other seminal 80s underground venues around Sydney. We played with The Tactics, The Models, Box of Fish, The Lighthouse Keepers and a lot of other great (and crap) bands of the time.

'Eventually we put out an album that had a paragraph-long title taken from the Klaus Oldenberg Manifesto – *I'm for an art ...* The engineer had a habit of nodding off over the mixing desk and taking breaks to score [smack] and consequently it took forever to finish and sounded like crap. The mastering and pressing made it sound even crappier. It was rightly slagged. The follow up was a 7" of our big live number "Acid Dog Man".

'Madroom went through about seven guitarists, eventually stopped looking for one, and we decided to all play guitar instead. Near the end we got our own sound, a sort of drunken dada-ish loose, lazy, less-inhibited one. Sadly, the recordings were never released, except for the 'Banana Box', a 50-only cassette box, with a plastic banana stapled to the front. I never got one. Suzie says she hasn't got one either, but I don't believe her. During all this artiness, I had discovered early rhythm n' blues, soul, funk, hillbilly, bent rockabilly shit and lots of points in between. But I'd also become more serious about playing guitar, which was a crime in those circles. Madroom was together for five years and five minutes after I left the band they became Box The Jesuit.'



MELBOURNE (LATE '80S TO EARLY '90S)

'After Madroom, I spent the next year or so playing with an Afrofunk outfit and a hillbilly thing I called Gasoline. They were very unsettled times, and I was living in Sydney's Kings Cross and then above the Hopetoun Hotel. I knew I had to get out. Then I discovered Melbourne, which was like shining beacon of musicality, as well as a quieter, cleaner, happier, sexier place in general, with great record shops and music on every street corner. I sold just about everything I owned and moved. It took a long time to find my feet there as an outsider, but I kept at it. Eventually I hooked up with Hamish Marr from These Cars Collide, a band I'd been on line-ups with. Hamish played a mean finger-picking blues-style guitar and sang, whilst I played rhythm and lead guitar, kick drum and hi-hats with my feet plus vocals. Together we were called The Chicken Hawks, doing rhythm n' blues, strychnine-laced hillbilly and rockabilly and eventually some originals. It was like Sun blues artist Joe Hill Louis meets Tav Falco's Panther Burns. We were regulars at the Espy, the Corner and several other places. The Hawks eventually started adding members, I got out from behind of the drums and the originals got to be a bigger part of the set. The band changed its name to The Ocean Stairs and basically became Hamish's band, in which I played guitar, vibes, drums and did backing vocals. During all of this I was playing with several other bands, sometimes seven nights a week, doing jazz, country, dub,

whatever was cooking. My music tastes were constantly evolving. I travelled around the world, wrote lots of tunes, and worked in my studio on all sorts of new ideas. I was now fusing a lot of new sounds – hip hop and dancehall were co-existing beside funk, rocksteady, dub, jazz and other Afro sounds. It wasn't much of a shift to start developing ideas that ran parallel to the evolving trip hop sound of the time. It came together for me when I heard U.N.K.L.E.'s *The Time Has Come* EP, Wagon Christ, DJ Shadow and so on. I could hear a kindred spirit in them, people who seemed to have a broad range of influences and were able to combine them in an abstract fashion.

I started my career as an 'electronica artist' by chopping breaks and sounds bit by bit from my belt-driven turntable onto my 4-track, later adding keyboards, vibes, spoken word, percussion, making some weird dubby, breaky excursions. Alongside all of this I was presenting radio on 3PBS and DJing more and more. The Ocean Stairs fizzled out in 1994, leaving behind a self-titled CD and a bunch of unreleased material, but I was off and running with the new shit that was developing in my studio. I got myself an Ensoniq 16+ sampling keyboard and a drum machine and began writing on that, once again overlaying on the 4-track. This eventually led to me getting an AtariST and Cubase setup, which was when I really started to get the tunes that were destined for my first releases and eventually the *Revolution* album.'



*Left and Above:
Madroom in
their prime*

*Below: Chicken
Hawks poster*



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SYDNEY (THE LAST DECADE)

'In 1996 a friend of mine played Creative Vibes's Peter Pasqual a demo of my stuff and he seemed to be really keen for me to be involved with his label. At the time it seemed a very cool idea, especially because they were closely connected with Ninja Tune [as the Australian distributor]. So I started getting all these ideas about going back to Sydney. In my last months in Melbourne I finished "Dope Thing" for Creative Vibes' *Evolutionary Vibes I* compilation as well as performing at [seminal mid-90s Melbourne ambient night] Global Warming, and my own night at the Prince of Wales called Uppah.

'I had been back in Sydney for just two days, recuperating at Curl Curl beach, when I met Sir Robbo. I had been aimlessly wandering around, trying to find a few underground happenings. Ken Cloud at the now defunct Reachin Records told me to check Club Kooky [the legendary, performance-meets-eclecticism weekly club night run by Seymour Butz and Gemma, 1995-2001]. Someone else said to check The Cricketers Arms [which hosted some of the best eclectic low key nights around 1995/6]. Next stop Good Groove records. I get into a rave with JD, the guy behind the counter, about records, places to go, and I mention I make music, his ears prick up and he asks me about it. He puts on my demo CD, and two minutes later the guy beside me asks, "What's this?" JD points at me. The tune that was playing was "Sugar", which became my first solo record on 7" vinyl. Sir Robbo was the guy next to me, and one of the heads behind underground zine *Head Shots*, which I'd been collecting in Melbourne, and he asked if I would be interested in an interview for the mag. The interview never surfaced but we got to hang out a lot.

'Robbo had recently become involved with Frigid, which was then just starting out at Kinsela's [see *Cyclic Defrost* Issue 1]. He hooked up one of my first gigs in Sydney there and helped out with sounds on the decks when I played my Frigid debut. I'll never forget that night: a room full of happy faces, digging the tunes. Some of those faces became good friends, the start of a very positive new stage. Not long after, Robbo and I started hooking up for some sessions in my recently updated studio. Instead of the usual swag of funk breaks, Robbo brought around psyche beat/rock, folk, soundtracks and all sorts of unexpected stuff. It came together beautifully. Over the years, lots of people have said, "Hey, maybe we could lay down some beats together", but, apart from the fact I generally don't have the time or mental energy, I just can't see it, not like I could see it with Robbo – it was right, you just know these things.

'We had the bed of a bunch of tunes for what was to become the *No Strings* album (released in 1998) down in no time and were soon doing gigs as The Sir Robbo/Purdy Experience. It took about a year and a

half to finish *No Strings*, which back then seemed like an eternity, but really everything was happening so fast. For the album and live gigs we had teamed up with Dale Harrison, who provided bass and good company. With help from Cryogenesis and the Fromage posse we got our crazy selection of Indian chants, sunshine pop, cocaine disco, space boogie and psychedelic lullabies together, with gorgeous artwork by Fromage's Duncan Irving. All the reviews of *No Strings* were amazing, tons of kids dug it, it got lots of radio play [especially on the community stations], but it didn't sell as well as would have appeared... Probably three-quarters of the people who liked it had burnt copies, which gave us the kudos factor, though without the sales factor. But by the time we put out our second album, *Sirens From Here To Titan* in 2001, the general vibe was that our first album did very well, but I was always mystified. There were so many cool, crazy kids buzzing around at the time, with Freaky Loops parties turning hordes of people onto leftfield beats, so what was with the stupid low sales?'

FAIRYTALE INSURANCE (TODAY)

Kevin Purdy has spent the last two years working on his second solo album *Fairytale Insurance*, a lavish, sprawling record that is equal parts sample-based Krautrock, and warm, enveloping psychedelic live instrumentation. His production has become more expansive, helped by new equipment and a shift to ProTools. He says, 'I want to use technology to make things simpler. I was using the Atari ST to trigger the Akai [sampler], now I just use ProTools. My main focus is to compose music, everything else is just flummery and I've never had any interest in being a technological wiz, it's not the way I'm made. I can't read manuals and I know next to nothing about the most basic of technical terms and concepts, I just want to make music. Originally it was just a cheaper and more efficient way to multitrack, without getting a 24-track analogue set up... I got myself heavily in debt last September and bought a whole stack of cool studio gear, including a full ProTools set up, a Mackie desk and some beautiful microphones. I wanted to get my studio to the point where I could do the whole process up until mastering myself, without having to pay for studio time, or having to translate my thoughts to a mixing engineer.

'So the journey began, not only to finish the album, but to learn how all this new technology worked. That's how I spent my summer. After months of work, technical mishaps and madness, I sussed out what I was doing and how I wanted to do it, and with a few weeks to spare, I finished the album. So the flavour, the comfort and tension, the colours and the magic of the album all came from, basically, those three weeks. The other thing which adds richness to the album was that I now had the ability to lay down

as many layers of live instruments as I wanted, some tracks with four guitars, two bass tracks, three cellos and five layers of percussion. This gave me so much scope to interweave sonic colours. There were times where I thought I'd never make it, editing tabla lines for hours like a mad professor. I wanted the album to have a wholeness to it, to take you somewhere as a journey. The tunes were becoming more lush and seductive, and I wasn't about to let that stop. When I write, I'm gauging the effect the sound has on me and working on strengthening the aspects of sonic colour, to heighten that effect. On this album I tried to tie the tunes together so that they all shared a common journey. Though the journey, like the title, has a duality, investigating lines of fantasy, dreams and childlike wonder juxtaposed with the lightning bolts of the bogeyman, the despair of the oppressed, the hopes of the human spirit, in a world in which it is downtrodden. The end result is really in the eye of the beholder. Some have noted the album as dark and some as light and bright. I think the dark aspects are more like sitting on a cliff at night under a large full moon. All of those things could lead some to intense discomfort, others to blissful joy, depending on whether you go with it or not.'

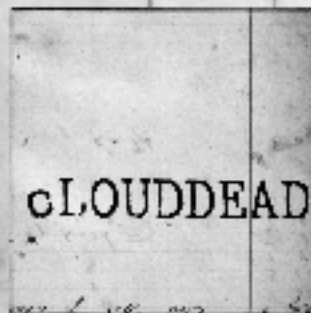
Fairytale Insurance comes at a time when pop is on an upswing, lyrics and vocals are everywhere in the remnants of the electronic scene. Abstraction, depth, and the 'journey' doesn't seem to fit with the MP3 and Ritalin generation who demand instant, quick gratification. 'It's a crazy scene when you're making lengthy abstract tunes in a time where the market wants short, catchy, genre-specific product. They don't want space jams, not in Australia anyhow, I'm talking the mass market here, not music loving, open-minded folks. So we're always essentially giving the bird with our stuff, being cheeky schoolboys who won't tuck our shirts in... If my label Soft sold lots of CDs and I had my way, I'd release tons more vinyl, gatefold 10's with posters and bubblegum cards. Boxed sets with comic books and pop out 3D glasses. I think there's still a few of us out there. I think it'll be alright, we'll last the long run because we do what we love.'

Purdy's Fairytale Insurance is out now on Soft Records. Copies of the 'Sugar' 7" and other back catalogue can be ordered through Soft (softrecords.com).

To find out more on the Melbourne and Sydney underground scenes of the '80s and '90s, see Bob Blunt's excellent Blunt – A Biased History Of Australian Rock.



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+ A TALE OF 3 CITIES

City City City

Interview with Ned Collette
by Bob Baker Fish

Over the last few years luscious instrumental seven piece City City City have been busily exploring the intersections between jazz, rock, electronica and all posts between, experimenting with various line-ups, sounds, and techniques until arriving at the smooth, challenging and beguiling sounds of their debut long player *Dawn And The Blue Light District*. Recorded over a year ago, the full ensemble had only been together for about a month before entering the studio, with the resulting session capturing an energetic and vital outfit full of enthusiasm and numerous ideas. In short, it's an album brimming with musical possibilities.

'Everyone had their own place that they were coming from,' remembers guitarist and founder Ned Collette. 'I think on the album that's very true. It sort of swings through a whole bunch of genres really, which funnily enough have sort of ironed themselves out.'

At the time, Collette reflects, the sounds on *Dawn and the Blue Light District* were still very fresh, with keyboardist Tye (the newest addition to the band) providing a more synth/electro sound than they had previously experimented with. Although their sound has continued to evolve with Tye's recent departure and the addition of Ben Bourke, two tracks on the album, 'Grayscale' and 'Year In' are still quite represen-

tative of the outfit's more upbeat, guitar-orientated live performances and preoccupations.

'I always wanted it to be much heavier than it used to be, and it is now,' offers an enthusiastic Collette. 'It's just more full on with seven people and the sort of sounds we're getting up there. One thing I've wanted for the last couple of years is to bring that electro vibe in but still have what I would call a really driving rock guitar in there too.'

'As far as electronic music goes, I really like those lo-fi elements – where a ye olde guitar is thrown in with like crazy glitchy beats and shit like that,' he continues breathlessly. 'Even dudes like Matmos using guitars and all old instruments. I really like that sort of graininess you get when you combine those crappy crunchy guitars with really slick electro stuff. I think the album represents that really well, but the set we're playing now probably represents it even better. And it's just a lot more unified for me from beginning to end. You could see a downside in that all the songs sound similar to each other now, but I don't think that's really the truth, I think they complement each other a bit more. The whole show and the whole vibe behind the band is a bit more unified now.'

Initially formed to provide Collette an outlet for some of the tunes he had been writing, City City City has developed quite organically. It was originally more jazz orientated, featuring extended solos and improvisation, before a bit of active listening caused Collette to re-evaluate this approach.

'I spent a few years studying and listening to jazz, came to the end of it and thought everyone's playing too long and too much. Everyone thinks that everything they play is worth hearing and I don't believe it. And our band used to be different; we used to do really long versions of songs live, sometimes they'd go for 25 minutes.

I remember listening to a recording of a gig ... not only did I find it boring – it seemed so irrelevant to the music I was into. It was just this kind of dull noodling.

'I think that's where a lot of improvised music and jazz falls down,' he continues. 'Unless you are a complete aficionado, which a lot of the jazz audience seems to be, as long as you play jazz you can do no wrong. It really is just music for the people playing. I remember listening to a recording of a gig we did and not only did I find it boring it seemed so irrelevant to the music I was into. It was just this kind of dull noodling.'

'I think we're all trying to hit people with this one big sound we're trying to create. There's no hierarchy of soloists, lets make the tunes as long as they have to be to get their point across but lets not harp on about it.'

As a result the music on *Dawn And The Blue Light District*, whilst still drawing a loose influence from jazz, never feels cluttered, long or overdone. By contrast it all feels carefully constructed and finely nuanced, a remarkable achievement when considering the number of players involved. To Collette however, this is not surprising.

'Everyone's very confident in their playing in this band so I don't think anyone feels that they're getting squashed, not getting a big enough say, or that they're saying too much,' he states. 'When the seventh person joined, we looked around and said, "Fuck, we're a seven piece!" It was a bit of a shock, but it's never been harder with seven, it's actually been easier. I think it's a band full of people that are interested in what happens when you have the onslaught of seven people, but we're all also interested in what happens when not everyone plays at once. We're trying to work more of that into the music as we go along.

'Everyone in the band has a very similar idea of what the music can sound like,' he continues. 'Even though everyone comes from very different backgrounds, we're finding that a lot of us are into the same thing right now. I feel like just a component of some sort of music that's happening, and I don't really know where it came from. I know that sounds really wanky, but I think we all feel like we are elements of something that's greater than the sum of its parts.'

City City City's *Dawn And the Blue Light District* is out now on *Sensory Projects* through *Inertia*



DOMINO THEORIES

Anthony Pateras

Interview with Anthony Pateras
by Bob Baker Fish

Melbourne-based composer Anthony Pateras is somewhat of a puzzle in the local music scene. He simultaneously fits everywhere and nowhere. His tastes are broad and his talents unique. Even in the world of electronics and improvisation, a world he regularly inhabits, he stands alone, creating inspired, challenging and iconoclastic music, seemingly out of step, or perhaps a step ahead of those who surround him. And then there's his painstakingly devised score-based work. Straddling the difficult divide between academia and live improvisation, over the last few years Pateras has become a regular on the live scene, responsible for some of the most awe-inspiring and challenging performances around, either in solo or ensemble pieces and utilising a variety of instruments and sound-making techniques. Both facets of his work are unique and diverse, often barely existing within known realms, dragging genres and expectations kicking and screaming behind him.

'I'm not trying to be provocative, that's the thing,' he offers from his home/ studio in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. 'What I find hard to stomach about that ultra-minimal thing, or experimental music in general, is that sometimes people think they're being extremely radical. You don't want to actually be able to hear that in the music, you don't want to listen to that and think, "Oh, they're trying to be extremely radical." I just want to listen and hear something unique.

As an exploratory musician you have to do your research – ask yourself what can you offer within the historical context of this stuff.

'I think it's important to present musical ideas without any kind of pretension, and just say, "This is what I'm doing, take it or leave it,"' he continues. 'But at the same time, to not assume anything about your audience... that can be really insulting. The best thing for me about my CD launch was that there was such a diverse audience there – from hiphop crews and golden oldies to kids and musicians across the board. It wasn't just your regular improv/new music back-slapping sausage party.'

Pateras' most recent work, *Mutant Theatre*, on John Zorn's iconic Tzadik label, is extremely radical. A veritable grab bag of Pateras' musical obsessions it's an exciting work that somehow manages to draw the listener in without appearing self-conscious or contrived. It's a work that he refers to as his chamber music record, though the reality is that it's unlike any chamber music that you're ever likely to hear. Unless your idea of chamber music involves percussion sextets, amplified quintets, numerous percussion instruments, dominos, mousetraps, prepared piano, vocal manipulations and electronics. Though at times quite dense, it is an absolutely astonishing assemblage of fascinating, energetic and tightly controlled sounds. Equally influenced by his classical background, the avant-garde, and his live improvisation work, its mood oscillates from austere complexity to the mischievous and absurd.

'I'm pretty interested in that juxtaposition of comedy and violence with anything that I'm doing, and it's especially satisfying in the chamber music context because many people in that field can be so narrow minded – hung up on def-

initions of music and so forth. A couple of the performers who play my stuff are actually from the improv community who are interested in doing something that requires a bit more work than just rocking up to a gig and playing with whoever. Some of them want to do something more structured or work harder; really rigorously rehearse something so it can be absolutely killer when it's time for the performance. These people are the ones you want to work with – they've got the essential ingredients of having a completely open musical mind, combined with discipline and enthusiasm.'

Pateras, who is currently doing his PhD in Composition (he's been studying since 1997) wrote *Mutant Theatre* over two years and, as a result, it is quite varied, touching upon many of his divergent interests, drawing upon many local musicians to perform everything from abstract percussion to setting off 650 dominos and mousetraps. Then he sent it to John Zorn.

'I just sent Zorn a CD and hoped for the best, and he responded quickly because I think he's really into composers at the moment,' he remembers. 'The whole idea of scoring and presenting it to the conductor and the conductor presenting it to the ensemble, that whole process. I think he digs it.' Whilst touring through Amsterdam on the Synaesthesia tour alongside the likes of Delire, Snawklor and Robin Fox, Pateras received the call from Zorn, saying he wanted to release it immediately, though unfortunately there wasn't enough material. When the tour ended he quickly set to work writing three new pieces specifically for the disc. One of these was "Twitch", an amplified quintet, which is arguably one of the most challenging and interesting pieces of the album. Comprising of Natasha Anderson on her distinctive contrabass recorder, Vanessa Tomlinson on percussion, James Wilkinson on trombone/conch, Erkki Veltheim on viola and regular contributor Robin Fox on laptop, "Twitch" is a strange disjointed musical game of tag, where each performer performs short series of ordered sounds before the piece ultimately culminates in Veltheim torturously smashing and tearing apart a violin.

'The quintet is a very acquired taste,' laughs Pateras. 'The interesting thing about that piece is that it is written not just for instruments but also for instrumentalists. It's written for five very specific people with sounds they've spent a lot of time working on. Erkki, Natasha, Robin, Vanessa and James all have sounds that only they can do, so I felt really privileged to be able to ask them to perform those sounds at certain times in the piece. The score is almost like a comic strip – that seemed like the only way to communicate the piece, rather than using a traditional score-based format.'

Unlike many contemporary composers Pateras has in recent years developed a strong interest in working with electronics and integrating them into his scores as an instrument equivalent to any other. Not only is “Twitch” an example of this but, like much of his recent work, it highlights his desire to explore the possibilities of the electronic form.

‘What I’m interested in is using electronics in notated composition as an instrument,’ he offers, ‘not as a separate element to the music like a drone or something, but actually gesturally incorporating it into the piece. And that’s what “Twitch” was about, giving Robin an instrumental voice for his instrument. I aim for a total integration of his sounds combined with the idea that you can also make acoustic instruments sound “electronic” - like with prepared piano for example.’

Laptop musician Robin Fox has been an essential figure in Pateras’s burgeoning interest in electronics. Back when Fox was a drummer the two collaborated in the trio Flubb (with Jeremy Collings on cello/electronics), constructing instruments, using junk and combining them with toys, distorted voice, cello and bass. Four years later, the duo produced the wonderfully chaotic and violent *Coagulate* (Synaesthesia), which consisted of Pateras feeding a number of channels, consisting of vocal mics, piano frame and the ancient AKS synth prototype to the waiting Fox, who then electronically treated the sounds in real-time via his laptop. Pateras would then respond to the processing, creating a sensory feedback loop of real-time composition. Whilst the album is sonically and emotionally devastating in its energy and abrasive mischievousness, their live show kicks it up a notch. Interestingly, what looks like fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants improvisation is in reality a lot more carefully prepared.

‘Our stuff is based on having an intensive rehearsal period and working out different systems and approaches to the instruments at hand,’ reveals Pateras. ‘So we spend a lot of time just working on one sound. When we actually perform it live it’s improvised, but there’s been a lot of research that’s gone into the actual sounds and the different sections that we present during a gig. In terms of actually discovering something interesting during improv, I guess I do it the other way round. I see improvisation as a forum to present the ideas that I work on at home as an instrumentalist. You build your arsenal then you let it loose. Of course you find stuff in totally free improvisation but, at least in my experience, often it feels a lot better to play than it actually sounds. I don’t want to be fumbling for ideas and trajectories in front of audience unless I really know what I’m doing.’

In fact, improvisation is a concept Pateras finds problematic, ill-defined and, despite its intentions, often flawed or at best unhelpful in true music development.

‘It claims to be this free art form, where you’re granted any kind of option at any given time to

respond to any given musical gesture,’ he begins. ‘But the more I watch improv, and this is by no means all of it, some of it is predictable in its unpredictability. You kind of know where it’s going to go just from the language the performers set up from the beginning. I’m interested in structured improvisation personally, but I’m not interested in being able to tell where the music’s going. I think you can juggle these two things to make something really special – to guide your impulsiveness without being restrictive.’

‘I think improv is a forum where a lot of amazing ideas can be executed, but because anything goes, often the ideas aren’t presented as strongly as they could be, or perhaps there’s a kind of underlying excuse that you can do anything without being accountable conceptually or even technically,’ he continues. ‘It ruins it for everyone – it just becomes like bad theatresports with instruments.’

‘I’m not saying this is the ultimate solution to music’s problems – but Robin and I always have parameters, but that’s because we’ve been playing together for four years. For example, depending on the patch that he is using at a certain time, there are only certain things that I can do which will sound decent with that patch – and they have to be performed at a certain rate to allow the processing to kind of breathe and work. If you work with someone long enough, that’s when the great stuff happens. Like with Rob, I think we’ve always understood each other musically, but just started to at the same time.’

Recently Pateras teamed up with local improvisers Sean Baxter and David Brown (Bucketrider/Lazy), to release *Ataxia* (Synaesthesia), which is a gentle, though at times uncomfortable, textured bed of improvised sound, which saw him utilising prepared piano alongside Brown’s prepared guitar and Baxter’s percussion. ‘There are certain people you play with where your languages sort of convalesce into one rather conveniently,’ offers Pateras enthusiastically. ‘I don’t think improv is all completely predictable. With these guys I just sit down and play and we rehearse maybe once a month. We don’t talk about it.’ The result is a collection of minimal clutter, fragments of junk sounds ricocheting off each other, and rustling, twitching, tearing textures from an ill-defined unknown sound world.

Ataxia came about quite by chance, when Baxter and Brown performed at the launch for Pateras’ debut album *Malfunction Studies*, with Phillip Smartzis in their minimal electronic trio Western Grey.

‘They saw me play and they wanted to do a free jazz trio with Baxter’s fucked-up percussion and Dave’s bass, said it’d be really freaked-out free jazz stuff. I said that I didn’t really listen to much free jazz stuff and didn’t have much experience with it,’ remembers Pateras. ‘I listened to classical music for years before I listened to rock music. So I was never one of these kids who grew up on John Coltrane and

Miles Davis. It’s something that I’ve regretted at times. I mean, I can’t play jazz at all. I can’t read charts or voice a chord properly. But I’m not really interested in that because I’m not interested in harmonically functional piano-playing. I’m interested in more physical approaches to piano, which is influenced by electronics more than anything. Treating it as a resonating box of strings and focusing on density, intensity and velocity – rather than treating it like a piano and worrying about harmony, melody and rhythm.’

Pateras currently has a number of other projects on the boil. Firstly there’s a two-pianos record with The Necks pianist Chris Abrams, where they each play for fifty minutes in each octave, with four overlaid takes each, which results in a chaotic piano going crazy for fifty minutes. ‘The point of that is to add so much piano to something that it ceases to sound like a piano,’ explains Pateras. ‘You get this spectral wash of energy. I’m interested in that kind of instrumental exploration as well – adding so much that it ceases to exist or becomes something else, in a manner of speaking. The results freaked me out actually.’

Then there’s his hip hop record. Being the first to admit that he knows little about hip hop, he is clearly excited about this project, playing fragments on his computer whilst discussing its inception. Instigated by Sydney-based turntablist Martin Ng, they also roped in Robin Fox and Curse Ov Dialect’s Vulk Mackadonski for extra support. The result is an abstract, demented form of hip hop, with Pateras acting more as producer chopping up Vulk’s beatboxing on one track whilst Fox chops up Ng’s turntables in real-time and Ng scratches over the top. The parts I heard were weird and strangely beautiful, a simultaneous kick in the pants and demonstration of the possibilities of modern hiphop.

‘It’s not like it’s a pistake,’ laughs Pateras, ‘it’s more like taking elements of the style, processing them beyond recognition and then using them again in the form of the style. So we used hip hop as a starting point, improvised with the elements of it, and then brought it back into improv-influenced, song-based form through post-production. Martin and I did a lot of talking on the phone rather than heaps of rehearsal. It’s evolved a lot over the last three months because I was just left with all the material to put together in post-production. It’s probably going to be a 16-track record and there’s more accessible stuff on there as well... which actually surprised me.’

It’s fun, he smiles. It’s nice to do something not as serious for once. Writing scores gets a little boring, not the results, just the actual process. It takes so fucking long it feels like your life is slowing down, but the results are eventually worth it.’



Pateras’ Mutant Theatre is out now on Tzadik.



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'I like working with mistakes and trying to make something from them.'

+ HARVEY WALLBANGER

◀ **Pablo Dali**

Interview with Matt Roesner
by Melinda Taylor

Matt Roesner is Pablo Dali, a self-confessed control freak who finds musical inspiration in the tranquillity of his natural surroundings, as well as the sterile and harsh nature of man-made structures.

Inspired by the indie music of his generation, Matt began his musical career at the age of 18. Like many electronic musicians, he has no formal music training; he taught himself to play guitar by ear and everything else since then. His introduction to experimental electronic music came via the advent of Radiohead's stunning album *OK Computer* in 1997 and the evolution of trip hoppers such as Massive Attack and Portishead in the mid-nineties. This music altered Matt's perceptions and took his own musical adventures down a winding path he has not since returned from. Over the last three years he has shied away from his indie roots, experimenting only with an abstract and minimal palette of sounds that inform his current musical project Pablo Dali.

Matt currently lives in Harvey, a little town about an hour and a half drive south of Perth. He works during the day as a CAD draftsman, designing farm machinery for his family-run business. The rest of his time is spent in the studio capturing and embodying the serenity of life in Harvey in musical forms.

'In Harvey music is my only outlet. There are a lot of open spaces where I live, flat plains to the west and large hills to the east. Harvey is so quiet, I can sit outside and not hear a single thing except birds or the wind. It's the quietness and the space which helps me create the music that I make, I find it very reflective and meditative in a weird way.'

Pablo Dali started in late 2001 while Matt was still involved in the post-rock electro act OK Tokyo. OK Tokyo had built up quite a reputation for their amazing improvised live sets and played regularly at festivals all over the country. The group split in late 2002 leaving Matt to pursue his solo work. 'I had been experimenting with abstract and minimal sounds that didn't fit in the band context, and at the time it felt like OK Tokyo was heading in a more song-based and accessible direction that I wasn't 100 per cent happy with. I decided to start a solo project as Pablo Dali, but it really wasn't until mid 2002 that I started to take it more seriously. Some of the early Pablo Dali music wound up in an installation in Perth and also got a bit of interest from overseas and I was invited to play at Sound Summit 2002. Toward the end of 2002 OK Tokyo was burnt out creatively, it seemed that we had reached a point of implosion, and it was then that I decided to make Pablo Dali my main musical focus.'

The music of Pablo Dali combines a rich sonic palette of minimal electronic and acoustic sounds that is both mesmerising and provocative. 'I find that minimalism is a major inspiration. Simple ideas are the best, and you can have a really sparse sound that still has a lot of emotional depth. Certain sounds and objects always get my creative thoughts going. I could stare at modern buildings, the aluminium and concrete, and get a thousand ideas, and it's the same with mobile phone towers, antennae and power lines. These man-made inspirations are played against the natural spaces that I live in.

'In terms of sound I might find inspiration in a small fragment of noise found in a guitar recording or the way a sound reacts when projected into a large space. I like working with mistakes and trying to make something from them. OK Tokyo tracks were always built up from improvised jams, between the acoustic elements and electronics that we were using; we didn't have a plan, as long as it sounded unique. Now I am more focused in the way I create music, I have a plan with each track, and I use processed sounds a lot more, like taking something that was originally an acoustic sound source and then mutating it into something that sounds quite digital. Making music is a lot easier and fun for me now. In OK Tokyo I had to write pieces that fitted within a live band context, but I'm a control freak and I have always been happier working by myself.'

However, Matt's extensive touring with OK Tokyo has given him an insight into how to present his minimal and less accessible sets as Pablo Dali to a live audience. His shows place a large emphasis on improvisation and real-time audio processing.

'I don't feel it's hard to create an intriguing live set as a solo electronic artist in terms of sound. But it is more difficult to create a visual presence. The audience don't get much out of watching a guy press buttons and looking into the laptop, that's why I like to use live guitar playing and also sampling to create a stronger live feel. I never play the same live set twice, I will use similar sounds or progressions, but they will never be in the same sequence. Live visuals can be a

great tool too, as they give the audience a chance to establish a visual identity to the sounds that they are hearing. Visuals are something that I hope to use more of in the future.

'I perform live using a laptop, acoustic or electric guitar and a cheap Boss sampler for really grainy lo-fi textures. I normally run eight outputs from my soundcard into a mixer, so that I can manipulate sounds through the desk as well as the laptop. Lately I have been doing the occasional laptop-only set where I play sounds in a more improvised and minimal fashion.'

While we await a full-length release from Pablo Dali, his music has not gone unnoticed, with several compilation appearances to date. Ai Records in the UK included one of his tracks for their last compilation release entitled *Station*. "Contemplate" was recorded in July last year and at the time the plan was to include it on a demo CD for sending out to various labels, it was not written for the AI release. I spent most of last year working on refining my production techniques and writing new material, and "Contemplate" was one of the first tracks that I actually felt happy with in terms of production and inspiration. The track was recorded on a really cold morning, and I remember it was finished in around three hours, it just seemed to fall into place.

In August last year I was reading a review of an Ai's Montag release and thought they might be interested in hearing some of my music, so emailed asking them if they were accepting demos, and they replied saying they were looking for new tracks for their next compilation. So I sent them some tracks, and they asked if they could use "Contemplate" on the Station compilation. I was surprised that they chose that track as it was the most unique one on that demo. I thought they would be more interesting in the other material which was more beat-based and glitchy.'

Matt has also collaborated with the Micro Label 12times50, also based in the UK. 'I came across them whilst listening to Resonance FM online. We started talking via email and they asked me to work on their file sharing project. Basically they had a

one-minute MP3 file that contained a heap of different sounds and noises, and the challenge was to create a track using only the MP3 as source material. I spent a weekend working on a track that involved a lot of processing and editing of sounds, and I ended up with really minimal click house track. When I sent it to them they played it on Frequenzen, their fortnightly show.

'I think online collaboration between artists is a great thing, it's something that I would like to explore more in the future. It's a way to learn new techniques and also be inspired by other artists' creativity. 12times50 are hoping to release the tracks created by various artists who participated in the file sharing project sometime soon.'

File sharing? Aren't they the two words that make any underpaid and overworked independent musician shake their head in frustration and sadness? It's strange to think that file sharing, in the sense of making files openly available for audio collaboration, is a great way for musicians to broaden their creative output. And yet file sharing, as in making other people's music freely available for download despite copyright restrictions, is a great way to ensure a lot of musicians will never be able to make a living from their music.

'In the future I hope to make my music available for download but I hope to get paid some money for it. What concerns me is when files are downloaded and distributed without the consent of the artist. Technology will eventually overcome this problem, making downloading of music more secure and a way for artists to receive income that they deserve.

'I am a CD/vinyl man at heart, I do download MP3s but if I really like something I will buy it. Then you get the artwork and packaging, it's collectable. I like what the Fällt label does, you download the MP3 and a PDF file to print out and fold it up into a cover. If I were going to go with digital distribution I would do something along those lines, it's interactive, personal and collectable. I have looked into digital distribution, which I think is a good thing provided the artist is paid. I see it as a good way for a new artist to get exposed to a larger audi-

ence without the backing of a label, and MP3s are a great promotional tool.

MP3s, digital distribution, file sharing and the internet all play an important role for electronic musicians located in far off locations such as Australia. It helps them gain exposure internationally, and far off states in their own country, that otherwise would never get a chance to experience their music. Without the internet there is still the local scene that can thrive and nurture an upcoming artist.

'In Perth only a handful of venues promote electronic music on a regular basis. That's why a gig like Aesoteric, a weekly night dedicated to new left-field styles of electronica, dub and jazz is so important to the Perth underground scene. It provides local artists a platform to perform their music to an appreciative audience. RTR FM is also a strong supporter of local music.

'There are artists in the Perth underground electronic scene that are producing music that is unique and high quality. It's strange because some of the artists are more well-known overseas than over on the east coast. My favourite local artists are Dave Miller, Manuel Bonrod and Audio Cephlon.

'Kieper Records, run by Audio Cephlon promotes West Australian electronica through the release of compilation CDs and occasional gigs. There is also a local collective called Semikazi which involves a large number of Perth electronic artists working in a wide range of genres, from noise, electro, indie-tronica, hip hop and glitch. There are also a couple of VJs involved. The aim of Semikazi is to increase exposure of electronic music outside the realm of traditional club music, and also to nurture new talents.'

Pablo Dali is currently working on a full-length album to be released on ::Room40:: early next year. In the meantime, keep an eye out for his contributions to the upcoming Kieper Records Aether 2 compilation and Semikazi 02 compilation.

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STEALTHY SMALLGOODS

Coldcut Interview with Jonathon More
by Clark Nova

Four turntables and a 4-track tape recorder is a long way from the hi-tech world of VJing Coldcut now inhabit. While Jonathan More and Matt Black have adapted to more technologically advanced means for music and video making—or adapted the technology to suit their purpose—their movement around the cultural fringe has been decidedly backward. They travelled from chart success with their earliest releases and remixes, to become the ‘anonymous’ DJ Food, starting a wholly independent record label. Not to mention their radio show *Solid Steel* which had its first incarnation on the then pirate ‘Kiss’.

Say Kids What Time Is It (1987) used the laborious method of recording samples and breaks from records onto a 4-track, then rewinding and recording more samples and breaks. Today Black and More spend a lot of their time programming new plug-ins for their audio programs and creating computer programs for their live VJ shows. Their label, Ninja Tune, has passed its tenth year and is almost nearing the hundred mark in terms of releases. With all this, they haven’t released a record of their own in over five years.

‘There’s no rules that you must release an album at a given time,’ More says. ‘We do a lot of different things. We’ve got the radio show, the record label; we’ve just done a play for BBC Radio 3. We do a lot of stuff like that, plus we were touring the last album. I think we came down your neck of the woods about five years ago. That show has developed and we only stopped touring it at the beginning of this year. At the moment we’re touring a show for the project we’re promoting at the

moment—let’s be honest—the *Zen* TV DVD compilation. In the last two weeks I’ve done Liverpool, Manchester, London, Glasgow, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Madrid, then Japan after that. So, we do a lot of that. If we’re touring Coldcut stuff we’re often touring just a general show and then I DJ all over the shop. I’ve done about 20 gigs this year already in different states and places. We’ve also been developing the software we use and making stuff and that takes a lot longer than picking up a guitar and thrashing out a tune.’

With their *Jazz Brakes* series Black and More were at the forefront of what was eventually termed ‘trip-hop’. Over the next few years they started building the Ninja Tune roster, early on releasing artists such as Steinski, London Funk Allstars and Funki Porcini and, more recently, artists as varied as The Cinematic Orchestra and Super Numeri.

In 1996 the duo had their now legendary Journey By DJ *70 Minutes Of Madness* mix released. It also saw the return to their use of the name Coldcut, having absolved themselves of a contract with Arista records. Coldcut’s commitment to DJing, mixes and

I suppose there’s a Zen-art to selling out successfully. Zen and the art of selling out! People do it all around you. I won’t name names – it would take too long!

compilations—as much as anything—has maintained their relevance, seeing them and their label outlast a number of short-lived genres they’ve regularly been associated with.

As much as they strive to break new ground, they’re fondness for music as a whole, like all good DJs and record collectors, has resulted in a number of releases and ideas that always sound fresh while other labels and artists have well and truly passed their used-by date. Equally, they’ve been confident and conscientious enough to say no to projects that may have brought fame or money as well as being careful not to repeat themselves. Recently Black and More compiled tacks for the funk/soul re-issue label Harmless. It was a welcome relief for the pair to do something where they weren’t responsible for the licensing.

‘We thought it would actually be a good idea if someone else did the licensing because it’s a lot of work. They were one of the first bunch that came to us and haven’t asked for a mix, because we get hundreds of people wanting us to repeat the Journey By DJs mix and we don’t really want to do that,’ More explains. ‘One day when things are right we might do another album like that. Our attitude is we do something like that on a regular basis with Solid Steel anyway. So [the Harmless compilation] was a really good opportunity to find some really great records that we liked that had an influence on us. There were still loads of records that we couldn’t get hold of, that we really wanted to have on there so, as with all things it depends on who you can get permission from; there’s always a compromise. It’s not 100% my ideal compilation because we couldn’t get all the material we wanted but it’s still good.’

Whilst never having faced any serious legal consequences from their sample-heavy sound, releases and artists, the issue of licensing is one More is all too familiar with. ‘You get situations where Queen object to you using one of their tracks which goes [beatboxes *We Will Rock You*], you know? If I was to do that on a record I’d have to put the publishing down for that. We wanted to use *We Will Rock You* on the Hexstatic mix but Queen wouldn’t

allow us permission to use the actual record, so we went ahead and just recorded it with a drummer. We did that and they said that was alright because it was a cover version but they still wanted 100% of the publishing. Even when I did vocalised [*We Will Rock You*] to you on the phone, it's instantly recognisable and they've stamped their identity on it. Those are some of the difficulties you do encounter when you're doing these mix albums. Some people object to you mixing their music with someone else's music because they don't necessarily see that as valid because they come from a different discipline.'

Indeed, Black and More's talent at re-contextualise the world of popular music and culture has long been the basis for the Coldcut aesthetic. This has seen them move on to the visual media and VJing which developed into their cut&paste audio-visuals—using Vjamm— which is put together in a similar way to their earlier remixes such Erik B & Rakim's *Paid In Full*. (incidentally, Rakim has been highly critical of the Ofra Haza sampling remix.)

At the same time, this has provided them with the opportunity to do remix work for the very cultural products they would normally throw in to their ironic musical critiques. Though, as More explains, it's not always something the pair are comfortable doing. 'We've turned down quite a lot of stuff along those lines basically because we haven't got the control that we required or the

checks and balances, as they say in politics. We turned down a remix for the Rolling Stones recently, they wouldn't let us do our own thing [laughs].

'They wanted us to fly to America and do it in their studio and use some special system that means that it can't be duplicated. Why don't they just put a bloody album of Rolling Stone acapellas out, get shitloads of amazing bootlegs, take the best, make a compilation CD and put it out? You don't have to pay anyone anything then. The bootleggers can't turn around and say 'hey, that's my bootleg!' when you've officially released it. They couldn't get that argument. So we turned it down because they wanted too much control over it. They had this idea of what they wanted us to produce but it wasn't the idea we had. And that's often what happens, people get this notion in their head and say this is what we want you to do and it doesn't necessarily marry with our version.'

For More and, it would seem, the whole Ninja Tune staff and roster, as much as it's about the music, there's also a strong commitment to politics, activism and a sense of integrity. Something Coldcut have been able to illustrate more articulately through VJing. Through this combination of media manipulation and tomfoolery Coldcut have met like-minded artists such as Emergency Broadcast Network, who pioneered cut&paste VJing. Whilst More respects EBN's work, he's wary of following a

similar path saying EBN's visual production on U2's *Zoo TV* tour somehow diluted their message and future output.

More is just as happy providing 'zentertainment' as he is confronting people with uncomfortable output and live shows. 'It's meant to do your head in and make people think a little,' he says of their live show. 'We're surrounded by these images all day every day, we're just constantly being bombarded by, people are trying to sell you shit the whole time. You're always being approached from every angle with some guy saying 'hey I'm wonderful, buy me. Why isn't your life like a soap?' Things like that. The idea, in a way, is taking that and regurgitating it and adding in stuff that they filter out and it can make it quite difficult to see.'

And while many contemporaries—such as EBN—have been prepared to take the big bucks, More isn't so quick to point the finger, 'Well I don't knock anybody for doing it. If you can do it and keep it going... I suppose there's a Zen-art to selling out successfully. Zen and the art of selling out! People do it all around you. I won't name names, it would take too long!'



See www.ninjatune.com for more info on Ninja Tune.



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4 TRACK MIND

Lali Puna

Interview with Valerie Trebeljahr
by Peter Hollo

'I want to believe in what somebody tells me or writes in a book so there has to be that connection'



Lali Puna is one of the best-loved electronic pop groups on the Morr Music label. Previous releases have gained them attention from some high-profile fans such as Colin Greenwood of Radiohead and Andy Weatherall, and their third album, *Faking the Books*, will only gain them more fans. Lali Puna began as a solo project for Valerie Trebeljahr.

'A year before Lali Puna started I played in an all-girl group [called LB Page],' Valerie says. 'It was a guitar band, quite a normal indie rock band.' Unfortunately getting the six girls together (including Steffi Böhm, who went on to form Ms. John Soda) proved complicated, and they split up. 'It was more a fun project because we were friends. In the end everybody had different ideas on where to go to.'

'I played classical piano as a child', remembers Valerie, 'but that was the first time I made music myself, and with my own songs and so on.'

After such indie rock beginnings, Lali Puna was markedly different. 'The idea of Lali Puna was really to sort of make what I understood as techno, but with a pop melody. So it was really designed as an electronic project in the beginning, it just sounded quite trashy because I recorded everything on 4-track. Over the years and with the other band members involvement, it developed more into a band, and it more into a song-oriented group.'

Markus Acher (of the Notwist, Tied & Tickled Trio etc) was the first additional member of Lali Puna. 'Yeah, he already played on the first 7"; it was just quite natural – he was there. I also asked Steffi from Ms John Soda too, and she played a melody on one track on the 7". At that time I asked people to just join in on the recordings, and it was later that it developed into a band. Also, it was just getting boring doing everything by myself.'

The trashy 4-track tape-recorded sound was quickly replaced by a computer, 'because it's much easier and it sounds better,' says Valerie. These days Markus and Valerie write the songs at home. 'We just do the very basic structures there; the chorus, the verse, and maybe the lyrics, but all the instrumentation and arrangement is done in the studio.'

'There used to be a big difference between Lali Puna in the studio and Lali Puna live. We used to re-arrange everything in quite new ways live, because it would be too difficult – we didn't have the computer in use like we have it now. The difference isn't so big any

more because we've included the live thought in the recording.'

The new album *Faking The Books* is much more of an indie guitar album – sounding surprisingly closer to old bandmate Steffi's Ms. John Soda than previous releases. And the drums, while often programmed, are much more rock-sounding too, due to the influence of playing live with the band.

'The thing is, when we started doing that album we knew it was the third one, and you had to make sort of a step. And we really wanted to do that. For me it's not that much indie rock – of course that's our background, I mean that's the music we heard, Sonic Youth, Pavement and Yo La Tengo, all those bands – but we really wanted to include the guitar and we wanted to include it in a way that had an energy, but that was also sort of electronic. It's not used in a "rock" attitude, like for example Nirvana. It's really used in a distant and electronic way; that's important for us, to still have that electronic background or influence also.'

'It's often programmed too. I mean the guitar is still the best instrument to transpose that energy kind of thing, but we really wanted an electronic background on it. A really big influence were bands like My Bloody Valentine.'

Lali Puna is just one of what seems to be a thriving community of bands from Germany (and elsewhere) that are working in that indie-meets-electronica area.

'Here – just in Munich or Weilheim – all these bands are related and have a similar background; but if you look at other bands that are making music in the same direction as us, there's a sort of community. For example, in Germany, bands like Tarwater or To Roccoco Rot also come from that song background, but they do music in a much more electronic way than we do it. Also maybe Dntel in the US; there are bands that are coming from electronic backgrounds and moving towards song, so it's also happening the other way round, and in the end you can't make a clear distinction any more.'

Lali Puna did a remix of Dntel on the Evan and Chan single in 2002, and a Dntel remix is in planning for a 12" later this year. Boom Bip has also remixed and been remixed by Lali Puna.

'I really like to work continuously with people – not to have this person on one record, and that person on the next... I really like to keep personal relationships with the people I work with. It's sort of a friendship over music, working together on songs.'

As for their remixes of other artists, 'It's mostly Markus and me when we're doing a remix. We very rarely do remixes, because it means taking the sound of somebody else and making something new out of it, so it takes us even longer to make than our own songs. You have to deal with the idea somebody else had, and then your idea of the song. Normally, you get the files from the person you're doing the remix for and you hear what they've done, and then you think of doing the opposite, or making a really big difference. Then you try to pull everything apart, and just go from the sounds to build up a new song from them.'

Apart from the other band members, who themselves feature in various other acts in the promiscuous Munich scene, Lali Puna has had some great collaborators. Many listeners first became aware of Lali Puna through the gorgeous Bomb the Bass collaboration Clearcut, which Valerie is characteristically laid-back about. 'He just asked us. We've got a distribution company in the UK called Baked Goods. He's friends with them and they just gave him the record – they probably give him many records – and he then asked us through if we wanted to do a song with him. It was quite funny because we didn't see each other, we just exchanged the files through the mail, and it was only months later – after the record came out – that I met him in Berlin.'

It's impossible to convey the delightful way of speaking that Valerie has in a written article; but listen to their songs, or read the lyrics on the website, and you get some idea of the strange evocativeness of English lyrics written by a European. Why does Valerie, who was born in Korea and brought up by German parents, write in English?

'I used to write lyrics in Portuguese too – because I lived in Portugal for a long time and can speak Portuguese – but it's really a long time since I lived there, and that's why I concentrated on English. Many people ask why we don't sing in German, and Notwist get that question too, but the thing is that each language is very different. You have to make totally different lyrics if you want to use the German language. Something would sound okay if you say it in English, and if you said the same thing in German it would sound totally stupid – and embarrassing maybe. The German bands I really admire all have that sort of an ironic approach to the lyrics, and I can't do it in that way... I never really tried; I always concentrated right from the start on English.'

'In Portugal, they just had mainly English TV, English movies, so the English language isn't that far away from me. For me, it was quite normal to use it, and I can't really say if it comes also from the music I hear. I don't notice if a band sings in French, or German or English. For example

Stereolab was a very important band for me, and she sings a lot in French. Maybe I'm just so used to hearing different languages that I don't really notice much that it's now French – now English.'

Stereolab comes up again when I ask Valerie about influences on her vocal style. I refer to a famous German chanteuse, but, 'I know that comparison to Nico and I don't really like it at all! I absolutely respect what Nico did on the recordings, but I don't see that connection. I really like vocals that are sung in quite a normal way, not so much big expression in it; I really like the singer of the Pastels, and also of course Laetitia Sadier from Stereolab, and the Cardigans' singer Nina Persson, and also the girl from Yo La Tengo.'

As to whether her lyrics are drawn from real life, well naturally they are. 'I mean it's not one-to-one exactly, but of course I think everybody does it in a way that – except maybe for country singers or something – that of course you tend to reflect what you have experienced. And I think that is the right way to do it. I don't like to read, for example, a book where somebody tells me a story that is totally far beyond him and his personality; I want to believe in what somebody tells me or writes in a book so there has to be that connection.'



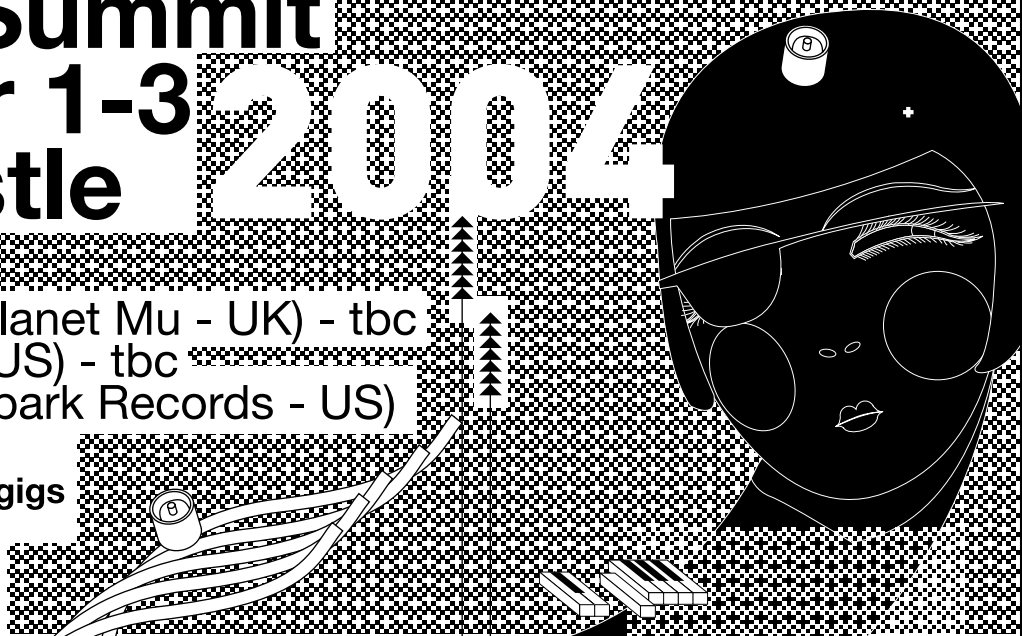
Lali Puna's album is out on Morr Music through Inertia

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OUT OF THEIR SHELLS

Tortoise/Jeff Parker
Interview with Jeff Parker
by Matt Levinson

Tortoise's Jeff Parker is exhausted, having arrived home at 4am following a four-hour drive from a gig in Bloomington, Indiana. The gig was with Josh Abrams' Aesop Quartet. The quartet consists of Parker, Abrams, former bass player in The Roots, with Cologne-based trumpet player Axel Dörner and saxophonist Guillermo Gregorio. He was back up at 8am to look after his two-year-old daughter Ruby. 'Woah...' he chuckles. Ruby makes sure she gets plenty of attention throughout the interview, chiming in with songs, shouts, and occasionally wrestling control of the phone from her father, piping in to ask for a turn.

Like his daughter, Parker knew what he wanted from a very young age. Immersed in the sounds played around his parents' house in Hampton, Virginia, Parker wanted to be a jazz musician. After a year's worth of piano lessons, he picked up the guitar at age nine and started learning basslines from Earth, Wind & Fire and Funkadelic songs on the radio. His parents eagerly signed him up for guitar lessons. After time in a handful of obscure high school bands playing 'generally modal music, rock and jazz... like Santana without the singing, and rock bands that played like ZZ Top and Led Zeppelin', he took off for the Berklee College of Music in Boston. After four years of study, he quit just before graduation, frustrated by the controlled learning environment and conservative approach to the music he loved.

Of course, studying is about learning the technique and theory of the music. But Parker thought the musicians at Berklee had a narrow perspective. It wasn't alive the way he'd experienced as a kid, and the musicians were more focused on honing their technical skills. 'I spent a really good part of my professional adult life in reaction to the conservative atmosphere. For years I wouldn't even really even identify myself as a jazz musician. Even though it was my background and I wanted to be a jazz musician from when I was a little kid, I mean now I'm fully admitted. But I made a conscious effort to disassociate myself with the jazz aesthetic just because I felt there were too many limitations imposed on that music. People don't buy jazz records anymore, they don't see the music, because so many musicians are so self-absorbed and the music is so intellectual on many levels.

The way that it is perceived by the public, as well as the way the musicians look at it, it's like this elitist thing. I don't think it should be like that.' This hierarchical approach that places jazz above other music is reminiscent of the one that used to put classical music above jazz.

'I hate to put it like this. But all the categories! Creative people are just going to reinvent the music. That's just what's going to happen and eventually it's just going to end up being called something else. Most people who think of jazz, or even rock, have a certain sound they expect and associate with it. Everyone in Tortoise, just because of our backgrounds, excluding mine, considers Tortoise a rock band because of the way we come up with songs. Even though we might sound different, essentially that's where it comes from. Because all those guys played in punk rock bands from when they were 16 years old. Even though they were checking out a lot of different stuff and had a really open conception of music, in the social realm, that's kind of what we identify with.'

After college Parker spent time playing improvised music with George Garzone (now an Associate Professor at Berklee) and Antonio Hart before moving to Chicago in 1991. 'I didn't move here because of any scene. I moved here to work and was planning on staying for a couple of years then moving to New York.' Despite this, Chicago proved fertile ground for Parker. 'I just kinda fell in with this crew of people... Chicago is a good place if you're trying to find your way because the local musicians, the local scene, is really supportive. Between the club owners, the audiences and the record labels here it just seemed like a really good place to work to really find your niche. And that's what I was looking for when I had just come out of college. I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, I just knew that I wanted to do something different, and fortunately I fell in with a group of people who saw things like I did.'

Parker's technique has been described as playing the guitar like a saxophone. Whether it's straight-ahead, fuzzed-out, abstract or mysteri-

ous, he always creates a beautifully toned, textured sound. 'I used to listen to a lot of saxophone and I spent a lot of time not necessarily trying to make the guitar not sound like a guitar, but more around the phrasing. I've always had a kind of linear approach to the instrument. I was always very concerned with the sound and the fullness of the tone. And when I was in college I liked a lot of guitar players but I was really into saxophone players such as Sonny Rawlins, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Lee Connit. So I would just approach the instrument more like that until I came up with a way that was comfortable and felt like it worked.' Since leaving Berklee, Parker has continued to refine the sound. 'I think it is a lot clearer now than it was 15 years ago,' he says.

Chicago is a cold working class city – the meat-packing and grain industries are big employers – and it doesn't jump out as a centre for wild musical ferment. But combining the legendary sixties jazz collective, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and the eighties indie boom that led to the formation of labels such as Touch and Go Records, it's produced a thriving music scene. By nurturing the free spirit of jazz, the city now sees the thrilling results of collaborations between avant-garde musicians, electronic producers and indie rock hacks. And outside of that there's so much else happening – house, hip hop, gospel, classical, hardcore and electronic.

There's no improvisation... the biggest thing is the way that we blend the instruments [and] look at the way the individual instruments function in the ensemble. I think that's what makes people compare Tortoise to jazz... But there's absolutely no improvisation in Tortoise's music. And that's the number one characteristic of jazz.

'When I first moved to town I did some gigs with a drummer named Larry Banks, and Ernest Dawkins, a saxophonist. We got to talking and Banks had some of the same ideas, and I think he liked the way that I played. He's a little older than I am, he had his own band that was pretty established in Chicago and he asked me to play with him. He's a very prominent member of the AACM in Chicago and I got affiliated with the organisation, met a lot of other musicians and started playing with them and collaborating. Cats like Fred Anderson.'

With Charlie Parker and Lester Young's influence on his guitar playing it must have been rewarding getting the chance to play with Anderson, who said

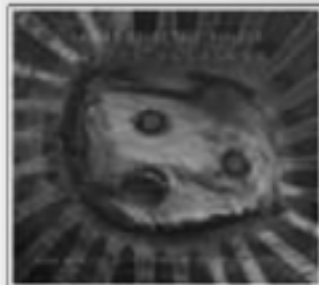
in a recent interview with www.jazzhouse.org that he'd seen both of them play. Described by *Jazz Times* magazine as 'the foremost underground avant-garde sax player today', Anderson was a critical player in the germination of the AACM back in the 60s. In the jazzhouse interview he explains his reasons for working with (Jeff) Parker by saying, 'he hears the music right away. I can play with him because he has such good ears and he picks up on it for a youngster.'

By the end of the '90s, Parker had established a reputation for involvement not only in Chicago's rich avant-garde music scene, but also for captivating performances and recordings with a swathe of indie rock musicians. He's now 37 years old and has played with several generations of jazz musicians including Roy Hargrove, Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Redman and Branford Marsalis, as well as Fred



FENNESZ - Venice Touch

The hotly anticipated new album by Viennese maverick Christian Fennesz is one bound to break him through to a wider audience. Experimental electronica, electro-acoustic soundscapes, harsh static and blissful melodies intertwine. Features special guest David Sylvian.



NURSE WITH WOUND Angry Electric Finger (Spitch'cock One)

World Serpent
The latest release from the UK's king of the experimental underground, Stephen Stapleton, aka: Nurse With Wound, sees him branching out ever further into the worlds of avant-pop and deconstructed noise. Features members of Coil and Sonic Youth.

Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise.

- Jacques Attali

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Anderson, Lin Halliday and Ken Vandermark. He's also worked with musicians from very different backgrounds. He began in the city playing hard bop and free jazz with cornettist Rob Mazurek and drummer Chad Taylor as the Chicago Underground Trio (which is sometimes extended to form the Chicago Underground Orchestra). Mazurek and Parker also played as the art-rock/jazz-funk outfit Isotope 217 alongside trombonist Sara P. Smith. He's played with bands like Ernest Dawkins' New Horizons Ensemble, Uptightly, Aesop Quartet and Tricolor, and released his first solo album, *Like Coping*, last year on the influential Delmark Records label.

'They're all just friends.' Parker commented on working with such a diverse range of musicians. 'I actually introduced Rob [Mazurek] to the more creative part, the more creative side of the Chicago music community – I mean he was a pretty straight-ahead jazz trumpet player when we started hanging out. I got him into free improvisation and eventually that led him to electronic music and such. It's inspiring to be in a community of musicians who have so many great original ideas and great voices on their individual instruments and such.' The extent of cross membership of bands makes the Chicago scene seem like an incestuous musical family tree. In some ways it's reminiscent of New York's underground in the '80s. Like the collaborative network around Branca, Laswell and Zorn, Chicago has had an amazingly prolific output of experimental and often brilliant records that, in reality, few people will ever hear.

It's probably his membership of post-rock outfit Tortoise that Parker's best known for. He joined Tortoise prior to the recording of their '98 album *TNT*, replacing bass player Dave Pajo (formerly of Slint and now Aerial M/Papa M). This cemented the lineup with John McEntire on percussion and keyboards, John Herndon on keyboards, vibraphone, percussion and programming, Dan Bitney on guitar, baritone saxophone, keyboards, vibraphone, marimba, bass and percussion, Doug McCombs on guitar, lap steel guitar and bass, with Parker on guitar, vibraphone, electric harpsichord, synthesizer, keyboards and drums.

Skirting the boundaries of rock, jazz and electronics, Tortoise make complex and melodic music that probably bears the closest resemblance to jazz than any other musical genre. Despite (or perhaps because of) his musical background, Parker categorically disagrees with Tortoise's music being described as jazz. 'There's no improvisation. I think the biggest thing is the way that we blend the instruments or the way that we look at the way the individual instruments function in the ensemble. I think that's what makes people compare Tortoise to jazz they've heard. But there's absolutely no

improvisation in Tortoise's music. And that's the number one characteristic of jazz.'

Since forming thirteen years ago the band has continually redefined their sound. They've just released a fifth full-length album, *It's All Around You*, while the band's members play and record with a bewildering array of other bands. Think the beautifully complex sound of the Sea and Cake, Bowie-style glam rockers Bobby Conn Band, Eleventh Dream Day, Gastr del Sol, Come, Sonic Youth, Him, Smog, Stereolab, Red Krayola, Tricolor and 5ive Style just to name a few. Suffice to say, they've had a profound impact on the indie rock scene.

After three years coming to grips with McEntire's new Soma studio, Tortoise released *Standards*. It was a step back from *TNT*'s computer-based production, and though it was dismissed by many as little more than a *Bitches Brew* outtake, it had a more organic feel than previous albums. '*Standards* wasn't a 'live' live album, but most of the performances were live,' comments Parker. 'Of course, there was a big process behind us getting to the point where we could play the songs with everyone at the same time.' *It's All Around You* combines the cut and paste aesthetic of earlier albums and the organic, musical elements of *Standards* to form possibly their most developed album to date. 'The process for recording the new record was actually a lot closer to *TNT*, we went with no material and made everything in the studio. John McEntire's getting these really distinctive tones [at Soma] and I think he was just discovering how to do that when we did *Standards*, it's a lot more refined now.'

Tortoise have long flirted with electronics, though it rarely does more than peek out from beneath the sparkling melodies and rhythms. But software and the technical aspect of production have been an extremely important compositional tool for the band. 'I don't know what we would do without it [Pro Tools],' Parker laughed. 'Tortoise is essentially a studio, and we're a studio band. I mean we love to play live, but this particular aggregate of Tortoise, we come up with everything in the studio, that's how we write all the songs, everything is based around us experimenting in that environment. So at least for me, it's hard to even imagine what our band would be like without the innovation of hard disc recording.' This was also part of the reason for the gap between *TNT* and *Standards*, as they spent a lot of time in the studio getting to know the software. 'Nobody was really using it when we did *TNT*, so we went in with totally cold feet and were learning as we went along.'

On earlier albums, Tortoise extended their electronic romance with remixes from producers like Oval, Coldcut, Autechre, Derrick Carter, Springheel Jack, UNKLE, Wagon Christ and Techno Animal. These days they are less interested in that sort of

collaboration, though Parker has been listening to a lot of hip hop. He worked with Chicago rapper Diverse on his excellent *One AM* album, and they're currently completing a new project together. He's particularly excited about the current wave of producers and MCs reworking the rich vein of jazz history. 'That Madvillain record is awesome. Oh man, I love Scott Herren, Prefuse 73, Madlib, MF Doom, Jaydee. It's refreshing to hear. One of my favourite times in music was early '90s hip hop – you know, Tribe Called Quest, where they were sampling old Blue Note records and stuff. It's really nice to hear it coming back, but in a completely different way.'

Like the Native Tongues, Tortoise have always searched the past for inspiration. But the LA Weekly summed up popular feeling in 2001, saying 'it's difficult to decide whether Tortoise are capable of creating their own riches or can only mine the past'. Whether it's Ennio Morricone's spaghetti westerns, Neu and Can's machine funk, the minimalist work of composer Steve Reich, or musicians like Lee Scratch Perry, Herbie Hancock, Dick Hyman and Jean Jacques Perrey, there's no doubt Tortoise have borrowed liberally from their heroes. Parker considers his words for a moment before saying 'I think whatever you're checking out at the time inevitably filters it's way into whatever you're creating. It's just a thing that's true for all art and artists. I can definitely listen to our past work and hear the influences a lot more clearly than when I listen to this new record. We're kind of coming into our own, really developing our own identity. That's apart from all of our influences, in my opinion, when I listen to the new album.'

At this point Parker's daughter Ruby has a tantrum, screaming and generally needing attention. 'I'm going to have to talk fast,' he said 'because my daughter's starting to get pissed off that I've been on the phone so long.' While juggling the phone and Ruby he quickly gives his take on file sharing (bad for artists/labels, especially mid-level acts like Tortoise, but also capable of encouraging artists to be more self-sufficient and concentrating ownership with artists instead of labels). And then he's gone. Whether you call it jazz or not, Parker has created a body of work that's unique and new, from a diverse range of influences and sources. His thirst to play and create with a dazzling range of musicians from different backgrounds marks him as an important player in modern music. Perhaps in the future, we'll see his name quoted alongside some of the names he mentioned such as Charlie Parker, Sonny Rawlins and Fred Anderson.



Tortoise's It's all Around You is out on Spunk/Inertia

FREE TO BE MP3: THE AESTHETICS OF MP3

by Vaughan Healy



You might have seen that scratchy footage of European explorers playing gramophones to Papua New Guinean highland tribes. They are pretty amazed, not having experienced the wonders of records or imperialism before. In that moment, an entire worldview changed radically and indelibly. And that moment still reverberates today, as some of the biggest record collectors in the modern world are the descendants of those once undiscovered, lost tribes.

Those explorers considered themselves pretty modern. Today, we too consider ourselves rather contemporary, especially those of us with iPods, but we should remember that modern awareness is a process and not a position. In fact, we are living through one of those quantum shifts in the way we understand music right now. After a shaky start, the MP3 is becoming accepted by the music industry as a legitimate music format and delivery medium, and this will prove to be the largest shift in our understanding of music since Edison rapped 'Mary had a little lamb' onto wax.

The radical evolution of the MP3 from outlaw to saviour is neatly summed up with the recent relaunch of Napster as an online music store. Its original incarnation in 1999 as the infamous peer-to-peer software allowed music lovers to freely swap music. Despite being bankrupted by litigation and shutdown in 2002, peer-to-peer sharing and the MP3 was established as a force for the music industry to grapple with. Jump forward to 2004, and the cultural cache of the Napster brand has been reformed

into a legal web-service selling music to the English and American market.

Napster is staking out territory in an already crowded arena dominated by the Apple iTunes service. When iTunes was launched in March 2003, downloading was largely unexplored as a form of legitimate distribution, as music publishers were reluctant to allow their music to be available on the internet. But Apple's achievement went beyond persuading the music industry to open their vaults; they also provided the public with remarkably fashionable little white devices to play their legally downloaded tracks on. The iTunes service and iPod player go hand in hand and have been a massive success: over 70 million MP3s were downloaded in iTunes first year, and iPods now outsell their computers.

The Apple business model relies on selling both the hardware and the music, but legitimate music downloading also offers new and novel commercial possibilities. A recent Pepsi campaign featured Beyoncé and Britney in an epic Gladiator-style tele-

vision commercial tied in with free music downloads from the iTunes service. Coke replied by stepping into the ring with mycokemusic.com. Dentists worldwide couldn't believe their luck.

These exercises in calorific cross-promotion and soft drink propaganda conceal the biggest winners in this early scramble for high visibility MP3 associations. Peter Gabriel's Real World label pushed world music into the western consciousness through the 1980s and 1990s, but his recent project is proving to be much more significant. His OD2 venture provides the structure and distribution framework for a number of European music services, including Microsoft's Music Club, HMV and Virgin in England, the French music chain FNAC, as well as MTV in Italy, Germany, Spain and Holland. OD2 looks after the publishing rights and downloads while the peripheral brands concentrate on identity and marketing.

Telecommunications companies are also taking note of what is happening in the music arena. Despite its small broadband market and poor infrastructure, Telstra is looking to legitimate MP3 e-tailing as a way of providing substance for its content-starved internet service provider Bigpond. If unreliable broadband or defective email access isn't enough of an incentive to sign up, the new bigpond-music.com site offers music downloads at a subsidised price for its customers, as well as the helpful reminder that 'not paying for music downloads and file-sharing is like stealing. And stealing is still ILLEGAL.' Got that kids?

The telecommunications interest is understandable. The public response to MP3s, the take-up of fast domestic internet services and the subsequent investment in bandwidth infrastructure are the litmus test for a delivery network that could conceivably provide other forms of media, for instance television or cinema. Software like Bittorrent already



Obscure .. the most comprehensive listing of NZ electronics .. nationwide events, clubs & people .. news and views from within New Zealand dance culture.

IPOD KRUMPING

BY VAUGHAN HEALEY

There is a whole industry of after-market accessories for Apple's iPod. You can splash out on a remote control unit, memory-card readers, digital cameras and of course, upgrade to special earphones. All in white, naturally. Of the more interesting paraphernalia is the iTrip – a tiny radio transmitter that is supposed to allow the listener to tune an FM radio into their iPod. Armed with what is effectively a pirate radio transmitter, fashionable iPod enthusiasts have devised a new variation on the classic pirate radio hijack: Pod-krumping, or Pod-jacking.

The scenario is straightforward: the iPod-armed vigilante enters a space broadcasting bad radio with nothing more than an expensive piece of designer fetish and spirit of mischief. Places like cafes, taxis or long-haul buses are perfect with their terrible MOR/FM-rock radio and captive audience. They find a position near the antenna and turn on, tune in and press play: the local supermarket is rocking to your very own playlist. Getting down with your personal Top 25. Who needs conspicuous white headphones when the background ambience is your own MP3s? Pod-jacking/krumping is proving to be so popular that a suspicious black market exists beside the iPod industry. A bit of hunting can unearth iTrip boosters, Bluetooth transponders, cigarette-packet-sized microwave links and miniature amplifiers – available pre-assembled or in kit form. Krumpers are jacking into datastreams all over the place and grooving everyone out with their selections.

I was lucky enough to be lent an iPod from the kind people at Apple for a couple of weeks and decided to try my hand at pod-krumping. Famously, Apple design their products for ease of use and luckily for us krumping is no exception. Since it's launch in 1999, the iPod has been a miracle of product placement and slick design. Other manufacturers of MP3 players can only drool at the iPod sales figures and cultural cache. There are swags of MP3 players out there, built into watches and phones or rolled into PDAs. Many, such as the iRiver HP-120, are technically better, with in-built recording features, sturdier design, and longer battery life. The iPod itself will soon become an anachronism: not only with competition from Apple's very own Mini-iPod, but through the necessary turnover of volatile technology – 40GB in a device the size of a deck of cards might sound impressive now, but machines of the future will eat 40GB for breakfast. Even the first generation of iPods looks old fashioned with its antiquated push buttons. However, for the wealthy and fashion conscious saboteur in 2004, a pristine iPod is the only way to go.

After a couple of false starts, my first success was a greasy spoon cafe in Sydney's inner west. I took a position near the laminex counter and spied the coat-hanger doubling as an antenna for the radio blasting the hits of the 70s, 80s and 90s. The soundtrack was krumped in no time, moving from bland radio to a selection of 20th century serialism before you could say "atonal mayhem". A few eyebrows were raised, but unfortunately the staff were quick to change the radio and put a CD on instead. Deflated with the end of my short-lived radio prank, I sat back with a Turkish pide and played solitaire on my \$800 toy.

allows easier downloading for the huge files required for television shows. By employing a variation of typical peer-to-peer sharing, Bittorrent is a perfect way to download all those movies and television shows yet to be broadcast through traditional methods. As bandwidth improves, this will force a major rethink of television scheduling. Stations will no longer hold the keys to programming and the ad break that interrupts viewing every few minutes will be a thing of the past, as commercial material is further integrated into storylines and plots.

But while established media giants have the publishing rights to support the insatiable demand for content, cyberspace offers a level playing field where smaller websites can offer niche services. Although independent artist and label sites might not have the sugary endorsements of pop divas or funky white and chrome digital toys, inventive music makers are still able to exploit the enormous possibilities of file sharing. Backpack hip hop doyen DJ Dangermouse has guaranteed his place in pop music history with his now infamous *Grey Album*: bootlegged Jay Z's *Black Album* a capellas over beats jacked from the Beatles *White Album*. Ironically the *Grey Album* would have faded into obscurity if not for Dangermouse being served with a cease and desist order from EMI, who own the Beatles recordings. The interest of the press was piqued by the David and Goliath tussle, and the public was able to make their own mind up; the *Grey Album* was readily available as a download. From LA to Liverpool, listeners who had never given abstract hip hop a second thought were rocking to Dangermouse and his high-concept prank.

The paradigm shift in consumption and listening stretches to the very core of the music industry itself. Pressure is mounting for changes to be made to the composition of music charts. In 1999, the celebrated boss of Factory Records, Anthony Wilson, declared that 'in five years time we'll still be buying CDs but the UK singles chart will be 80 per cent composed of download statistics'. As yet, the UK pop charts don't reflect download statistics. However, the Official UK Charts Company is currently assessing 'the best time to include downloads into the main chart'. That time may be soon. While the public has long been sceptical of the mysterious music industry alchemy used to compile pop charts (a suspicion that was cynically exploited by reality-TV hit Popstars), download charts promise a less affected method of tracking what's hot and what's not. Indeed no established download service would be complete without its own top ten. Chart reform could even go further than tracking sales, with the popular internet service gracenote.com providing a chart of database hits that track individual songs being played in computer CD trays. Perhaps this could provide the next geek challenge: a total and complete pop music chart able to trace MP3 downloads, international file swaps, CD database hits, radio and television playlists, and so on. For an entrepreneurial computer nerd, these lines of code could be the path from the garage to the mansion. Just remember where you got the idea...

There is considerable inertia and pressure to maintain the status quo as entertainment industry giants struggle to keep up with new technology, but consumer demands are proving to be both voracious and infinitely creative. Just as business models have been adapted to accommodate MP3s as a legitimate format, a surprising new sector of the pop music economy has developed. Similar to the syncretism Apple used to establish its iPod and iTunes, mobile phones have created a huge demand for ringtones as pop music. As monophonic melodies evolved into polyphonic rings, the new gen-

eration of mobiles can play sophisticated realtones. Realtones, or mastertones or truetones depending on whom you ask, are sections of pop songs rendered down to catchy hooks and are the coolest ring in the playground. Amazingly, some estimates suggest that mobile phone ringtones now account for 10 per cent of the global music market, earning a whopping US\$3 billion.

The realtone phenomenon illuminates some of the deeper movements behind changes in music awareness. Music composers are engaged in a complicated feedback loop with culture, technology and the listening public. Advances in technology precede evolutions in uses and understandings of music itself, for both consumers and performers of music. In the same way, the shellac disc allowed accurate recordings of intricate performances in New Orleans to be played back to amazed jazz fans in Paris as well as amazed mountain clans in Papua New Guinea. The 45 single afforded teenagers with a medium to covet and exchange and rock n' roll was born. MP3s and the changes produced through digital distribution offer artists an entirely new relationship with the public and palette to create their art.

One of the most immediate changes for the MP3-ready music listener is the offer of an unprecedented choice of music. People have (almost) all music instantly available all the time. This allows listeners to be radically causal in their listening as tracks can be downloaded on a whim. Searches are ad hoc and haphazard, randomness and surprise is created with misspellings, typos and incorrectly labelled files. Listening becomes grazing, with the audiences' microscopic attention spans searching for musical hooks and repeated licks to maintain interest. Significantly, the unit of exchange is the song as opposed to the album, reducing the importance of the album as a staple of artistic intent. It could be argued that the current popularity of hook-based, song-based music such as r'n'b and hip hop is partly because of its ability to translate into catchy ringtones and for a downloaded song to be a complete unit in itself.

As a balance to this blithe and chaotic grazing, listeners are also allowed a deeper engagement with artists and ideas. Enthusiasts worldwide can tune into a movement that would otherwise be confined to a city, or perhaps collect and archive the complete works of their superstar of choice: from all the legal recordings to all the bootlegged concerts and everything in between.

These two contradictory tendencies generate conditions that demand music to be arbitered. As music is abstracted from context and removed from traditional modes of distribution, new forms will develop that direct taste and provide meaning. This is role conventionally filled by media like radio, television and magazines, but this economy of cool will necessarily develop in additional ways. One optimistic scenario is a record store renaissance where canny retailers will be able to trade on the kudos of recorded music and associated paraphernalia as a fetish item.

Perhaps most significantly, the move from atoms to bits places a renewed emphasis on live performance. A sympathetic legislative framework combined with supportive infrastructure would nurture new modes of performance and celebration, and the benefits of progressive thinking are obvious. Shows would be a corporeal experience, ideally with the economics of performance geared in favour of supporting artists of all scales, from megastars to the undiscovered bedroom producer.

Regardless of our political, economic and cultural climate, history dictates that the kids want to party. The new consciousnesses and aesthetic possibilities afforded by MP3s are only the latest manifestation of the most important function of music: that of social ritual. After all, we can't all be sitting behind computers downloading all day long.



Tortoise's It's all Around You is out on Spunk/Inertia

Information for Members and their Guests

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Purdy
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REVIEWS

LOCAL RELEASES

Ian Andrews
Ceremonial
(Fallt)

Fellow Australians Pimmon and Oren Ambarchi might currently be more familiar names within electronica circles, but, if there's any justice, that should change for Andrews with this exceptional outing. The Sydney-based composer brings decades of experience to the recording. Most notably in his guises Hypnoblob and Disco Stu, he immersed himself in techno and drum'n'bass during the '90s and recently drew attention for Radiohack, a foray into online minimal ambience. But *Ceremonial* is a peak suggest techno but it's too unusual to be delimited by that label. Its music oozes oceanic depth, yet it's hardly dub. There's no shortage of digital handiwork either but to name it glitch would be misleading. In short, Andrews' music bears traces of said genres but distills them all into a compellingly fresh hybrid that's mesmerizing. On most tracks, Andrews creates a looping base over which he drops

swirling, syncopated layers, although the repetitiveness of the strategy is camouflaged by the tracks' sonic contrasts: an incessant whirring pattern accompanied by clanks and rattles dominates 'Recursive Toupee,' for example, whereas bell patterns hypnotically pan back and forth in 'Libidinal Decay.' On the majestic 'Working The Whole,' machine noises and twitchy pinpricks grind out relentless chugging rhythms alongside industrial thrattle, abrasive surges, and garbled voice samples. Over its ten minutes, the track becomes increasingly dense and works up an incredible, propulsive steam until it turns progressively more vaporous, and seemingly evaporates at its end. While the labels are obviously dissimilar in some respects, it wouldn't be hard to visualize *Ceremonial* as a Chain Reaction release rather than a Fallt one. As if to dispel any doubt, crowd noises and exotic clatter surface through the haze of the eleven-minute closer 'Jaffa' which clearly references Vladislav Delay's equally immersive 'Multila' and 'Entain'. Certainly, *Ceremonial* exudes the deep, dubby qualities associated with the Berlin label but, more importantly, it's a work of mesmerizing originality that sublimely reconfigures, if not transcends, genre stereotypes. **Ron Schepper**

Tony Buck & Axel Dörner
Durch Und Durch
(Tes/Vitamin)

Whilst Buck is more renowned as the drummer of the sublime improvisational trio The Necks, he has also forged a simultaneous career as an improviser of note. Dörner, who incidentally lives in the same apartment block as Buck in Berlin, is also widely regarded throughout Europe for his improvisational work and pioneering techniques on trumpet. A couple of years ago the duo began playing together and *Durch Und Durch* is their first release on Buck's own Tes records. Dörner creates a warm atmospheric wash by simply allowing the air to pass through his instrument and then manipulates the results via laptop, whilst Buck tinkers and thuds along, allowing the duo to progress through fragile minimal moments, to bizarre electronic buzzes or increase in volume and density into dull roars of electrics. In fact some of the music is either so dense or unexpected that in the tradition of some of the more interesting electroacoustic performances, at times it becomes difficult to determine who exactly is doing what – which is always a sure sign that things are really cooking. The duo appear to utilise a similar technique to The Necks, allowing ideas to simmer, develop or gradually fall away until the piece has altered dramatically from where it was only minutes before. Whilst the sounds are strange, the

interplay between the two is absolutely exhilarating, not due to their ability to adapt at split seconds, rather due to the fact that much of *Durch Und Durch* feels so tightly connected that it could easily have come from the mind of one person. There are little or no jazz elements in this work, it is pure experimental improvisation owing more to the world of sound art than jazz or rock. There's even a couple of moments of pure silence, that when broken serve to reorientate the piece. An incredible, challenging, document. **Bob Baker Fish**

Celsius

Kickin it to Hell and Back
(Croockneck)

Following hip hop in Australia is like watching a whole civilisation in its adolescent years, as it struggles to establish a legitimate government, a system of law and an infrastructure. Though hip hop in Australia has a rich and illustrious history, it is only in the past few years that it has gained wider recognition. Celcius, and in particular Serreck, have been around for a lot longer than many of their contemporaries, and it's fitting that they have delivered the first pubescent, cynical middle finger statement (albeit with a wry smile), to all and sundry – partly in indignance at other's successes, but also mindful of the fact that as hip hop's popularity grows, so does the ability to make a living. With the 'Hoods on Nova and The Herd raising Stan Zemanek's ire, the time is ripe for a slap in the face of complacency – an album that is so real to the roots of hip hop that it doesn't even sound like a hip hop album. Relying more heavily on 808 and synths than on samples and loops, it's an album like a finally restored vintage car – finely crafted glassy synthlines work in harmony with shiny chrome beats, albeit powered by an engine of vitriolic rhymes. Devoid of pretence, Serreck's abrasive frown defines him as one of the elder statesmen of oz hip hop. Brass's sidewinder flow is far more contemporary – taking inspiration from Anticon's Dose One as much as anyone else, and Sinus strides a middle ground (though he's perhaps the most ascerbic of the three). It shouldn't work – it's akin to KRS-One hooking up for a collabo with Busdriver and Sage Francis – but it does, and despite the anger and the swelling temple veins there's plenty to laugh at as well. Hardly anyone escapes unscathed – the industry, fellow artists and headz in general – but it's such a gloriously unprejudiced broadside (they seem to hate everyone equally) that it is compellingly entertaining. And 'Straight Outta...' will go down as one of the all time great moments in oz hip hop – a nod to a classic NWA moment combined with a local re-rendering ('I'm radical, white and ready to kill, and I'm coming fresh, straight outta Wentworthville') over a perfect bluesy Sandro beat – it's pure gold. **DH**

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LOCAL RELEASES continued

City City City

Dawn And The Blue Light District
(Sensory Projects)

Melbourne's Steve Phillips has made a name for himself as editor of the *Sadness* in the *Sky* zine, and much of that publication's power lies in the compilation CDs they frequently come with. So it's only natural that the label he started up in the last year or two is going to be an excellent source of interesting new music. City City City are a seven-piece from Melbourne who would probably be best described as post-rock. This album was first released on their own Big Leg Records before being picked up by Sensory Projects. It's a heady mix of genres, from '70s spy-movie-soundtracks to krautrock beats, Slint-like guitars and occasional electronics. Minimalist ostinati in guitar and rhythm section can be offset by a jaunty horn line seemingly in a completely different key... Long expansive passages can change mid-song – and some of these tracks are quite epic in length! Krautrockers Can are without doubt are a definite reference point in these tracks, but then short interludes will point in a totally different direction – now more contemporary jazz, now driving post-punk rock. In amongst this are some truly memorable riffs and grooves, making this a highly accomplished debut more than equalling output on labels such as Constellation, Kranky or Thrill Jockey. **Peter Hollo**

Epa

Black Ice
(Dorobo)

Whilst no stranger to creating dark, dense, difficult and evocative soundscapes this is Darrin Verhagen's first foray into the noise genre. And the first of a trilogy that will also include an ambient record and a minimal electro acoustic piece. But he begins with noise. Whilst it's an album filled with difficult, tearing sounds stretched and tortured well beyond the comfort level - initially it's all about the assault, yet repeated listens reveal a searing darkness as Verhagen twists and manipulates his sounds, favouring relentless whooshes of wind and searing bursts of static. What further elevates it above simply a series of harsh sounds are the extraordinary use of dynamics, dip slightly and then kick it up a notch. Verhagen's use of structure, not just restricting himself to repetitive bursts of chaos, ensure that he's striving for more than just the pain, and perhaps more unexpectedly, more than just the trance. Not only does this elicit the emotional response of beauty borne from pain, the complexity of the assaults is strangely refreshing. Call me a masochist, but as I sit through the various works I can hear train whistles, machine guns and even faint chorals in with cartilage, though perhaps I'm just hearing things. And that's the other strange aspect of this collection of sonic aggression, your ears become so brutalized that they begin to play tricks upon you. Whilst the sounds are extreme so too are the rewards. **Bob Baker Fish**

Good Buddha

Futurhistrich
(Independent/MGM)

Journeymen of the still blossoming Australian hip hop scene, Good Buddha have existed in various forms for almost a decade. Like the scene around them, they have evolved from raw beginnings, in this case the instrumental funk of their youth, to a level of sophistication that both belies their beginnings and acknowledges their dedication to the previously thankless task of making hip hop in Australia. Despite taking the anachronistic path of their oz rock forebears in developing songs on the road and playing them night after night until they were right, Good Buddha have produced an album in *Futurhistrich* that in some ways fails to live up to their exciting and tight live show. The hooks are all still there in their abundance, the songs are obviously unchanged, and the lyrical interplay between the staccato prose of Alex Young and the somewhat laconic AND shines through – but somehow some of the glossy excitement and ing process. What remains is comparatively sterile, and lacks the goopy mid range glue of their last release, *Skillathon*. That said – as a document taken *sans* live context it is sparkingly solid, with an almost uncanny separation of sounds courtesy of engineer extraordinaire Bob Scott, and this, more than anything else, marks it as 'album most likely' to cross over to mainstream success. Whether that parlay turns out beneficial remains to be seen – perhaps us doubters will be silenced by a live album at some stage? **DH**

Jolz

Down Pressure
(Down Pressure)

Producer driven albums are still a rarity in Australia – no doubt a factor in the disparity of recognition between lyricists and beat makers in this country. Starting with the rather lack lustre instrumental 'Just Doin It', *Down Pressure* then traverses a number of territories with great aplomb and in a manner that hints at, but never suffers from, the obviously modest manner that it was produced. Somehow Jolz manages to bring forth the best in his collaborators, especially the rappers. Solomon shines in the melancholy head nod of 'From Within'; Hau from Koolism rides a digi dancehall rhythm like a sweet voiced cherub; the self-examining Muphin exposes his inner workings yet again in 'They' – but is serviced with a contrasting, yet perfect, uptempo beat that screams mid 90s brit soul; and the UK's finest Task Force bookend the mini-posse 'Truth and Rights'-sampling 'Forward' like a manifest destiny. Despite being pressed locally on single vinyl (a recipe for the feedback monster that was Hunter & Dazastah's release) the tracks are separated with superb attention to detail in the lower end, and as such they shine through the gain knob crustiness that could have been their destiny. Incidentally, the CD comes with instrumental cuts – hopefully an instrumental version on wax will also ensue. **DH**

Koolism

Part 3: Random Thoughts
(Invada/Inertia)

When Canberra's Koolism first hooked up in the early 90s, Aussie hip hop was all about American accents and dodgy DJing. Countless shows, a couple of 12" and an album later, the duo of Hau and have hooked up with Katalyst's Invada label for the long awaited second album, *Part 3*. And they've crafted a unique sound. It touches on electro, hip hop, Miami bass, reggae, jungle and breaks, with soul and funk mixed into Polynesian rhythms. Nasty sub-bass tears into squelchy synthesized basslines, while bells and scratches ride above all and despite the various flavours, its hip hop that's bursting with funk and originality. Hau comments in the liner notes that he's 'never afraid to open up on a track'. It's true. He flips words around all sorts of emotions, with throw your hands in the air party tracks, intimidating battle rhymes and reflective observations. He can just as easily swing between cutting politically observations and sexy and breathless suggestions. His cheeky lyrics show a depth that's rare in Australian hip hop vocalists. The production and rhymes are killer, but the best thing about *Part 3* is just how much fun it is. It sounds like a band messing around and having fun in the studio, and the fact that it's come through on the record is just as exciting as the wildly original music and lyrics. **Matt Levinson**

Mark N

Under Sufferance
(Epileptik)

Mark N mixes Volume 7 in an ongoing mix CD series from French hardcore label Epileptik. *Under Sufferance* is 20 tracks of unconventional extreme breakbeats and brutal grooves, deftly assembled with turntable skill. The Novacastrian noise merchant has always enjoyed a much higher profile overseas, and this CD was recorded during Mark's 2003 tour of the Middle East and former Soviet republics. In a gesture of goodwill, Mark was asked to provide some entertainment for the troops and citizens of occupied Iraq, performing at a number of hotspots and flash-points across the freshly liberated country. Mark's selection, cutting and mixing is, as usual, superb. Peppered throughout the mix are a few turntablist embellishments but the real highlight is the smooth mixing: individual tracks are left from their start to their finish letting the overall mix breathe. The selection is from the more radical side of electronic music, artists like Doormouse and Noize Creator as well as a few tracks from Bloody Fist protégés: Syndicate, Fraughman and his own drum & bass pseudonym, Overcast. Surprisingly though, the overall effect from these tracks is not skull-numbing - tracks are assembled and the tempo manipulated to accentuate not the harsh metallic textures, but the abstract and progressive qualities of the music. I have no doubt that the Iraqi prisoners and brave warriors from the US military enjoyed the mix as much as I do. **Vaughan Healey**

Rosy Parlane

Iris (Touch/Creative Vibes)
While New Zealander Parlane has released solo work on Sigma Editions, he may be better known to Touch listeners for Live, a collaboration with Fennesz released on the Australian label Synaesthesia. Iris itself is three immersive, drone-like soundscapes totalling 50 minutes whose organs, pianos, and guitars are digitally transformed into glacial masses. 'Part 1' unfolds slowly as a mournful organ tone acts as a nucleus around which soft crackle constellates. Six minutes in, prickly showers emerge and build in intensity until they obliterate all other sounds save the dying drone of the organ. It's not an abrasive sound, however, but simply a textural one that gradually turns into a softly subsiding wave of percolating pinpricks. The piece entropically drifts down with the crackle eventually disappearing, leaving soft organ tones and insect hums to end it meditatively. 'Part 2' is the least interesting piece of the three for being most monochromatic. It opens with a shimmering organ drone, clouds of static, and creaking shuffles until the textures drop out at the six-minute mark leaving for six more minutes now unaccompanied, to continue for six more minutes before being overtaken by a sound expanse including noises that skitter and grind. The loudest piece is also the shortest, the twelve-minute 'Part 3'. In this case, a sombre opening of organ tones is buried gradually by blurry waves that abruptly stop, allowing the organ to surface again before ceding the spotlight to thrumming showers that close it out. In many respects, Iris is a quintessential Touch recording. Its packaging includes the label's signature style of evocative landscape photography, in this case wintry scenery, and its creator brings to the project experimental credentials that put him in good stead with his fellow Touch artists. In truth, Iris hardly represents Touch at its peak (see Fennesz and Jock for instance) – it's wholly less engaging and memorable work than much of the recent Touch output. **Ron Schepper**

Anthony Pateras Mutant Theatre (Tzadik)

Eclectic local composer Anthony Pateras manages to effectively straddle the divide between austere academia and the energy of both performing and improvising live. The pieces on *Mutant Theatre* are separated into five distinct parts, all of which are representative of a particular aspect of Pateras' restless musical mind. It begins with 'Transmutations', a percussion sextet that continues to explore Pateras' interest in divided into five tracks, vary from booming spasms of percussion to an odd cacophony of squeaks, shuffling, and even a weird rumbling that initially appears to have more to do with electronics than percussion, before a shrill piece and what sounds like a piece of timber being hit with a sledgehammer. Much of *Mutant Theatre*, though fascinating, is moody and uncomfortable as well as ingrained with a sense of the absurd; utilising dominos, balloons, and mousetraps. These cuts are challenging to say the least, almost relentless in their energy as the occasional accenting beats punch through the music like uppercuts. Whilst he also engages in solo piano on 'Inevitable Plasma', and demonstrates his incredible, almost textural, piano style, and teams up with Robin Fox for a piano, voice and

electronics piece entitled 'Meshanitsa', perhaps one of the most effective, rewarding and different works is 'Twitch'. An amplified quintet consisting of contrabass recorder, percussion, trombone/conch, viola and Fox's live laptop processing, participants splut, squeak, spasm and twitch through a series of short gestures, in what almost sounds like a musical pass of the parcel. It's only after repeated listens that some vague semblance of understanding comes from this live real time jump cutting, and even then you're inclined to wonder about him, particularly given that it ends with a violin getting torn apart. An odd yet brilliant work. **Bob Baker Fish**

Pateras, Baxter & Brown Ataxia (Synaesthesia)

It's sparse yet feels like you're wading through clutter, through odd bits and pieces, and strange fragments of sound making junk as acoustic instruments rattle, pick, boom and twang and successfully coagulate into one overriding force. It's a unique alternate universe of rustling and unsettled twitching that's surprisingly patient, surprisingly restrained, surprisingly silent in parts, and one that when the Tourette's induced torrent of bluster appears, manages to avoid making any violent scenes and gently evaporates into minimalist territory. Part experimental sound design and wholly improvised, *Ataxia*, which is the medical term to describe complete loss of muscular coordination, lacks any discernable grooves or melodies and is the documentation of the meeting of three local sound artists. With Anthony Pateras on a piano prepared with bolts and coins beautifully documented on the cover, and the Buckettrider, Lazy and Western Grey duo of David Brown on prepared guitar and Sean Baxter on percussion, *Ataxia* highlights some of the more abstract and restrained work of these renowned improvisers. The trio coordinate an amazing array of sounds and textures, much of which are impossible to discern which participant created it. Launching through six tracks, the trio utilise a number of different techniques, yet repeatedly arrive at a similar minimal, almost silent location, which allows the individual sounds an additional emphasis or resonance. Whilst for some its stop start nature might be a little confronting, others may find a certain freeform rhythm. When things do get going, and the textures become denser and the sounds more flowing, such as hexadactyly, it really does become crazy, almost overwhelming, feeling like the sounds are all travelling together in the same furious flood, rattling, rubbing, banging against each other, causing a chemical reaction that will send both them and the listener ricocheting off into strange new sonic worlds. **Bob Baker Fish**

Pretty Boy Crossover Always Buildings, Always Cities (Sensory Projects)

Always Buildings, Always Cities (Sensory Projects)
Pretty Boy Crossover are Cailan Burns and Jason Sweeney. This latest release is on the Melbourne based Sensory Projects label and documents their early work on 8-track. These works were collections scattered on many old tapes and minidisks made at the same time as tracks from the first Surgery LP *The Building and Formation*. There are apparent linkages between this first album and *Always Buildings*, *Always Cities* not only in terms of titling, but more so the urban atmosphere conjured throughout both. A reflection on the time when both artists lived in

different cities, the travel between the two, and the everyday challenges of living in both Adelaide and Melbourne. Though a bustling feel is consistent throughout both releases, *Always Buildings*, *Always Cities* delivers a darker representation of those times. Pulsing stabs, distorted panic across a constant static - awash with dreamy confusion. Shifting between the gently layered ambience of suburb illustration to the murky dub of decks, the album is able to tap into a range of different moods. Effectively an album of reworkings that weren't right in the context of the initial release, the shivery sounds throughout left me with a resounding feeling of winter, and the contemplative mood that is brought on by the sun being lower in the sky. **Dan Collins**

Purdy Fairytale Insurance (Soft/Inertia)

Fairytale Insurance is the second album from Sydney based artist Kevin Purdy, who happens to be a key member of Sydney's Tooth. Following on from 2002's *Kevolution*, Purdy himself plays the majority of the instruments, though he's joined by Fourplay's Peter Hollo (cello), and Prop's Kym Moyes (vibes). On 'The Roof Of The World' bounces its way along nodding appreciatively toward Stereolab, but then says its goodbyes to its sexy and quirky krautrock chords that and opts for smooth sweeping guitar chords that introduce a nifty chorus. More power to Krautrock aesthetics and strong choruses! The wonderfully cinematic 'The Secret Smile In The Camel Girl's Eyes' plods along lasciviously as if taken from a cowboy movie-slow groove-dream sequence, complete with 'outlaws just murdered my wife and child and henceforth my only reason for living is sweet bloody revenge ..' breakdown. '3 Friends To The Stars' immediately reminds of the movie *Midnight Cowboy*'s melancholy guitar motif, and then gets all burly with submerged synths and vibes, revealing the extent of Purdy's marvellous cinematic grip on sound production. 'The Grip' moves toward more spooky territory, but still allows the luxury of the most sought after groove we all know and love, the cop-chase groove. 'Another World, Any Colour' ever so slowly throbs into an eerily beautiful piece, its placement in the album perfectly bringing the pace down a notch to introduce the wonderfully brooding saunter of 'Harry's Day'. 'Happy Ending' is in fact not altogether happy, introducing the debut vocal contribution to the album (apart from miscellaneous and thoughtful use of speech samples), featuring the majestic lurking menace that is prevalent throughout all of *Fairytale Insurance*. This is an album that just seizes your attention, and does an outstanding job

LOCAL RELEASES continued

of holding it. Fairytale Insurance is brimming with simply lovely melodic colour and movement that has you humming to almost every track, and features a slew of perfectly cluttered tracks, with softly rounded percussion that just merges magically with all the other instrumental work. Essential.

Barry Handler

Realistix
Turf Wars
(Self-Released)

It's hard to remember an album this bitter and paranoid since Tricky's *Pre-Millennial Tension*. The result of plenty of red-eyed nights, it's redeemed by real insights and tough, raw production. Better known to his mum as Shane Wasley, Realistix has been on Sydney's hip-hop fringe for a while now. Starting out with Blue Mountains hip-hop crew Explanatory in the mid '90s, it's taken a while for him to get a solo release out. Along the way he's kept up a pretty constant stream of output – notably producing a 7 inch for Brass Knuckles of Celcius fame – but he hasn't been happy enough to release anything solo 'til now. The lyrical subject matter swings between bitterness at bands 'selling out' with their 'pop lyrics' and black observations about the life of a Marrickville gangster 'Pimpin' ain't easy with GST / All the paperwork just confuses a mack like me'. There are a handful of great guest MCs on the album – Ozi Batla and Urthboy turn in typically acerbic rhymes, check Batla on the promise of policy change from successive governments, 'I won't believe a word / 'til I see red, black and gold up a flag-pole'. Macross and 13th Son also contribute guest rhymes, and ex-Explanatory MC Disco Rosso delivers the hilarious 'I write it down / So I don't have to think about it.' Despite some well-executed vocals, it's the production that stands out here. Wasley's schooling in New York hip hop, old school funk and tough industrial Bloody Fist techno informs the sound. The tough distorted industrial or sparse electronic hip-hop beats. At times let down by the vocals, it's the interludes, intros and other instrumental tracks that show the potential talent on show here – see extended into a full project. *Turf Wars* isn't perfect. At 20 tracks it could do with some pruning. But Realistix conveys real, raw emotion. There's something really honest and engaging about this album and it's worth tracking down for that reason. **Matt Levinson**

The Rectifiers

Levy
(Sensory Projects)
Late last year, it seems Melbourne's Sensory Projects label-head Steve Phillips had somewhat of a revelation – a remix project between artists from different musical worlds

result – the *Levy* EP by The Rectifiers, featuring seven pieces, most recently responsible for a Melbourne mix of *The Resting Sky*, an album released last year to critical acclaim, with its atmospheric, subdued, cerebral sonics mixed with country roots. More than a remix, and closer to reinterpretation, the Symbiotic Collective set to work with samples, but without any knowledge of their origin or previous context. The result is something special, something unique, even – with a few tracks showing hardly a semblance of their previous selves. In a way that still manages to compliment the original, the Symbiotic Collective have managed to create some downbeat/instrumental hip-hop gems. Original track 'The Pull of the Restless Earth' by Beatrix. Other stand-outs for me included the dark and brooding 'Climate Control' by Pitch Bureau, and the 'Rusty Dawn Reprise' by Paso Bionic – in which the beat construction recalls the classic sounds of Portishead. Not to be outdone on their own disk, the Rectifiers chime in with a remix of the title track 'Levy' – a worthy inclusion in an otherwise quality EP. **Dan Collins**

Various Artists

Xing-Wu
(Xing-Wu/Synaesthesia)

Featuring live bands, avant electronica, field recordists, improvisers and minimalist composers, there are numerous reasons to be excited about this 2-disc compilation of some of the most innovative and original sound artists from across the world. Perhaps the most important reason is that this is the first release from the new Malaysian based Xing-Wu records, a label established to document local experimental works, five of which appear here alongside the worlds fore-most experimental performers. Another reason is that all of the tracks are exclusive to this release, including the likes of persistently weird Argentinean rockers Reynolds, no input mixing board sine manipulator Toshimaru Nakamura, Ambarchi, recent visitor and collaborator with Tony Buck, German trumpet and sound manipulator Axel Dörner and Japanese dobro player Tetuzi Akiyama, who coaxes difficult skull piercing pitches from his innocent looking instrument. Highlights include American Jeph Jerman's field recordings of birds gathering near his house, local improvisers Anthony Pateras and David Brown's (Buckettrider) sparse and tentative untitled cut which echoes some of their work with Sean Baxter on the recently released Ataxic disc, and the incredibly difficult pitches of Malaysian ensemble Zai De's Ni-Be. The reality is that the multitudes of sounds and approaches presented here ensure Xing-Wu a bright future in providing an important regional role in documenting the local scene and assisting it to remain connected to the all of the directions and developments from the other side of world. **Bob Baker**

Various Artists

Melatonin
(:Room40:)
Named after the brain chemical that is a main part of the brain's sleep process, and featuring tracks based around the idea of sound in sleep, *Melatonin* is a splendid compilation of

oddities. Packed in a metal box (similar to the Chain Reaction boxes) the range of contributors are international and local luminaries – a mix of sound artists and electronic musos. Disc one opens with a brutal telescopic sound recording from Chris Watson who reveals alien sound worlds up very close to common objects, insects and animals, apparently recorded in the Cairns rainforest one summer night. However after Watson's brash drone space with excellent spatial and hypnotic tracks from Stephen Vitello, Melbourne's Ai Yamamoto – her best work since Shoushi, Oren Ambarchi, DJ Olive – who reprises some material from his excellent Sleep CDR, DJ/Rupture's track 'Heart Murmur' is possibly the weakest on the first disc, sounding like a unhappy conflation of sound recording and a subdued version of his usual bombastic. The second CD is more musical and, strangely, vocal with contributions from John Chantler, Scanner, David Toop. Ralph Steinbrückel and Janek Scafeher offer the two standouts on the disc, whilst heart surgeon/avant-turntablist Martin Ng collaborates with improv guitar virtuoso Tetuzi Akiyama to create a strange crossbreed of guitar and high pitched tones. Locals Frost and Gail Priest offer two returns to the soundscapes of the first disc and Tim Koch follows his recent *Islandtones* album with more experimental ambient techno. An excellent compilation that for the most part holds together around its theme well, although not one to try to sleep to. **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

Aether 2
(Kieper)

Word has it that Perth is the most remote city in the world. But despite this, or possibly because of it, Perth has developed a solid electronic music scene. Its distance from the rest of Australia has meant that a lot of West Australian acts look immediately overseas rather than bother with the east coast. A sensible move that has paid dividends for Dave Miller (Background), Greg Packer (Looking Good), Pendulum (31 Records) and others. Greg Lawrence (Audiocephalon) runs Kieper Records and this is the label's second compilation release. *Aether 2* brings together a range of downbeat ambient electronic sounds from some of the emerging figures in the Perth scene. Standout tracks include 'Futuristic Dinosaur' by Ele-mental, a delightfully glitchy soundscape reminiscent of the work of Xela or Telefon Tel Aviv. The smooth jazz infused softness of 'Blue Eyes' by Kane and the eerie breakbeat uneasiness of 'Turn to Shiver' by Jaek are also notable. Complementing the electronic warmth felt throughout the compilation, a couple of dubbed out num-bers, 'Paying Tribute' by Manual Bonrod, and 'Departure Dub' by New Sirius Project are both rich in punchy synths, and laidback feel. Twelve tracks in all, providing everything from ambient noodling to breaky glitches and sombre vocals, and a rare insight to the goings on over the other side of oz. **Dan Collins**

**INTERNATIONAL
RELEASES**

!!!
Louden Up Now
(Warp/Inertia)
American 7 piece !!! cross neo-disco heavy punk funk
with a west coast sense of liquid psychedelia. There have
been some comparisons to the D.C. GoGo sound of Trouble
Funk and E.U. and it's a fair point to make: the ten tracks
these meandering jams through some interesting instrumen-
tal moments into fully formed tracks with a sense of urgent
groove. The big difference lies in the beat: !!! leave the gogo
shuffle well alone, instead each groove is pinned down with a
weighty 1 2 3 4 kickdrum and bassline ensemble. The absence
of syncopation or backbeat is notable on this record with a
rhythm is mapped out in even, regular strokes. The heavy
beats are a counterpoint to the wacky instrumental excursions:
songs breakdown into mutant guitar bridges, short latinesque
percussion breaks, tonal keyboard riffs, vocalist Nic Offer
wailing 'everybody thinks I'm fucking crazy or something...'
into melodic synth noodling. *Louden Up* is !!!s second album,
just in time to surf the no-wave revival. It's easy to understand
why attention is focused backwards to some of those obscure
1980s sounds: the rediscovery of live funk is a response to
aesthetic deadends and boring performances. The inventive
grooves on *Louden Up Now* are evidence of plenty of fresh
ground to be explored. **Vaughan Healey**

The Advantage

(5RC)

The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) was the sole benchmark of home entertainment in the eighties. The sole equivalent of the Commodore64 or the Sinclair Spectrum, its games were pixelated, clunky, simplistic, featured plinky yet memorable soundtracks using the saw, sine, square and triangle forms of audio waveforms, and it looked like a goddamn brick from video gaming hell. The Advantage are a four piece who have decided that these old NES soundtracks deserve more than just the dust of pawn shop shelves. Welcome then to a group of twenty-something white boys reliving their childhood soundtracks to rainy days, in the form of balls-out riff rock interpretations of their favourite NES game tunes. Included are the unmistakable melodies of games such as Marble Madness, Bubble Bobble, Bomberman, Contra, Super Mario, Zelda, and Ghosts 'n' Goblins. By pure coincidence, the complexity of themes such as Castlevania 3 and Goonies 2 (at least until it changes into the Cindy Lauper tune) results in a translation to the more conventional guitars, bass, and drums format with an unexpected math-rock twist. Alternatively Ninja Gaiden translates into bad electric guitar disco, with its octave jumping basslines and plinky leads. Mario 3 – Underworld (the definitive Mario melody) remains the infectious slab of zany melody that it forever shall be, to the hardcore retro gamer, this collection will mean a lot, to the uninitiated, the WTF factor will be to the point of bemusement, but ultimately it is just some grown up kids who refuse to believe that the NES is dead. **Barry**

Handler

Mitchell Akiyama
Is A Weed

Mitchell Akiyama
If Night Is A Weed And Day Grows Less
(Sub Rosa)

At thirty-five minutes, this qualifies more as a mini-album but, thankfully there is no shortage of satisfying music. The album grew out of four piano compositions that were deconstructed and reassembled, the result being eight pieces that contain distant echoes and vague refrains of others featuring Akiyama on silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra) on cello. Flames, The Piano Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra) and that's He lists 'manipulation' as his third instrument, and that's entirely apropos, given the liberal degree to which he smotherers the piano in DSP treatments throughout. Aside from the Steve Reich homage 'With Hope That,' the tracks gather into groupings of Fenneszian DSP or more conventional piano pieces. Coming after the two opening abstract excursions, the Reich tribute offers some effective contrast. Akiyama's repetitive piano lines and Foon's multi-layered cellos create a dense propulsive mass that approximates a blurred version of Reich's large group sound. Two pieces, 'A Lesser Path Growing' and 'Night Grows Less,' feature Akiyama's piano in relatively unadorned manner, save for some echoing tinkles, faint clatter, and a soft glow of reverb that shadows the piano playing. Both are pensive in mood, with the second an affecting, gentle coda that ends the recording. The remaining five tracks showcase Akiyama's command of DSP and his talent for creating richly textured soundscapes. In each case, piano sounds are submerged by Ovaleque flutter, stuttering clicks, and a blanket of static and thrum. The piano is virtually swallowed by the dense, rippling layers of grinding static, yet the piano emerges near the end in a manner resembling both a mandolin and dulcimer. It's an accomplished and distinguished recording in spite of its indebtedness to DSP precursors like Fennesz and Markus Popp. **Ron Schepper**

The Books

The Books
The Lemon of Pink
(Spunk/Inertia)

The second album from The Books – who thankfully are far more imaginative than their name – is a strange beast indeed. *The Lemon of Pink* is like an imaginary sequel to DJ Shadow's *Dark Days* soundtrack, except the grimy tumescence of the NYC subway and its shady denizens have been replaced by a sublime (or ridiculous) parade of hoary buck-toothed fiddlers, six-toed banjo pickin' Maybelles and shotgun totin' moonshiners riding pickup truck-chariots – all viewed through the chillingly dappled Appalachian sun-light. Juxtaposed to this litany of hickdom are a minutely-accented narrator, a muezzin's call to prayer and a minimalist chordal refrain – and all this in the first two minutes. Despite its sample-based origins, *The Lemon of Pink* manages to appear at once organic and refreshingly human – this is partly due to the proliferation of vocal samples (including distant shouts, narration, singing, found artifacts and processed sections of sound) but is arguably primarily due to the fact that it eschews the palpably seductive impulse to use drumbeats as a sonic canvas. Though syncopations inherent in tunes such as "Take Time" suggest possible drum patterns, they never appear. Though initially unsettling, this lends the album a uniquely airy and unfettered quality, and appears to allow the songs space to stretch and breathe. Though at times abstract and deceptively complex, the album and the tracks therein

unfold in an elegantly natural manner – as though the songs were already in existence and were just waiting to be uncovered in some sonic archeological dig. **DH**

Cee-lo Green

Cee-Lo Green
...is the Soul Machine
(Arista)

How Cee-Lo hasn't blown up all round the world is completely mystifying to me. A Dirty South longstayer who used to be part of Goodie Mob, Cee-Lo has also guested everywhere from Common to Santana. His voice is raw, beautiful soul with a hint of bassoon that is dynamite when whisked with his double-time and gospel-influenced rhyme patterns. Similar to his debut album *Cee-Lo Green and his Perfect Imperfections* the production contains roomy percussive arrangements, this time courtesy of the likes of Timberland, Neptunes and himself. But it's when his colourful harmonies get playful you realise you're really in Cee-Lo-land and the space given by each production piece fills out like a pregnant belly. His infectious optimism is really enjoyable to get caught up in – like Missy Elliott without the hype or 'old skool' marketing. Although the appearance of the Neptunes and Timberland seem an unnecessary addition brought in to turn a highly successful artist into a massive star. I could be wrong though. They might be good mates. One thing is certain – I can't imagine not liking Cee-Lo, he seems like a good fella. **Tim Levinson**

Chicago Underground Trio

Chicago
Slon
(Thrill Jockey/Inertia)
Having had an ambiguous relationship with 'jazz' over the past few years – in that it seems that nothing before my date of birth is worth listening to – I approached Slon with a degree of trepidation. Of course, having heard Rob Mazurek's unique timbre on many Chicago scene releases and the odd tootle on Pan American releases and the presence of Bundy K Brown's deft touch on the mixing board, I was prepared for my prejudice to be allayed. *Slon* hangs between appealing to a nicer, kinder time in history and an encapsulation of the lustful beckoning of technology and the war machine – the album jarringly moves from the perfect play between ride cymbal/double bass undertow of Taylor and Kupersmith and the uneasy trumpet of Mazurek to exercises in the outer edges of sonic play, where individual instrumentation is abstracted to near oblivion. It's as if they need to prove their jazz chops as well as appeal to the chin scratchers – and though this provides for an album that is diverse in scope, it seems to lack coherence and settles for merely navigating through sounds rather than

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES cont

scoping out new territories in both their 'jazz' and 'abstract' voices. Although this may seem harsh, one needs to remember that the genre that they appear to feel most comfortable in is at least thirty years past its prime, and despite the fact that they are far more interesting than the conservative noodling that currently passes for jazz, and retain the agit-prop attitude that their forebears had in abundance, it's still firmly grounded terrestrially – despite aspiring to the lofty heights of outer/inner space travel. **DH**

Claro Intelecto

Neurofibro
(Ai Records)

Neurofibro's short for Neurofibromatosis, a genetic disorder of the nerves which cause tumors to grow along various kinds of nerves and which can also affect the development of bone and skin tissues. Apparently Mark Stewart (Claro Intelecto) was accompanied throughout the recording of the album by the disease but, beyond the title, the album betrays no audible connection to the condition. As delectable as it is, Stewart's not blazing any new trails here and treads ground visited by others before him. Still, having registered 'Peace of Mind' opens the set strongly, with warm Rhodes chords joined by funky propulsive beats and atmospheric synth washes. Other highlights include the stumbling house rhythms on 'Percentages,' the chugging Kraftwerk machine beats on the electro-house-flavoured 'Mono,' and the dark symphonic techno of 'Section.' 'Contact' might be the best thing here, its insistent bass line establishing a hypnotic groove alongside flickering hi-hats and moody synth melodies. What ultimately compensates for the familiarity of the Claro Intelecto style is Stewart's ability to infuse each of the thirteen tracks with unique qualities. Such largesse has its downside, however. Most of the tracks weigh in at five or six minutes, and the album consequently becomes wearying. Imagine each track shortened slightly and the result would still be over fifty minutes, and subsequently more concise and fleet in spirit. **Ron Schepper**

Daedelus

Meanwhile
(Laboratory Instinct)

Despite the tag of 'instrumental hip-hop' (as in file under) being hard to lose – Daedelus keeps pushing the boundary lines of what is acceptable at the outer limits of beat-making. In fact, calling this hip-hop would be akin to calling John Coltrane's *Ascension* 'jazz'. Although the method is similar they are obviously very different beasts. Although *Meanwhile* it nevertheless goes far from the craggy boom bip shore in pursuit of deep oceanic depths. Like the brilliant architect/industrial designer of

Greek myth his productions are intricate mazes in which the unwary can perilously lose their way (or find themselves gored by a Minotaur). And though his flights of fancy are supremely elegant, they are also tragically fragile – like his namesake's son Icarus – sometimes they attempt to fly too high and come scudding to earth in a mess. Juxtapositions abound on *Meanwhile* – 'One Breath to Breathe' is an aquatic fairytale interrupted by an oil rig; 'The Brazillionaire' is a well dressed daytime television schmaltztonality being stalked and eventually bailed up in a dark alley by the knife-wielding proto jungle swagger of Aphex Twin struggling with ADHD and a rampant delay unit; 'A Stiff Drunk' like a piller up slosher, accompanied by the frenetic amen break of his never to be sated libido (brewer's droop never sounded so good); The Barry White-isms of 'Just For You' are again accompanied by snips and snaps of guitar, jungle breaks and scratches – they bristle with primal energy, bliss-fully unaware that Bazza White drolls on moistly. The crowning achievement however, is the clammy evocative 'Denouement' which starts as some lost french master's autumnal scene in oils and slowly transubstantiates into an actual dappled sun-lit glade. It's also packaged in a nifty digipak with gorgeous cover art. **DH**

DJ/Rupture & Mutamassik

DJ/Rupture & Mutamassik in
Bedouin Sessions
(Violent Turd)

Apparently made initially as two 30 minutes mixes for as a giveaway for series of shows in the United Arab Emirates, these date from 2004 (Rupture) and 2002 (Mutamassik). Both mixes draw extensively on Arabic music – Rupture's opens ominously with the Malcolm X sample from 1964 '22 million victims of Americanism are waking up' and then deftly cuts across hip-hop, dub, jungle and breakcore cutting TOK with Kelis with something that sounds like something from the Ambush label. It never settles into a particular sound – keeping it sounding fresh and exciting. Brooklyn-based Mutamassik opts for a more dub heavy approach but her mix continues mixing Algerian rai with North African music, Arabic beats whilst blending these with some excellent old school hip-hop and manic drum and bass. What continues to make these mixes interesting, as with Rupture's other releases, is their focus on building some kind of pan-Atlantic African liberatory and revolutionary sound. I'm not sure it's all successful and it's certainly a work in progress, but these mixes are drawing on more musical styles than your average world music store, and at the same time injecting an anger and vigour, a feeling of post-colonial resistance. This is not some world music to be consumed comfortably in your favourite café, but neither is it shaved head white boy noise music. **Sebastian Chan**

Andrew Duke

Just because you can doesn't mean you should
(Cognition Audioworks)

That rare thing, experimental sound art with a message – although it helps if you read what the message is before listening. In this case it's a comment on his local government's disregard for the preserva-

Rob Ellis

Music For The Home Vol. 2
(Leaf)

While the first volume emphasized computer-based compositions, volume two collects twenty-seven tracks, seventeen of them solo piano. Even though he's self-taught, Ellis's piano playing is accomplished and assured. The manic style of many compositions, however, more often induces admiration at the technical prowess required for their execution than it does appreciation for their emotional depths. In 'No. 2 The Rank Outsider Triumphs' ('Three Nature Studies For Three Pianos'), for example, one is entranced by its rapid-fire figures but more impressed by the ruminative mood conjured on 'No. 1 60 Francs' from the 'Four Pictures With Debussy' series. Not above injecting humour into his playing as well as his song titles. 'No. 2 Tom & Jerry & Claude' ('Four Pictures With Debussy') appropriately simulates the chaotic sound of mice scurrying up and down the keyboard. The non-piano works include excursions into minimalism, drones, and field recordings. 'Triminufakeinsymph' sounds like a mini-piano concerto performed with an electronic toy orchestra, and the marimbas and child-like harpsichords on 'If You Were The Only Girl In The World' and 'And I Was The Only Boy' maintain the playful mood. Clearly, *Music For The Home Vol. 2* is an idiosyncratic and challenging release. At almost eighty minutes, it's also long, although the closer, 'Music For The Home No. 9 - The Empty House,' is a superfluous nineteen-minute field recording that could have been omitted. Given its solo piano emphasis, it likely won't have the same broad appeal as does his work with PJ Harvey, nevertheless it's a work of rich stylistic range. **Ron Schepper**

tion of local heritage, it's crass vote-buying come election time, and it's neglect of the less fortunate in society such as the homeless and unemployed. Sound familiar? Small world. 'Paradise Paving' sounds like its beats are also created from construction – it's spattered with a synthesised pneumatic drill while a single note mournfully loops, reminiscent of a distant fog horn. For me this is the most successful musical evocation of the album's theme. There are some interesting sounds on here, and some lovely evolving textures – and that's where I should come clean. I can't help wishing he would do more with it, as it appears to be another in a long line of amorphous processed sound that bear little interest if subjected to repeated listens. If a few more of these sounds were formed into slightly more structured tracks like 'Paradise Paving' I could listen and enjoy more often. The album closes with 'Container Anxiety (version)' – there's a scratchy, speakerphone-like conversation at the end, where two men discuss the phenomenon of feeling the need to fill a CD with 78 minutes of sound just because you can. This nicely returns us to the theme of the album, but also begs the question – sure, you can process sound into abstract pieces of amorphousness, as many people do at the moment, but does that mean you should? I don't know the answer, by the way. **ollo**

Fennesz

Venice

(Touch/Creative Vibes)
Although he is working in the experimental reaches of electronics, Austrian laptop composer/guitarist/sound manipulator Christian Fennesz is so adept at conjuring up emotions that his sounds feel firmly entrenched, unable to be separated from memories, feelings and experiences. It appears that these worlds he created on his last outing *Endless Summer* have left an indelible effect, as *Venice* sees him operating with a similar form of nostalgia, though he is operating with more of a drone-based palette. It's almost impossible to draw out highlights, but the overwhelmingly ethereal treated guitar of 'Circassian' wavers between noise and new age, never really defining itself, a gorgeous wall of bombastic reverb that hints at the tones touched upon by Sigur Ros and the textures of Keiji Haino. *Venice* is Fennesz's most gentle and searching release thus far, the entire album imbued with a sense of space and patience that is sheer genius. There's also a couple of unexpected developments, firstly a breathtaking collaboration with David Sylvian, with Fennesz providing a shifting bed of static and overloaded digital material over which Sylvian croons, and 'Laguna' in which he strums some winsome electric guitar warm and untreated. Venice reinforces the fact that, with a few warm sweeps of droning static and decaying digitalia, Fennesz can say more than most artists will say in their entire career. **Bob Baker Fish**

Jason Forrest

The Unrelenting Songs of the 1979 Post Disco Crash
(Sonig)

Last year I saw Donna Summer (aka Jason Forrest) perform at the Wrong Festival in Barcelona. For some reason I keep get him confused with Knifehandchop who I met on the same trip – a scruffy kid in a Megadeth t-shirt. Both make mutant splattercore but Jason Forrest makes music that is big, loud, stupid but at best of times also witty and intelligent. How can this be? Well, Forrest ran one of the best college radio shows in the USA on WFMU, Advanced D&D which finished earlier this year, and on this show he developed a huge global fanbase. This full length album from Forrest who, perhaps for legal reasons, has dropped his Donna Summer moniker, plunders the vaults of Seventies rock – from the rubbish to the classic, the hair metal and glam to the very revered. Imagine if you will, a crack fuelled DJ Shadow let loose on the playlist of a 'best of the 70s' radio station. The best track, 'Satan Cries Again', is a lively mix of crashing drum solos, guitar riffs, a slight snapshot of The Cars, and loose jungle timing. And on 'Ten Amazing Years' The Who is mercilessly shredded and reworked. There are obvious nods to Z-Trip, Shadow, RJD2, Prefuse73 and Dangermouse's *Grey Album* but there is a truly irreverent streak that runs through everything on the album – too fast, too noisy. And unlike most of the bootlegs and mashups circulating this is more than just stupid fun, there's actually been time, care and concept at work. **Sebastian Chan**

Hinterlandt

Poprekordt
(Hinterlandt)

Initial reactions are along the lines of a wry smile as you think that if Jochen Gutsch aka Hinterlandt believes that he has made a pop record then he must be more than a little deluded. With three of the four pieces clocking in at over thirteen minutes it isn't exactly the format we've become accustomed to. The music, at a stretch, could be considered pop – a repetitive bass run, glitchy funky beats and some slow burning slide guitar. Though perhaps this is Gutsch's impression of pop, or better still prog pop, as the piece then slides into an extended dreamy heavily reverberated vocal part before returning to the initial bassline and funky electronica beats. A carefully produced album with multiple parts referencing everything from post-rock to minimal electronics and numerous posts in between, multi-instrumentalist yet bizarrely constructed series of suites, weirdly logical yet bizarrely constructed series of suites, that feels like it drags some of the more difficult and unusual techniques from the underground out into the open. It's almost abstract experimentation sprinkled with a pop spirit and deep love of groove and percussion, ensuring that everything is not just interesting and challenging but more importantly, enjoyable. **Bob Baker Fish**

Hinterlandt

Sitting Going Places
(Abflug)

Perhaps it's something to do with the lack of stimulating things to do whilst travelling, the lack of movement, or that weird half asleep weariness that international travel brings with it, but German artist Jochen Gutsch was intrigued enough by it to devote *Sitting Going Places* to the exploration of its unique environs. In Gutsch's hands the music is always moving, evolving through genres as diverse as ambient, electro pop, electronica, and more experimental sounds. He begins low key drifting, with 'Taiwan', a piece that opens with flecks of processed glitchy static and a warm drone before slowly evolving into a more upbeat pulsing electro cut, whilst simultaneously retaining that dreamy quality via some repetitive strings – it then descends into some noisy electro chaos before what sounds like a sample from a midday movie is introduced, before it slowly drifts into the next track. This kind of rest-and-cologne reference throughout the album. 'What's going on in the world today' repeated ad nauseum opens Oslo, a deathly dark storm, again evolves into upbeat electronica, and ends finally with some repetitive vocals, whilst Santiago and Cologne reference everything from avant garde sound design to ambient chill out music. Hinterlandt's command of multiple styles and techniques and ability to integrate them seamlessly, almost logically into his tunes – resulting in a strange form of prog-electronics that is nothing short of jaw dropping – especially when accompanied by grainy airport footage from Finnish artist Karri O. **Bob Baker Fish**

Holkham

Komatta Saru
(Expanding)

While the work of Holkham (Simon Keep) is littered with rhetoric of exploring sound for its 'scientific' qualities and applications, his presentations on Komatta Saru are not so much scientific as cinematic. Grabbing small melody fragments and meshing them together

with oddly looping electronic glitches and percussive cut ups, Keep creates a genuinely enjoyable and for the most part gentle ride through the outer rim of electronica. Tracks such as 'Bose Bose' feature probing synth parts that wash back over each other in waves of reverse processing, there's an undercurrent of distortion present here, a tension that adds a real appeal to this piece. These ideas of creating tension are repeated throughout the record – 'Tam' for instance has a soft yet piercing quality to it – like rubbing your finger on a blunt knife. There's often a sense of danger here, but there's no real chance of slicing open your skin; this inherent security meaning that at no point does this album lead to discomfort. At its best, this album has a swelling quality, a sense of purpose and direction that engages with the listener in a plethora of ways. At its weakest there are moments of predictability and familiarity but these seem to play against the darker element of the mix, rather than dominate the overall mood of the songs. **Lawrence English**

Icarus

I Tweet The Birdy Electric
(Leaf/Inertia)

In David Cronenberg's *The Fly*, scientist Seth Brundle is fused with a fly that accidentally goes along for the ride in a telepod and leaving him a grotesque mutant. Imagine now conventional instruments of late-20th century popular music making that same trip and likewise getting turned inside out by an accompanying circuit board or two. The sonic outcome might resemble the sound of Icarus, as the group exhumes instrumental artifacts of the 20th century and reanimates them for the 21st. Using the acoustic past as fodder for electronic manipulation while still retaining the audible presence of those acoustic instruments to provide a recognizable ground for the abstract result is a reasonably imaginative, but not entirely original approach, as Icarus is hardly the first group to merge acoustics and electronics. The album's a mish-mash of electronic bits and pieces that's all fury and commotion but lacks a conceptual core. Drum patterns rarely settle into a groove but flail spasmodically like jittery jellyfish, and electronic enhancements are added so excessively they become suffocating; 'Teabell,' for instance, would be an even more appealing reverie of resonant bells and chimes without the intrusive electronic effects. Icarus effectively morphs fluttering piano lines on 'Essen' into stuttering shadows yet again one imagines that the piece would breathe more easily minus the electronic clutter. In short, for all its rambunctious energy, *I Tweet The Birdy Electric* meanders along in an improvisatory haze rather than developing into satisfying, fully-formed compositions. **Ron Schepper**

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES cont

Lowfish

1000 Corrections per second
(Suction)

Lowfish (Gregory de Rocher) presents his third album, and all you need is to hear the first few bars of the first track, 'Glass House', to get a good idea of what's coming. And that's some well chunky retro-styled instrumental electro and electro pop, with a couple of more reflective moments towards the end. The early eighties are Lowfish's spiritual home: Vince Clarke effectively gets three nods (as himself, Depeche Mode and Yazoo) in the sleeve notes, and he is perhaps the most appropriate of the listed influences. Some vintage kit was used, but a couple of newer machines and the occasional contemporary production quirk place it in the now. Vocally it's free of the cheap sleaze or detached monotone that, currently, seem like the only style permitted. In fact the whispers on 'Air of Supremacy' and some vocodered counting are the only vocals on the album. The tracks have a lot of great (if familiar) ingredients, and overall the production is clean and punchy. It will sound hot as a bag of roasted scorpions on a club sound system, although in Australia that won't happen very often. But too often a track short by going into a holding pattern – or by going into a breakdown just as it's triggering the old foot-tap head-nod or knob whammy. There's not quite enough musical interest in double whammy. There's not quite enough musical interest in more playfulness and experimentation wouldn't go amiss. Perhaps either a song over the top (these sometimes sound like backing tracks crying out for a song) or less stop-start track structures would offer some wings – but 1000 Corrections per second is so close to being outstanding it's frustrating. **ollo**

Madvillain

Madvillainy

(Stones Throw/Creative Vibes)
Although the distance of time will certainly provide a greater objectivity – it seems we have a winner for album of the year – at least in the beat driven and lyrical camps. Although there has been no dearth of excellent beats and lyrics in '04, nothing has quite come close to perfection, in terms of a whole project, as Madvillain. With their collective prolificness it's as though MF Doom and Madlib have finally thrown enough shit against the wall to finally have something stick (despite more than adequate performances in the Viktor Vaughan and Jaylib releases). Madvillainy is simply a great album – and in the tradition of great albums it's not the songs as parts but the gestalt of the whole album that is particularly impressive. Though songs such as 'America's Most Blunted', with its insistent guitar lick, stumbling stonerphonic beat and ascend-

Rob Mazurek

Sweet And Vicious Like Frankenstein
(Mego/Synaesthesia)

One of the many denizens of the incestuous Chicago scene that revolved around Tortoise in the late nineties, cornet player Rob Mazurek is renowned for his post-rock jazz chops via his Chicago Underground ensembles, though increasingly in the last few years has acquiesced to the pull of electrics. Constructed from field recordings and various digital and analogue electronics, there is a certain vitality to the sounds, a certain diversity and a certain sense of structure, which suggests that although Mazurek has forsaken his cornet for the laptop and is operating within strange new soundscapes, lessons learned during those post-rock years are still inherent in his music. And this is the album's strength. Though it consists of two epic tracks, each dense tapestries of sound, with their own swells, peaks and dips, everything is carefully constructed together and free from abrasive squalls of feedback or digitalia. In this sense it's almost pop music for the electronic pioneer, much more accessible than say Jim O'Rourke's recent foray in laptop music on Mego. Mazurek seems to be interested in creating a series of moods, working with repetition yet moving restlessly from one soundscape to the next, before abruptly pulling the rug from under the feet to reveal another perfectly formed world. With elements of subtle ambience evolving into roaring drones, fluttering electrics and booming bass heavy rumblings, Mazurek is a master at manipulating volumes and density, unravelling *Sweet and Vicious*... in a strangely logical yet still entirely unexpected manner that unlike many laptop practitioners remains not just intellectually but emotionally engaging. **Bob Baker Fish**

Mr Projectile

Sinking
(Merck)

Matthew Arnold's third album rides in on a wave of approval from Funkstörung and it deserves the acclaim. *Sinking* floats between pillows of evolving ambience and stuttering digital percussion, before settling into bold, hip-hop hinted swaths of musical confidence. Laid back melody coexist happily with frantic drum programming on tracks like 'Resistance is Fertile' and 'Acting Right'. The produc-

tion is clever without being tricky as it moves through the insistent crunch of 'Slow Rewards' before reaching the title track – correctly billed as the stand out. 'Sinking' joins a vortex of delay and vocal looping with hip-chugging syncopation and seductive. 'The Inevitable Haunting' picks up the looping delays rather than the beats, and it feels like the natural thing to do. It wouldn't be too many steps from here to a form of digital psychedelia. Across the album, bittersweet chord sequences and delays build into melody and hold the attention. The beats sometimes threaten to stumble but always remain upright. *Sinking* is a well-paced album – nothing outstays its welcome and it flows like a dream as it gently walks those twitchy glitchy digi-beats over to a soothing corner and makes them listenable again. The only gripe I have is with it's slightly cold digital sound which could be the mastering, I don't know. But don't let that put you off because you'd be missing a treat. **ollo**

Laurent Pernice & Jacques Barbéri

Drosophiles and Doryphores
(rx:tx)

Pernice and Barbéri bring decades of wide-ranging experience to this collaborative foray into electro-jazz. They're both gifted instrumentalists: Pernice is tasteful throughout, resourceful yet unobtrusive, and, although he occasionally solos (as he handsomely does on 'Au bord du centre'), he often adopts a supporting role. Barbéri's no slouch either, equally adept at playing robustly or with restraint; the strangled, squeals on the opener, 'Au-delà du miroir,' for instance, showcase that more aggressive side. Like most sax players, traces of influences surface in his playing, and in this case it's Wayne Shorter; with his electronics-based arrangement and treated saxes, 'Entourloupe' evokes Shorter's fresh electro-jazz fusion here but it's only partially successful with the electronics a mere backdrop ('Réverie métallique') a distinct base that's not wholly integrated with the piano and sax playing ('Waterbed'). A more successful piece is 'Charybde et Scylla' whose fluttering multi-tracked saxes and brooding electronics evoke the futuristic style Paul Schütze conjured with 'Phantom City'. *Drosophiles and Doryphores* is, frankly, quaint when considered next to its peers such as Phantom City's *Site Anubis* or *Shiva Recoil (Live/Unlive)*. Perhaps overstretched in their roles as solo players and over-reliant on overdubbed rhythm backing, the album suffers from a consequent lack of spontaneity that arises naturally through a full band's interaction. **Ron Schepper**

Proem LiveMD (n5MD)

Richard Bailey (AKA Proem) opens with an expansive yet hypnotic looping ambience that invites mental images of the large dark spaces and flickering visuals that are most likely his live domain. This is in some ways a mix CD, but who cares when you get such a seamless and evocative dark landscape populated with elegant swirling mists of sound, enticingly fat with elegant swirling mists of sound, and sequencer lines that breakbeat clicks and kicks, and progression and movement, although it does sag a little in slither around your hips. It flows well, with well-timed the middle (don't we all? Ed) during the 13-minute 'Sleep is for Lunch', and it doesn't quite lift off again before it drops the pace for 'And Sweet I Mean'. Otherwise this is a very effective ad for the Proem live experience, and one that I would far rather have paid my precious dollars to see than certain Twin I saw not so long ago. Best played loud in the dark with enough space between your furniture to enable unhindered bodily gyration. Better still, get a friend to wave a torch at you at the same time. **ollo**

OOIOO

Kila Kila Kila
(Thrill Jockey/Inertia)

Despite recent projects, for many people Yoshimi P-we will be forever known for her long standing role in Japan's free-wheeling chaotic outfit The Boredoms. *Kila Kila Kila* is the fourth release from her side project OOIOO, an all female quartet. It's a step away from the ethereal pop ambience that characterised some of their earlier work, moving into some edgier, fractured structures. It begins with stark fragmental- tion; freeform organ work that echoes the transcendental improvisation of Alice Coltrane, though Yoshimi's vocal utterances push proceedings in a markedly different, more playful direction. There is still something very spiritual occurring, however, and unlike Coltrane, music isn't the vehicle for worship, it's the actual source. Complementing this religious fervour are some amazing Eastern percussive works that come across like water dripping in a temple over which Yoshimi and her band mates chant and wail, such as the epic sweeps of 'Sizuku Ring Neng', in which the peace is shattered by some repetitive guitar riffing and pounding drums. Like many of the cuts on *Kila Kila Kila*, 'Sizuku Ring Neng' appears composed in numerous sections tenuously, almost innocently secured together, making emotional rather than intellectual sense. There's elements of post rock, the trance psychedelia that the Boredoms have experimented with in the past, disturbed folk, strange pop, odd experimental, even elements of jazz, all tied together with a bizarre epic and ecstatic compositional structure and Yoshimi's amazing and distinctive vocals. **Bob Baker Fish**

Erlend Øye

DJ Kicks
(K7/Creative Vibes)

Voice behind Kings Of Convenience, Erlend Øye returns vocals to the role of a DJ. The DJ Kicks series has been through peaks and troughs over the years and this mix is one of the best yet, revealing and revelling in the parallels between shimmering Kompakt pop-techno and 80s synth pop. Øye sings a capellas as varied as The Smiths' 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'

to Opus III's 'It's a Fine Day', Pet Shop Boys' 'Always On My Mind' and Shocking Blue's 'Venus' (yes, the same one Banarama did a cover of). These are overlaid across tracks from Øye's own tracks (with Kings Of Convenience and solo), Jürgen Paape, Royksopp, Morgan Geist, Villalobos, The Rapture, and from New York, the Peaches' clones Avenue D who do their 'version' of Too Drunk To Fuck. Its very overtly pop – all rubbery basslines, soft melodic synths, rounded blips and bubbles, with the a capellas delivered in a deadpan New Romantic fashion. Indeed, 'It's A Fine Day' never sounded so good. For those of us who grew up on synth pop, this is a fun summer mix, bright and silly. **Sebastian Chan**

Savath & Savalas

Apropa't
(Warp/Inertia)

The notion that 'place' plays a part in the production of a commodity is antithetical to free market global economics. Gladly, Savath & Savalas have yet to dip their lid in the direction of anonymous spaces and 'music as product' (despite, rather ironically, producing an album of tracks that would sit well on any of the Café Del Mar comps). Apropa't fairly glistens with the magic of Barcelona – the modernista architecture, the winding thousand year old streets, the still simmer of summer – like the boozy garlic sweat of too much cerveza and the angelically tonsilled Herren and his new conspirator, the angelically tonsilled Catalan native Eva Puyuelo, literally ooze the character of their surroundings. More a collection of variations on a theme of pretty indolence than an overt stable of tunes, Apropa't's great virtues are in its denial of easy categorisation and its seemingly timeless quality – with a nod to the Tropicalismo movement and a wink in the direction of Herren's other project Prefuse 73 it manages to sound at once contemporary and of another time. The breathy lushness of the vocals ebb and flow like gentle waves lapping on a river bank of lazy arpeggios, with plucked guitar, subdued piano and subtle percussion the slowly bobbing boat tethered to the shore. Very rarely the boat strains at its moorings, as in the vague Lennon-McCartneyisms of 'Um Girassol Da Cor De Seu Cabelo', but even then it's merely a gentle tug (as at heartstrings) rather than any real attempt at breaking away from the picturesque framing of the river bank. **DH**

Throbbing Gristle

Mutant TG
(NovaMute)

Despite the odd surfacing re-interpretation, Mutant TG is Throbbing Gristle's first ever album length remix release. The final choice of remixers and the fact that the record has been released on NovaMute, with CD and vinyl versions offering different track listings (emphasis on home listening and dancefloor respectively), points to the considerable commercial concerns that have gone into this release. Some of the tracks have lost nearly all the menace of the original (the Motor remix of 'Persuasion' is aurally accomplished, but still comes across as a bit tastefully toothless) and some contain only small traces of the song covered (Two Lone Swordsman's disappointingly uninspired 'United' picks up from the above-mentioned Sabres remix, gaining more stomp (and a re-recorded vocal?) and losing more of the melody). It's synth pop pearl 'Hot On The Heels Of Love' that stands out here as it did 26 years ago. It

appears here in three different versions – clearly a universal favourite. Carl Craig's 'epic' nine-minute re-version starts out simply re-ordering and looping parts of the original, but once minimal repetition has led to a trance-like distraction, he adds his own elements, turning this pop song into a club track. Simon Ratcliffe (from Basement Jaxx – crapes!) crafts a breathtaking, dripping, breezy, pulsating, shimmering mirage of a rendition and TG members Carter Tutti add 'United' into their throbbing filtered house version. Does this release live up to the hype? That depends entirely on the expectation of the listener. After several repeats, I find it quite successful overall as an enjoyably eclectic collection of contemporary electronica tracks. It is, however, not an essential TG release. I await their new material with trepidation. **ollo**

Tortoise

It's All Around You
(Thrill Jockey/Spunk)

The nature of the post rock beast is slow change, if any – witness recent releases from giants of the genre Mogwai and Godspeed You! Black Emperor, who've redefined their sonic template just enough to prolong long term audience interest. Yet the third, Tortoise have had no revered prong of the post rock, Tortoise have had no truck with sweeping old ideas from their Chicago studio and starting again, from the retro/futurist *Moogified Standards*, the techy TNT and rolling, elemental guitarisms of their landmark *Millions Now Living...* and their debut *s/t*. This newie is another thing again, a wide-screen soundtrack perfect for an as yet unwritten film by maybe Werner Herzog. Cassevettes or Godard. When viewed live, the great power of the act was their wilful destruction and able re-creation of songcraft; the band made you feel they could rewrite the universe if they had the urge. Working with less electronic elements, *It's All Around You* is essentially a live-sounding record, best described as heavy, both sonically and in a hippy sense. Be it the direct stomp of 'Salt the Skies' and the tribally percussive 'Dot/ Eyes', or the extraordinary loving beauty of both 'The Lithium Stills' and 'Crest', the former offering vocals on a Tortoise track for the first time since the *s/t* LP, what's on offer are tightly reigned and expertly played journeys into instrumental space and further, although 'On the Chin', veers too close to the jazzy muzak realm they've hitherto avoided. *It's All Around You* is a document that demonstrates that this significant act remain on the artistic make, and though it's not essential, it's highly satisfying. **Glen Martin**

INTERNATIONAL RELEASES cont

Trapist

Ballroom

(Thrill Jockey/Inertia)

It begins sparse jazz improvisation, the strum of acoustic guitar, and reverberating silence, before being joined by the rustle of percussion and a feeling of endless space, an evocative form of stasis that bleeds into an electronic drone. The fusion of electronics and jazz improv has the potential to be a perilous pursuit however Vienna based trio Brandlmayr, Siewert and Williamson manage to create a fully integrated sound that never seems to confirm to any kind traditional forms of improv techniques or approaches, and this is what makes *Ballroom* so interesting. This no safety net freeform approach works beautifully on the opener 'Time Axis Manipulation (Part 1)', providing twelve minutes plus of drifting textures and unexpected progressions. 'Part 2; meanwhile is a much more traditionally structured, almost funky groove with oscillating electrics and smooth synth lines. At times it recalls the searing work of fellow fusionists the Kammerflimer Kollektief, with it's locked in grooves and introduction of bursts of dense static, before evolving into rumbling textures that eventually increase in volume and density and are locked in with a steady beat that makes it feel like the music is literally scorching off the compact disc. With a freeform instrumental approach in which each instrument (including the electrics) play differing roles at different instances, it's abstract - yet with enough hooks to get the pulse racing. **Bob Baker Fish**

Various Artists

On Paper

(Cronica)

On Paper is perhaps the most strange, uncommercial, unfathomable and difficult releases around. Yet I say that with a strange sense of awe. The concept of mixing and remixing the sounds of paper being ripped, those great big thick, almost cardboard gig posters you see around town, or you would if you lived in Berlin, is unmistakably weird. Stranger still is that this is a double disc set filled with numerous souls who have lined up for the challenge. And there's even some known names such as Sebastian Meissner (Random Inc/Autopsies) and Ran Slavin who team up under the name b.Z. ToneR for a couple of incredibly minimal and tense electronic pieces flirting in that quiet and gentle way with dangerous frequencies that in the wrong hands could be potentially head splitting, yet in theirs are almost pop. There's also German artist Stephan Mathieu, a master at dragging out the unseen/unheard frequencies trapped beneath the recordings. Mathieu's contribution surprisingly is a spooky drone, half feedback, half organ, a dreamy narcotic that seems to have little to do with the paper preamble, which

only leads to more confusion. Many of the tracks feature much scratching, banging crashing and yes of course ripping, but little in the way of melody, rhythm, or repetition, in short there are very few handles. Yet it's in these strange bleak environments where the unexpected can grow, such as 'Paperwork', which commences in abstraction yet develops a soothing electric ambience that is simultaneously painful and calming, before erupting into a strange mechanical drone. Again what this has to do with paper is totally beyond me, yet given this disc boasts some of the strangest music I've encountered I'm willing to sit tight and forgive any thematic inconsistencies. **Bob Baker Fish**

Various Artists

Hiiro

(Saag/Couchblip)

IDM has been in crisis for a while, suffering from a directionless-ness that has come from a plateau-ing of technology, the stagnation point for a musical style whose lifespan was artificially extended by the spread of digital signal processing (DSP), soft synths, and glitch. *Hiiro* is a very plain looking compilation of fractured IDM from Japanese label Saag and in these days of general over stock and over supply of electronic music I'm surprised to see such a plain cover. Inside there is a solid representation of some of the Japanese scene as well as ring-ins from elsewhere - Octopus Inc, Kettel and Ghislain Poirier. Full of those icy mid-90s IDM synths and fractured static beats reminiscent of some of the early releases on Schematic, Hiiro suffers at times from its derivativeness. The standouts are all Japanese - Taisuke Matsuo's pure Schematic-style splinters and delicate melodic flecks; Yuzokako's pure sci-fi synth and tone pulses; Purusha & Urkama's skipping gloom; Akar's crumpled lumbering beat and crumbling industrial glitch. **Sebastian Chan**

Various Artists

Beanbag Aesthetics

(Pink Music)

The idea of the beanbag is appealing, but the reality is something else entirely. While the concept of a piece of furniture which moves to the whims of your body appears on the surface to be a good idea, extended beanbag use usually leads to back problems not to mention just getting comfortable in the thing. Which leads us to the Gold Coast beanbag sound. In reaction to lounge music and aimed at people who can't afford lounges - *Beanbag Aesthetics* gives the listener an insight into the sample heavy genre. Over two discs samples are butchered, hacked and melded together at a lightening pace - sometimes in rhythmic fashion and at other times all sense of rhythm is abandoned. Artists such as Gold Coast, Bliss Bongs and slako & Bushmoker! create soundscapes that take in raw noise, punk rock rackets, hip hop, bizarre exotic, erratic samples, world music snippets and tinny electro. It's not easy listening, but most probably wasn't designed to be. Much like a beanbag requires a great deal of manoeuvring to achieve any comfort, *Beanbag Aesthetics* requires a great deal of patience... Perhaps they should have tried for the divan sound? (see also sleeve review in issue 7) **Tim Colman**

Various Artists

Haunted Weather

(Staubgold)

It's hard to imagine that electricity hasn't been with us for centuries. As we grapple to come to terms with our humanness in a digital age, David Toop shines a light over this vast area, illuminating this sometimes spiky landscape and offers us a soundtrack in *Haunted Weather*. Featuring an immersive and disparate array of artists, *Haunted Weather* echoes the many sounds, movements and audio theories that have shaped sound production in recent years. Collecting together the looped abstract sonic clips from Oval and juxtaposing them against the wonderful acoustic phenomena captured by artists such as Toshiya Tsunoda and Alvin Lucier (whose recordings of Ionosphere radio emissions are simply astounding), *Haunted Weather* provokes contemplation rather than offering resolution. Like the snippet included from Janet Cardiff's 'sound walk' (The Missing Voice) around Brick Lane (available for use from the White Chapel library - a personal recommendation!) we're introduced to a way of experiencing the sound world around us and asked to explore what lies in this realm. From this exploration comes a chain reaction of imagination that's increasingly rare in a world where consideration and reflective thought is erased by transsexual reality TV, cheap video gag programs and lifeless soaps. The accompanying book by Toop should be out locally very soon. **Lawrence English**

Various Artists

Station

(Ai Records)

Building a reputation as a label unafraid to release music from unknown producers, this release is Ai's third compilation to date and presents 16 tracks from 13 different producers. The music traverses a range of styles from the metallic quirky dancefloor of 214's 'From the Outside' to the bewitching melodies of Sofalofa - one of the stand out contributors. Sinner DC's track 'Alice' takes me back to the days of Warp's Artificial Intelligence compilation (a strange co-incidence I am sure) while Iceland's Traject presents a dark and intricately programmed piece which sets the mood for the latter half of the CD - melancholic, moody and contemplative. Other highlights include the beautiful instrumental 'Fairly Tall Tails' by Inotamori - a track mildly reminiscent of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells. Though Station didn't immediately grab me, it rewards further attention, with yet more hidden details revealed upon each listen. There's a good assortment of music on offer and it has a certain unique quality that can only be appreciated when engaging with it in a focussed manner. **Melinda Taylor**

Vast Aire

Look Mum...No Hands
(Chocolate Industries)

After the explosive Cannibal Ox album a few years back, and repeated guest spots, comes the much anticipated solo album from Vast Aire. Blessed with a stalled, jolting flow reminiscent of blunted spoken word (though not spoken word at all), Vast controls the mic without raising volume. Thankfully *Look Mum...* is a departure from some of Vast's uninspiring cameos, with all tracks here displaying solid rhymes, humour ('you want world peace, world peace is where the titties at'), and some fresh as fuck production courtesy of Madlib, RJ, Camu Tao & Da Beatminers. The authority Vast commands arises out of his composure and the rhythmic space in his delivery, which also demands he gets every phrase right. This is perhaps why when he lacks in imagination, the result can't be hidden underneath a barrage of syllables and his flaws are exposed. That's not the case here though, and his ability to balance between the viciousness of '9 Lashes', where he eats up Eso and Celph-Titled, and the softer sentiments of 'Could You Be?' where he adlibs 'tell someone you love em, that's real', is indicative of the skills possessed by the man. Ain't nothing wrong with creative dissing, I'd prefer it any day over simple battle shit so often employed among weak angry MCs. Vast is slowly taking his rightful place near the throne. **Tim Levinson**

Venetian Snares

Horse and Goat
(Sublight/Couchclip)

Any discussion of this mini-album must first mention Trevor Brown's artwork, which apparently inspired the Venetian Snares' two Hymen albums *Doll Doll* and *Find Candace* (reviewed in *Cyclic Defrost* issue #4). Under a special safe-for-shops insert is a mostly-pink scene involving a half-naked pre-pubescent girl tied up among what can only be described as 'sex toys'. *Horse and Goat*, on fledgling Canadian label Sublight, finds Aaron Funk at his most experimental (emphasis on 'mental') and least 'funky'. The seemingly-random bleeps and blurps do coalesce on repeated listens, most successfully on 'Weinerpeg Mannertoeba' (a reference to Sublight's hometown), which is a demented Venetian Snares classic. Other tracks seem like gratuitous filler, with lack of melody and weird time signature leaving little sonic friction, so it all slips by without making an impression. And although I'm no great fan of the guy, 'Richard Devine A+ student' seems a bit of a snide title for a throwaway bit of ambient randomness. **Peter Hollo**

Yesterday's New Quintet

Stevie

(Stones Throw/Creative Vibes)

The 'jazz' project of the prolific sonic auteur and loop digging obsessive Madlib, Yesterday's New Quintet relegates the cos-mic slop loops and head knot lyrics of his typical production work to a minor role in favour of live playing – albeit with this, uniquely out in-ness that defines his work. In line with this, YNQ consists of musicians who are themselves, in a sense, samples – in that their names are truncated from real jazz players – Ahmad Miller on vibes is a nod to pianist Ahmad Jamal and bassist Marcus Miller. The irony being that for the most part all the parts are played by

Madlib himself – a fact hinted at by the drummer's handle; Otis Jackson Jr (which of course is the name Madlib's momma calls him). This intricate web of deceit is secondary to the music itself, but serves to illustrate Madlib's brilliantly slapdash attitude – one which transforms an album of Stevie Wonder standards into a series of fractured musical fairytales. 'Superstition' is rebirthed as a loping obesity, 'Golden Lady' an elegantly flawed charcoal sketch and 'Visions' as Musak for a parallel universe in which greenbacks are replaced by green buds. In all its half-arsed glory YNQ's lazy beat driven jazz is a tonic for ears grown tired of the twin fascisms of quantized time and the precise noodling of instrumentalists. **DH**

Dennis Young

Old Dog, New Tricks
(Day & Nite)

There's a tendency in pop music to think short term. And under this thinking it is difficult to conceive that Dennis Young could still be making music. Drummer/percussionist for the seminal late 70s/early 80s New York punk-funk band Liquid Liquid, who were part of the whole No-Wave scene back then alongside Glenn Branca, ESG, Bush Tetras, Dennis Young and Liquid Liquid are both still, clearly, making music. Indeed, on this latest album, Liquid Liquid singer Sal Principato guests on several tracks along with the guitar of David Axelrod, both riding Young's super funky percussion - Latin and African polyrhythms at the fore. Of course, punk funk is back in vogue – the initial signs of a revival came a few years ago first with MoWax reissuing Liquid Liquid's self-titled mini album featuring the famous 'Cavern', the track whose bassline was sampled for White Lines and subsequently bankrupted both the 99 label and Sugarhill. Young's solo release then is well timed and for the most part keeps pace with these young pretenders, although most of the punk urgency is gone, replaced by a quite lovely languid groove. Apparently there's a new Liquid Liquid album in the wings as well. **Sebastian Chan**

Zinc & Friction

Bingo Sessions Volume I
(Bingo)

With what looks like a new mix series for the Bingo Beats label, are two of the drum'n'bass scene's biggest DJs – old hand Zinc and new recruit Friction – mixing up 47 tracks over two CDs, with extra vocals from Dynamite MC, MC Eksman and MC SP. Zinc's mix uses space efficiently to create a cold, metallic junglist funk. It harks back to the pivotal moment when hardcore exploded and rave and jungle were brothers. Now of course, rave is a pretty cheesy affair, all lowest common denominator hard house, but Zinc's selections bring back the energy rush of that period, with improved production and technical skills. Unfortunately, self-aggrandizing interjections from Dynamite MC are like a slow leak in a balloon, gradually deflating the tension of Zinc's selections. At least he doesn't dominate the entire mix and MC Eksman almost makes up for his colleague's failings. New boy DJ Friction drops a more straightforward drum'n'bass selection on the second CD. Widely recognized as one of the most best new drum'n'bass DJs, he's won a handful of awards and recently mixed a cover CD for Knowledge mag. Highlights are Zinc's own 'Coco' (now renamed 'Drive By Car') and 'Stepping Stones'. There's a great new version of Jo's classic 'R-Type' and Friction

kicks off his mix with the massive 'Odyssey' by Drumsound & Bassline Smith. Bingo has always pushed its own take on drum'n'bass, and though they've messed around with garage and breaks sounds in the past, *Bingo Sessions Volume 1* is a strictly junglist affair. All styles are covered with dark and nasty, chopped up and soulful stuff, through to classic jump up. 80% of the tracks are previously unreleased, so new tracks from Roni Size, Shimon, Fierce, Calibre, Sonic & Silver, Trinity and Loxy are bound to get hearts racing. **Matt Levinson**

Zu and Spaceways Inc

Radian
(Atavistic)

A savage burst of muscular, machismo jazz, this collaboration between legendary Chicago trio Spaceways and Italian ensemble Zu, manages to be violent and aggressive without necessarily being abrasive. Split into two distinct parts, the initial four cuts are played as a quartet by Zu with the addition of the Spaceways reed player Ken Vandermark, explosively combining hard funk with free jazz on some original Zu cuts. The bass is heavy as hell, a pounding apocalyptic rumbling as Vandermark and Mai's baritone sax tussle for supremacy, the tunes often escaping into seemingly freeform screech fests before they triumphantly kick into a doom ridden groove. The remaining four cuts are a true collaboration, a sextet of both Zu and Spaceways providing strong-arm interpretations of Funkadelic, Sun Ra and Art Ensemble of Chicago tunes. Funkadelic's 'Trash A-Go-Go' in particular is really quite amazingly constructed. Whilst the bowel rattling funk is probably an expectation for this outfit, opening with a funky assed drum solo is absolutely inspiring, and by the time the bass kicks in you've got your hands in the air and are positively cheering. This is contrasted with quite gentle moments of subtle discordance, where the sax seems to be coming from miles in the distance – a display of restraint and unique interpretative skills to offset the otherwise powerful listen. **Bob Baker Fish**

SLEEVE REVIEWS

Sleeve Design by Alex Crowfoot

Right: Dangerous & Gemini's
Ghetto Pop Life with close-up of
the embossing inset



Some people, as the cliché goes, know the price of everything and the value of nothing. These people, if they were releasing a record, would be unlikely to shell out for embossing. An embossed sleeve is often a sign that someone gives a shit. It costs more money. You have to go out of your way to make it happen. You have to care. It could even be argued that embossing is a manifestation of love. And as we all know that's what makes the difference. In the last year I have seen some incredible embossing on record sleeves. This could be due to an advance in embossing technology, or it could be a reaction to the two-dimensionalisation of design that's occurred since the emergence of the screen as dominant graphic medium. Or it could also be due to the passion of one design company leading the way. Whatever the reason, embossing seems to have entered a new era, so it's time for a selective retrospective, with an emphasis on the recent output of Warp offshoot Lex. More examples from the recent and not so recent past are also available at cyclicdefrost.com. It's very hard to photograph embossed paper, however. Hopefully this will prompt you to look out for these designs and see what they are really like. Like most art, you need to see the real thing.

WHAT IS EMBOSSING?

Embossing is the process by which areas of paper are raised into bumps. Debossing is not the process of creating out-of-office activities for your manager in order to be left alone to do your job, but rather is the reverse of embossing. To emboss, part of a design is cast in metal. These shapes are then stamped into the paper. Often embossing is used to highlight a title, or a logo. A braille typewriter is essentially the same principle. Coincidentally embossing without corresponding ink markings is known as blind embossing.

Various

Lexoleum Tile 1

(Lex 2003)

Format: 3 x 12" vinyl

Designer: eh?

Leading the pack, as far as I can see, are the designers at Eh? who, as well as possessing a name that approaches genius, have been turning out some breathtaking work for Warp's hip-hop offshoot Lex. Often embossing is "pretty" and takes one of a few forms: the embossing of text or a title, of a logo, or a to pick out parts of an illustration. Here, on the second Lex release, debossing is used to bring a realistic texture to a painting of some lino floor tiles, complete with irregularities, scratches and gaps between tiles. There's a lot of detail – it took some doing. Also embossed are the cheesy "sparkles" on the word Lexoleum. And, as if to say "you thought we were finished?" the centre of the letter "o" features a blind deboss. Such is the quality of this design that it could just as easily star in a feature on the use of metallic inks, varnishes (entire illustrations consisting only of varnish) and hand-drawn typography - with a footnote on die cuts. In a league of their own, despite the slightly nauseating colour combo on this release.



DM & Jemini
Ghetto Pop Life
 (Lex 2003)
 Format: CD
 Designer: eh?

Another shining star from Eh? comes in the form of this card slip case and gatefold insert for DM & Jemini. A masterpiece of gold foil stamping and embossing, this sleeve manages to say bling and anti-bling at the same time. The decadent use of gold foil and gold metallic inks contrasts nicely with the use of grown-up graff that tells a story. On the outer sleeve a cartoon cat and mouse are seen inside a safe - a treasure trove of gold and gems. The cover of the gatefold inside finds the mouse in pre-robbery mode, dreaming of the riches he's about to find. Thank god they left some white space on the inside of the design or it would be one super-rich triple chocolate and whipped cream pudding. But on to the embossing, on the outer cover. It's difficult to tell if the gold foil stamping involves debossing or not, suffice to say it's very slightly recessed. Then we've got large areas of blind debossing on black with what looks like an underprint of vignettied metallic gold. These guys do nothing by halves. The debossing is a swirling organic texture of tiny dots, some only the size of a pinprick. This pattern also appears on the back and on the spine. A tiny misregistration of the deboss means that a few dots intrude on the gold foil but it's still damn accurate. The sparkle on the gems may have been stamped separately, as you can still make out their shape as they cross other areas of gold. Not content to leave it there, the letterforms from the Lex logo are blind debossed into a gold ingot on the back cover. The inner sleeve, where the mouse is about to open the safe, is like a lesson in the visual richness that can be achieved with two-colour artwork. Worthy of mention is that these releases come shrink wrapped with a on a sticker holding the artist information and bar code. This leaves the slip case free of the usual graphic intrusions and the dilemma of what to do with the bar code.



Non Prophets
Hope
 (Lex 2003)
 Format: CD
 Designer: eh?

Like DM & Jemini, this CD comes in a card slip case with gatefold insert. Anything would look subdued in comparison to that release, but this is another highly detailed and visually absorbing sleeve. The embossing is restricted to the front cover here, this time it picks out the detail in a kind of gothic graff illustration of Christ being crucified on a ship's anchor, surrounded by what could be mutated cog wheels. Beyond that, stars shoot out from the elaborate centrepiece. The finely detailed emboss is exaggerated by the skilful use of a gloss varnish on the unembossed portions. A characteristic contrast with this graphic finery appears in the remainder of the cover illustration and its soft pencil/charcoal textures. The hand-drawn type on the back references ornate manuscripts, completing the updated gothic aesthetic which suits Sage Francis' raw and unapologetic confessional lyrics. The inner gatefold displays a more thoroughly contemporary abstract form before opening to reveal some lo-fi blackletter hand lettering, all in black and white. The inner and outer sleeves don't quite hold together as well as "Ghetto Pop Life" and there is a lack of sophistication in the typography, particularly some awkward line returns but that's like saying you don't like the seat fabric on your Porsche 911.



Detail of the Hymie's Basement release



Jonathan Wolf and Andrew Broder
Hymie's Basement
 (Lex 2003)
 Format: CD

Designer: burlesque design / eh?
 Yup, another card slip case and gatefold. Totally contrasting graphic style this time, perhaps because the initial layout was by someone else. It's still a nice job, with a studied lo-fi feel. Angled black and white images with ripped edges are overlaid with squared-off areas of spot varnish on both the outer and inner sleeves, a nice touch being that the spot varnishes on the inner sleeve image are "ripped." All over the artwork are red pen marks and my overactive imagination suggests that it is a dismissive comment on the original art by the people at Eh? but that's most likely crap. Anyway, the red pen is where the deboss comes in. All these red pen marks have been indented, creating a very convincing trompe l'oeil - it really does look as if the artwork has been crossed through.



See cyclicdefrost.com for a more comprehensive overview of embossing - including releases by Durutti Column, Ultravox and Muslingauze.



you can drive yourself, and everyone else, insane learning to cut with Rumpelstiltskin and Goldilocks records.

MUSIC VS PHYSICS SELECTS

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 WE FEATURE MUSIC VS PHYSICS.

Music vs Physics have strode an idiosyncratic path throughout their career. Beginning with one of the unsung gems of the late '90s in their instrumental debut *Northside Perspective*, they have since added live drums and vocals – along the way developing a versatile live show that fills dance-floors as much as it fills minds. Though firmly grounded in hiphop, they manage to steer clear of the clichés of the genre merely by being themselves, which is refreshing – especially when it results in something like 3rd Dek's (production/ rhymes and scratching) predilection for using a custom-made mouse rather than a crossfader to scratch. They also figured prominently in the Symbiotic System's compilation *Ants Farm Aphids*, which was one of the highlights of 2003.

3RD DEK'S SELECTION

The Beatles

Abbey Road
(Capitol, 1969)
Age 0-5

Let's start at the beginning. This album is the soundtrack for the earliest memories I have. It got some serious airtime in my childhood, I'm half-convinced my dad must have listened to it three times a day for five years or something. I'm pretty sure this was the music that introduced me to music.

The Smiths

The Queen Is Dead
(Warner, 1986)
Age 11

One day my older brother returned home with this album and the rest of us had copies in a week. Up until this point my music collection pretty much consisted of cassette recordings I had taped off SA-FM: 'Hits of '84', 'Pop Charts of '85', and 'Pre-Packaged This Is The Music You Like of '86'. This album sent me down the path of listening to music that I guess would be dubbed 'alternative', and led me to discovering a whole cache of music I probably would have never found.

Sonic Youth

Goo
(Geffen, 1990)
Age 14

The first time I heard someone making giant racecar sounds on a guitar I knew I wanted to make music. Unfortunately I lacked the guitars and amps, but there was something about this album that told me it didn't matter. After messing around with tape experiments and microphone feedback for awhile I realised it probably did matter, but at least the seed had been planted.

A Tribe Called Quest

Midnight Marauders
(Jive, 1993)
Age 16

I had been listening to a bit of hiphop for a few years but this was the first hiphop album I ever bought. It defines the crossover from guitars to samples for me. The simplicity of hiphop production opened my eyes up. I learnt a hell of a lot about production from cutting this album to pieces on my parents' computer. Soon after this I hooked up with some producers in Adelaide and got introduced to my first ever sampler.

Tha Lumbajak

Blue Ox Breaks
(Bombay, early 90s)
Age 18

This record was my first battle album. As an aspiring young turntablist, it felt good to finally get my hands on that all important 'Ahhh this stuff is really fresh' sample. Up until this point I had been using spoken word albums (mainly old children's storybook albums) and you can drive yourself, and everyone else, insane learning to cut with Rumpelstiltskin and Goldilocks. Although I can't remember a single break on this album, I can recite every single sound in the last centimetre of both sides. Brains are weird.

BEATRIX'S SELECTION

Neil Young

Harvest

(Warner, 1972)

When I was ten I stumbled across a dusty turntable in the garage. I set it up in my bedroom and was eager to test it out. As I had no records of my own I had to settle with my dad's collection, which included *Harvest* by Neil Young. I instantly fell in love with his voice, lyrics and guitar. I would lock myself in my room for hours and sing along to 'Heart Of Gold'. This experience not only prompted me to get an acoustic guitar but also helped me discover my love for vinyl.

Nevermind

Nirvana

(Geffen, 1991)

Nirvana was my introduction to grunge music. Kurt Cobain's simple chord changes and melancholic vocals really touched a spot in my cynical teenage heart. Nirvana made me realise that simple songs can be just as striking as complex compositions. When I was 14 I went to the all ages Nirvana gig in Melbourne. As you could expect, I got trampled in the moshpit, but luckily a kind bouncer let me and my friend hangout sidestage. From this close angle we saw a big trucker dude throw a can of beer at Kurt's head, he didn't even flinch!

Billie Holiday

Greatest Hits

(Sony, 1998)

Billie Holiday's voice blows me away when ever I hear it. Her voice is like a free-flowing spirit with no constraints. The combination of Billie's textured voice, the instruments and record crackle all meld together like a sweet humming horn. Billie's live recording of 'Solitude' with her orchestra is by far my most favourite song. If you're feeling lonely, Billie's crooning soothes your soul and makes you revel in your lonesome mood. Billy made me realise that there is a lot more to singing than just being in tune.

God Speed You! Black Emperor

Yanqui U.X.O

(Constellation Records, 2002)

This album is like a big, grey, ominous orchestral storm slowly marching towards a tranquil blue sky, and at times covering it completely with heart-stomping thunderous sheets of melodic noise. The slow haunting builds and monstrous crescendos make this album ideal for those times you feel like being engaged in your deepest darkest thoughts. All of GSYBE albums are extraordinary and I find them most effective when played really, really loud!

Buck 65

Man Overboard

(Anticon, 2001)

This album has probably influenced me more than any other hip hop album. Buck 65 has the ability to fuse hip hop with country, folk, heavy metal, blues, etc. Buck 65 has proved without a doubt that hip hop has evolved into a genre that can encompass any kind of music. His husky, old man, narrative, rapping style sets my mind a wandering. Has anyone noticed how similar Buck 65's voice is to Jim Henson's 'Rolf the dog' voice from *The Muppets*?

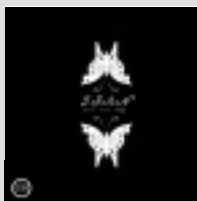
Music Vs Physics's new 12" is reviewed in web version of issue 8 see cyclicdefrost.com. Underscore is available now on Sensory Projects through Inertia

MORR MUSIC



LALI PUNA Faking The Books

Adored by Radiohead. Pop with distorted guitars and distinct, beautiful electronic compositions and of course Valerie Trebeljahr's amazing vocals. Includes members from The Notwist, Tied And Tickled Trio and Console



ISAN Meet Next Life

Wonderful melodies and soft rhythms to transport you to far-off and imaginary landscapes. The sounds of glockenspiels, guitars, percussion and an aged drum computer – this is dreamy.

"All twelve pieces are exquisite jewels. Time stops when you put this on." WWW.PITCHFORKMEDIA.COM



MAN'S BEST FRIEND The New Human is Illegal

Sole of Anticon's political, lo-fi side project. Shitty guitars run through broken reel to reels, rusted keyboards and over-compressed radioshack mics.

"...angry, often hilarious attacks on this bullshit country over beats and loops that sound like Portishead" **ROLLING STONE (US)**



The Morr Music label // Distributed by



Inertia

DEAR DEGRASSI

A REGULAR DOSE OF IRREGULAR POP CULTURE



Dear Degrassi,
I'm planning a holiday away soon. Do you have any ideas of where I should go?
Wandering Star

I can help you get away from it all whilst catering to your need for lashings of pop culture. However, since you didn't specify your budget or your level of comfort, I'll provide you with a number of different options catering for the backpacker and 5-star Princess alike.

If you're looking for a cheap but cheerful Mecca-like pilgrimage across the United States of War Mongers, what better way to do it than following the steps of Danielsan aka the Karate Kid? Yes, this a bit of a pick-your-own-adventure style holiday where you won't have to put up with a tour guide, but that also makes it free... ish. It looks as if I've found someone who has out-Degrassied me – there is a website dedicated to *The Karate Kid* which shows a monumental surplus of time and an unhealthy (even by my standards) interest in the first two *Karate Kid* films. Don't believe me? See for yourself at www.fast-rewind.com/kkid. Golf n' Stuff... it's all there!

To convey the feeling that Danielsan was not from an upper-middle class Country Club kinda family, the director insisted on using real locations and didn't make too many alterations to them either. As a result, you're more likely to see more of the locations from the *Karate Kid* films than just about any other film, since most are filmed on sound stages that are disassembled once the film wraps. Unfortunately the plague of mega-mall homogenisation has led to a number of these sacred sites being but a memory etched in cyberspace by über-nerds.

Still,
if your up for a cross-country drive, with very little to amuse you along the way, then this could be the holiday for you.

If donning some lederhosen is more your kind of thing, then join me in Salzburg, Austria, for a re-imagining of *The Sound of Music*. I've never made any secret of my love for Maria Von Trapp, and I will refuse to make any apologies for it. Although I've not yet made it on to the tour, it is definitely on the top 100 things I'll do once I turn 30. Like karaoke, I imagine that it would be a judicious move to pack at least one hip flask of grandfather port for each hour of the tour (that's four per person) because it's always more fun to belt out off-key Broadway tunes when you're absolutely shit-faced. But if that's a little out of your price range, how about getting uninhibitedly naked bar a pair of hiking boots and visiting www.foxhome.com/soundofmusic?

(By the way – remember that late '70s *Spider-man* TV show with really dodgy special effects because they superimposed video and film? Well the man in the red tights was none other than spunky Friedrich Von Trapp. Oh, and Louisa Von Trapp posed nude for Playboy years after *TSOM*.)

Truly, any trip to the west coast of the States that doesn't include a day dedicated to The Dirty Harry Tour of San Francisco (www.movietours.com/harry), is a trip wasted! Harry Callaghan was the baddest, meanest, and dare I say it, hunkiest cop to ever enforce the law on the streets of 'Frisco. If you haven't already seen *Dirty Harry* steer clear of me when you see me in public, but also, make sure that you view it in its historical context. It devised the template for films such as *Die Hard 3* in much the same way that *Play Misty for Me* pre-dated *Fatal Attraction* by more than a decade. So while you're in the approximate vicinity, you'd be a fool or just a plain ol' Clint-hater if you don't also take in The Play Misty for Me Tour of the Monterey Peninsular (www.movietours.com/misty). If you think Ken

Sherry and Richard Mercer are originals, they ain't got nothin' on Clint's DJ Dave Garver who brings his late night jazz lovers 'a little bit of song and a little bit of verse'. Chicken delight!

If the idea of jumping into a minibus with a bunch of strangers and some guide who appears to have taken a near fatal dose of Marcia Hines' Own anti-depressants makes you retch, then step with me, away from the bucket, towards www.famouslocations.com for a more DIY approach. Sure, you have to do all the legwork yourself, but that also means you can tailor it to your means. The locations can be somewhat vague, however when an address is available, they deliver. Since I was already in the Bay Area I investigated another of my favourite films, Hitchcock's 1958 masterpiece, *Vertigo*. Of course since the film has been 'paid tribute to' so many times in films such as *Dressed to Kill* and the mini-series, *Tales of the City*, even those who haven't seen the original will recognise most of the landmarks. You'd be surprised to find where some of your favourite flicks have been filmed.

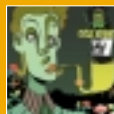
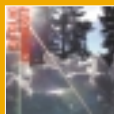
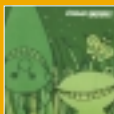
Alas, the website is not so all encompassing as to include a DIY guide to the best adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* thus far (apologies to the Cohen boys, yours is a close second), *The Warriors*. And extensive searches for any enterprising Brooklyn locals have also proved fruitless. So I implore any NY natives that somehow read this zine to rectify this situation, post haste. Surely the loose change needed for a daily travel pass, a knowledge of the working NY subway and good vocal projection capabilities are all that are needed...



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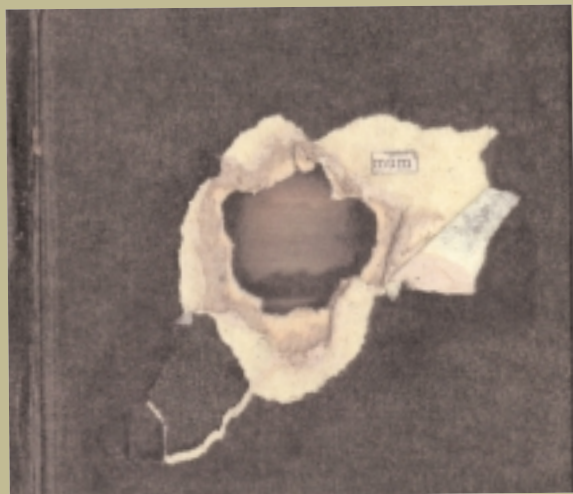
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