

Grooves
EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC MUSIC MAGAZINE

Grooves

EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC MUSIC MAGAZINE ISSUE 3

<ANDREA PARKER>
<MY-ZIQ>
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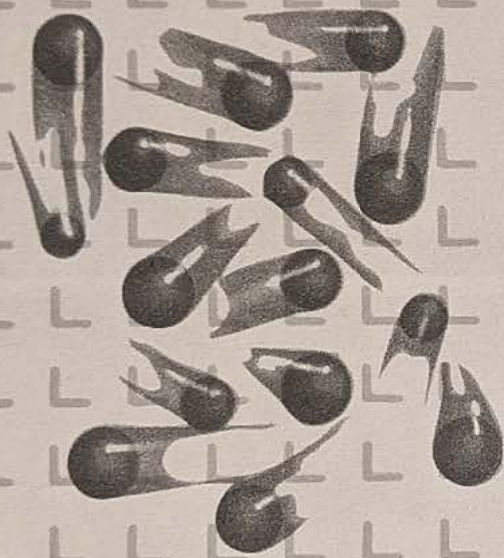


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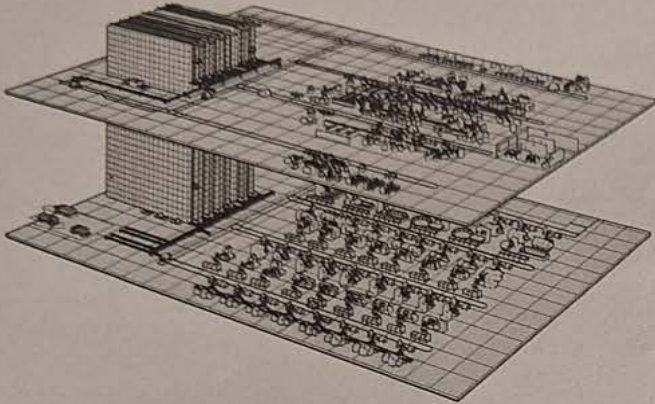


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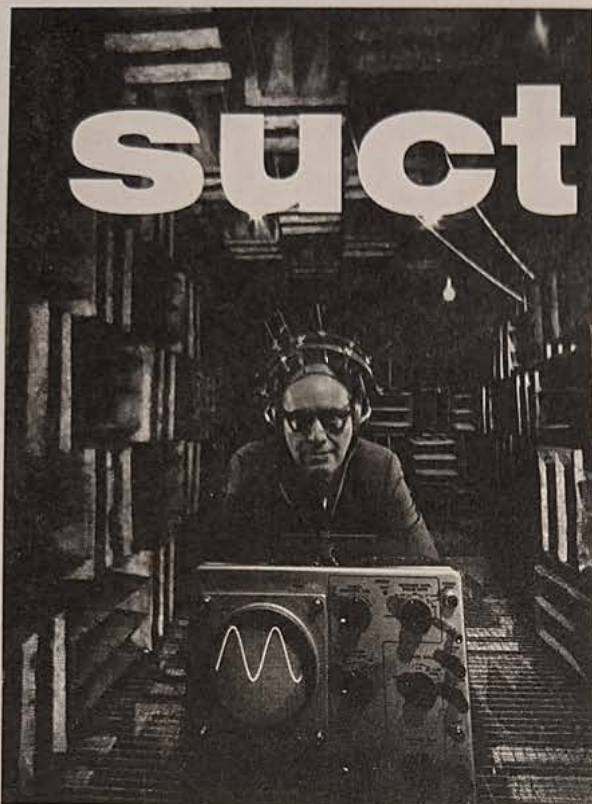
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suction007

artists = **various**
title = **assorted pieces**
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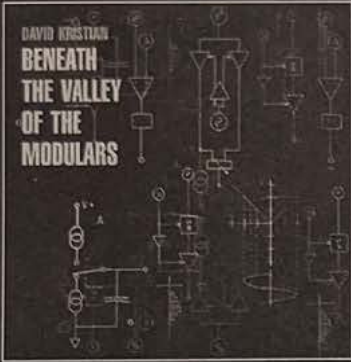
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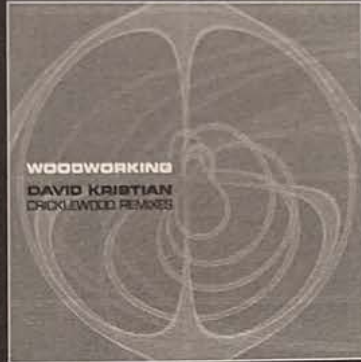
1. suction's own canadian robot *lowfish* - in full-on Vince-Clarke-Attack mode.
2. *pluxus* - a 3-piece analog improv group from Sweden - electro Drumatix and nice '70's melodies.
3. the debut of suction's *tinfol teakettle*, aka lowfish & solvent - more beats, more melodies, more synthesizers.
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D A V I D K R I S T I A N

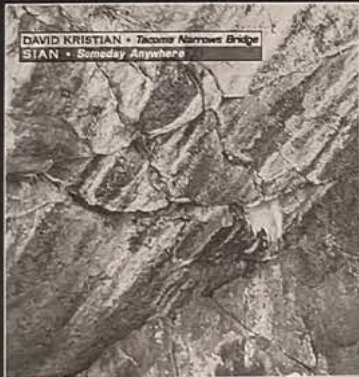
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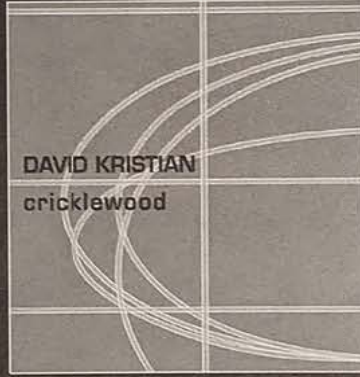
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GROOVES

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Subscriptions

\$8 for 3 issues in the U.S.
\$12 for 3 issues outside the U.S.

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"Warped Grooves" is a satirical column.

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Que Vivan!

To Steph and Maddy

Editor's Note

Pick up any magazine remotely related to either computers or music lately, and you're bound to read something about the burgeoning MP3 explosion/revolution/buzz word du jour. And with good reason: While the major record labels stumble in implementing their plans for a secure, downloadable music format, MP3 players are being pumped out for homes and cars, and college students everywhere are ripping and trading files from the latest CDs and playing them on their RealJukeboxes and Winamps. And you only have to go to MP3.com's site and use "Aphex Twin" as a search term to see how quickly the electronic music world has taken to the new MP3 order.

But there's another, smaller-scale revolution also going on in the digital music world that may matter to the music you see covered in Grooves as much as MP3s—the phenomenon known as "audiowarez," the trade term for pirated digital audio software, whether sequencing programs like Logic or Cubase VST, sample-editing programs like Sound Forge, and so on. In one sense, audiowarez are like any other pirated software—software makers cry foul about lost revenue and ferret out and shut down FTP and web sites with warez available for downloading.

However, the claims aren't quite the same with sequencing software as they are with, say, office-productivity software. While thousands upon thousands of office suites are sold each year, music-making software is a niche market—economies of scale would suggest that software sold in smaller quantities would need to be sold at higher prices and that sales lost to piracy would hurt more. In other words, it isn't quite so easy to say, "Screw spending \$300 on Office 2000; Microsoft is already rich enough," when talking about smaller audio software companies.

Yet, proponents of audiowarez could argue that the high "entry" price of this software means that students and beginners could not afford to drop a few hundred dollars on it—as a result, manufacturers aren't losing any sales from pirating, because warez users wouldn't purchase the programs to begin with. Perhaps addressing this concern, some "lite" versions of programs like

Cakewalk and Acid have been released for hobbyists.

In addition, a large number of shareware programs like Fruityloops have been released, allowing budget-minded musicians to create beats and edit samples for a far smaller outlay. Rephlex's press releases loved to extoll the fact that Bogdan Raczynski, their recent signing, used shareware programs to create tracks on his albums. Further viability was given to these efforts when Radium, perhaps the most famed audiowarez "crackers," announced that they would no longer bother cracking such inexpensive programs, arguing that the individuals who create this software deserve paying support for their efforts.

Obviously, there will be no quick end to the audiowarez controversy, as programs will continue to be cracked and manufacturers will continue to halt the widespread distribution of cracked programs. But the overall significance of this battle should not be overlooked—in the same way that the MP3 explosion has called into question traditional means of reproducing music, so too has the emergence of audiowarez is further evidence that a radical democratization has taken place in the production costs of creating music. With shareware—or pirated software—and a CD burner, starting costs for budding musicians are incredibly minimal, really allowing anyone with enough perseverance and talent the opportunity to be heard.

While pirating software is ethically dubious, it has pointed to a future where consumers will no longer pay for packaging, huge printed manuals, shipping costs, and other physical costs of distributing product. It will also remain a fixture on the electronic music scene—like it or not, some of the music you have recently purchase, or will purchase in the near future, may have created with audiowarez.

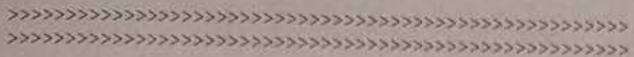
And don't forget the legend that the Sex Pistols stole the instruments they used to create some of the songs that changed the future of popular music...

—Sean Portnoy



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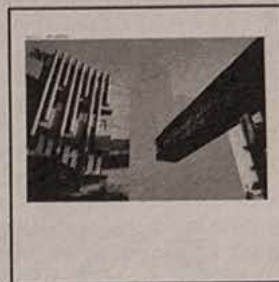
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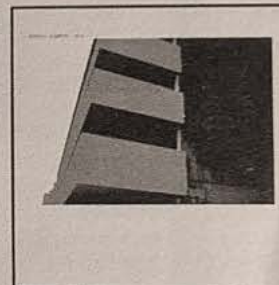
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Curd Duca's *Elevator Music*

An architect by training, Austrian Mille Plateaux artist Curd Duca is a purveyor of an 'electro-acoustic mood music' in which small fragments of gentle sound are pushed through an obstacle course of digital rendering and manipulation. The resultant sonic construction is a rich and extremely varied tapestry. Take his latest release, *Elevator 2*, as an example. One minute (literally, since its 32 tracks tend to last for around that duration each) you're listening to a slightly rendered banjo, apparently strumming its way through water, the next it could be a sampled kung-fu fight, disembodied fragments of human voices or a gentle easy listening swoon. All the time, the sounds are treated with rendering and electro-acoustic treatments, meaning that the various fragments within each track slide in and out of focus. This makes for music of constant momentum, always moving to new places, never standing still. It is also entirely studio-based; his recordings carry far more potential on CD than they might when played live. In an e-mail exchange, Duca explains the reasons for this approach to his sound: "I used to play in 'real' bands for most of the '80s. Electronics open up a world of much more interesting sounds. Live music is more about what you say; it has exhausted itself (for me). Electronics is more about sonic space."

When asked, Duca explains that his sources come "mostly from obscure records; when I remove the samples from their context, I expose their textural quality. My most important criteria are sound and atmosphere, and rhythmic openness, as opposed to metric patterns." The result is a organic sound that evolves according to its own logic; one in which easy listening chic is ripped from a flaccid cod-ironic lounge room and reconfigured into a fascinating, experimental scenario without the cheese that make straight lounge music so unbearable. Within this, he aims to cover a wide range of moods and emotions. With reference to the mildly silly kung-fu track on *Elevator 2*, I ask if humour is an integral part of his work. "Absolutely. This element has been there for the most part of my work. I want to keep it very subtle, though; I want to include a wide emotional spectrum in my work, melancholy as well. Ideally the whole human condition."

Being signed to Mille Plateaux, combined with this approach in general, means that Duca's music is contemporaneous with the digital rendering of Terre Thaemlitz and Christian Fennesz; in many ways his music is oddly reminiscent of *Farmers Manual* in its constantly changing manner (although this is a fundamentally more mellow outpouring than FM's nightmarish rapture). This is something Duca understands. "I know some of the current experimental 'digital glitch' artists, some personally, like Fennesz and *Farmers Manual*. I like Thaemlitz a lot. I come from a different direction. Sometimes we arrive at similar points; we are using the same technology after all, a factor not to be underestimated."

However, he also cites, amongst a variety of other unusual influences, "children's music, fairy tale recordings, Austrian operettas, marching bands, strange electric organs from old Czech cartoons, easy listening, ethnic musics, rock, techno." It is from this unusually broad range of influences that Duca's music stands out as one in which variety is all (compare this with the likes of the poor old Chemical Brothers who seem interested solely in

psychedella, rendering most of their tracks interchangeable). This could have been a hindrance, leaving his material disjointed, yet everything he does has his own definite stamp of identity, meaning his records sound like the work of one person, rather than a compilation of dozens of different artists.

The rather quiet nature of Duca's music, and the references to elevators and mood music, would seem to indicate that he is interested in creating merely an audible wallpaper for future lounges and restaurants, but as he explains, this would be a misinterpretation of his output. "From 1991 to 1996 I was working on a CD series called 'easy listening' (vol#1 - #5), an ironic title for re-contextualized exotica and experimental stuff. In 1997, I applied similar principles to the music of Richard Wagner on my 'Switched-on Wagner' CD. I never saw it as background music (maybe in a Brian Eno kind of way), more like a psycho-analytical exploration, a sonic journey." His current material extends these ideas. "*Elevator* is supposed to take these concepts to the next level. There is an ironic allusion to elevator music, of course, but mainly it symbolises ascending, going beyond, taking you higher - in a spiritual/drug culture sense."

His reference to drug culture inevitably raises the question of whether he is ever likely to produce music aimed specifically at clubs, the arena at its very core. As he reveals, this has already been a part of his musical development. "Funny, that's exactly what I was trying to do around 1990/91. It didn't quite turn out that way instead, I ended up producing rather un-techno sounds that eventually evolved into my five-volume easy listening series. It was a crucial phase of self-discovery and artistic truth that made me follow a rather obscure path instead of what I (and everybody else) at the time considered "cool!" This is likely to reap dividends - with the increasing attention centred on the experimental "digital glitch" area, and a rapidly growing glut of acts producing such music, Duca has been in this field for some time already and (along with Markus Popp, Fennesz et al.) has a headstart on the newcomers. His opinion on the reasons why electronic music is rapidly diversifying away from the club environment is that "maybe audiences (and artists) have matured. Maybe people are simply bored with "normal" styles. I like this new openness and encouragement of experimentation."

Outside of music, Duca has also run a workshop in "sound sample poetry" (exercises in spoken word cut-ups, elements of which can be traced on *Elevator 2*) for Vienna's school of poetry and his architecture training is not neglected either; he is currently writing a concept for light and sound design in parking garages. The diversity of his music clearly extends into other areas of his life too.

Such is Curd Duca at present. For the future he notes that "I am planning to do at least *Elevator 3*, maybe more. I am always working on new stuff; it's getting weirder and more 'avant-garde.'" His intention seems to be to progress with his music even further. However, even if he stayed where he is right now, his music is so wide-ranging that he would progress anyway.

-John Gibson

Elevator 2 is out now on Mille Plateaux.



DEAN GARCIA IS HEADCASE

Headcase Takes a Curve

Dean Garcia, half of Curve along with vocalist Toni Halliday, embarked this year on the first in a series of solo projects under the name Headcase. His first album, *Mushi Mushi*, on his own label of the same name, was initially made available as a signed and numbered limited edition by mail-order only. He has since renamed and repackaged the album for general release. He recently talked about the album, his new project with producer/remixer Tim "Bomb the Bass" Simenon, and the future for himself and Curve.

Grooves: At the risk of sounding unoriginal, why *Mushi Mushi*? Headcase? Do you only use the Headcase Medipac name when remixing as Headcase?

Garcia: We chose *Mushi Mushi* because it sounds cool, kind of *Manga*-ish. A bit cartoon, and we like cartoons a lot—Robert Crumb, *Freak Brothers*, *Simpsons*, *Ren and Stimpy*, *Pinky and the Brain*, *Wallace and Gromit*, *Southpark*, *The Silver Surfer*. They make you feel good; *Mushi Mushi* does the same.

Headcase Medipac, that was a name I used for [Curve's] "Chinese Burn" mix. Medipac is from *Tomb Raider*, another cartoon, but I haven't used it since, because I thought I may get sued by Edios, which is something I don't need. So I left it as Headcase; I might change it to something else...

Grooves: Any relevance in the use of the cows on the original picture sleeve for the cd packaging? A Mad Cow's disease reference, maybe?

Garcia: The cows picture is from a very old photograph I took in Wales; I have always liked the picture. I liked the cows on the *Meddle* cover from Pink Floyd—it was always a bit odd. Mad Cow's did cross my mind...

Grooves: How would you describe your creative process? Do you concentrate solely on the musical side of things and allow your collaborators to write lyrics, or do you have input at all levels?

Garcia: Haphazard, off the wall. I work with a small set up: sampler, seq, moog, and just fuck about and

continued on page 15

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Delarosa+Asora Moves Softly Into the Limelight

Scott Herren, a.k.a. Delarosa+Asora, sits across from me at the Flying Biscuit Café at the corner of Clifton & McLendon in Atlanta. Even though we are old friends, I am still in awe of him, an artist who is constantly looking for new ways to innovate... with sound, with visual/graffiti art, even with his personal style. Sonically, Herren is a master of making hi-fi sounding music from lo-fi equipment, like his beautiful composition *Sleep Method Suite*, which is rich with warm ambient tones and textures and gently flowing rhythms. *Sleep Method Suite* was recorded entirely on a 4-track using no midi equipment at all.

Herren's music stands out for being soft and melodic, where so much experimentalism leans towards abrasion. Now, as the latest addition to the Schematic family and with an album coming along on Hefty Records under his other moniker Savath & Savalas, Herren is getting ready to fade out of obscurity and into the limelight.

Grooves: How did things get started with music for you?

Herren: I grew up playing music. My mother was pretty strict about making me play music to keep myself occupied. There was too much ill shit to get into when I was that age, so my mom knew how to keep me in check. I didn't retain much from those days but I'm glad she did it.

Delarosa started when I was living in New York around '94 or '95. I didn't have many people to play with up there so I started buying whatever gear and instruments I could afford. I just started banging shit out, complete slop style...one cheap-ass mic, bad effects, 4-track cassette recorder, etc...About a year after that I moved back to Atlanta to try and finish school and Source Germany called me about putting that New York stuff out.

I sent the DAT and they mysteriously never

released it. I soon after started to play live with friends, but it didn't really last too long since everyone had so much of their own shit going on. So that was when I started to tighten up my whole program and get more into my own personal explorations I guess.

Grooves: What are you using for production now?

Herren: My setup is pretty simple: guitar, bass, Rhodes, Melodica, vibes as far as tonalities go. Feed it into my computer and create something else without losing the warmth that those instruments contain naturally.

Grooves: What are your major influences and what are you listening to now?

Herren: I'd say nothing moves me spiritually more than jazz records from the late '60s up to '73: Alice Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Charlie Haden, Joe Henderson, that whole crew, some ECM stuff...those records never sound old or tired, you hear notes or sounds you've never heard upon every listen. As far as current influences: Company Flow, Indelible MCs, Mos Def & Black Star, etc. No matter how far my music gets from these influences, it's always hip-hop that hits me over the head. Also most Thrill Jockey releases I have loved.

Grooves: As a producer what other projects have you worked on? Who have you collaborated with?

Herren: I've done some stuff for various friends' bands and projects here and there. I like working with other bands in a studio environment, but it's not something I particularly want to fill up all my time doing.

I've had a hard enough time finishing my own



projects successfully. Richard Devine and I have just completed remixing each other. His shit is completely genius; you have to listen closely to catch all of it. I'm glad we're both in Atlanta right now.

Grooves: How have you evolved technically and conceptually?

Herren: Having better gear and playing every day obviously advances my abilities to express ideas and technique. I try to keep individual projects sounding consistent. I'm trying to elaborate on a consistent theme within each project without becoming monotonous.

I have a whole other project called Savath+Savalas which is pretty much all live and organic so to speak. There isn't much programming or processing involved. It serves as a different outlet and therapy from sitting in front of a screen. It's coming out on Hefty Records, a label in Chicago run by John Hughes the 3rd (Slicker).

—Carter Tracy

Sizable Chromosome 57 Crew Rules New Orleans

As "intelligent dance music" (IDM) surges forward in recognition and popularity, more and more artists are poking their heads out from behind the machines and getting heard. Still, in a country as large as this one, the proportion of idm artists per square...well...city is still minuscule. Yet in New Orleans, a city hallmarked for its tradition in blues and zydeco, we find Chromosome 57, a sizable collective of self-starting artists ready to take on the world. Now with releases lined up and more and more live gigs, they are rapidly making headway.

"Chromosome 57 began as a collective of bedroom-bound electronic musicians who spent a lot of time on Sundays listening to bootleg AFX tapes and Squarepusher and the like," says Nicole Elmer, founder and head honcho of the New Orleans-based record label/collective and electronic music producer under the guises Neutral, Squab Teen and Searchwoundindefinitus.

We're sitting in her tiny bedroom at her aunt's house in Metairie, just outside New Orleans. The room is cram packed with gear: keyboards, sound boards, drum machines, a sampler, a computer. All that is left is a sliver of floor space, just the width of Nicole, where she sleeps at night.

The Chromosome 57 collective formed when Nicole Elmer moved from her home in Colorado to

New Orleans to become a production assistant at Trent Reznor's Nothing Studio. Working on the side as runner at trendy restaurant, she met Charlie Cooper who introduced her to his gang of electronic music fans. All well-versed in IDM, they taught her about the latest artists and she taught them production techniques. "I've sort of planted the seeds that have started these gardens of creativity by showing them how it was done," says Elmer. "They, in turn, exposed me to a lot of electronic artists I became very influenced by."

In all, the Chromosome 57 collective includes Neutral (formerly Wax Mat), Plexitmind, Squab Teen, The Madd Wikkid, Olivetti, Pointnklik, Searchwoundindefinitus, Lipid, Fuckhead, King Slender, and Michael Pruett. Their music has as much variety as their names, but is devoted to the punk ethic of no-holds-barred IDM experimentalism...they try everything! Within the mish-mash of their songs you here remnants of new wave, ambient, techno, hip-hop, electro, industrial and even classical music.

Together they collaborate on songs, remix each other's work, burn CDs, work on their ever-evolving web site (<http://www.chromosome57.com>), organize shows, and now, run their label. "We try to make semi-state-of-the-art music with a degree of catchiness that seems to be unavailable as of late,"

says Turk Dietrich aka Plexitmind, "In a world where technical chops and mad production skills seem to be the main focus, we just try to offer something unique...I hope."

In the Neutral track "Beef Bouillon," a squeaky-voiced girl reads off items from a trailer park cook's grocery list against some hard-hitting industrial drum & bass, in Plexitmind's "Thief George's Reanimation House," a chorus chants "wiener dogs...wiener dogs...", and Squab Teen is entirely Ween-style kitschy electronic pop-silliness, (if Ween ever decided to dabble in electronica). Where the IDM world continues takes itself more and more seriously, Chromosome 57 blatantly pay tribute to what's come before and laugh at the whole thing.

As for releases, there's a 12" compilation out featuring all the artists of the collective. Squab Teen has a full length called Dance America out as a joint release with another New Orleans label, Turducken Records, and Neutral has a full-length CD coming out on Mad Monkey Records out of Austin, TX featuring remixes by Burning Rome and Solenoid. In addition they've had loads of success with live shows, wining over audiences and making lots of new friends and supporters in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Detroit.

—Carter Tracy

■

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Imminent Starvation's Aggressive Evolution

For some, the quantized possibility of electronic music is comforting. Rhythms can be shifted in perfect time, melodies polished into perfect harmonies, and imperfections eliminated. For others, electronic music offers the opportunity to extend beyond the boundaries of homogenized four-on-the-floor rhythms and explore more chaotic possibilities, where the distinctions between the sound and signal noise become less clear.

"People use noise because it's complex. I don't really see my music [as] very noisy, at least not pure noise—it's just using some kind of texture to get a certain sound," explains Oliver Moreau, the man behind Imminent Starvation, the orchestrator of the most world's most horrific terrortapes, built upon throbbing techno rhythms and chilling ambient textures. "Noise, it's in your face, it's really pressure, and tension, it's powerful."

Moreau began constructing his own primitive noise collages in the early '90s using only a tape machine and a passion for industrial and experimental music. "The music was not really that interesting," he says. "It was really pure, not noise, but playing with sounds." Slowly, Moreau began to hone

Moreau released a CD (*Body Bags*) and 12" (*Acplenc*) in 1993 on Belgium's Reload ambient label under the name Delta Files. "Delta Files is a solo project: You have one side with a kind of Imminent Starvation, the noisy stuff, and the other is a bit more techno—for some people, I think it can be very interesting," explains Moreau. "In fact, I am both interested in both industrial and techno. I'm jumping from one to another; for me, I feel real in the middle of it."

"I don't want to be just very techno or too much industrial; I think to go in both is the best I can do. The techno and industrial people are merging more and more because they like the same music, and there is no reason they cannot work together."

In 1997, the first full release from Imminent Starvation was unleashed upon an unprepared audience. *Human Dislocation*, a harsh document of unrelenting monochromatic abuse, immediately captured the attention of industrialists and technologists alike with its combination of brilliant precision, experimentation, and brutality. As one review described it, "Electronically speaking, Oliver Moreau is a one man wrecking crew. 'Human

and a piece of the mixing device used in the recording of *Nord* and previous albums. "The box with the mixing desk was my mixing desk [and] it was special because it was malfunctioning a lot," Moreau explains. "It was an old one, and with time, I was getting more and more problems and strange sounds...and when I made music it was really unpredictable, making it very difficult for concerts."

"You can hear on the record some of the malfunctioning from the mixing desk, and because I had bought new material to record [with], I decided to cut it up to give to the people, so they could own a piece of the music."

"I think it's not really fetishistic, but you can feel it. A CD is quite abstract—here is something you can touch, and so I like that idea of people having a piece of it, just not the music, which is nothing."

In the meantime, Moreau, between Imminent Starvation albums, still finds time to collaborate with friends John Sellekaers of Xingu Hill and C-Drik. One such project is *Ambre*, whose *Enclave* is also released on Ant-Zen. Moreau says, "When we first decided to make it, the first CD was to make something ambient, beatless, but for the next one,



his skills—after acquiring some equipment, the tracks began to take form and structure in the shape of collaborations as *Urawa* and *Torsion* with John Sellekaers of Xingu Hill and, eventually, a demo tape completed in 1993 entitled *Emergency Provisions* as Imminent Starvation.

Just as Moreau was completing *Emergency Provisions*, Stefan Alt (a.k.a. S.ALT) was forming his Bavarian art collective Ant-Zen: Audio and Visual Arts. Derived from *anti-zensure* meaning anti-censorship, Ant-Zen quickly developed a cult reputation for their extraordinary releases, which combined brilliant packaging with some of the most impressive exhibitions of industrial music, chilling ambience, techno rhythms, and power electronics. Each act was painstakingly constructed as an individual piece of art by Alt in a myriad of creative packaging schemes: 2 kilogram slabs of concrete (*PAL's Plugged*), in aluminum covers (*Zyklus D*), on colored vinyl, picture discs, steel cases (*Anthology*), and usually quite limited (i.e., impossible to find). With releases by experimentalists such as Telepherique, Pineal Gland Zirkeldruese, and Vromb and industrialists such as PAL, Synapscape, and Wumpscut, Ant-Zen quickly gained visibility as a label pushing the boundaries of experimental art and music.

After hearing a copy of *Emergency Provisions* from a friend, Alt requested a track for the Ant-Zen *C-Lektor* vinyl compilation (limited to 589 copies). Shortly after the release of the *C-Lektor* compilation,

Dislocation's is a highly volatile aggregation of nerve shattering machine rhythms, monstrous sound currents, and an unrelenting percussive barrage, which fires away maximum carnage against a backdrop of ravaged audio landscapes."

In June 1997, following the release of *Human Dislocation*, Salt also signed Imminent Starvation to his more "techno influenced" sub-label Hymen, dedicated to presenting rough techno and ambient music, such as the *Human Relocation* LP and its follow-up, *Ethyl 6*.

Nord, the latest release, continues the aggressive evolution of Imminent Starvation—and a renewed disregard for genre barriers. Where *Human Dislocation* mostly dabbled in rough, distorted sounds, *Nord* explores new territories in melody and structure, even reaching number six on the German alternative music chart, yet Moreau is never satisfied: "I say it's not enough. I think [on] the next release the structure will be more complex."

"With this CD, it's really mostly a collection of live tracks and studio versions, so because they were in for the show, the structure is still maybe very techno. Kind of too basic for my mind, and for the next release, I want to get something more strange in structure that you don't have a straight track that has a few bars that are changing."

Continuing the Ant-Zen tradition of extraordinary packaging, the special limited edition boxed version of *Nord* comes in a compact case with the CD, a t-shirt, stickers, 7" record with a side of locked grooves,

we are planning to work with Mark Spybey and Mark Harris for this summer, so I don't know what the next one will sound like."

Other projects are *Urawa* with Sellekaers and *Axiome* with C-Drik. "[With] *Urawa*, there is just a new album coming up (*Villa Vertigo*, recently released on Foton Records)," says Moreau. "*Urawa* is with John Sellekaers of Xingu Hill and Torsion, [which] was our second project together."

"In the beginning, it was more techno oriented, but we changed names to Torsion for the more techno-oriented stuff, and with *Urawa* we get to a new life, to a bit more free thing. The new release will be very ambient." Torsion also recently released a 12" picture disc on Hymen entitled *Jackson's Private Zoo*.

"For me, there is no one direction in Imminent Starvation, one aggressive, one ambient, so I can hardly define it, because, in a way, [it's] an open project," he concludes. "So I can't really give it a name—mainly its harsh electronics, but not only the harsh."

"I like to add something more than the brutality of the noise, just more emotion, a different feeling than just the harsh sounds. After a long period of rhythmic noise, I am beginning to introduce more melody into the noise."

—Jasin Perez

Nord is out now on Ant-Zen, and *Urawa's Villa Vertigo* is out on Foton Records.

Headcase

continued from page 10

see what happens. Bung it onto a DAT or portastudio and sort it out later. Sometimes you get stuck into something, and it develops quickly and sounds more finished; other things are quick passes of basic beats and bass ideas.

The music is normally in shape before any voice goes on. When the voice does go on, I end up changing parts around a bit. Other tracks like "Going Round" were done in one pass with voice and guitar—Rose and I were messing about in the front room with the portastudio. She sang while I played guitar—it's exactly as we recorded it.

Grooves: Do you find it easier or more difficult working alone (as Headcase) or as part of a group (as Curve)?

Garcia: I like to perform to people, show off a bit. When you're on your own, it takes more to please yourself...whereas when you work close with other people, you get to help one another show off. This only works when the person you are writing with connects with you and vice versa.

I have this connection with Toni—we enjoy working with each other a great deal, which is why we do it.

Grooves: Where do you obtain your samples from? Do you collect sounds for potential future use or look for a sound to fit the music?

Garcia: Anywhere and everywhere. I have always

used samps—it gets you going very quickly [if] you hear a sound you like. You take that sound and you fuck the sound into something else. I hate those lifted Puff Daddy mega hits—fuck off. I love "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash; I don't want to hear some lame-arsed rap over the top of one of the best rap/poems ever on record, thanks.

I'm always listening for sound, from obscure south London garage to a 10p scratched-up record from the junk shop.

Grooves: What made you form the Headcase project? Did you want the freedom to experiment musically in a way that you couldn't as part of a group?

Garcia: I wanted to make recordings available outside of the major corp.set up, something that would cost no money to do other than the pressing. This appealed to me a great deal: something that was completely independent.

Grooves: Headcase first made an appearance as a remixer. Are there any more Headcase remixes in the works?

Garcia: I'm keen to do remixes for people and tracks I like. It's good fun—fucking up other people's music.

Grooves: Are there any plans to tour as headcase in the future?

Garcia: Not sure about that. I have thought about doing a half hour Headfuck set using a drummer, decks, and electronic tweeks. It would be a good

laugh, and it would have to be extremely loud.

Grooves: You have recently announced a new project in which you will be teaming up with the producer/remixer Tim Simenon. Tim's projects tend to be more trip hop than anything else: Is this what we can expect from this collaboration?

Garcia: Tim and I have been having a laugh in the teepee hut at his flat...slow-ish ambient beats with strange decks and general funkyness everywhere. I'm in the process of cutting it together.

Grooves: What does the future hold for curve? How is the new material coming along?

Garcia: Toni and I will always make and release records together; whether people want to hear them or not is something else. Curve evolve and morph...I don't know what the future for curve is. All I know is that we have just done two fucking top tracks, and we are going out to LA in a couple of weeks to mix and sort them with Ben Grosse [Filter]. If it goes well, which I have a good feeling about, we shall finish the record off by Christmas, ready for release early spring next year.

This is the plan. Don't hold me to it, but this is what we're working towards. Then, who knows...

—Merciless Boy

More information on Headcase can be found at: <http://www.mushimushi.net>.

www.interchill.com



Neil Sparkes and The Last Tribe

"a delicious organic-meets-electronic jambalaya with hearty infusions of dub, downtempo, jazz, and spoken word."
Andrew Duke - Cognition / In The Mix

Previous member of Transglobal Underground, Neil's first solo album ventures into modern dub and Afro-Cuban atmospheres with Last Tribe collaborators, Zion Train, Count Dubulah, Mike Willox, & Dick Heckstall-Smith.



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Solenoid Creates the Furthest Electrical Current in Sound

David Chandler has been recording under the guise Solenoid for the last 8 years, with his talents in producing quality electronic chaos spread over a distinct vibe that can only be classified as alive, obscure, and inspiring. Solenoid, as a musical entity, is rather complex and distorted, while the knob-twiddler behind the sounds remains quite normal and intellectual. Recording for various labels such as Diskono, Outward Music Company and his own label, Chandler is also known as Mr. Pharmacist and as half of Office Products and is set to release full-lengths on both the Emanate and Endpoint imprints.

Solenoid is both crunchy electronic noise and soothing atmospheric melodies floating about in the foreground; Office Products, on the other hand, takes on an entirely improvised style that includes abstract samples and odd tweaks, sans melody. Solenoid creates his own worlds and furthers the electrical currents by inserting strange pulses of sound that bend and twist in the most abstract directions.

My first question for Chandler was how the Solenoid nameplate came into existence.

Solenoid: When I made tapes to give to a couple friends in '91. I only made a few tapes and wanted to call them something...At the time, I liked the idea of a Solenoid, because it is a fundamentally simple electromagnetic switch, which is a like physical model for a digital bit when you think about it. I'd love to hear the sound of a solenoid-based computer.

Grooves: What propels you to make these wacky, experimentally fun tracks? Any influences?

Solenoid: Curiosity and an odd sense of humor, I suppose. It is a challenge to try to make something I am imagining, and I imagine a lot of possibilities when I listen to just about any kind of music or sound. Instead of just stopping there, I try to follow up my thoughts with my own sequencer-composed music. Sometimes I find unforeseeable new directions that are accidentally discovered in the process of composing or improvising that make the process rewarding along the way...Sometimes I just start by trying to make straight 4/4 melodic music that is fun and simple and the more I work on it, the more strange and complex it seems to become.

Grooves: What kinds of instruments have you been using lately?

Solenoid: For free-improv (in Office Products), I am using turntables and effects. For programmed compositions (Solenoid), I use mostly synthesizers (preferring a variety of forms of synthesis: analog, FM digital, PDdigital, Fast Fourier, Additive digital). I sometimes use a sampler for small pieces of sound otherwise too difficult to synthesize. I spend a lot of time exploring these older digital synths and exploring odd rhythms on drum machines and acoustic drum kits. I use a lot of blatantly electronic-



sounding tones and percussion.

Grooves: The dreaded question: Have you done any live instrumentation?

Solenoid: I've played drums and modified crude electronics and practiced a kind of improvised-electronic-noise music. I think I've been careful enough not to just make sonic mud, at least I hope so. Office Products has been predominantly "live" in that we've been strictly in the free-improv mode for 2 years. Doug Theriault, the other half of OP, comes from many years in that background as a guitarist, and I've worked mostly with turntables in that project, though our first release had me playing drums.

I've played partially programmed and fully-preprogrammed sequencer-based sets many times...It is getting a little tiring, moving gear, plugging stuff in, arranging transportation. I have a hard time playing live, because I often make entirely new music for each gig, which is time-consuming, especially creating the level of improv-like variety within a track that I would like to have happen live without predetermining too much. Usually, I program my synths to have the most performance control possible so that I can tweak a timbre at any time and play in new sounds by hand. I have never succumbed to using DAT or preprogrammed sets or hard-disk-sets.

Grooves: How did Pharmacy Recordings start?

Solenoid: Originally, this label served as a system for demos and a vehicle for Office Products tapes and my older projects. It also has been a vehicle for the packaging, which is a vehicle for exercising my visual arts college degree. The Office Products CD-Rs will continue to come out on Pharmacy Recordings, since there is only a handful of bleeding-edge noise labels we could get them released through with the packaging designs we'd want (basically making it match the music in recycled images and materials). I'm trying to spend less time making arty packaging and instead focusing entirely on making tracks. I don't have my own CD burner, and since I've made CD-Rs, I'm having a hard time going back to tapes. I record live to DAT and don't really use a computer for anything except sequencing still.

My interest in putting music out to the public is motivated by the idea of getting copies of my tracks on vinyl and being able to get copies of other people's music in trades instead of shelling out cash. I would ideally like to just trade for all the new records I want to hear or else just be involved with the labels whose records I'd otherwise have to buy. I'm definitely getting closer to this, but have a long long way to go.

After 10 years of this electronic music obsession, I am just starting to want it to support itself a bit, either by costing less to make (I am using cheap, old equipment mostly) or by making the reproduction not cost so much. It is an expensive activity...



Grooves: Are there any particular sounds, groups, labels influencing you these days?

Solenoid: Lately, I've been very impressed with old cartoon sound effects, particularly the sound effects of '50s Hanna Barbera cartoons and the voice talents of Daws Butler and Don Messick when they are most abstract and goofy. I find it very interesting that a handful of acoustic sound effects and simple tape manipulations can create such specific connotations of cartoons...but they are amazing little noises in and of themselves. Some of the voices are really strange when taken out of visual context.

I listen to a lot of music of an odd variety. For example, this week, I have been really enjoying Like A Tim's last 2xLP *Yeah Right*, some old Sly Stone, the newer Disko B and Clone label releases, and I've been revisiting some old GPR and Serotonin records.

Grooves: Have you created any new tracks lately?

Solenoid: I've made a dozen tracks in the last month (April), only a couple of which might ever be shared. I can't pin down a single direction of interest, and it unnerves me sometimes, because it compels me to work on too much at once. I've got lots of new tracks, some of which are moving further into a kind of Chain Reaction/Basic Channel direction even more, and I have some Office Products tracks Doug and I have recently mastered for our next full-length CD.

The new Office Products might come out through Illegal Art, though we have just contacted them and found out they are interested. It would be released early next year, which is good because the way I currently edit the tracks and re-construct them is at a rather microscopic computer-editing level not unlike tape-splicing but in hundredths-of-second scale, which is how we sound when improvising our fast collages.

It is a very different approach than my Solenoid recordings, which are rather old-fashioned in the sense that I use MIDI sequencing heavily in conjunction with sequenceable complex synthesis routings that are just programmed into the synths. The Office Products is much more the extreme ends of the spectrum of music making; improvising the collaging of bits of sound without any preprogrammed direction (except vinyl records, which I manipulate as raw material).

We're really going for a rate and tightness of collaging that is just beyond our physical abilities on the turntable/mixer and guitar/live-resampler. So, with this Office Products work in mind, you can probably see why I might tend toward more minimal-repetitive and melodic programming structures on the sequencers and synths. It is just a balance of interests. Sometimes I wish I weren't interested in so many different kinds of music at the same time, as I could develop and grow in a more specific direction with more consistency.

-Pietro Da Sacco



WITH YOUR GOOD
TASTE COMES YOUR
DIRTY ASS LISTENING
HABITS & FUCK YOU

PHITMANO

Kracfive: Pittsburgh's Mechanical Penguins

The music division of Pittsburgh's Kracfive Recordings started at the very end of 1997. With label head Christopher Graves' project as Colongib, Kracfive saw its first release on cassette tape with the extremely limited demo simply called 1. Soon after that, Graves and Noah Sasso (a.k.a. Pacman) joined forces on a split remix disc pressed exclusively on CD-R format (limited to 100 copies). In November of '98, Colongib released the *Upgrade [to v2.0]* CD-R that raised the obscure electronics status to an area that had not (yet) been discovered. Kracfive has since become one of the major headquarters for releasing experimental electronica in the US.

On the verge of releasing the *Kracfivian Mecha-Penguins* compilation, Graves, Sasso, and Joe shed some light on how Kracfive have switched gears to release their latest output on a CD-only basis. Colongib's *Mapping Music* was Kracfive's entry into the pressed CD domain, and, as Chris states, "We are getting away from this CD-R business, and people should know it. It costs us much more to press CDs, and if people still think they are CD-Rs, then that's weird!"

With Kracfive on a mission to "make the post-K5 world better than the pre-K5 world," the sound designers behind K5 are some of the friendliest electronic heads I've had the pleasure of talking with this year.

Grooves: [To Graves] Is Kracfive solely run by you?

Graves: Well, at first, I did almost all the work for the record label, but now it is spread out a bit, with Noah pressing his own new CD and a few friends here who are involved, a couple of whom make music too. I'm still the person to talk to for now, though. It has never been just me though. The whole thing developed with these guys.

Grooves: What are your views on the CD-R label front? Do you see it as a new angle at releasing quality electronic music that bypasses standard methods?

Graves: If I had more money, I'd never have our releases be CD-Rs. There's no reason for it. We've moved from CD-Rs already: The last couple releases were pressed CDs and it should continue like that. Not because CD-Rs are bad—what's on them is what matters—but pressing is quite a bit more convenient than waiting 40 minutes for each disc, and looks nicer.

So, when we started out, Noah and I had been releasing some of our music on audio tape. When we noticed the price of CD-Rs was near cassettes we had this idea: We'd use them instead.

Joe: We weren't consciously trying to make a CD-R label. We just wanted to release our music the best way we could given our budget.

Graves: It's great that people can cheaply do high-quality sound with the CD-recording machines, but you might wonder if it could more easily fall into evil hands!

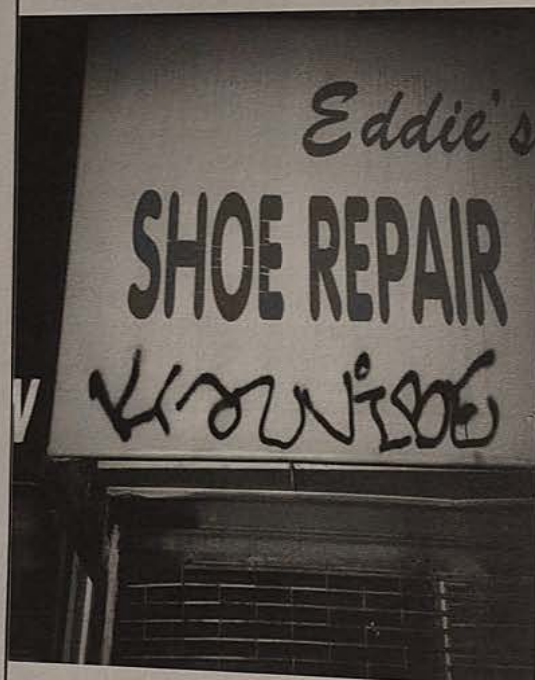
Joe: The whole CDR label thing doesn't mean better or worse music overall, just more music in general.

Graves: Crap will be released on both pressed and burned CDs regardless.

Sasso: As well as vinyl, cassette, MP3, etc. CD-R is an excellent way to distribute your music to family and friends, but after you make so many copies, it stops being cost effective and convenient.

Grooves: Upcoming projects/info?

Graves: We're releasing the *Mecha* comp really soon. It's a compilation where we gave the artists involved a set of mechanical-like samples, clangs and grinds and stuff, and they were to use some of them in the making of a track with a general mechanical or machine sort of feel. It's called *Kracfivian Mecha-Penguins*. Also Noah and I have a new collaboration album ready, but this time we might send it around to some other record labels first, instead of releasing it ourselves.



Sasso: Another comp is in the works, and by the time this interview is in print, our second pressed CD will be available, the Octopus Inc. disc. Also, once things settle down a bit, we plan to add an MP3 section to the web site [<http://www.kracfive.com>] with exclusive songs and remixes and such.

Graves: We have hopes for a lot of "gigs." We just did one last night with the Toneburst guys in Massachusetts, which met up with the Kid606/Lexauncpl/Cex tour, so we got to meet them too. We, for that show, were Colongib, Miragliuolo, and Zaharia. We did a lot of improv type stuff, not just playing pre-sequenced tracks, but maintaining grooves throughout. Really a lot of fun. Not as tight as a hit-play-and-stand-back set, but who cares?

Grooves: Any particular influences as far as Colongib?

Graves: Really all sorts of things are always influencing and inspiring, but I bet you want some

names of musicians. Well, recently I've been really into stuff by Freeform and Phthalocyanine. I think they're both doing their own thing like we try to do...definitely no copycatting. Autechre discs are often hanging around our CD players, too.

And I could go on about graphic artists and film makers and stuff, but not now. What really matters is that we found these sorts of things and people. They were doing something new, something we liked, and that could give us a new insight or feeling and [we] pursued it ourselves.

Grooves: What kind(s) of gear do you use?

Graves: We try to always make all new sounds for each track. Some tracks are made from one initial sound sample, all effected up and mutated into percussion, tone-y instruments and the other sounds. I guess real quick I could mention what we used in that live show I mentioned above: That one involved PC laptop (realtime sequencing in addition to pre-sequenced loops), Yamaha CS1X keyboard, Ensoniq ESQ1 keyboard, Ghostbusters sound-maker toy and microphone, Minidisc recorders, turntable.

Grooves: Has the "music industry" directly or indirectly affected Kracfive?

The Prof: Everyone feels the effects of the music industry; it shapes how people listen and view every music that they are exposed to. A person who turns 180 degrees around and rebels against said "music industry" is, in my opinion, as much a pawn as one who caters to it. Instead of following the "music industry's" idea of what to do, this person is following the "music industry's" idea of what not to do. The hypothetical person I am speaking of should just do whatever it is he or she wants to do and not worry about "industry" and "society." If, without those external factors there is nothing left inside this person that wants to still make music.

Grooves: Do you feel Kracfive is finally gaining recognition?

Joe: That reminds me of an event that happened just 2 days ago: I was walking down the street with Kracfive, and these two little girls ran up to him and asked him to sign a CD! It was the weirdest thing! I don't know how they recognized him, but they must have found a picture somewhere. Anyway, he signed it and we kept going, but it was just so weird.

Sasso: Our first CD is not even 2 years old yet; K5 hasn't really been around for all that long, as a record label per se. Beginning to press CDs, and moving away from the CD-R thing, has been a big deal to us. It remains to be seen how the rest of the world is going to respond.

—Pietro Da Sacco

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Don't Judge Saundart's Beauty by Its Covers

Where can you find Swedish music that is tinged with smooth electronica and hypnotic polyrhythms? You can start by tuning into the friendly sound-manipulator known as Martin Abrahamsson, whose Saundart Recordings is a small CD-R-based label located outside Karlskoga, Sweden.

On *Part 1 & 2*, Saundart explores the depths of experimental techno/electronica, leaving his listener's in a state of disillusion. A combination of tracks that are reminiscent of (early) Plastikman and (recent) Pole glide peacefully within each other on this 68-minute full-length. On Saundart 03, Bauri's *Hultan Söklart*, Abrahamsson morphs the sonic arrangements of his obscure beats into a display of quirky electronic bits that form sculptures of demented sound. *Sassafras Flip*, released in December of '98, is a 60-minute interlude of ambient washes penetrates with an amazing pulse that sounds like a collaboration between Autechre, Plastikman, and Plaid.

Saundart's signature soundscape is definitely one that stands out from the crowd. With production and distribution offered via the web, he has established himself with labels that follow the same philosophy: creating a musical soundscape that is both soothing and confusing. Upcoming projects for Saundart (a.k.a. Bauri) include compilation appearances on *Toast And Jam*, *Dead Culture DC*, *Kracfive*, a 12" on *Pitchcadet*, and a full length on *Phthalo*. Earlier this year, Saundart appeared on the *Mad Monkey Records' Enter The Monkey* compilation.

It's pretty difficult to describe the sounds emanating from the mind(s) of Saundart, but rest assured Martin Abrahamsson is one to look out for. If you can consume the strange and quirky soundscapes, then Saundart will absorb you.

Grooves: Who else is involved with the Saundart CD-R label?

Abrahamsson: I am alone with this label; no other people are involved besides some artists I will borrow from other labels for the forthcoming compilation... [Saundart] captures the function of an audible output for me and my kooky comrades. We mostly design sounds equivalent to hardcore mind magic, heavy mental noise love and lush polyexpanding units of lucky fresh feelings. This is our box of lo-fi antipop and edgy suburban voices.

Grooves: How do you view your music? When was Saundart born?

Abrahamsson: Basically, it's all about good electronic music, mainly this thing called IDM or intelligent dance music, which I'd prefer to call ELM (electronic listening music) or something like that. It's been all about having a ball, which is what making music is all about, I think. I couldn't live without music, and needed an output for my material, no matter if it's dead serious or just weird. Saundart is that output, and I haven't really been satisfied with one single release to date, which I believe is due to the fact that I use very simple or basic methods and gear for making music and [am] always striving to make something better all the time.

I really fell for intelligent electronica when I

bought [Aphex Twin's] *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 2*. It really changed a lot for me. It was the best electronic music I'd been exposed to since a friend played me a Kraftwerk tape in the fifth grade. After that, I began buying some records and getting into making my own music in 1994.

Saundart was born the summer of 1998, when I was into this deep atmospheric techno thing without caring too much for huge legendary labels such as Chain Reaction, Basic Channel, or Maurizio and being more interested in Plug Research and similar more experimental cutting-edge approaches to this type of music. Yet the techno material on Saundart was about something even more mesmerizing and subtle than the PR output (i.e., the relationship with CR/BC).

Grooves: You mentioned that you might retire the Saundart label?

Abrahamsson: I'm currently only 19 and unemployed after having graduated a couple of months ago. I had plans to put the label to sleep and then starting a new one focusing on IDM vinyl-only releases, but that feels pretty distant now—if I won't get a job really soon, that is. If I do get a job, I'll probably keep Saundart alive and put out vinyl and proper CDs from there instead. Otherwise, it'll be like building a small sand castle and just stepping on it when it's getting somewhere.

Grooves: Where is electronic music heading?

Abrahamsson: I believe electronic music is heading more on to computers and software than before when things were more concentrated on to gear. Just take a look at all these incredible programs and various plugins, which could basically offer almost all the power of a grand studio.

The future of Saundart isn't really planned very far ahead. Right now I'm only planning that compilation [*Srnakfull Elektronik*] I've been raving on about. It will feature invited artists from labels such as Phthalo,

Pitchcadet and Kracfive, plus a few neat surprises which I think will be very appreciated. It'll also have tracks from various rather unknown artists who I've gotten to know over the years (and) who really could use the positive exposure I hope this release will offer.

As far as stuff coming out from me I have a *Pitchcadet 12"* coming out soon and I'm talking to a couple of other labels of putting out some records too, but nothing of that has been confirmed yet so I don't want to talk much about that...

Grooves: When do you use the Bauri alias?

Abrahamsson: When I make Baurian music, which could be described as sort of nice little bubbly stuff. It works like this: Bauri is for the bubbly IDM material, Saundart is for the subtle experimental techno, and I've also started to record more atmospheric, edgy, and sometimes cute techno/electro/ambient stuff as Bearded Vault System.

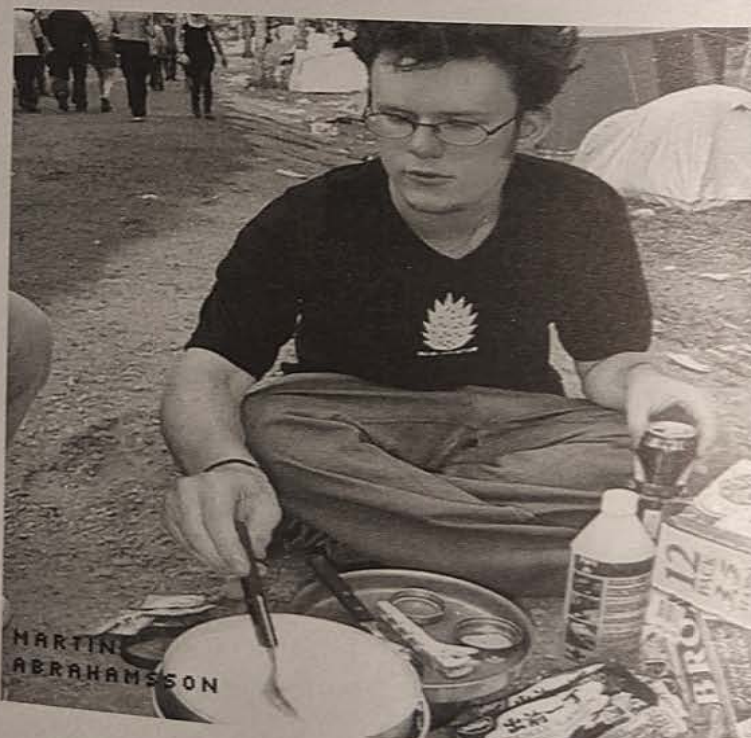
Grooves: What are your thoughts on CD-R labels?

Abrahamsson: They're good mostly because they offer good music at a low cost both for the label and the people who buy the records. For me, it's not how the music is made or which medium it travels by which is the important thing: It's just the music. Nothing else matters. That's why sometimes Saundart sleeves and artwork is very sparse or dull, because I've put most of the time into the music instead of creating artwork which you obviously can't listen to anyway.

Of course it's nice to have a well-designed sleeve to look at, but to me the music means so much more. I'd rather release good music with ugly artwork than bad music on really slick see-through vinyl any day.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Murre Krakowski's *Naken Under Huden* is forthcoming on Saundart.

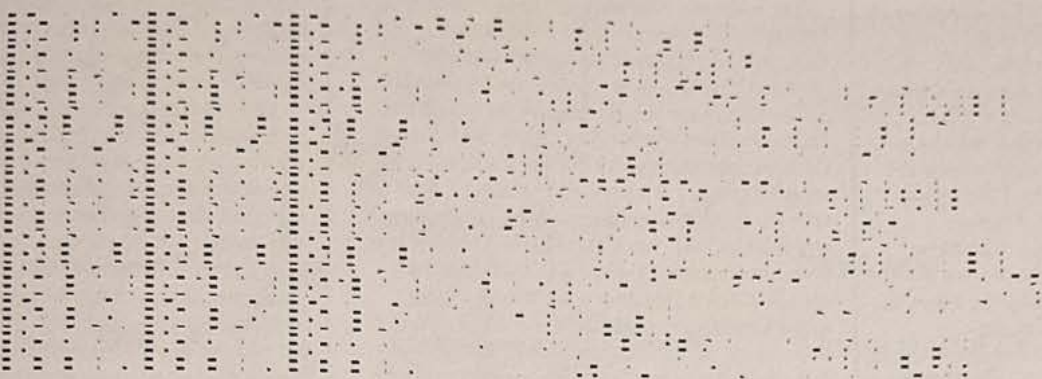


MARTIN ABRAHAMSSON

NUMMER EEN

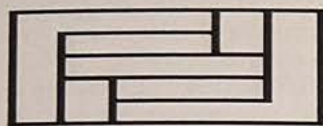


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1999

12k Mirrors Taylor Deupree's Metamorphosis

Y2K? Bah. Your attention should be focused upon the 12k label and its figurehead/impresario Taylor Deupree. Chances are good that you've encountered Deupree in one of his numerous solo or collaborative guises, such as Prototype 909, EOX, and SETI—exemplars of North American post-rave electronica. The imprimatur of his undertakings as Escape Tank, Human Mesh Dance, Arc, Futique, and Unit Park encouraged a generation of techno technicians to pursue experimental and ambient projects. Deupree's design and typeface work for labels like Caipirinha and Instinct has given a distinct look to the packaging of electronic music.

In some ways, the self-run 12k label is simply the next station along Deupree's winding route. "12k was never planned ahead of time at all," he explains. "It was purely a reaction to Silent Records' backing out of their contract to release [Human Mesh Dance's] *thesecretnumbertwelve*."

"I got so pissed off that I decided to release the album myself. So, pretty much then, on the spot, I needed to start a 'label.' The idea from the start has been to keep it low key, do very little press, keep it limited, and keep it secret for as long as possible."

"I thought [12k] made a perfect label name," Deupree continues. "It's short, abstract, technological, graphically nice—and it's pronounced the same throughout the world. No one can mispronounce it!"

thesecretnumbertwelve (12k.1000) finally emerged in January of 1997, announcing the first appearance of Deupree's Human Mesh Dance project since 1994's *Mindflower* (on Instinct). Much had changed. *thesecretnumbertwelve*, 70 mysterious minutes of cloud-form melodies, angelic cooing, and intermittently fluttering beats—not entirely dissimilar to certain FAX label classics or Wolfgang Voigt's later Gas works—launched 12k in fine fashion. "Because the first release was rather spontaneous," he says, "I didn't have a plan for my label's sound."

"As my tastes changed and songs were produced, I knew I was finding a direction—minimal and synthetic—which I still think applies to all of the 12k releases. Not until the large gap between the release of *Comma*, and the *.aiff* compilation did I establish what is now the direction and sound of the label."

12k's deeper roots become apparent as Deupree retraces his humble beginnings. He relates that he was drawn to electronic music ever since his first exposure to an older cousin's new wave records. Around the same time, his parents bought him "Autobahn" for Christmas ("I'm not even sure what inspired them to do that!"), fueling a fire started by Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" and Jean-Michel Jarré. "Then," he explains, "seeing musicians like Howard Jones—really the first mainstream 'one-man band'—I was floored."

"From that point on, I knew I wanted to be involved in electronic music. It was never a lashing-out or rebellion against more traditional things. It was just what appealed to me, maybe because I was brought up in the age of early home computers. I had a TRS-80 and an Atari 2600, and I spent most of my free time at the video arcade. I think those early lo-tech electronics have subconsciously inspired me to do what I'm doing today with pure tones and bleepy sounds."

Deupree pays tribute to such lo-tech avatars on the Arc vs *Tiny Objects in Space* collaboration (12k.1001) and on Drum Komputer's *Alphabet Flasher* (12k.1002). Arc is an alias that Deupree and Savvas Ysatis have used for releases on KK Records' Radical Ambient imprint. *Tiny Objects* debuts a new Deupree solo identity. The five Arc tracks present superior samples of minimalist, mid-tempo beatcraft with an icy, wind-warped disposition, jumpy Axis-esque cycles, and clean Detroit melodic lines. Drum Komputer reunites Deupree with P909/Unit Park partner Dietrich Schoenemann. Billed as "robot music for the soul," *Alphabet Flasher's* busy blend of post-electro swing, brittle ambience, re-jigged samples, and progressively funky programming is a highlight of the early 12k catalog.

"I've always been interested in sounds that don't exist anywhere else besides within the machines," Deupree says. "Very otherworldly, synthetic sounds."

"I was 13 when I got my first synth. Since that first



day, my attitude has been along the lines of 'if I want something to sound like a real instrument, I'll use a real instrument.' So, ever since my early days of programming and sound design, I never went for emulating real sounds. I'm always more interested in creating something entirely new."

It becomes evident that Deupree wants to maintain distance between 12k and his previous activities. "I think it was necessary to disassociate myself from my musical past, definitely," he says. "Although I feel the quality of my output with P909, SETI, and the other projects was very high, I never felt like I had any place. I felt like I was instead following trends, and it was very important for me to be a part of something really new—to help create something new as opposed to following where others had already gone."

Deupree has since abandoned many of his alter egos and continued recording exclusively under his own name. 1998's *Comma* (12k.1003) is not only the first Taylor Deupree solo album presented as such but also one of the first 12k titles to accurately reflect his/12k's solidifying identity. Based on exactly controlled repetition and fractional shifts, *Comma* maps Deupree's actively synthetic sound designs over an unyielding (generally 4/4) beat matrix. The same year's *Tower of Winds*, Deupree/Ysatis' opening entry in Caipirinha's Architettura series (which pairs experimental electronic artists with an architectural inspiration) actually marks what Deupree considers the turning point in his music. "Everything I've done since has been under the name 'Taylor Deupree,'" he explains. "I think that

maybe it's been my way of telling myself that I've finally found who I am—that my music has finally become 'Taylor Deupree's' without the need for hiding behind another name."

12k's turning point would follow, with the release of the exemplary *.aiff* (12k.1004) in February of 1999. With its name borrowed from the digital sound-file format and its participants culled from the then-scattered and untitled international underground of minimalist "microscopic sound" artists, 12k's first label compilation has since become a defining statement. In presenting the activity of such artists as Komet (Rastermusic's Frank Bretschneider), Dum's Kim Rapatti, Goem, Klip, and Deupree himself as evidence of a new current of post-techno electronic experimental composition, *.aiff* (and it's even more definitive Caipirinha-released follow-up, *Microscopic sound*) argues a case for classification. "There were no guidelines for *.aiff*," Deupree says, "because the musicians I approached were the theme. They already had what I was looking for..."

"While I didn't think much about it at the time of *.aiff*, I knew that, with *Microscopic sound*, I was doing something that definitely had not been done here before. I think that's a very important album, and I hope that *.aiff* and *Microscopic sound* will continue to be viewed as important releases."

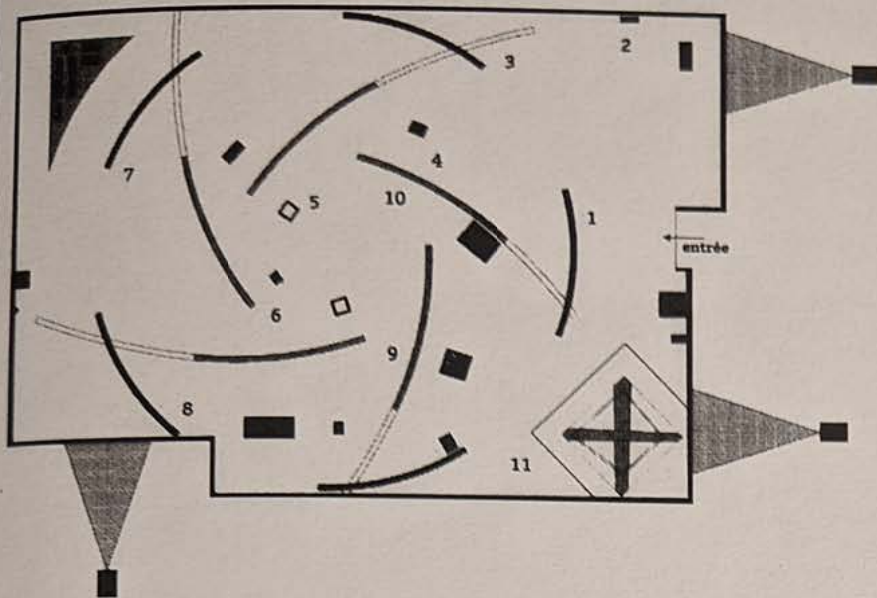
On his recent projects, Deupree has chosen to credit himself as "composer"—a decision that makes sense in light of his explanation. "I use the terms fairly loosely," he says. "I like 'composer' more than some of the other crediting terms."

"Written by" implies that you're actually writing music. Are we really writing music down? "Producer," to me, implies someone who produces other peoples' music. I think what I do is create sonic compositions, just as I would create photographic or graphic compositions. Thus, I'm a composer."

Here, the lines between Deupree's graphic design and his musical activities begin to blur and merge. "I don't think the two have paralleled each other until recently," he explains. "But most certainly now that 12k has found its niche, it's very important for me to have parallels with the music, the packaging, and the design. Each inspires the other."

.aiff brought Deupree into contact with Dan Abrams (Shuttle358), a Californian art student whose ingenious designs have figured prominently in many of 12k's unconventional packages. For *.aiff*, Deupree worked with Abrams to realize a translucent mylar representation of the label's 5" floppy-disc logo—laser-cut to allow the compilation's plastic insert and disc label to peer through strategic holes. His own Shuttle358 debut, the *Optimal* LP (12k.1005), arrives in a traditional jewel-box but with striking blue-toned artwork integral to the disc's eerie atmospheric spell.

Optimal certainly stands out among 12k's latter releases. A gorgeous electro-organic system of breathy blue ambient sighs, subtle DSP tweaking, and intermingled frequencies, the album is as current a piece of ambient art as one is likely to find. As the ripples play and splash across *Optimal's* vast oceans of digital sound, Abrams offers proof that ambient music can still be both completely relevant and transcendently beautiful.

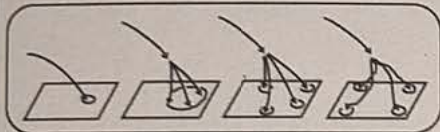


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—Digital Intersect Volume #1, Issue #1



TMA-2

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—Paul Allwood,
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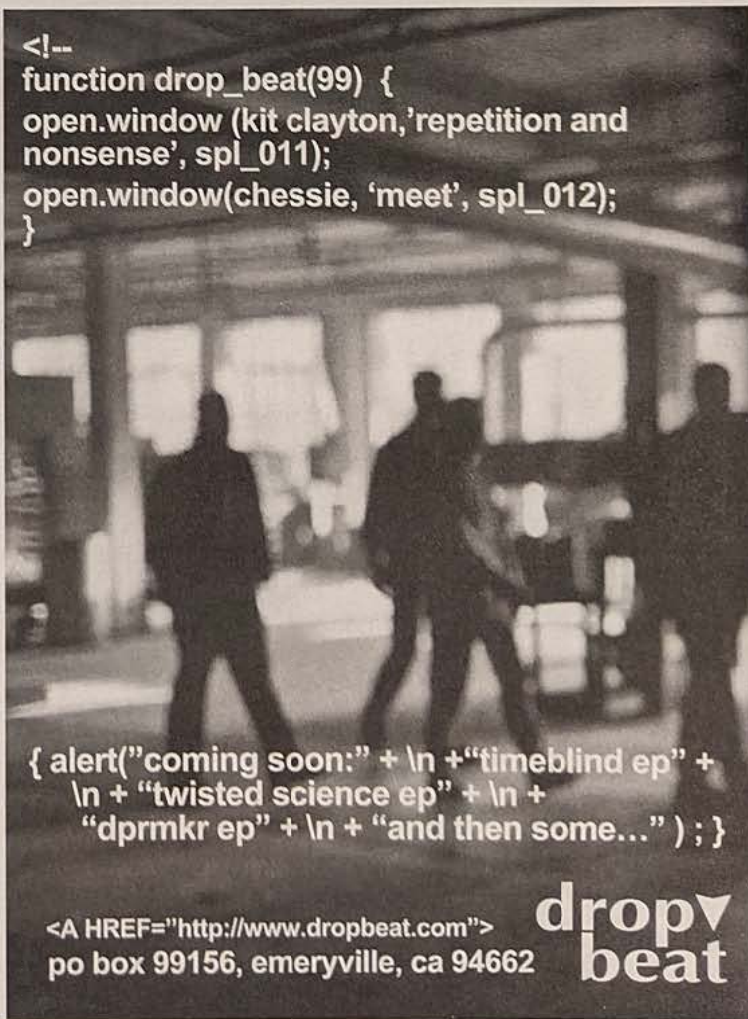


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}
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An Englishwoman in Detroit

**Tamara Warren talks
to Hannah Sawtell,
first lady of the
Planet E label--and a
DJ in her own right.**

**Photo:
Nicola Kuperus**

Hannah Sawtell's voice carries over the crowd in the Irish tea room. People grow quiet as they listen to her speech, attuned to her British accent. Her voice is deep, resonant, and self-assured, unmasking the strength that lies behind her slight physique and fine features. Her energy and resolve are infectious as she speaks of the things she cares for—music, art, her husband, her friends, family and her homeland.

People are staring, maybe because they are not used to seeing a striking young English woman sitting in the middle of a Detroit eatery, but Sawtell pays no mind and takes a sip of her juice. She confesses to being a bit ill at ease, though her manner is in no way suspicious. She says she does not like to be under a microscope; she is not

personally seeking the limelight.

At age 27, Sawtell has created a life that is compelling. She has earned a reputation as a sought-after soul and funk dj in Detroit and far beyond—not an easily earned mark in Motown for a woman of her stature. In her other roles, Sawtell has been a catalyst and helped reshape one of Detroit's legendary dance music labels, Planet E. She lives and works in Detroit to be with the man who created the label, Carl Craig, her husband. "He doesn't follow the whole romantic view of what an artist should be," she says. And, with a laugh, she jokes, "He calls me quality control."

Her relationship may have given her confidence and a sense of security, but it takes a certain kind of strength to have left London, friends, and family to move to Detroit—and to make it here. "I did not want to leave England. When I got here, I didn't have anything to do, I didn't have any friends," she says, remembering the move she made 3 years ago to Craig's hometown. "We believed in each other so much we were willing to give up things." She says it with a casual shrug about a trip many people would never consider.

She reverts back to 1995 when she met and married Craig after being acquainted with him for a short time. The two became engaged after a 5-day interlude, a last-minute rendezvous in Australia. When she first met Carl Craig, Sawtell would not have predicted the rapid course her life would turn. She was DJing in London clubs and battling male stereotypes in record shops. "My real love was jazz and soul; that was my thing," she says.

She was not a Detroit techno fan and had no patience for this foreign music the first time she heard Craig DJ. "What the fuck is this crap? I just don't get it. It's totally not me at all," she says of her first reactions to techno. "I knew maybe three records, but I didn't think of them as techno.

"I owned 'The Art of Stalking' by Suburban Knight, which is still want of my favorite records, 'Nude Photo' or one of Derrick's [May] other records and Mad Mike's 'Galaxy to Galaxy'—a fucking jazz record."

Sawtell had a talent for visual art, but music became another artistic avenue for her to pursue. She played the saxophone and sang in the choir, but became engaged when she discovered her love for vinyl, listening to late '80s pirate radio. "I used to listen to early hip-hop, funk, soul, disco, R&B," she recalls. "It was always around me, as well as [my] being into indie rock as well. I was into a bit of everything."

She got her start in the business side of music working on promotions for Creation, an indie rock label. She decided she wanted a more grassroots involvement in the business and went to work for Black Market Records, a well-known London record shop. She was one of two women working in the store. However, Sawtell was stuck at Black Market, working in merchandising. "I wanted to work behind the record counter," she says. "The owner wouldn't let me work there, basically because I was a woman."

Sawtell moved on to another shop called Honest John's, where she was actually selling, behind the counter. This store specialized in the style of records she preferred, as she says, all black music -- funk, disco, reggae, house, hip-hop, etc. Ironically, Craig saw Sawtell DJ first, before the two became friendly. "With a crowd that was 90 percent Black, there I was, a White, female DJ," she says. "The last song I played was a Jackson's record; people went crazy.

"It was the best night I had there -- imagine like 800 people gigging to like, soul, funk and hip hop-- Carl was totally freaked out. The next day he

showed up at my work. On our first date, we went to Wendy's and the arcade."

"After only being acquainted for 2 months, he called me and said I want to get to you know properly," she says of her delirious courtship. "I'm going to Australia to DJ next week. It's your birthday; I want you to come."

At first she said no, but changed her mind after reprimands from friends. "It was like as soon as I got off the plane. It really was like something out of a movie -- I saw him and he saw me," she remembers. "We got in the cab and just started snogging. After 5 days I fell in love."

Even after marrying, Sawtell had no intention of working for her Craig's label. "I didn't really like anything he did until I got to know him. I never heard it. I really felt quite ashamed that I'd never heard it before," she says. They decided to return to Detroit, for Craig's music career. "Then when I moved here I stopped DJing. When I moved here pretty much everything stopped."

She accompanied Craig to the Planet E office a few times. "I noticed things they didn't have—a proper mailing lists or databases," she says. Drawing from her record label background, Hannah started to make lists of what she thought the label needed: "We decided to relaunch Planet E."

Now, with her own project, a brand-new jazz label called Community Projects, and international buzz over Craig's revamped Innerzone Orchestra project, Planet E seems to be doing quite well under Sawtell's contributions. As a woman in business, she has overcome stereotypes and defiantly stuck out criticism. "Men are scared of me," she says. "I'm not a bitch. I'm sick of it."

She thinks about putting out records in the independent sector. "I'm working with young producers who are trying to make something with their hearts. Everyone has their part to play, and everyone has their part to play in different ways," she says. "That's me making my statement against all the run of the mill commercial crap.

"Even in the world of techno there are people who are trying to do something different, and people trying to do the same old crap."

Sawtell decided she missed DJing and playing the soul music she loved best. "I realized, 'Fuck it, I'm going to do what I want,'" she says. "At the end of the day, people sense when you're genuine and if you're a music lover, whatever kind of music it is." At first she was tentative about playing out in Detroit, but to her surprise she was well-received and now is frequently booked for gigs.

"That's my solution to the problem of musical play, to play randomly across music that is soulful and spiritual," she says. "That's the description of the music that moves me."

Weeks later, Hannah is DJing at one of her regular gigs. People are buzzing, as the music seems to melt away the stale atmosphere of the tiny bar room. It's a low-key event, and Hannah knows how to create the vibe accordingly. She plays several classics, meddling with the pitch, adjusting knobs to fit the track to her own distinct ear. A good friend watches her and has nothing but praise for her manner, talents and creativity. Her husband stands by in the shadows, but Sawtell is brightening up the dim lighting with a smile tugging at her lips. Away from the office, behind the tables, Sawtell has shifted into DJ mode, without a trace of daytime stress.

In the interlude, as a woman who has earned her own twist of success in a male-dominated arena on two continents—in record stores, promotions, as a DJ and artist—she will sail into her grooves as smoothly as she changes the record.

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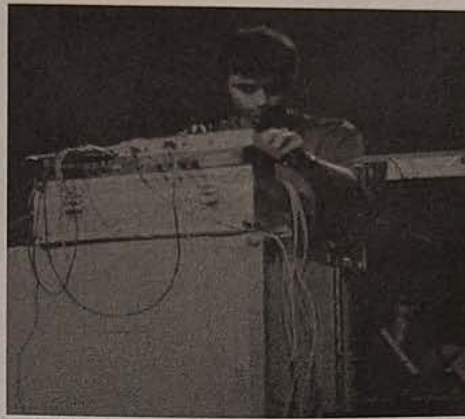
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Covering the Spectrum With Jega

Dylan Nathan tells Chester Blaze why he loves Cubase and cheers against Warp.

Exposure for Dylan Nathan is slim. After many releases on the exalted Skam label, a domestic distribution deal with Matador, and his present residence with Planet μ , there is still no existence of Jega on the web—and he's determined to change that. Multifaceted talents, ranging from a degree in architecture to computer 3-D modeling to working as an audio engineer, allow Nathan to become one of few artists who can independently create their entire presence. With a new album being released on Planet μ —entitled *Geometry*—coordinating a freelance media graphics company based in England, and plans for a VRML web site, Nathan is definitely pressed for time, but squeezed a few minutes out to meet with *Grooves*.



Melissa Fox

Grooves: I know you have a formal education in computers, but rather in graphics than sound. How do you use them for your sound creation?

Jega: They allows me to play around with sound, mess it up a bit. Sometimes I can just sit there and dab at the computer and mess around with what I've given it and then maybe sample a song from that. Maybe using the computer as some kind of catalyst sometimes for ideas and shit, which means you end up with something more individual, because you're starting so abstract. It's fucking great.

Grooves: Do you ever use the graphical representations of sound programs like MetaSynth, which seems to be the most popular?

Jega: That's cool. MetaSynth is such a cool idea, but the way the filters work in it are quite unique, so no matter how mashed the sound gets, it leaves its own touch on the sound.

Grooves: Sounds transformed through meta synth start to sound formulated...

Jega: Yeah. Leaves like a sheen. Aphex loves that program, so, in a way, when you use it, you're going to be creating sounds like Aphex, which is what many people want. There's so many different ways of creating sounds and fucking with it on the computer, you can start anywhere—you can start with a song and then break it down.

Grooves: Have you ever used the programs designed by the french agency IRCAM?

Jega: There's a program they make called MAX—kind of standard. It's not worked with MIDI, so it's made for sequencing notes and stuff, but you can use it to do all sorts of stuff. Like linking bits of hardware to your music so you could link motion sensors to the tempo of your music or the pitch or the scale and do really insane things. Like, if you've got an oscillator or something that's slowly moving between one and zero and get that to adjust the tempo of your song so your song's constantly speeding up and slowing down, or just insert something that will every now and then randomize your rhythm or the melody or just fucking your stuff

up basically. That's a really good program, good stuff.

Grooves: What about Logic?

Jega: I'm less into Logic, and everyone does say, "Use it, use it, use it"—but everyone says that about Max in 3-D modeling—"use studio max—it's the best." But it doesn't really matter what you have; it's what you do with it...In Cubase VST, you can do this shit, I've done it—I don't know if anyone else has done it—but I've been getting into importing loads of random sounds into the computer, like tapping on a table or bustling traffic or whatever. And put it in the program and ask the computer to look at all the different peaks and all the sounds basically in your big lump of sound and ask the computer to quantize that, so what you end up with is noise that is making rhythm because it's quantized. And it's insane—you can turn anything into a beat or a melody. Or tuning noise so it turns into melodies.

Grooves: In your past releases, like on your first Skams, it's a lot darker, a lot harder. In one example, you use a sample—"hardcore will never die." You still feel that way?

Jega: Oh yeah. That "hard core will never die" thing is just basically stay young. It's so easy to look at what the kids are listening to now and go, "oh now, that's shit; it was so much better when I was a kid" and everything fucking says that, and I promised I would never say that, so "hardcore will never die" is part of that.

The reason that the Skam tracks are darker is generally because Andy Maddox, who runs Skam, obviously chose the tracks that suited his label. *Spectrum* was kind of more what I was feeling at the time—I had a lot more say in that. But *Geometry* is harking back to the darker more—it's more melancholy and it's not up.

Grooves: On *Spectrum*, there is definitely a sense of innocence and lots of free energy throughout it. At parts, it reminded me of some old children's video games and that gave it some very ethereal qualities that weren't present in your work before.

Jega: I just throw it out there, and some tracks sit that way with other people. I think Matador

probably tuned into that kind of sound off of *Spectrum*—the fact it was quite earthen, quite poppy in places. It had a lot more melody in there maybe. So they were probably more into that, which is probably why *Geometry* is quite different from that. I really don't want Matador to expect that sound from me—I'd rather they drop me than I ended up doing the same shit all the time.

Grooves: Did [Matador] initially approach you to come domestic or was it your choice to find some other distribution?

Jega: I'm so slack when it come to the business side of music, so they kind of just approached me. It's always best when someone's approaches you, though, because you're in such a better position to negotiate. Generally, they are more into your music. If you push it on other people, then you never know what's going happen, really.

That was just quite lucky, I suppose. I'm quite glad it's getting this kind of indie launch in America rather than like on a dance kind of thing, like being launched on the back of [a] jungle type of thing. Indie music generally, I think, could be defined as thinking music. It's mainly aimed at students, I suppose, but they are thinkers generally. So it's not a problem. I can totally see there being a link between the two. The only other alternative would be dance, and, although I'm into dance, I don't think it really sits well with my music.

Grooves: Electronic music from abroad has been doing well for those labels that have started to pick it up—like Matador and Nothing.

Jega: Yeah—Nothing seems to have fucked up a little bit recently, which I can't say I'm upset about, because Warp is so massive, almost like tDR [the Designers Republic] is with design, but Warp is like—they just have the money. Some artist will make it on a small label, and instead of them doing better and better and better, and that label getting bigger and bigger, Warp just goes, "Here's a lot of money; we're having them," and then all these little labels just die.

Like Squarepusher was on a label called Spymania, got signed up, Spymania's fucked. Boards of Canada are on a label called Skam, Boards gets signed, Skam's fucked...It's shit, because who gets shit on are these little labels, and that's what makes the scene really. And so the fact that they went with Nothing, and it maybe fucked up a bit, it's, like, cool—I made it without their help type of thing.

Grooves: So is *Geometry* going to be release in the UK on Planet μ still?

Jega: Yeah, I think so. Planet μ is so lush, because it's kind of such a new label that it hasn't got any fixed sound yet, so we can still mess around and do shit on it.

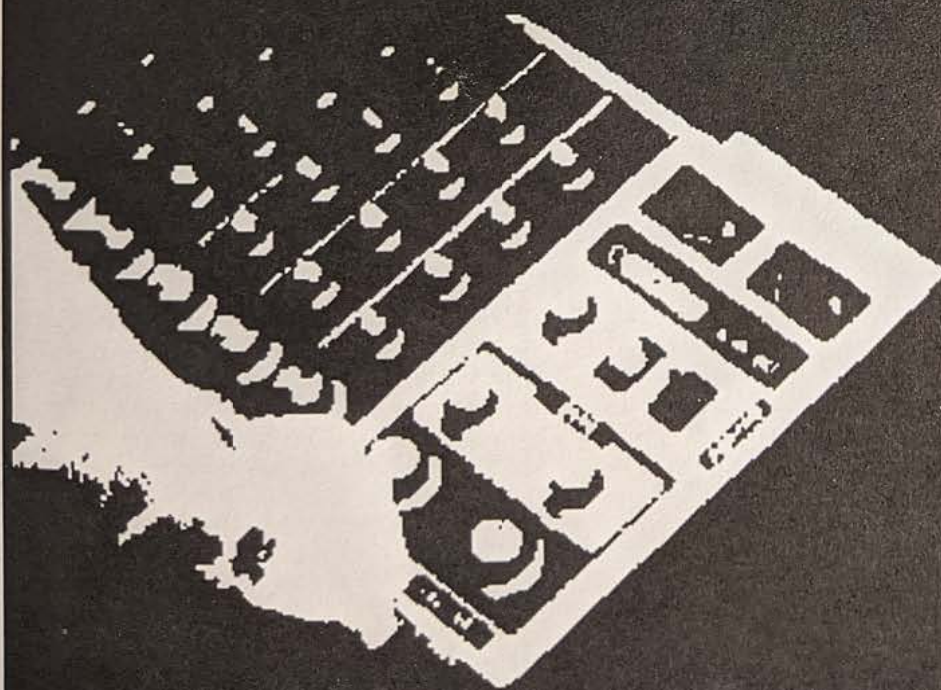
Geometry is forthcoming from Planet μ / Matador.



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ANDREA PARKER'S ARP-CHESTRA

After a lengthy tie-up, her debut *Kiss My Arp* is finally driving the booty-quaking highway. Sean Portnoy rides along.



Andrea Parker has waited 4 years for her debut full-length, *Kiss My Arp*, to finally see the light of day. In the meantime, she has released notable 12"s on Mo'Wax like *Ballbreaker*, and a well-received electro mix album as part of the *DJ Kicks* series from Studlo K7, as well as remixing the likes of Depeche Mode and Steve Reich. After her recent US tour supporting *Arp*, Parker did a quick fax'd Q & A with *Grooves*.

Grooves: You were over in March for the Winter Music Conference—what was that like? How did the tour you just wrapped up go? What's it like to play in Detroit considering your interest in techno?

Parker: Well, the Music Conference was great, but it's always a bit worrying coming on after a DMC champion (DJ Craze). But, still, I suppose I made my mark when I got arrested for noise pollution when I played "Ballbreaker." I heard the label had to pay \$300, so I'm sorry about that, IK7.

About Detroit—it was great to be invited to play there, after all these years of collecting their records, and to meet up with all the booty boys in the new scene that's going on out there. Lots of bass!

Grooves: How did the new album evolve over the 4 years it took to get released?

Parker: After all's been said and done, there are now four versions of the album, so I think that says it all about evolution.

Grooves: Are film soundtracks any influence on the strings used on the new album? At times, they sound like they're from a Hitchcock or film noir movie?

Parker: There's been many great film scores, but I haven't necessarily taken influences from any...It's an area I'd like to get into.

Grooves: How do you go about getting your drum sounds and doing your beat programming?

Parker: I normally make about 60 sounds from the analog synths—kicks, snares, and sequences and any mad sounds I can find (the more bottom end, the better)—and then program them to make a rhythm. The 808 usually goes in there somewhere.

Grooves: Why the use of vocals on the album? Was there an interest in mixing vocals in with traditionally instrumental genres like techno and electro? Why did Mo'Wax release an instrumental version of the album?

Parker: Sometimes I want to listen to instrumental music and sometimes vocals: It was nothing more complicated than that. I wanted to make an album that showed both sides. Mo'Wax were happy to release an instrumental version, because I wanted them to.

Grooves: How did you meet David Morley, and what's the collaboration process with you two like?

Parker: I was DJing at Lost in London and Renaat from R & S walked in as I played David's strangest record, "Evolution." He asked me if I was a fan—I said yes. So he asked if I'd like to go to Belgium and work with him. Once I walked in to his studio and saw his mad collection of analog synths, I thought, "Why not give it a go?" That's when we created Two Sandwiches Short of a Lunchbox.

Grooves: Why the special attachment to the Arp? Do analog synths just sound better than digital ones (and what is "better" about them)?

Parker: Call me old fashioned, but I like much dirtier, heavier sounds. The fun part for me is making my own sounds as opposed to digital keyboards, where

there's 60 boring presets.

Grooves: Why was [the older track] "Melodius Think" added to the album?

Parker: It's always seemed to be well received everywhere I go, and it's part of my history, and I wanted it on my first album.

Grooves: How did the Steve Reich remix project come about for you?

Parker: I've always been a fan [of Reich]. Anyone who's been such a pioneer will have influenced musicians right across the board, so when I was approached to become involved in the remix album, I was really happy to do it.

Grooves: What do you think of the "new" electro sprouting up from the likes of I-F and Ectomorph and on labels like Interdimensional Transmissions?

Parker: Obviously, I'm a huge fan of Kraftwerk and '80s electro and people like Ectomorph, Anthony Rother, Drexciya, Dopplereffekt. Panic Trax and Aux 88 have paved the way for the new style of electro for the '90s. People said there was a massive electro revival a while ago, but, in fact, what most of them were doing was taking from an old Newcleus or Bambaataa record and calling it new-style electro.

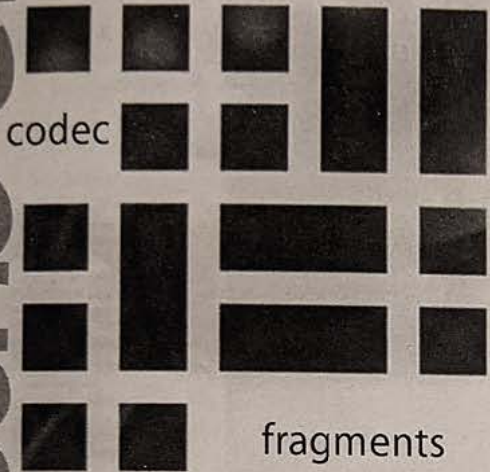
Grooves: Any new records you're enjoying?

Parker: Yes, I'm enjoying all the booty records I got given [in] Detroit and innovators like Tipper (on Higher Ground), Terranova, Mixmaster Mike, the Xecutioners.

***Kiss My Arp* is out now on Mo'Wax/Beggars Banquet.**

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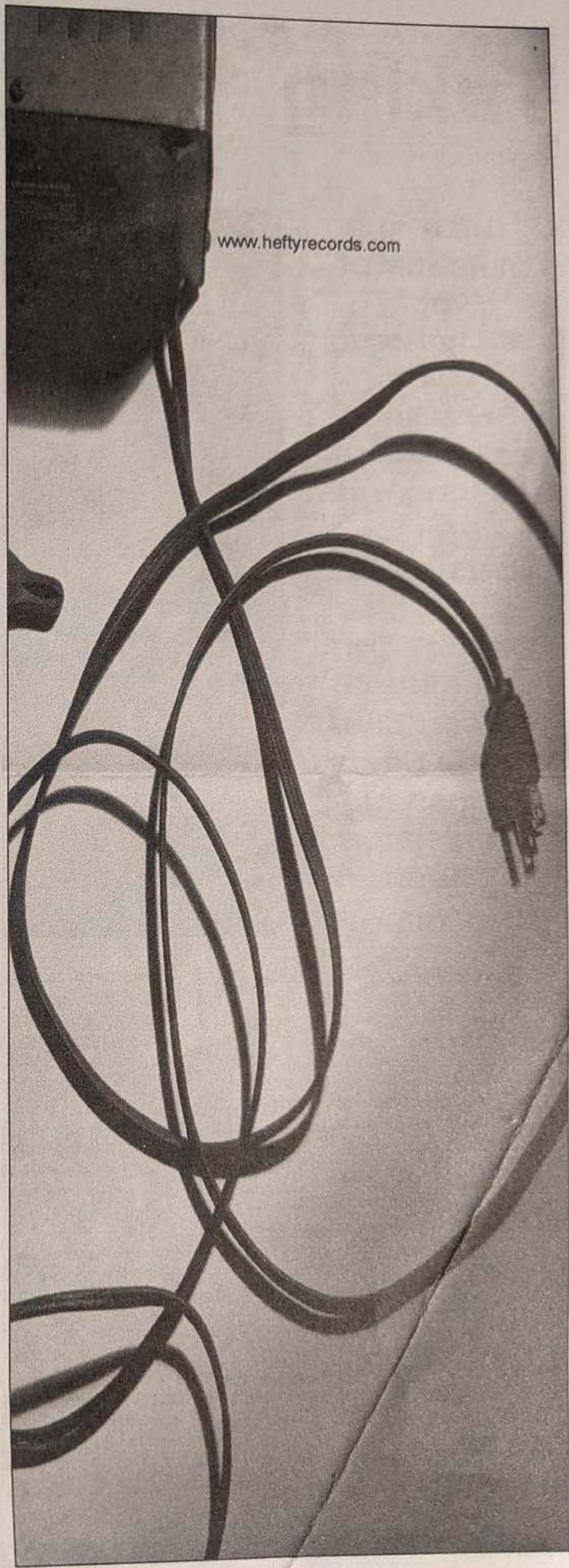
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Taking the Piss With μ -Ziq

With the release of *Royal Astronomy*, Mike Paradinas talks about working with Bjork, recording with Speedy J, and drinking to Fatboy Slim. Text: Sean Portnoy. Illustration: Jason McCollum



and bass sounds of tech-step or something, but then adds this tremendous snare roll to it. I am curious about your feelings about drum n' bass circa 1999. Obviously, you're still certainly using those breakbeats, but do you listen to a lot of it? My sense is that a lot of "genres" of it are too formulaic at this point—what do you think, especially about the drill n' bass "scene" you have gotten associated with?

μ -Ziq: I listen to drum n' bass almost exclusively: drum n' bass and classical. I don't think drum n' bass is formulaic at all; I think it's in good health, actually. There are shitloads of good records out—at least one a week. In regards to drill n' bass, I'll leave that to other artists to pursue. I've said it all on *Lunatic Harness* and *Brace Yourself*. I prefer to go in more melodic waters.

Grooves: Relatedly, where do you think electronic music is headed in the (near) future? Even Squarepusher, a person you've mentioned as an influence, seems kind of restless these days, dabbling in this genre and that sound. Have you heard anything recently that you think is particularly new and fresh-sounding?

μ -Ziq: My new album is wicked! Dave Tipper's new album is good. Electronic music is heading in different places all the time. I give a shit about where *all* music is headed. I make electronic music, but I'm interested in all music.

Grooves: Why did you start planet μ , and what are future plans for the label? How do you go about picking artists like Jega or Horse Opera to release on the label? Will the label get any kind of domestic distribution here in the states?

μ -Ziq: I started Planet μ so I could put out good music—and to fall back on if my career started to falter! We have a new album called Capitol K, which we just released, which is a very good sort of cohesive mixture of rock and electronics—halfway between Aphex Twin and Mogwai. I pick artists by word of mouth and by listening to tapes. Distribution is a little bit slow due to cash-flow problems; I usually put out about 5 records a year.

Grooves: How did you hook up with Jochem Paap for the *Slag Boom Van Loon* album—and how the hell did you get that title?

μ -Ziq: I've been friend with Jochem (Speedy J) for years—we did a gig together in Scotland in '94. It was his idea to work together, and I said yes, so we recorded at his studio in Holland. *Slag Boom Van Loon* is the name of the security firm that had

Grooves: I notice that an orchestral sound (strings swelling, etc.) creeps into some tracks (like "Scaling," "The Hwicci Song," "The Fear") on the new album. Is this a new influence on your sound? The "Hwicci Song" is really interesting because it has this classical-like orchestration rubbing up against hip-hop sounds.

μ -Ziq: I'm taking the piss—everyone and his dog uses strings nowadays. I just thought I could do it better. I guess it was a bit influenced by Bjork's live show.

Grooves: In addition to "The Hwicci Song," "World of Leather" seems to be another song with a hip-hop influence, both in its shuffling beat and its vocoded vocals. What influence, if any, does hip-hop have in your music?

μ -Ziq: "World of Leather" isn't really hip-hop (the beat is the same on "The Hwicci Song"); it is actually a two-step garage song, which is halfway between a swing beat and a house beat. The melody is more influenced by Primal Scream-type rock. Vocoders are more of an electro than hip hop thing—more like Kraftwerk.

Grooves: Another interesting track is "The motorbike Track," because it has the familiar beats

As Jake Slazenger, Kid Spatula, Tusken Raiders, and, of course, μ -ziq, Mike Paradinas has covered nearly every base in electronic music, from cheesy future-lounge ambience to spastic drill n' bass. Back from a lengthy (for his prolific history) recording sabbatical with his *Royal Astronomy* full-length, the man behind μ -ziq talked to *Grooves* from his UK home.

Grooves: Let's start with the new album. It's been a couple of years since a μ -ziq full-length has come out—is the gap due to time constraints of being a family man? Is your son aware that you make music for a career, and does he enjoy listening to it?

μ -Ziq: No, the gap was because I was on tour with Bjork... If it was a shorter gap, people wouldn't give it as much attention. My son likes "The Fear"—he is aware that I have a studio upstairs. He probably thinks all father's have a studio upstairs, though. He likes to play the keyboard—he'll learn when he gets to school.

Grooves: How did you come up with the title *Royal Astronomy*?

μ -Ziq: From a book by Kurt Vonnegut. He came up with the phrase for people who have no tolerance for change.

rigged his studio in Holland.

Grooves: I guess your last major touring was with Björk. How did you meet her, and what was it like doing the remixes for her?

μ-Ziq: I met Björk on the tour. She picked me to go on tour with her. She is a great fan of Lunatic Harness. I used to see her around quite a lot as well. Remixing her was nice, because she has such a great voice. A great tongue voice!

Grooves: The biggest market for your music seems to be in Japan. Why do you think that is? Have you been there and performed live?

μ-Ziq: Japan is a good market for me, because they buy most of my music. I reckon it's because they are really obsessive, the Japanese. They search out new music a lot more than Americans. I have performed there live. I've headlined gigs there with 1500 people. They shout and scream a lot more—yet they are also more polite.

Grooves: You are releasing a video for "The Fear," which I believe is your first video. What was it like to have a video done? Why was "The Fear" selected—because of its vocal snippets?

μ-Ziq: It was lovely having a video done. I think it's a great marketing tool. It's a work of art, isn't it? Yes, "The Fear" was chosen because of the vocals.

Grooves: I haven't seen a whole lot written about the Tusken Raiders side project you do. Why did you develop that? Also, how do you decide which track is a Tusken track, which one's a Kid Spatula one, which one's a μ-Ziq one, etc.?

μ-Ziq: I released three 12"s that didn't really get to the States—limited editions. Tusken Raiders is more dancefloor stuff, Jake Slazenger is funkier. μ-Ziq is the best stuff, and what's left over goes to one of the others.

Grooves: You have mentioned before that you and Richard James will eventually release another Mike & Rich project. Is this still true, and, if so, when will it be released? How do you guys work together?

μ-Ziq: We did agree to, but we have both been really busy. It hasn't happened yet. Our relationship is fine—we're not bosom buddies, but we still talk occasionally. We only worked together once. We just sort of made very good music together in a studio!

Grooves: Relatedly, it seems a bit odd that Rephlex, a label Richard is associated with, was so supposedly difficult in terms of releasing *Bluff Limbo*. Would a Mike & Rich 2 project be released on Rephlex?

μ-Ziq: If we did another Mike & Rich, it would probably not come out on Rephlex, but I wouldn't really worry about that.

Grooves: What records/tracks that you've created do you still like and think hold up over time, and what ones do you no longer like?

μ-Ziq: I pretty much like all of them and think they all stand up against time, depending on your mood. Except maybe the second Jake Slazenger: Fashionable sounds tire quickly.

Grooves: What do you think of the whole MP3 phenomenon and how the internet will affect the future of music? Are you concerned with lost royalties and things like that, especially when rare releases—like a *Bluff Limbo*—are highly sought after in the MP3 world? Or are you glad for broader opportunities for people to hear limited-release materials?

μ-Ziq: It will be good for more people to hear things they wouldn't normally get. Distribution and information will affect the way people all over the whole world hear music. There will be more direct communication between artists. I'm not concerned with royalties—in Europe, they are putting a plan in effect that will protect the artists. Lots more sites are secure, and the unsecure ones will be shut down.

Grooves: How do you feel to be on Astralwerks with the electronic "stars"—at least here in America—like Fatboy Slim and the Chemical Brothers? Ever want to make a "big beat" track and cash in (asked sarcastically, of course)?

μ-Ziq: Astralwerks do the best work for me. Hut, my UK label, has been very good this year, but Astralwerks has always worked hard. As far as being on a label with Fatboy Slim, at least it means that they can distribute my work well. I wouldn't make big beat unless it was wicked, but I'm not very good at that sort of thing. It's pop music, same as any other rock music—good music will get used for lots of things. It's beer drinking music; it doesn't require very much effort to listen to. I like it though—I'm not knocking it at all.

Royal Astronomy is out now on Astralwerks.



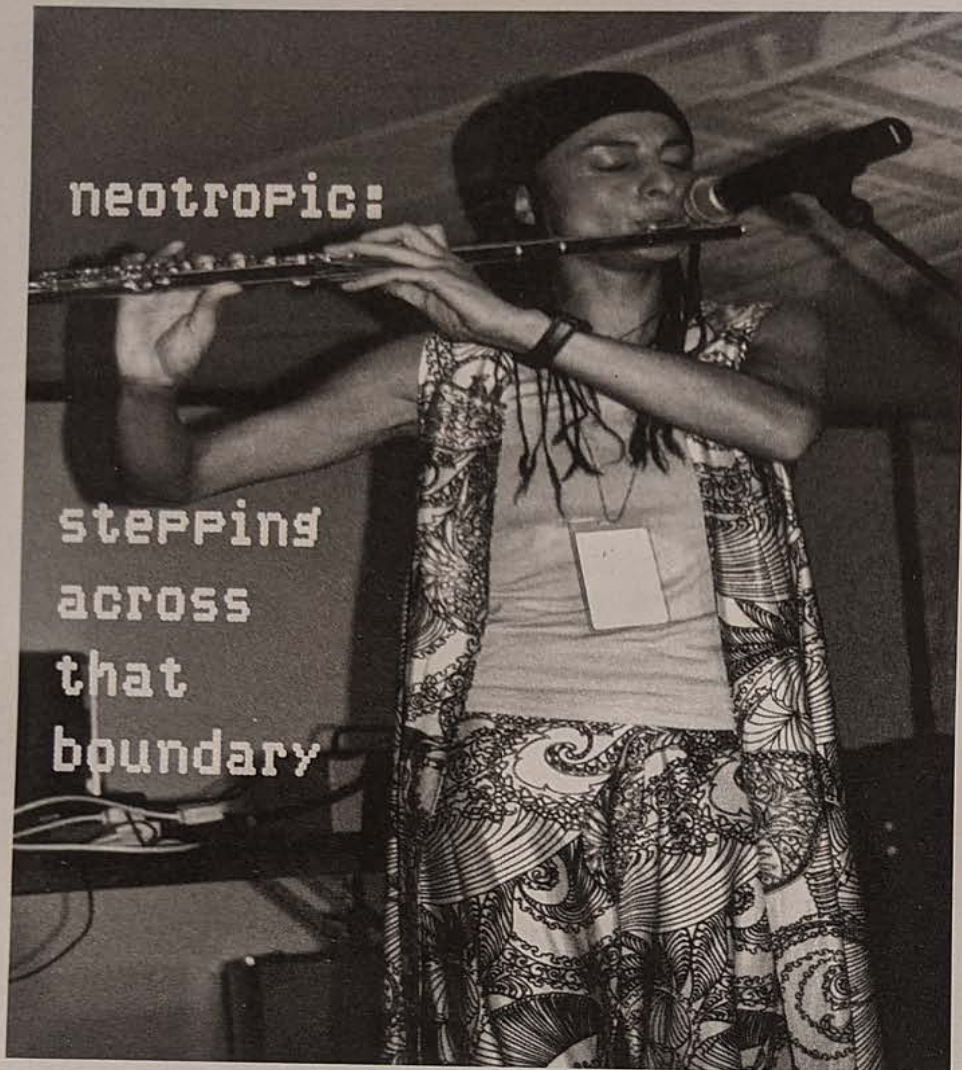
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Jasin Perez finds Riz Maslen taking her Neotropic project afield into acoustic sounds and vocals. Photos: Jasin Perez

The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, held in Indio, California was touted by promoters as "the biggest event ever created in the US in the style of the great European festivals." Constructed in the image of festivals such as Glastonbury and Roskilde, Coachella assembled an incredibly eclectic group of artists from nearly every genre imaginable, over 75 artists in all. For electronic music aficionados, Coachella featured one of the most diverse and compelling line-ups to date, featuring μ -zic, Autechre, Luke Vibert, Bola, Carl Craig, Plastikman, and the Ninja Tune Crew, including Kid Koala, Mr. Scruff, Amon Tobin, and Neotropic.

Neotropic's Riz Maslen and now Paul Jason Fredericks took the stage and put on a stellar performance of dense ambience, beat-oriented material, and even a bit of jazz. With Fredericks on vocals, and Maslen on keys and flute, Neotropic explored a wide range of sounds and genres, touching on some of the darker material found on *Mr. Brubaker's Strawberry Alarm Clock* and *Small Fish With Spine* (another Maslen alias) releases, as well as some newer material that seemed to explore more band-oriented arrangements.

Back stage afterwards, the distant drone of Tool and the clatter of Vibertian beats coalesced beneath

the dark desert sky as Maslen took some time with *Grooves* to discuss Coachella, the evolution of Neotropic, and the *Small Fish's* difficult swim.

Grooves: So after finishing your performance, and observing the whole thing in action, what are your thoughts on the Coachella Festival?

Maslen: I've been very impressed, I mean I think everyone has been very together, it's very well organized, and I think it's a real first, obviously, for this part of the United States. So I think, you know, if they've obviously achieved what they wanted to, then maybe they'll do it again. I mean, this is the first of its kind here, and I've been very impressed. Just by the hospitality of the people who've organized it. I mean, it's been very good.

Grooves: What have you been up to since releasing and touring for your last album as Neotropic [*Mr. Brubaker's Strawberry Alarm Clock*]?

Maslen: Well, most of the stuff I played tonight is basically what's going to be on the next album. I mean there is a lot of stuff I couldn't play because it's a lot more kind of band orientated now: I've actually

got people that play drums and play bass, and, unfortunately, we couldn't bring them all. So we've kind of condensed what is new, and it's a little bit more acoustic...and very different to a lot of the other artists today.

Grooves: So you are shifting towards doing more acoustic material?

Maslen: [pauses] Kind of...but, you know, utilizing what I've gained over the last few years doing electronic-based music, and I think for me it's kind of fusing the two together. And I really enjoy working with other people, and I think that's something that I haven't really explored all that much. And when you work with other people, you get a completely different perspective on the way you write.

I basically get them to come and play, and its very free form: I let them do their own thing without actually trying to guide them in any way, because then you get their perspective on it, rather than me saying you play it this way. And then I piece together the best moments of what they've given me.

Grooves: What methods do you use to accomplish this?

Maslen: I use a lot of old, sort of 8-track, quarter-inch tape, which I really like anyway. I do like a lot of analogue kind of based recording equipment, because it's a little bit warmer than digital, but then in saying that, I run a Mac. Obviously, I kind of use the two together, so hopefully there's a kind of middle ground. But it's a lot of fun working with real drummers, a double-bass player, a guitarist that I kind of use, and there's a violin player who couldn't come tonight, unfortunately, but she uses it with MIDI.

Grooves: Are there any plans to tour with this full-band lineup?

Maslen: Yeah, that's the next step for us. It's obviously to take what we've created in the studio out on the road, and I think that would be a lot of fun for us: the whole experience of being on stage with other people, you can kind of vibe off each other. Sometimes you're a bit exposed when you're on your own, and it doesn't always work, and it's quite hard to kind of vibe when there's no one else, unless the audience are really receptive.

I think, unfortunately, my music isn't kind of dance orientated, so it's very difficult for people to kind of get a hold of what's really going on. It's kind of nice to do something a bit...take what I've done over the past few years and kind of use that and maybe sort of bring in other people.

Grooves: When is the new album due out?

Maslen: It's kind of one third of the way kind of finished. A lot of the stuff isn't mastered, because we need to kind of go in and rerecord it, but the actual writing is a third of the way through...I want to finish it by the end of this year, so hopefully the middle of next year.

Grooves: Will this album be released by Ninja Tune?

Maslen: It's debatable at the moment; I mean, I don't know, to be honest. I'm not sure if they can actually work with the stuff that I'm writing at the moment. I think its quite hard for them: They have a kind of niche, and they are very good at working

that niche, and I think I've kind of stepped across that boundary right now. And they've been very supportive over the years. You know whether we do this on Ninja or not, it's kind of in the balance at the moment. We're not quite sure. That's not a bad thing.

Grooves: It seems as though, over the years, your output has been continually eclectic. What is the inspiration for all of this?

Maslen: I guess I'm like a sponge. I take in a lot, you know, I kind of just like soak it in, and it's done very unconsciously. I don't actually think about it. And I love music, whatever genre it comes in, and if it inspires me in some way or another, you know, I don't like to have too many boundaries. And that's really important, because I've grown up with lots of music. My mother was a huge Beatles fan, and that's only come into play in the last few years, where I've actually gone back and bought those records. Because I'm inspired by the way they've been produced, the arrangements particularly on the strings and things like that.

And a lot of other stuff, like my father was very influenced by a lot of rock and roll, so it's all kind of coming into place now without me really thinking about, and it just seems like taking on all those influences and channeling them. My parents, when they were home, particularly on a Sunday, it was like the music would be on, and I always remember growing up in an environment [with] John Lennon, Yes, Black Sabbath—quite a weird combination of things.

Grooves: How old were you when you started making music?

Maslen: I started at school. I spent a lot of time being classically trained, and I really didn't enjoy it, in that I found that it was very rigid. And I think, come 16, I kind of rebelled at all that. I ended up working for a lot of bands, just like kind of the tail end of the kind of Goth thing, which is obviously the Cocteau Twins and stuff like that. I was very much influenced by Liz Fraiser and This Mortal Coil, so I was kind of not that Goth. I mean, I did love the Cure; I have to say I'm a big fan of the Cure, their early stuff as opposed to the newer stuff.

But you know, I'm proud of the music that I've grown up with and I've been influenced by, I mean, as I said before it's not about having boundaries.

Grooves: How would you say your "sound" came about?

Maslen: It took me a few years to kind of get my head 'round using kind of things like samplers and that. And I'd always been very much based in bands where it was predominately made by bass, drummer, and guitarist, and I ended up working in a band with a guy that was only two of us, so we sort of had drum machines and stuff, that was kind of my first taste of sitting there and programming a 707. It gave me a bit of insight, and then I ended up just like hanging out in studios, and met people who were using samplers and stuff like that.

It really inspired me, because I'm not a great player of anything, and to suddenly find yourself sort of not in a band anymore and not really knowing where to go, I think I just like kind of found myself sitting for a lot of time in people's studios and just asking what they were doing. And thanks to people like Brian and Gary from Future Sound [of London], who I was lucky enough to work with during

Accelerator and stuff, it was kind of them that encouraged me in the first place. And they opened up a whole new avenue of making music, because they were predominately sample based in those days, and for me it was just like, "Wow, you could do this, and I don't have to be this great kind of piano player or whatever."

It's quite strange now, that I've kind of reverted to back to playing, but I'm glad I've done that kind of apprenticeship, because it's made me really appreciate the structure of music, and how you can be quite avant-garde. And I think that's really important: not to kind of make it too formulaic. I think a lot more music is emotion based; it's not about being too kind of tech-y with things, and I think for me it's kind of channeling those feelings.

It's not about sitting there and being predetermined about where I'm going; I just like sit and maybe fill the sampler with lots of stuff—whether it's been found sound or maybe something that I've sampled off the radio, TV, or whatever—and kind of spending time resampling it, processing it, adding effects, resampling it, and then writing with that. And that's a lot of fun with me, when I start with the core elements and then taking them away and sort of reprocessing them, and I really enjoy that



aspect...

It's about creating an atmosphere, I think, and a bit of tension. I like to have that in music, even if there is a nice kind of melody. It sorts of adds a bit of an edge to it. It's like every time you write music, you're reinventing your sound, and I think that's the hardest job for all of us: not to kind of stand still. I think the problem with a lot of other forms of dance music [is that they] haven't really moved on, it sort of stood still, and I think that's really sad.

And it does make me quite sad, that a big part of dance music has become formulaic, and obviously that's crossed over into a much more contemporary way in popular music. And it's been watered down, again and again. Every time I turn on commercial radio, it's like cringe, and you'll be lucky if you get one decent track on there. I think America has it a lot easier in that you have college radio, [and] to a certain extent, it does play a bigger part in kind of getting alternative music to other people.

Grooves: So the radio atmosphere in England isn't...

Maslen: Well, it's very restricted, and I think, unfortunately, it's very much governed by commercial radio, because it's very much based around listening people, figures, getting celebrities... whatever, and so obviously they have to play popular music that the majority of people will listen to. And it's quite sad; I mean, a lot of the

alternative shows are put on really late at night, and I think that's really quite sad in some ways. But it's a great tool, college radio, and I think it's beginning to break down that whole rock barrier. Not that I'm adverse to rock music, 'cause I'm not, but I think it has been totally dominated by that [more] particularly than anywhere else in the world.

This festival, for instance, is kind of taken away that you can be kind of eclectic and be like Glastonbury. It's just a shame that sometimes things do get commercialized and that's what's happen to Glastonbury I think in a lot of ways. It's about money, rather than about what it was originally about, music, bringing alternative music to people that wouldn't necessarily go out and buy it. It's a bit of a romantic idea, I think, perhaps now, because we live in a capitalist society and you can't escape it.

I think [Coachella] works, though, because it has offered alternatives. It's a shame that some of these acts aren't on the main stage, and I think that would be perfect to kind of intersperse within the kind of big people—I mean, Beck and people like that do offer an alternative side—but within in that, they should kind of have a little strange artist maybe in between. Maybe that's a bit too forward thinking.

Grooves: How did Small Fish with Spine come out, and why is it separate from Neotropic material?

Maslen: Because, originally, I had other material I didn't really think was right for Ninja, and was lucky enough at the time to kind of [have] had a friend who had this small label [Oxygen Music Works] in New York. And his whole philosophy was based in that it's about the music at the end of the day, and I really liked where he was coming from. And it was just another outlet to release music, and, particularly in the states, it kind of gave me another avenue obviously to get to the people here.

Grooves: How did you get involved with your vocalist [Paul Jason Fredericks]?

Maslen: Well, Paul I've known for years; we've been friends for 10 years. And I've always loved him as a vocalist, and to be able to bring someone like him is great. And I really enjoy working with song writers, so he's opened my eyes to a whole new way of working... He's from a whole family of singers, [and] he self-produced his last 12, and it's actually really cool. But he's kind of leaning towards being a bit avant-garde as well, rather than being the kind of traditional Black man that everyone assumes is going to be a soul singer.

Grooves: Is it frustrating, in the music industry, being a woman and having your own act?

Maslen: In as much that I think sometimes, if I was a man, I'd be treated differently. I mean, it doesn't happen that often, but there are moments when it does, and I have to kind of let them go over my head. I'm quite feisty anyway—I don't really take any shit. I mean that's one thing I've learned about this industry, is that you can't sit back and let things or people walk all over you.

Then you tend to get a reputation of being a diva, which is a bit of a pain in the ass, or you're neurotic because you're a woman... I know it's generalized. I've been very lucky, and I haven't encountered it that much. I've got other female friends who have, especially on the DJ circuit I think it's a lot more apparent. Because there is a different attitude, and it's far more competitive, and everyone in this scene is very sweet.

Vienna Calling

Peter Rehberg and Mego Records have been at the vanguard of the digital glitch and laptop jockey movements. Gil Gershman finds out what is next.

Mego has become a global buzzword for category-defying computer music and wayward digital experimentation. Once an obscure Vienna-based label manned by founder Peter "Pita" Rehberg and his associates in art, music, and media design, Mego (which may or may not stand for "My Eyes Glaze Over," the lament of the VDT junkie?) now serves as the hub for a creative international empire of trend-setting artists.

A rare Stateside appearance by Rehberg at New York's P.S.1. Cultural Center afforded the opportunity to catch up with the elusive Mego magnate. After he had surrendering the outdoor stage to an over-eager troupe of obnoxious French DJs, Rehberg and I ducked into a super-sized composite refrigerator. He made a quick mental survey of the appliance's impressive acoustic space—visions of a *Fridge Trax 2* obviously dancing in head—and quickly warmed to the fridge's welcome quiet. The seemingly sub-zero environment offered refuge from the sweltering August heat and humidity of the Bronx and from the incessant Gallic thump filling the sticky summer air. Not even the intrusion of a cheerfully drunk and buck-naked fellow (ah, New York) could budge us from the fridge's cold comforts.

We begin, as all great stories do, at the beginning. An outgrowth of various outposts within Vienna's healthy techno scene (circa 1994), Mego started as a group of friends united with a common goal. Just what that goal might be was neither clear nor terribly important. Rehberg insists that there was never any sort of Five-Year Plan for Mego. He had already cut a record with Ramon Bauer (of Berlin's General Magic), a chilled appetizer of icebox acousmatics and funky minimal techno that would become Mego 001—*Fridge Trax*. Things snowballed from there. "We just developed as a collective," he says. "It wasn't planned—though it looks as though it was. In the end, things just kept falling into place, and... here we are now."

Guided only by the ambition to "put out good music by people we liked" and motivated by the local techno contingent's instant acceptance of early releases such as *Fridge Trax* and *UFO Beobachtungen*, Stuzpunkt Wien 12's (a.k.a. DJ Elin, Auto Repeat) double-pack of silvery post-Detroit rhythms and textures, Mego's family grew by bounds—as did the crew's notoriety in electronica's inner circles and a corresponding reputation for being willfully difficult. Mego 007 may have been a train-spotter-confounding cotton jacket, but Rehberg denies any mischief aforesight.

"Sure, we'd like to see ourselves as somehow different. If not, then what's the point of doing this?" he says. "But it was never really like that. We just naturally did what we enjoyed doing. It came to be seen as different, and we've been regarded as purposefully 'difficult' ever since. But that's never been my intention."

Rehberg, Bauer, and the remaining core members of Mego—Peter Meininger, Berlin associates Heike Neihl and Andi Pieper, and art director Tina Frank—found their artists locally. "More than anything else, it's a very social thing," he says. "We have to really get on with the people—we're like a little gang of mates." Mego's early release schedule alternated titles from in-house projects such as Pita, Rehberg's extreme high-frequency soundlab, and the unmappable, schizo-delirious General Magic with choice records from Vienna's (other) finest—Farmers Manual, Gerhard Potuznik, DJ Pure, Florian Hecker, and enigmatic left-field hip-hoppers DJ DSL and the Sluta Leta crew.

Heads really turned when Mego unveiled *Instrument* and *Hotel Paralel*, suites of dazzlingly unconventional guitar and electronics manipulations by Christian Fennesz. "I'd known [Fennesz]," says Rehberg. "He used to be in a late-'80s band called Maische and was a known musician in Vienna."

"In the mid-'90s, he started doing electronics. Then he approached me one day, gave me a tape, and I told him that we were definitely interested."

Mego's contacts, gradually extending outside Vienna thanks to the boon of modern e-technology, are still made in this directly personal fashion. "Many people send us tapes and demos, and it's very much appreciated that they take interest in what we do," he says. "More often than not, though, the things sent sound like something we've already done."

"The classic line is 'We think this would be interesting for Mego.' But... we've done that! So we don't really want to do things again and again and again. It's like, 'Okay, we've done that sort of CD. Now we'd like to do something else.'"

One recent exception was Barcelona-based duo Evol, whose submitted demo of highly compressed chirps, glitches, and aggressive DSP tactics impressed Rehberg enough for Mego to release an Evol 3"-CD, *Principio*.

Considering latter Mego releases such as Fuckhead's aggro-digital testosterone-fest *The Male Comedy*, Fennesz's brief but brilliant *Plays* EP of Rolling Stones and Beach Boys covers, and "Dr." Bonifacius Nachtstrom's LP-only *17 Songs After Midnight*, a collection of junk-pile pop detritus cobbled together with spastic breakbeats, it comes as no surprise when Rehberg divulges that "For us, it has always been totally natural to have very wide taste in music. We enjoy quite a bit of noise music or slammin' techno or cool guitar sounds."

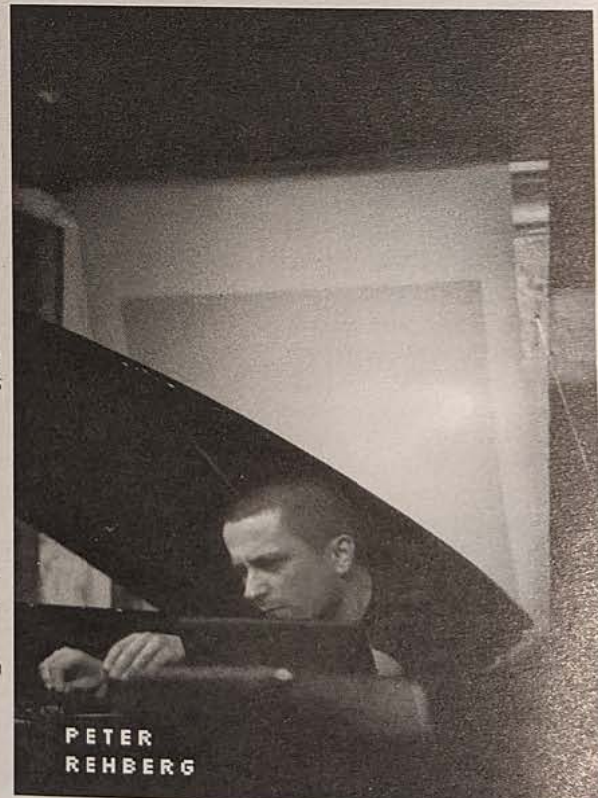
But many fans of the label have been taken aback by live sets by Mego's artists. Live Mego, as witnessed earlier that day at the P.S.1. performance, can be an altogether different beast, a noise-spewing, hard-disk

tweaking, groove-flaying brouhaha. "That was just straight off our heads," Rehberg offers. "We each have our individual sets, and then just have a little jam."

"I mean, electronics is considered a non-jamming kind of music, but we set ourselves up in a situation where we can actually improvise and jam out with each other until we get bored. It doesn't always work, but it's good fun to do."

Such Powerbook jam sessions have opened the floodgates for an exciting new form of electronic improvisation, and Mego is at its forefront. The digital improvisers (colloquially referred to as "laptop jockeys") apply the techniques of musique concrète and other academic process-musics to off-the-cuff live performance situations. Their activities, which require a minimum of set-up time or space, take the form of solo performances, ad-hoc duos and ensembles, or larger configurations involving a cross-section of jazz, rock, and digital musicians—as in the case of the Orchester 33 1/3 (co-led by Fennesz) and the Music In Movement Electronic Orchestra (whose revolving cast includes Rehberg, Fennesz, and such European Free Improv titans as Thomas Lehn, AMM's Keith Rowe, and Phil Durrant). According to Rehberg, "Much of my involvement in this came about through Fennesz. He and I started playing around on the Nickelsdorf free jazz festival circuit. And I also got involved with Jim O'Rourke."

The title of Pita's recent *Get Out* album, which features remarkable pieces improvised during solo



sets in Vienna, Paris, Oxford, Amsterdam, Tokyo, and New York, alludes to the suitcase-and-computer-packing, continent-crisscrossing, anywhere-but-studio-bound exploits that typify a year (1998-1999) in the life of a frequent-flying digital improviser. "I travel around so much," he explains. "And it's just me and my laptop most of my life."

"You need to be a bit more economical when you know that you're running on just so much memory. It forces you to be more aware. There are some things you can't do, but there are a lot of things you can do—with a little resourcefulness."

Whereas many of these performances remain true to improv and are intended to remain "of the moment," others have been recorded for posterity. They provide the most conclusive evidence for a thriving (and bewilderingly incestuous) international digital improv set. Di-n, a cacophonous Rehberg/Fennesz/Mike Harding alignment organized for a one-off event at The Hague's Gallery Keller, has been immortalized on heavy wax by Harding's Ash International [R.I.P.] label. Recordings of the Orchester 33 1/3 have found release through such Austrian labels as Plag Dich Nicht and ensemble principal Christof Kurzmann's own Charizma imprint. A selection of MIMEO events was compiled as Queue and issued by the Perdution Plastics label. Mego has been promising a document of the legendary Fenn O'Berg (Fennesz/Rehberg/Jim O'Rourke) triad for over a year.

Meanwhile, players from within the respected, jazz-schooled European Free Improv community and the international electronic music community sound-clash with increasing frequency and energy. As the scene takes shape, DATs and CD-Rs exchanging hands among musicians looking to recruit likeminded sparring partners or woo appreciative labels, a picture of a vital and extremely significant movement in electronic music emerges.

Over-intellectualize the din, however, and Rehberg's enthusiasm turns to indignation. Despite plaudits from estates both elitist and populist, he maintains an unpretentious attitude towards music. Indeed, Rehberg sees Mego's activities as fitting comfortably into the larger tradition of... rock n' roll? "I've always enjoyed noise," he says. "It's rock n' roll, basically!"

"I like it because there are people who love it and people who hate it. You either get it or you don't; there's no point in explaining it. It's there. Those that don't really, really love it tend to get totally weakened by it, which I can't understand. How can you be weakened by anything that comes out of two sets of speakers?"

"Our approach to noise is totally non-intellectual. I grew up with industrial music as a kid. I was always listening to it in school — that's my background, just noise music. I was listening to that when I was 12 or 13. It was confrontational and attractive to me because I was a kid; I had no friends in school and was a complete freak for listening to this kind of music. But I go back to it now and I feel like, 'Yeah!... I like this! I still want to listen to this!'"

"...I don't feel it's necessary to make excuses for [noise]. It's just good music! Sure, there is room for lots of intellectual debate about certain forms of music. But far too much thought is put into noise. The thing is that it's not really noise that we're into. We're all totally into techno and pop-culture music."

As his scattered appearances and unexpected remixes will attest, you can expect Rehberg to show up in unexpected places. He continues to brave the "local mutants" who come to shows and pester him with questions about what software he uses (in

regards to which, budding musicians and would-be 'mutants' might want to note, his stock answer is an exasperated "Just do it yourself! We didn't go around fuckin' asking everyone what they were doing!"), and vows to surrender no trade secrets if and when the dogs from *Future Music* or *Keyboard* come sniffin' at his heels.

Conversation turns towards the local musical activity that Vienna is witnessing, much of it channeled through Mego's in-house distribution network, M.DOS (www.mdos.at). Rehberg relates that "We started doing that because we've found that it's pretty hard to distribute this kind of music, especially in Europe. In America, we're pretty well sorted. But in Europe—especially in Germany and Austria—it's diabolical!"

"I'd worked in a record shop, so I had knowledge of the logistics of selling and buying records. And Ramon and Andi are very much involved in the Internet and web design, as well as Tina Franck, who does all the artwork. So we put our heads together to come up with a sort of Internet shop, which really, really works! It's a lot of work, but it's a place where people all over the world can come, and they know that they're going to get some excellent music."

Examples of Bauer, Pieper and Franck innovative design can be found all over the constantly mutating Mego site (www.mego.at). "We all sit around and exchange ideas," says Rehberg. "Websites in general are total rubbish. It's just text—and I find it all very boring. So we try to have fun. It's still quite primitive, but just playing around with the ideas... and I'm very keen on the whole e-mail thing."

Mego has also recognized the potential of new "hyper-music" distribution formats. The label's pioneering MP3-only Falsch imprint (<http://falsch.ch>) has released exclusive material by such Mego affiliates as cd_slopper, fon, Mäuse, and Voice Crack. Rehberg welcomes the international networking that the Internet Age has facilitated, and he credits M.DOS with directly fostering an increased sense of camaraderie between Austrian labels. "Because we now represent [labels like Rhiz and Plag Dich Nicht]—selling their stuff to America, Japan, and Europe—we've become something of a central node for Austrian music," he says.

This community spirit blossoms during events such as 1997's Picknick Mit Hermann! concerts, captured in snapshot form on the Rhiz CD of the same name. "That was through Rhiz—a bar in Vienna," he says. "Quite a small place, but they have a good PA system, and it's a convenient space for small events. It's very open."

"They run a label and also organize the Phonotaktik festivals. Picknick was held in Hermann park—a little park in the middle of Vienna. That was really sweet. Every Sunday performers came down—a bit like what we just did [at P.S.1] this afternoon—just sort of chilling out in deck chairs and totally turned on to this electronic music. The public wasn't necessarily receptive at first. But since the whole Vienna hype in the press, people in Vienna have been intrigued. They'd check it out and think, 'Wait a minute... what's going on here?'"

While cautiously dismissive of the "Vienna hype," shrugging it off as fairly meaningless, Rehberg does enthuse about such up-and-coming bands as Radian. "I'm currently very excited about bands like this—a three-piece: bass, acoustic drums and electronics," he says. "They have a really high-end



CHRISTIAN FENNESZ

sound, sort of jazzy drumming, and a nice earthy bass. You hear it and think 'that could have been done 20 years ago!'—but nobody did it. It's so exact, but they're actually not regressive at all."

With M.DOS, Mego is definitely creating a precedent for European distribution and a bridge between the label's own intimate collective and the wealth of Austrian musicians. "Vienna's a small town, and it's just a matter of time before word gets around," Rehberg says. "We get stacks of labels contacting us, some of which we really admire but would never even have dreamed of contacting ourselves. We aren't shifting tons of units, but they still want to be a part of our little thing."

One such unexpected contact even led to a Pita 3" CD mini-mix of the entire catalogue of the ORF-Kunstradio, a prestigious Austrian radio-art/"new music"/new media/multimedia society-cum-label supported through generous artistic grants and government funding. Inevitably, the success of Mego and of such conceptual conceits as Falsch and M.DOS, coupled with insistent hype in the overseas press about the so-called "Vienna scene," has attracted attention from high places. Rehberg reveals that external support has been increasing, raising questions that often lack simple answers. "This has been discussed a lot in the past year," he says. "We've played events where some money has been involved."

"In Europe, the government does fund the arts, though that really only happens in the high cultural circles. We're still probably too populist for them to start throwing money at us. Until now we've just mainly been involved in events..."

"It's not as easy to get funding for your projects as people might think. Most of the money really goes to the wrong places. But it might well happen someday. At the same time, there are discussions about whether it would be all right for us to accept it."

The thought makes Rehberg uncomfortable: "Once you start getting paid by the government..." He trails off, apparently distracted by an internal debate that has yet to be resolved. "They see that

Chester Blaze travels to the California desert to glimpse the finest techno lineup ever assembled in the States.

The first day of the festival arrived after a lengthy search for a campsite that included miles of off-road adventures and lost hours of sleep. Despite the rising temperature of Indio, I left the comfort of air condition and ventured into the gathering hordes. The grounds of the Empire Polo Field were unexpected scenery for a festival in the desert, with lush expanses of meticulously manicured grass and a background of forested rolling hills and constant blue sky. Swarming in from all over the world, thousands of stagnant, sweaty bodies defended themselves in line at high noon against a temperature of 104°F. As I strolled passed the masses, separated by a sturdy aluminum railing, I started to realize what a privilege it was to possess the purple press pass. So I flaunted it, a little.

Marked with a sticker for ArtistDirect.com, free water was forced into all hands as you entered the grounds. Adjacent to the mist tent, you could also get a free ArtistDirect.com terrycloth-rimmed hat that had been chilled in ice, just for your cool comfort. For press and VIPs, retreating from the heat meant taking a nice, long walk back to the private tents, where an endless flow of Red Hook could be found, along with classic video games like Ms. Pac-Man, Centipede, and Galaga, as well as giant mist fans to cool thy buttocks.

On Saturday, the early acts were not especially engaging, which gave me more time to become familiar with the layout of the festival. The layout included: a main stage, housing large names like Chemical Brothers, Beck, and Tool, a second stage, and three tents, two of which were identical and one that basically enclosed the third large stage. The setting for most electronic artists was the Gobi and Sahara tents. These circus-like tents were identical in size and spectacular in sound, each averaging a crowd of a couple hundred: the perfect intimate environment in which to experience the live music of μ -ziq, Amon Tobin, Kid Koala, Luke Vibert, Autechre, LTJ Bukem, Plastikman... the list goes on. The third and largest tent, the Mojave, was larger, averaging crowds of three or four thousand, and enclosing a large stage, lights, and four towers of speakers.

The first act I scheduled to make was Nightmares on Wax, also known as DJ Ease, the super stoner-smooth groove extraordinaire. As expected, the vibe was mellow and the crowd was stoned. The set opened with a long, ten-minute mix of "Night's Introlude," then Ease continued to play mostly modern hip-hop like Jay Z or Keith Murray and concluded with a couple tracks from both Nightmare LPs, occasionally introducing foreign samples and jazz influences. A quality hip-hop set with a positive vibe, but lacked the inventiveness present with many other Warp performers.

Utilizing pre-arranged tables full of artists' gear, the set switches were very efficient throughout the entire festival. Following NoW was Mike Paradinas, a.k.a. μ -ziq. Contrasting with the mellow mood set by NoW, Paradinas assaulted the crowd with hard-pounding beats overlapped by swirling rhythms and overwhelmingly distorted vocals. Playing mostly newly composed music, μ -ziq defined

himself as the first sound innovator of the weekend. After a literally staggering performance by Mike P. I headed outside to regain my balance and point myself in the direction of the Mojave tent to catch Breakbeat Era w/Roni Size, DJ Die, and MC Dynamite. I recently saw Breakbeat Era in Detroit and left the theater sorely disappointed, expecting to see more work by the headline artist Roni Size and less screeching by the lead singer. After a few moments amongst the Coachella crowd, Breakbeat Era quickly lost my attention and I chose to venture elsewhere. So again I had some time to kill before the arrival of a real breakbeat scientist, Amon Tobin.

The surrounding mountains made for quick sunsets, and glowing tonight in the darkness, other than the booth of raver glow orbs, was a pair of hot air balloons rising just beyond the food court. I followed my curiosity and continued towards the balloons after grabbing a teriyaki bowl of chicken and rice. Like most other attractions at this event and much to my surprise, the chance to elevate aided by hot air was available to any VIP or press member free of charge, and later in the evening available to all. There were only three other people waiting in line who turned out to be backup members to Esthero. We quickly realized we were all Amon Tobin fans in a bit of a hurry, and the five of us made a pleasantly brief trip up, snapped some photos, and then commenced next door to the Gobi tent.

It instantly felt like an amazing set. Playing with turntables accompanied by a sampler and what appeared to be an effects processor, Tobin dazzled the crowd with his playful antics of old-school jazz combined with dark, bellowing drum n' bass. A solid hour, mostly filled with newly composed tracks more reminiscent of Cujo, while sporadically tossing in a classic like the Squarepusher remix of East Flatbush Project's "Tried by 12." Tobin lived up to the many expectations set by two creative albums, employing clips of old 50's sci-fi films, jittery spittle sounds, and the amusing percussion of glass bottles and washboards. The set was finished with Public Enemy making noise over a flurry of Mexican horns.

In the Mojave tent, Jurassic 5 was on stage coordinating their signature syncopated hip-hop style, backed by the surgical precision of Cut Chemist. I stayed for a bit and then ventured into the depths of big-beat bombardment, where the Chemical Brothers were armed with the main stage sound system. The titanic sound of the main stage always meant that any act playing was omnipresent to those without shelter in a tent. Retreating in the Gobi tent, I caught the end of DJ Food's set, which preceded Kid Koala's jaw-dropping set. During his finest moment, and never having used headphones, Kid Koala introduced a track using an awesome sample about an evil-inspiring bug called a migi. After humoring us a bit with typical scratching, he casually and masterfully accompanied a dark hop-track he left spinning on one table—with an organ from the other—lifting the needle to certain parts of the record in conjunction with speed shifts and repeated needle contact to replicate normal scratching. I've never seen nor heard anything like it. Kid continued his set with a track by fellow label-mate Amon Tobin and then concluded with an intense swing mix, integrating wild instrumental solos with more imaginative technics.

Kid Koala concluded the first day's events, and I slowly started to make my way back to the entrance, stopping to catch glimpses of Underworld, Beck, and DJ Rap on the way. End of Day 1.



Days at the Coachella Festival

Day Two: Crammed to the Max With Tight Acts

Sunday was starting off right, and looking over the schedule confirmed my appointment for the musical experience of my life. Starting off was a personal favorite, the Angel, a.k.a. 60 Channels, with special guests Tré from the Pharcyde and Jody Watley. Unfortunately, the Angel's set entailed her standing behind tables while spinning instrumental versions of her songs as feature artists individually performed in front of her on stage. The lack of crowd energy coupled with numerous sound difficulties stemming from the Angel's clumsiness resulted in an overall disappointing performance.

Following that set, I roamed the festival sampling Andy Maddocks, A-Track, and Money Mark, waiting for the beginning of Rahzel, the Godfather of Sound and beat-box master from the Roots. Set up at the second stage, the staggering bass produced by Rahzel's special effects, vocal manipulations, and robotic transformations was more overpowering than anything else I had heard that weekend. This was my first time witnessing his solo act—desert bats, mechanical DJ, and all. With back-up by DJ JS1, the act was entirely captivating.

Drawing myself away from the Godfather, I headed in the direction of DJ Cam and Push Button Objects. With them playing in different tents at the same time, I was anticipating lots of running between jazz-influenced hip-hop and Schematic-style electro, trying to catch the best of both worlds. I was a bit surprised when DJ Cam's set consisted entirely of upbeat jungle, featuring an assortment of MCs like Method Man, Sizzla, and De la Soul. Unfortunately, Push Button Objects performed by far the most lackadaisical set I have ever witnessed from someone affiliated with high-caliber labels like Schematic or Chocolate Industries. Choosing to use turntables rather than play live, he casually flipped through records and sloppily mixed together bad electro with generic breaks. Then, after his best track in the whole set, he introduces a hip-hop group and scratch DJ on DAT! "This is some new shit from my man. Ya'll check this out, I'll be back in a minute." He then proceeded to stand backstage, in plain view of the crowd, and smoke a joint while refreshing with some drinks. At this point, I think he lost the respect of the whole crowd and definitely any energy left with the show. I left to grab another teriyaki bowl in the midst of Ben Harper's looming sound before the DJ Shadow set started.

Graciously introducing himself and his set, DJ Shadow thanked the crowd before tearing shit up for a dense 40-minute set packed with tons of funk. Accompanied by a DAT, he quickly blew through a stack of arranged records, creatively modifying many of his own classics as well as incorporating flavors resembling his duo album with Cut Chemist, *Brain Freeze*. He ended the set with a never-before-heard live version of "High Noon," resulting in a very crowd-pleasing performance.

And it just don't stop. The endless entertainment by mind-blowing musicians continued. Due to transportation difficulties, Jega and Mira Calix were unable to make the festival; Kool Keith was their replacement. The confines of the Gobi tent made for a very lively crowd during the Kool Keith show. Bodies flying from stage, plastic wigs being thrown around, midget astronauts dancing on the

speakers—the Black Elvis set had it all, not to mention the finger-pointing, green-haired lyricist himself.

The next act in the Mojave tent was Lamb, and I was certainly using my press privileges to get a good seat for this one. From the opening of "Soft Mistake" to the second encore of "Cottonwool," Lamb inspired energy in the crowd like no other performance that weekend. My only complaint was Lamb played a set identical to the one I saw 2 weeks earlier in Detroit, down to the second encore. Nonetheless, this show was far more entertaining.

Actually, I was so engulfed that staying for the second encore made me late for the Autechre set—something for which I had to work on forgiving myself.

Online and in print, Coachella had advertised that the Autechre set was only a DJ show. They lied. Performing for the longest set of the weekend and armed with matching laptops and numerous little gadgets, Autechre proceeded with what could be modernly termed an official "brainfuck." Describing such an experience with words would do no justice, but that's what I'm here for so I'll just go on. Proven innovators of sound, masters of their field, virtuosos of a modern era. Embodying the truth that sound has no boundaries, Autechre took the crowd through an innovative sonic experience unparalleled by any performer. Remnants of raga, hip-hop, ambient, breakbeat, electro, and "indescribable" were all present, but the highlight and most unexpected event of the evening was the live version of "Bike." I've already seen copies of this set available online, so I'd suggest starting your search after your done reading this magazine, front to back.

Locking back at the whole weekend, I have no complaints other than the fact that there was more quality music than I could fit into 24 hours. How am I expected to leave Autechre to go see LTJ Bukem when Luke Vibert is about to start and Thievery Corporation is playing? I opted to remain in the Gobi tent and await the arrival of Luke Vibert. Anticipating a DJ set similar to the one I saw in Detroit, I was pleasantly surprised when Luke, a rack of equipment, and BJ Cole took their places on stage. Cole is a renowned pedal-working steel-slide guitarist, known for his work with The Orb, Bjork, Marc Bolan, John Cale, The Verve, Beck, Depeche Mode, and countless others. Initially making sure the crowd didn't associate this performance with any of Luke's other aliases, the duo then continued with the most head-bopping source of positive energy present that weekend. It was that evident these two musicians were thoroughly enjoying themselves. Vibert featured newly composed pieces along with samples from every alias including "Glass World" from *Phat Lab Bad Nightmare*, while Cole flowed from hawaiian guitar solos to distorted ambient interludes—a perfect complement. I am highly anticipating their upcoming release, *Stop the Panic*. Luke Vibert was an ideal conclusion to an almost flawless weekend crammed to the max with tight acts.

The following week it was printed in a local Los Angeles newspaper that the Coachella Music Festival would return in the year 2000, but would spread to 3 days instead of 2, despite rumors that the event organizers lost a million dollars avoiding getting tainted by corporate sponsorship.

AUTECHRE (A), RICHIE HAWTIN (B),
AND AMON TOBIN (C) PERFORM AT
THE COACHELLA FESTIVAL.



Mego

continued from page 35

we're doing tons of concerts and events," he explains. "It's attracting attention. It's weird, really. For years, they've ignored us. Now they see that there's this 'delegation' from Austria, always going around the world and doing things... whether its us, or Kruder & Dorfmeister, or Sabotage, or Cheap, or Pulsinger... all these people—it doesn't matter who. It's all Austrian."

"The Vice Mayor of Vienna sent us an invitation asking us if we'd like to come to one of the public events. We thought it was a joke and ignored it. Then we got a letter the following week asking why we hadn't attended! Their reasoning is still so backwards. They've figured out that we and Cheap and all these electronic artists have created some sort of tourist attraction in a small way."

Rehberg's suspicions were confirmed when his own *Seven Tons For Free* album and Fennesz's *Hotel Paralel* shared 1999's Prix Ars Electronica for Distinction for Digital Musics. While he accepts the funds and attention provided by such recognition as a necessary (and perhaps not entirely unwelcome) evil, Rehberg values the resolute independence and non-exclusivist attitude of M-DOS and of the Mego label highly. "Part of what we do involves walking a thin and weird line between the populist and the academic," he says. "Sure, we can sit around and talk about or take part in artsy things, but we want to have something for the kids."

Rehberg also insists that the label's situation hasn't changed radically in light of the Ars Electronica honor. "It's business as usual," he sighs—

with no small amount of relief. "Loads of people now know us. As for whether or not they are interested is another matter. This year's Ars prize decision was a broad shift away from academia towards more street-level electronics—which is a good thing." He adds that government interest since has been nil: "Occasionally, a festival we play might be budgeted by a local authority or something. But that's as direct as the link between us and the government gets."

Mego finds itself in a situation unique to Europe, where techno is widely accepted and regarded as part of the musical mainstream. It amuses Rehberg to no end that American artists and labels don't face a similar dilemma: "Techno is massive here in Vienna—somewhat ironic, since it was invented in America." He pledges allegiance to the true stars of the Red, White and Blue, declaring his debt to the Stateside masters of techno in no uncertain terms. "Jeff Mills, Underground Resistance—the music itself and the ideas behind it changed my life," he recalls. "The whole idea of how it was made and what was going on. It was an exciting kind of, 'What the hell is this?!"

"That's missing now, though I still love to go and see Mills play. He's still top of the tree—you can't touch him. When he's spinning with three decks and a 909, that's... that's just 'It,' you know? You see him, and you think that you might as well just give up. His tracks always have this sort of formal rhythm, but what he does with it is so..."

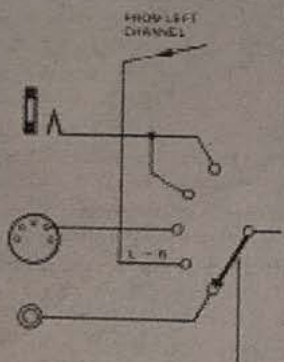
Rehberg recovers his composure and finishes the earlier thought. "The thing is, it's harsh, but, at the same time, it's very mainstream," he says. "At 1998's Sonar festival [in Barcelona], [Mills] was playing in front of 5,000 kids in an Olympic stadium—that was,

like, when kids get into it. He's really bridged that gap. Massive respect to people like him." Realizing that such a star-struck reaction to Mills' rigid rhythms might be questionable in the context of Mego's considerably less regimented output, he quickly adds, with a grin, "As well as to all the 'academic' musicians, of course."

Mego's full upcoming release schedule includes Hecker's [*r*] *iso|chall* (a remix CD based on the earlier *IT ISO161975*), a 3"-CD from Zbigniew Karkowski, the long-awaited *Magic Sound of Fenn O'Berg*, a debut full-length from Radian (co-released with Rhiz), CDs from General Magic, Farmers Manual, Fennesz, and Russell Haswell, as well as "loads of surprises" that Rehberg prefers not to divulge. In addition, Mego continues to retain its strong ties with such Viennese labels as Rhiz, Cheap, and Angelika Koehlermann, through production, manufacture, and/or distribution. While the rest of the world goes Y2Krazy, Rehberg laughs. Too busy for such nonsense, he offers assurance that—for Mego, at least—January 1, 2000 will be "just another day."

His hands as full as ever, Rehberg sums up his ambitions with characteristic casualness. "I'm not young – I'm already 30," he concludes. "But I'd like to think that, in a way, I'm a catalyst trying to make things happen. This past year I've been much more interested in setting things up than in making music, because I'm not out for my own glory or whatever. I'm more into seeing good music come out and find its way to the right places. And it's quite difficult to do, but it's rewarding."

Pita's Get Out is out now.



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Animals On Wheels
Nuvol Icadira
N-Tone/Ninja Tune

It's pretty well accepted that the world of electronic music is a fast-moving one, with myriad genres and sub-genres appearing on what seems to be a daily basis, and older ones going out of fashion just as often. One particular style that seemed to wear out its welcome especially quickly was drill n' bass, a hyper-kinetic off-shoot of jungle that had a brief heyday a couple of years back before people realized just how annoying most of the tracks were. So the prospect of a new album from one of the genre's better known artists may not thrill many listeners initially—until they find out that despite the Animals On Wheels name on the cover, this ain't no drill n' bass record.

Yeah, there are still a few breakbeats scattered about (most notably on "A Plus Tard," a track reminiscent of mu-Ziq and earlier AOW work), but generally, *Nuvol Icadira* is a subdued, downtempo affair. Tracks like "Never In & Never Out" and "To A Void You Is All Now" wouldn't sound at all out of place on a Boards of Canada record, and the closing duo "How It Destructs" and "Good Erics" are rich and haunting works that show why Andy Coleman (the man who is AOW) has also been releasing material on post-rock imprint Thrill Jockey. A pleasant surprise and a damn good record all around.

—Greg Clow

Aspen
Are You That Retail Snob?
Involve Records (NZ)

New Zealand's Involve Records is home to Bevan Smith, who operates under the guise Aspen. 1998 saw the release of his debut full length, *Album*, which spread loopy melodic beats with soothing dub-techno tracks. *Are You That Retail Snob?* melts breathtakingly simple ambience with dub and a hypnotic pattern of beats reminiscent of Bola and Boards of Canada. Creating an atmosphere of smooth electronica and intelligent polyrhythms, "Are You..." slowly emerges into a stream of soft-melodic sounds. "Super si," "Two Months Ago," and "Tips For Beginners" span through a maze of broken beats and casual melodies that is pure armchair-listening music. With Smith's passion for ambient music, *Are You* contains an assortment of icy soundscapes like the title-track, "Anniversary," and the 17-minute journey of "Forgotten Last Moments." If you decide to close your ears to Aspen, then you will be missing a calm array of soothing electronic music that is slightly ahead of itself.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Autechre
EP7
Warp

The smoky plastic cover to Autechre's *EP7* obscures the fossilized remains of various Lsystems, or fractals, each describing a set of rules that govern the iterated "growth" of a string of letters, or plant cells, or whatever is being modeled over a series of generations. Errors are thrown in every few turns so as to tune the work's obvious synthetic appearance, to make its overall growth appear more natural, more organic. Even with the random distractions, however, your eye will readily pick up patterns at various levels within the "organism," depending on whether you focus in on, say, one of its limbs as opposed to its body, or vice versa.

Rob Booth and Brown journey further into the wild territory explored in *LP5*, exploring complex,

and sometimes randomized, patterns at different levels. By hiding rhythms within rhythms, each of wildly dynamic time signatures and structures, they force the listener either to decide to hunt out individual complexities or to attempt to grasp the larger structure of a track as a whole. Loss of control over sound—the listener's fight to resolve details and patterns to reach understanding, as well as Autechre's own struggle to control the birth, growth, and death of its sound to impart this meaning to the listener—is key to *EP7*.

The indecipherable "cccc" features a jabbering speed freak who drops syllables, losing grasp of speech to the rhythms around him. The beats of "queller" beats slowly mutate into a complex, unmanageable structure that must be faded in order to satisfactorily conclude the track. "maphive 6.1" drops rolling kettledrums into the subtle melody of a playful but misbehaving piano. You can almost envision this naughty piano winking at the musicians as it goes in and out of tune. The oddly titled "zeiss contarex" features puzzled fragments of a BBC announcer's voice attempting to fight through a thick blanket of sinister melody.

EP7 is comparable with the more experimental projects of the Gescom style, so much so that *EP7* has already suffered the wrath of fans that pined for a release in the oft-imitated *Incunabula-Amber-Tri Repetae* vein. Yet the closing track—normally intended to finish an Autechre album with a dramatic flourish—is, oddly enough, both a mournful and optimistic finale. Through "pir," Booth and Brown reminisce on the creative paths they have voyaged in the past, but look forward to what is to come, to the next chance to bring wonder, sadness, brilliance and beauty into the world.

—Alex Reynolds

Badmarsh + Shri
Dancing Drums
Tommy Boy/Outcaste

There is some serious Asian-Underground-style funk going on here, with a hint of sinister-sounding drum n' bass. The record uses a variety of different live percussion sounds, without overlaying them too heavily or over-intensifying the rhythms. Asian-influenced music tends to be minimal and subtle in order to emphasize the unique sounds of the individual instruments, and this record stays very true to that while still enveloping a richness to the beats and the basslines. Although it is obvious that synthesizers and drum machines were used on many of the tracks, overall, there is a certain rarely heard authenticity to the sounds of the instruments used. At times, you feel you could actually be on the street outside a mosque, or an opium den, deep in India. The only vocal track is "The Air I Breathe," a beautiful, sensual piece with a spicy, Edie Brickell-sounding singer. With a record like this one making headway, Talvin Singh won't be the only name in Asian Underground for long.

—Carter Tracy

Beanfield
Human Patterns
Compost (GER)

To be electronic; to be jazz; to be accessible; to be experimental; to be programmed; to be performed; to be traditional; and to be unconventional—Beanfield wants it all. With *Human Patterns*, Jan Krause, Tobias Meggle, and Michael Reinboth realize the "future sound of jazz" for which their Munich-based Compost label has long been angling. Though assembled through "protracted spade-work"

from scavenged samples and (mostly) programmed beats, Beanfield's music avoids the pitfalls of homogenized downtempo groove and comes off sounding as fresh as the most uninhibited of soul jazz sessions.

Krause's supple basslines set the course, with Meggle's inventive keyboard shimmies following modal suit. *Human Patterns'* phenomenal first single, "Enchanting Signs," is chunky and funky, its rollicking breakbeat romping roughshod over Boris Geiger's sweet vocal hooks and Reinboth's zippy electro vamps. "The Season," an exotic, ethno-rhythmic confection made all the more delectable by the breezy, Beat-style delivery of vocalist Bajka, is less flashy but even finer. Other standouts include "Azure," a jazz-techno-house summit worthy of Ian O'Brien, the weird-beard fusion genius of "Catalpa," the lush, hip-hop-tinged "The Great Outside," and "Human Patterns" itself—a brilliant finale that at once wraps up the album and extends its tantalizing future-(of)-jazz propositions beyond tomorrow's threshold.

—Gil Gershman

Binger the Voyager
Sweet Taste of Nothing
Oxygen Music Works

A three piece that includes the Swedish artist who records as Hab (most notably for the on-hiatus Dot label), Binger the Voyager travels all over the sonic map on 15 tracks, ranging from Warpish, complex bleeps and beats to a couple of Beatles-updated-for-the-90s rock songs that I haven't heard the likes of since the Boo Radleys' demise. Unfortunately, a number of selections are marred by the same type of nondescript male vocals that weakened the recent Looper project, *Up a Tree*. The singing's much more effective on a track like "More Than I Can Say," which travels gracefully down a melodic Detroit highway. Other highlights include the robotic "Hanzo & Fredroc"—complete with requisite vocoded voices—and the light-hearted opener, "No Yesterday No Tomorrow No Today," which incongruously marries a goofy xylophone sample to a tough-funk hip-hop beat. If you're not put off by the vocals, *Sweet Taste of Nothing* is actually a pretty complete one-disc overview of a lot of today's electronic sounds.

—Sean Portnoy

Cabbageboy
Genetically Modified
N-Tone/Ninja Tune

The latest release from Si Begg (although by the time you read this, he'll probably have another couple of records out as Buckfunk 3000 or Bigfoot or one of his other guises), *Genetically Modified* is an amusing and somewhat confusing collection of tracks. On the one hand, the album exhibits all of the wry and slightly surreal humor expected from Begg's Cabbageboy incarnation. The tracks are dubbed with titles like "Rhythm & Blues Angus Steakhouse," "Hey Hey We're the Monks," and "I, Cabbage," and there are lots of obscure vocal samples scattered throughout that are good for a chuckle or two.

However, once the funny bits have lost their novelty, you'll find yourself with breaks and grooves that are enjoyable enough, but not nearly as substantial as you may hope. Sure, cabbage is nice, but sometimes you just need something a little more meaty to go with your veggies.

—Greg Clow

Faultline
Closer Colder
Leaf/Dutch East India

Every once in a while, a record comes along that seems to perfectly sum up everything that's right about a particular type of music at that moment, as well as offering a glimpse of where the genre might be headed. *Closer Colder* is one of those records. Following on a back-catalogue of a mere two EPs, this debut album from David Kosten's Faultline project is an outstanding and accomplished hybrid of dub-heavy beats, distorted electronic rhythms, ethereal voices, found sounds, and unique live instrumentation (including xylophone, trumpet, strings and more).

Every track deserves time in the spotlight, but I'll try to focus on a few highlights, like the title track, which sounds like This Mortal Coil as remixed by Mick Harris and directed by David Lynch (it features a nice vocal snippet of Dennis Hopper from *Blue Velvet*). Or the juxtaposition of quirky melody and perky beats with death threats left on Kosten's answering machine by a vocalist he rejected on the track "Control." Or the floating ambience of the untitled hidden track that closes the set, or... Ah, hell, they're all so good, just get the damn thing!
 —Greg Clow

Fila Brazillia
A Touch of Cloth
Tritone/Dutch East India

A fixture for Pork Records, Fila Brazillia opt instead to release this on their new Tritone imprint and, in a further departure, plan to play live for the first time. Bulkied up to a six-piece, Fila unsurprisingly add live instrumentation to the smooth and mellow beats for which they are known—to middling results. While the flamenco-like guitars and trumpet on "XII" push successfully towards a new direction, there's also acid-jazz noodling on tracks like "Slow Light" that isn't far from Brand New Heavies territory. *A Touch of Cloth* works best when it stays closest to Fila's sample-editing roots: The opener, "The Bugs Will Bite," is a funky and irresistible concoction of an endless variety of sounds and styles that really grooves and is one of the best tracks of the year. The sum of this album's parts may not be a total triumph, but it sure beats the hell out of Jamiroquai.

—Sean Portnoy



Flanger
Templates
Ntone/Ninja Tune

With the front cover photo suggestive of a jazz duo and a back cover listing traditional instruments like drums, vibraphone, guitars, and a Rhodes (along with "sampling"), I was a bit surprised when I started *Templates* and heard a Coldcut-like, flippant micro-pastiche of musical styles and then an Autechre-like beat; it's only midway through "Music to Begin With" that Flanger (a.k.a. Burnt Friedman and Atom Heart) throw some snippets of acoustic instruments into the mix. What follows is sometimes a delightful tension between Latin/jazz influences and Teutonic electronics, a tension best exemplified by the fact that this album was recorded in Chile and mastered in Hackenbroich.

"Short Note With a Few" and "Studio Tan" find

Flanger splicing acoustic sounds into microslices, with the results sounding like Slicker's DSP experiments, while "Full on Scientist" is the type of downtempo-beat-meets-warped-electronics track that is Ninja Tune's bread-and-butter. There are times when things get bogged down and the dynamic sense of play loses steam (such as on the torpid "Endless Summer" and "Lata"). More electronic than the cover artwork may suggest, *Templates* presents acoustic instruments digitally spliced and reconfigured—but could stand to be filled in a little more.

—Sean Portnoy

Four Tet/Rothko
Rivers Become Oceans
Lo Recordings/Dutch East India
Four Tet
Dialogue
Output Recordings

Despite his relative youth, Kieran Hebden, a.k.a. Four Tet, guitarist with po-mo London rock group Fridge, shows a depth of emotion and artistic maturity in solo works *Rivers Become Oceans* and the recently re-released *Dialogue*, which rivals Bola's inconsistent but often brilliant *Soup*. *Rivers* sets Four Tet against Lo's Rothko for a subtle layering of bass lines, simple drum programming, and a few piano notes that repeat, growing with erotic intensity with each loop. It's all pretty simple and straightforward, but it works beautifully, growing into a no-holds-barred, throw-everything-into-the-pot mix of steam-pipe samples, avian chirps, and what sounds like looped takes of live drumming. Very intense and intimate.

It is the sampling and recutting of non-electric instruments that makes the *Rivers* and *Dialogue* releases worthy of repeated listens. Tracks from *Dialogue* like "Chiron" and "Misnomer" take live saxophone, guitar riffs, and drum beats and end up filtering, chopping, warping, and otherwise retrofitting these sounds into fresh, organic, living music that throbs with rich humanity. Another aspect of *Dialogue* is its ambition: Each track sounds unique enough that the release seems a patchwork of styles, bouncing from the chilled-out jazz-lounge of "Misnomer" to the Orb-ish go-nowhere ambience of "She Scanned" to the meditative sitar ringing of "Aying" and "Charm." It's perhaps this ambition that brings the album down a notch or two—Hebden seems a bit distracted having to jump from one style to the next. But the quality of individual tracks more than justify the artist's manic experiments. Watch out for this guy.

—Alex Reynolds

Gentle People
Simply Faboo
Rephlex (UK)

In the couple of years that have passed since the release of the debut album from the Gentle People, the wave of neo-lounge culture that many folks considered them to be a part of has pretty much run its course (due in no small part to the overexposure of the closely linked swing revival). Perhaps sensing the trend's impending demise, the UK-based quartet has spent the interim hanging out with pals from Japan like Fantastic Plastic Machine and Pizzicato Five, who have kept the spirit of suave sounds alive with their hybrids of EZ-listening pop and electronic grooves.

As a result, *Simply Faboo* avoids sounding like a collection of lightweight retro-cheese. Sure, the lyrics are pretty cornball, dealing with such topics as

love, shopping, and other elements of fabulous living, but they're so tongue-in-cheek (or perhaps just plain cheeky) that you can't help but start humming along. And with the music bringing together smooth electro-funk, elegant Franco-pop, orchestral ambience, and—of course—a healthy serving of soft sounds in the '60s/'70s style, you may find yourself clinking those martini glasses one more time. Groovy, baby!

—Greg Clow

Rei Harakami
Opa*q
Sublime (JP)

While many of Japan's most famed techno producers reside in Tokyo—and therefore reflect the hypermodernity and urbanity of the city in their music—Rei Harakami calls Kyoto home. The prefecture is the historical seat of the emperor, a religious and cultural center dotted with pavilions, shrines, and temples. Mountains and greenery surround Harakami, not neon and concrete, and this closeness to nature can be felt in his music.

Harakami's melodies are splendid—soft as the curves of cherry blossom petals or the blush of the sunset. The burbling brook of "Glimglim" races over pebbly bassruns and whitewater snares, nimble synth lines playing, laughing, and darting like shoals of multicolored fish. "Chromatic Cliff" and "V," miniatures written as short-film soundtracks, forgo beats for fluttering melodic explorations and wintry sound scrapings. The more animated "Double Flat" and "Triple Flat" revel in tangles of fusion-y melodic corkscrews and flights of funky rhythm, while Harakami tickles his electric piano like a kitten crossing a keyboard on mincing paws.

Though Harakami's beats dance, they are less dance beats than the rhythmic patter of rain ("Poof") or the lapping of waves ("300ml [Milk]"). *Opa*q* concludes with a pair of exemplary remixes by Ian O'Brien and Max404 that fatten Harakami's rhythms, teasing out their inherent funkiness without crushing his delicate constructions.

—Gil Gershman

Richie Hawtin
Decks, EFX, & 909
Novamute/M_nus

There's a lot of talk about the DJ as musician, but few jocks actually have the skills to back it up. One such DJ who manages to pull this feat off is Richie Hawtin (a.k.a. Plastikman), who's not one to hide behind beatmatching and claim the music as his own. Hawtin performs behind a battery of machines including the standard 1200's, a souped-up mixer, a 909 drum machine, and an Ensoniq effects processor with a foot pedal. That's a lot of gear for one man to pilot, but Hawtin does it brilliantly. This latest mix CD is all the proof you need of that fact, and the closest thing to a live performance you could ask for. Thirty-eight tracks are mixed, filtered, tweaked, eq'ed, and cut up in every way imaginable. The end result is a disc that showcases various shades of techno, ranging from the no-holds-barred beats of Jeff Mills and the Surgeon to the dubby rhythms of Stewart Walker and Vladislav Delay. The last 15 minutes or so prove the most interesting, as Hawtin eases up on the BPMs and crosses over into Basic Channel territory. Not one for the faint at heart, but recommended all the same.

—Brock Phillips

Holon
The Total Fuckin Revolution Edits
 Silver Recordings/Dutch East India

With its in-ye-face title and its being created by "sample terrorists" Riou Tomita and Koen Lybaert, I expected something more like Digital Hardcore-style lunacy than the moody atmospheric offered here (as the beatless tracks suggest, it's more terrorism by intimidation than bomb blasts). Often starting with a trip-hop-speed breakbeat, Holon then adds sinister synths ("Conspiracy") or distorted electronics ("Desperate") while mutating the beat into rifle-shot rolls. The closer, "Code of Honour," evokes a machine dying in a storm with dark moans and metallic percussion. Only on "Dust" does Holon truly work itself into a frenzy, creating a drum n' bass workout that sounds like a long freight train speeding by. Unable to live up to its hyperbolic title, *The Total Fuckin Revolution Edits* instead is like Joy Division updated for the end of the millennium, with new sounds but still every bit as bleak and desolate.
 —Sean Portnoy

Hrvatsi
Oiseaux 96-98
 Reckankreuzungsklanwerkzeuge

Hrvatski (Keith Whitman) comes at drum n' bass from a "classical" music background, and thank God for that. In a genre where the musical vocabulary is being limited to the point of stultification, Hrvatski's expansive use of orchestral instrumentation over this compilation of previous material is certainly refreshing. Such new syntax—like the guitar-based ambience of "Ghatham"—even manages to resurrect the funkiness of the "Amen" break, overused to near-parodic proportions at this point (though Whitman is a fervent supporter of its continued use). Likewise, the ever-present sub-bass of "hard" drum n' bass becomes only one of many sounds on "Routine Exercise," which is infused with warped symphonic touches and an ever-shifting array of beats.

The piano riff on "Atelier" is reminiscent of the Cranes, the UK group that married Goth touches to Joy Division-inspired doom rock, but rubs up against jazz breaks and works towards a frantic conclusion. On the closer, "Cirrus Minor," even bird chirps aren't safe from Hrvatski's digital manipulation, as what starts almost as a pastoral morphs into a Halloween track with scary-movie organ and increasingly distorted bird cries. Not pleasantly digestible, but probably one of the most challenging drum n' bass records of the year.
 —Sean Portnoy

Innerzone Orchestra
 Programmed
 Astralwerks/Planet E

Astralwerks and Planet E team up for the release of Carl Craig's *Innerzone Orchestra* album, one of the most eagerly anticipated full-lengths of the year. Certain to draw criticism, the record marks a departure from Craig's Detroit techno roots into the territory of live jazz instrumentation. Electronics still play a prominent role, but are now showcased alongside the talents of jazz pianist Craig Taborn and drummer Francisco Mora. While there are jazz reworkings of classics like "Bug in the Bassbin" and "At Les," other tracks feature moody, pensive electronics and freestyle hip-hop from guest lyricist Lackadaisical. Futuristic themes and a melancholy sentiment characterize many of the songs, with the Vangelis-inspired "Architecture" and the loping

breakbeats of "Blakula" standing out above the rest. All in all, it's an ambitious album that's not aimed to please Detroit purists or the dancefloor. Nonetheless, Craig deserves credit for pursuing his own vision and reinventing the sound of Detroit for the next generation.
 —Brock Phillips

Institut Fuer Feinmotorik
 Verschiedene
 Institut Fuer Feinmotorik (GER)

"Verschiedene" means different, and different this eclectic remix project certainly is. Institut Fuer Feinmotorik created a minor stir with several LPs of ultra-minimalist, Thomas Brinkmanesque grooves created through quirky mechanical turntable manipulations. In orchestrating *Verschiedene*, I.F.F. sent CDs hand-inscribed with individual, playable lock-grooves to a delegation of French, Austrian, Swiss, and German sound-artists. Each was encouraged to use I.F.F.'s raw lock-groove material as he saw fit and to remit the resultant "remixes."

The beauty of playing a CD on a turntable is, of course, that the arbitrary line between digital and analog sound becomes hopelessly confused. *Verschiedene* abounds with Powerbook treatments such as the grainy, glitch-infested Teleform, Marcus Maeder, and Farmers Manual contributions. Sudden Infant's gurgle-effected loops evidence less explicable processing, as do the curving, jackhammer iterations of CD-Slopper (a Hecker/Farmers Manual offshoot) and the subtle scuffings of Anja Theissmann and Klaus Sander's onomatopoeic "Nutzstich" ("utility stitch").

Perhaps most baffling of all is "Froh Zu Sein Bedarf Es Wenich," credited to Herkules Dreigangduo (Brinkmann/Reise), twin loops of German singsong twining beneath an exceedingly peculiar ping-pong pulse pattern. Equally impressive and irreducible are the rubbery revolutions and melodic mutterings of Shave Ass' "Doch Doch" and Batchas' tidal textural expositions. Only the mighty Pomassl disappoints, with his "Compression" a (deliberately?) grueling, funkless, hermetic 4/4 thud. As a bonus, each *Verschiedene* CD comes with its own hand-inscribed, playable lock-groove. Join the fun. See you on Vol. 2?
 —Gil Gershman

Instrumental
Acoustek
 Big Chill/Dutch East India

Some might say that a project like this—a five-piece string ensemble doing "classical" arrangements of some electronic classics—is another sign of techno's increasing influence in society beyond clubland, though I'm not yet ready to equate this with the London Philharmonic covering the Stones or Pink Floyd. But it is a recognition that these electronic compositions have a complexity that's translatable from the dancefloor to the chamber room.

While an Eno piece ("Sparrowfall") seems like an obvious choice (with his pivotal, and nearly canonized, championing of ambient music), not everything else is—especially a take on Plastikman's "Consume." Certainly some tracks—Orbital's "Forever," Moby's "Hymn"—have a melodic resonance that makes the jump from synth "strings" to bowed strings, but others lose something due to the finite range of sounds this handful of instruments can create. In particular, the Orb's "Little Fluffy Clouds" loses part of its dynamism without the samples of Ricki Lee Jones' vapid commentary on

cloud watching, while the Shamen's (ugh!) "Re-evolution" somehow winds up sounding like "Eleanor Rigby."

Of course, percussion is also removed from the equation, though the group makes a valiant effort to keep things rhythmic without a handy 4/4 kick or breakbeat, even managing to create a creepy, thumping pattern to pace a barely tonal "Consume." The bottom line is that *Acoustek* is classical music you could play for your child and not feel like a lame yuppie trying to "educate" your toddler about Mozart.

—Sean Portnoy

Hidenobu Ito
Bedroom in the Cage
 NS-Com/Dutch East India

This was sent without CD cover or promo sheet, so all I know is that Hidenobu Ito records for the Japanese experimental electronics label NS-Com and travels all over the sonic map on the lengthy *Bedroom in the Cage*. At times, Ito, like artists like Bisk and Farmer's Manual, takes Ovalesque digital audio manipulation and ratches it up a few notches, which can lead to some conceptually interesting moments—as the Steve Vai's guitar-in-a-vortex sound of *Track* exemplifies—but whose novelty can begin to wear thin without coalescing into something more substantial. But the album also has one of those ubiquitous crunchy-beat tracks, a straight-ahead jazzy downtempo number, some farting drill n' bass, and a couple of plaintive piano pieces.

Bedroom in the Cage's best moment comes on the dreamy ambience of *Track*, which flows into the Oval data continuum and manages to shift its gentle electronic pulses smoothly into overdrive with some high-octane drum rolls. But ultimately, Ito fits into the jack-of-all trades, master-of-none category: While *Bedroom in the Cage* casts its net broadly over multiple genres, it only yields moderate results. In the ever-increasing pile of new electronic releases, that's no longer sufficient.

—Sean Portnoy

Richard H. Kirk
Darkness at Noon
 Touch/Dutch East India

Richard H. Kirk has long been known not for fun, happy, cutesy records. (any smile that crossed your face during Cabaret Voltaire's records was probably Mal's doing).

Thankfully, that reputation lives on with his latest release, which I'd like to describe in human terms, but that isn't going to work very well. Consider Kirk's words pilfered from the liner notes: "real and synthesised sounds of battle clandestine and other short wave transmissions; fighter plane communications/co-ordinates; the nova light show; electronic assault systems; digital warfare the use of atomic fission to decompose human beings..."

The above list is Kirk's source material. So, you see, you can't really talk about this CD in regular human terms. It's very sterile. It sounds totally devoid of human contact, save the voices, and they sound like they're unfamiliar with bodies also. It carries a great deal of subtlety and detail if you listen to it enough, something I find a little difficult.

—laerm



David Kristian
Beneath the Valley of the Modulares
AlienB (CAN)

Perhaps wary of being typecast as a drum n' bass artist following a notable release on Drop Beat, Canadian Kristian has eschewed beats on recent full-lengths, but this release compiles more techno-style, beat-laden tracks recorded over the last 5 years. Though individual songs aren't given dates, it's clear that the crisp kick-drum beats and otherworldly melodies of "Suction Cup Race" and "Mouthfully" are influenced by Bytes-era Black Dog and Aphex circa *Selected Ambient Melodies, Vol. 1*. Other tracks feature exotic-sounding synth drones, with "Idiotland" sounding like a static-y radio broadcast of a Middle Eastern celebration and "Bad Mood No. 3672" suggesting the fanfare for an alien procession. Not as experimentally charged as some of Kristian's other work, *Beneath the Valley* is nonetheless a fine distillation of the vintage Warp sound.

—Sean Portnoy

Laub
Unter Anderen Bedingungen Als Liebe
Kitty-Yo (GER)

Sounding like a kindler, gentler, Germanic Add N to (X), Laub wring all kinds of weird tones out of their electronics. Complimenting the spitting and burping noises, Antye Greie-Fuchs sings at times like a Teutonic Bjork and other times with a Nico-like deadpan—in either case, Fuchs' vocals are pretty well blended into the mix. The Bjork impression is most evident on "Widergefühlich," where it sounds like she's dueting with a vocoder, and on "Losigkeit." Other notable cuts are the trip-hoppy "Augenscheinlich" and "Diffus," both of which ride along on roller-rink-organ-like tones, and the opener, "Symbolisch," which is bursting with *Pacman* samples. Though they need to concentrate more on structuring songs out of the noises they output (i.e., lose that 14-minute track), Laub is yet another German band deserving of more domestic attention.

—Sean Portnoy

Lilienthal
Castor & Pollux
Emanate

You may recognize Lilienthal from his contribution to Emanate's debut compilation release, *Emanated*. Based in New York City, Arrow Kleeman produces music that is breathtakingly simple, and introduces a fine sequence of IDM structures combining ambient-techno with soft melodies: The side of electronica that is both soothing & relaxing. On *Castor & Pollux* (Lilienthal's debut release), hints of Mouse on Mars, Oval, and Solvent take the stand, with the music combining ambience, jazz, and complex rhythms into an expansive collection of lush soundscapes. The music on Emanate's third release focuses on disconnected beats and smooth atmospheric structures, while the melodic spectrum of electronic sounds remains drenched in pure ambience and chaos. While other record label's search for the next Autechre, Emanate thrive on releasing robot-music that is simply complex and marvelous. *Castor & Pollux* not only represents the stary eyes of the two mythological Gemini Twins, but it also represents one of the most important DM releases for 1999.

—Pietro Da Sacco

L'Usine
L'Usine
Isophlux

It's been some time (a year? more?) since we've seen/heard new material from Isophlux, the label run by California's Shad Scott and was one of the first US imprints to issue music in the genre that we've come to know as IDM. With the growing popularity of the labels and sounds that followed in the wake of Isophlux (Schematic, Chocolate Industries, Orange, etc.), the time is perfect for the label's return, and kicking off the relaunch with this self-titled debut by Texan Jeff McIlwain's L'Usine project was a great choice. A pleasure from start to finish, this CD features nearly 70 minutes of what can be described most simply as classic IDM—crunching, post-techno beats melded perfectly with layers of swirling, electronic melodies.

But beyond the usual suspects that have become ubiquitous as inspirations in this field, McIlwain has filtered a wider range of influences into his compositions. The track "Scratch," for example, opens with a moody, atmospheric riff that brings Coil to mind, while the closing notes of "Charydis" and the melody lines on "Coded" seem to betray the fact that Mr. McIlwain may very well have a couple of Depeche Mode records in his collection (and trust me, I mean that as a compliment of the highest order). It would be an overstatement to call this a ground-breaking record, but it's certainly an enjoyable one, and it proves quite handily that there's much more to the current IDM scene than half-baked Autechre clones.

—Greg Clow

Maeror Tri
Meditamentum II
Manifold

Proving that audio cassettes haven't completely been rendered useless in the CD age, *Meditamentum II* compiles tracks released only on tape from this German drone trio. Dark ambient is the term that covers some of the selections (like the opener, "Middle of the Earth") here, with their grumbling oscillations and howling sweeps like the winds of a sandstorm. Other tracks ("Inner Lightning," "Res Magnifica") feature guitar drones that unfurl like the Cure's '82/'83 "dark" period, with even fewer pop pretensions. Best of all is "Archaic Sensations," which possesses the only "beat" on this compilation: massively reverberating percussion suggesting the panic of a midnight tribal battle in the jungle. Songs tend toward the lengthy side (some in the 10-minute range) and often don't really "develop," though that hardly seems like a concern among these bleak sound fields. Unsettling, in the best sense of the term.

—Sean Portnoy

Ming & FS
Hell's Kitchen
Om Records

Ming & FS call their music "junkyard," but their debut is really futuristic pop music. No slight meant there, since the duo ably animate the corpses of hip-hop, jungle, breakbeat, and soul and imbue the resultant Frankenstein's monster with a mighty



swing. The two artists, who are collaborating for this adventurous duo, as a scratch-fest like the adrenaline-pumping "Rock Higher" is likely to mutate into a sample breakdown or ambient soul song. "Family" organically develops from a laid-back, summery hip-hop groove, with positive rhymes traded back and forth, into a jump-up jungle track, staying catchy the whole way through. Beneath the nimble genre-jumping, Ming & FS invest each track with a real song and seem to spit out the right hook at the right time effortlessly. *Hell's Kitchen* just sounds like the New York of the future.

—Rob Geary

Mouse on Mars
Niun Niggung
Rough Trade

A passel of acoustic instruments appear in the mix of *Niun Niggung*, but somehow the various horns and guitars fit right into the miniscule funk of Mouse on Mars. "Yippie" bounces processed horns over the meticulously programmed squelches and clinks, creating something like supercomputer ska. Perhaps picking up a few tricks from their work with Stereolab, Mouse on Mars have found the ways to balance their experimental, occasionally coldly Teutonic, tendencies with sweet hooks, as on "Pinwheel Herman," building little toy symphonies from forgotten noises. *Niun Niggung* (which will get a domestic release by Thrill Jockey in February) bridges whatever gap remained between left-field electronics and post-rock, leaving the listener often wondering just what that sound could be. An effects-processed horn? A vocal? Another synthesizer? Or all the above? Mouse on Mars clearly want all the above, work it all into *Niun Niggung*.

—Rob Geary

Multiphonic Ensemble
Cirque
Flavour of Sound (JP)

Yoshihiro Hanno respects no boundaries. On *Cirque*, rhythms suddenly break from tweaky house lockstep into drum n' bass tech-step or hip-hop lurch-step; electronics bleed into instrumentation; compositional chaos resolves in melodic arcs of breathless beauty; the gurgle of meticulous glitchcraft underscores post-classical, pop, and junglist maneuvers alike. A sophisticated, timely, and downright incendiary display of sample-wrenching DSP eccentricity, "musique actuelle" improv, animated turntablism, and unhinged breakbeat, Hanno's second Multiphonic Ensemble opus is the out-sound spectrum of 1998-1999 as refracted through Q.R. Ghazala's rewired Speak n' Spell prism. Once again, Hanno proves himself peerless. My pick for the most important "electronica" title of the year? Absolutely.

—Gil Gershman

Osmyso
Welcome To The Palindrome
Sprawl Imprint/Dutch East India

25-year-old Mark Nicholson is a quirky electronics fella displaying some of the funniest samples along with a knack at regenerating distorted yet funky beats. On *Welcome To The Palindrome*, an assortment of deranged samples fly in many directions, including some that will make you spew with laughter. With tracks like "Won't Lovers Revolt Now?," "Sod It, I'm Off To Hawaii," and "Hannah," it

isn't too hard to digest Mark's obscure musical directions. From the ambient soundtrack music on "When Bob Met Hannah," to the space-disco sampladelic washout of "A Dog! A Panic in a Pagoda," *Welcome To The Palindrome* is a fun album that will make you giggle all the way through. It may be difficult to explain Sprawl's genre-bending philosophy, but it's nice to see a label jumping into unestablished areas of funky noise that flirts with your mind. Weird, yet amusing, deranged yet intriguing.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Passarani *Unspeakable Future Outbreaks* *Hymen* (GER)

If the Hymen/Ant-Zen axis is the future of "industrial" music, then things are looking up against the downspiral of angst and pseudo-darkness. In comparison, *Unspeakable Future Outbreaks* is a winning combination of crunchy beats and dark atmospherics that owes more to Autechre than Front 242, as the track titles ("cnc't Point," "Reut-RC") bear out. The opener, "ee5," sounds like a crunchy beats set played in a swamp, while "V-Tek" like a Funkstorung remix of a Hitchcock score, dramatic strings and all. Other tracks show the Vangelis influence Passarani claims, with "A-Tek" suggesting the soundtrack to Blade Runner being played in a robotic factory.

—Sean Portnoy

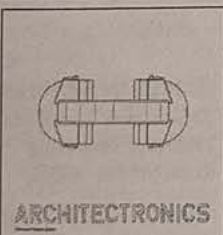
Plaid *Rest Proof Clockwork* *Warp/Nothing*

Experimental electronic music really bugs me sometimes. You listen to it and hear all these bizarre alien noises and a-rhythmic "rhythm" patterns and you think to yourself: "Yeah, this programmer really knows his shit, and this music is all very conceptual and intellectual, and every one will think I am really smart for liking it, but GOD DAMMIT I AM NOT A ROBOT! I wanna feel da funk! I wanna dig on some smooth grooves." For all those of you who feel that way, run right out and buy Plaid's new album, *Rest Proof Clockwork*. This album cannot disappoint—it is funny and funky and smooth and gloomy. There's melody and harmony and ambience and jazzy beats and crazy rhythms. There's cuttin' and scratchin', there's swirling electric guitar... and there's even a pretty vocal track hidden at the very end. Plaid has rocked my world.

—Carter Tracy

Pomassl/Kodwo Eshun *Architectronics* *Craft/Sabotage/Dutch East India*

More heavy-duty conceptualizing from the European axis, as Austrian digit-demon Franz Pomassl and neologism-spouting author and *The Wire* contributor Kodwo Eshun (*More Brilliant Than The Sun*) meet at a live



event on the future construction site of the Vienna Museum Quarter. Those lacking the constitution for spoken word may want to skip this round and refer instead to Pomassl's stunning *TrailError* opus (on Laton). As Eshun vents a stream of name-droppy,

allusion-heavy rhetoric—supporting his rather naff cultural theories about music as sonic fiction, architecture, Grand Funk Railroad, noselids, blah blah blah—Pomassl, bless his soul, does his best to render Eshun's monotone screed inaudible. He spizzles incandescent electronic icing with the glee of a sugar-happy pastry chef. He vocoder-s and compresses Eshun's words until they're barely blips in the datastream or angels perched on the heads of radio towers.

With his electric razor, Pomassl buzzes Eshun's insufferable mumble down to a stubbly background crackle while the dueling frequencies dance the fandango in triumph. Forty-three uninterrupted minutes of this war-of-wills is a bit much, even for the most aggressive Pomassl-holic (who might, in fairness, be disappointed by the restraint their hero shows during most of the exercise). But when Pomassl springs to life, in jags and spurts of unbridled impish energy, *Architectronics* is a blast—and a giddy vicarious thrill for those who'd like to see all wanky *Wire* writers similarly drowned out for once and for all. Hehe.

—Gil Gershman

Porter Ricks/Techno Animal *Symbiotics* *Force Inc.* (GER)

Now here's a combination to look forward to—Porter Ricks, one of minimalist Europe's more adventurous loopers, matched up with the dark ambience and distorted beats of Techno Animal. The opening bits of "Polytoxic 1" bear such anticipation out: As one of PR's trademark distorted grooves attempts to lock into hypnosis mode, it's derailed and clipped—like a tough taskmaster, TA refuses to let the listener lapse into any type of pleasure-inducing trance. Likewise, the frost blast that's "Phosphoric" is masochistically compelling for its lost-inside-someone's-chest-cavity ambience. In other words, *Symbiotics* rewards fixated, not fixed, listening.

If Techno Animal clogs up the gears of Porter Ricks' engine, PR sets out to streamline the Animal's icy beats and gritty low-ends—"Hydrozoid" features a mesmerizing clanging like an off-kilter gong, while a drill-like sound reverberates over "Bio-Morphium's" head-nodding polyrhythms. Even "Ionic," whose 12-minute length normally would send me to the next track immediately, comes out of the box smokin' and morphs into several shades of a high-BPM stormer.

With none of the "battle" rhetoric remix projects usually love to play with—relying instead on the organic-sounding process of the title and the even split of remixes (four Porter Ricks, four Techno Animal)—this project takes electronic collaboration to a new level. For those intimidated by and/or bored with the Chain Reaction school of micro-repetitions, *Symbiotics* is quite rewarding and, for fans of PR and their ilk, it's absolutely essential.

—Sean Portnoy

Potuznik *Concorde+* *Cheap/Dutch-East India* *G.D. Luxxe* *Submission* *Breakin'/Dutch-East India*

He's a complicated man, that Gerhard Potuznik, and no one understands him like his labels. This double delight from Cheap and Breakin' Records presents two of the many faces of Potuznik. On *Concorde+*, we find Potuznik and Mego allies Ramon Bauer

(General Magic), Florian Hecker, Peter Rehberg, and Tina Frank (Chicks on Speed) indulging in heavy, brow-furrowing conceptual sport. Potuznik's frames his ambitious synthesis of the various strains of electronic weirdness filtering out of Vienna within an Internet-age electronic opera narrative. Solemn-voiced Max Goldt provides the plot interludes, while Potuznik and Bauer deliver some of their most confounding disco-damaged digital antics to date. It could have been a gimmicky pastiche of electro-pop, fictional pretenses, and gritty academic pabulum, but *Concorde+* strikes an unimpeachable balance between concept and execution.

As does *Submission*, Potuznik's flawless tribute to early/mid-'80s New Order. The man struts his guitar, synth, and vocal chops, sounding every bit as seductively stoned as Bernie Sumner on such synth-pop tinglers as "Empty White," "Superamerica," "Comebacker," and "Disconnected." Potuznik somehow manages to embody the four-headed synergy of *Power Corruption & Lies* all by his lonesome—with astonishing melodies, lithe, Hook-y synth-basslines, pulsating discotheque beats, and all the hedonistic accoutrements of post-punk Electro Romanticism. Chick on Speed Nicki Murray-Leslie's showroom-dummy allurements on the Dopplereffekt-like "Geisha Girl" are the icing on *Submission's* fabulously decadent display.

—Gil Gershman

Proem *Burn Plate No. 1* *Hydrant Records*

On *Burn Plate No. 1*, Hydrant's 7th release, odd beat patterns and abstract rhythms bend and twist to form new hybrids of smooth electronic melody. Working with a 16-bit soundcard and a 486DX PC processor, Proem's work is not too far from Tom Jenkinson's older material (abstract drum n' bass). Many of these tracks are built on a platform of distorted beats (think Autechre with extra rhythm) matched with sizzling high notes and screeching melodies locked tightly within each groove.

Although many of the tracks on *Burn Plate No. 1* remain consistent throughout, tracks like "Third Shift," "Old School Pudding," "Drool Master," and "Wet Groceries" veer towards their own platforms of digital trickery. Proem has built a reputation for providing a multitude of ambient sound sculptures and presenting them in a genuinely abstract shape.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Quannum *Spectrum* *Quannum Projects*

Quannum is the latest mutation of the Bay Area hip-hop crew Solesides, with a free-flowing roster that recombines in seemingly infinite variations. *Spectrum* is an accurate title, as the Quannum collective tackles everything from vintage tag-team rhyming with Jurassic 5 on "Concentration," to hardcore Rawkus-style beats on "Looking Over a City." The big surprise of *Spectrum* is Lyrics Born, who emerges as the star-in-waiting to bona fide superstar DJ Shadow, as he takes equally skilled turns as a producer, MC, and funk-soul shouter on "I Changed My Mind." The downside of *Spectrum* is that inane radio spots sit where DJ Shadow or Chief Xcel should have had instrumental tracks, breaking the otherwise excellent flow of songs. As it stands, *Spectrum* is a mix tape assembled by the Bay Area's premiere hip-hop collective and divines a bright future for those formerly known as Solesides.

—Rob Geary

Quasimodo Acoustic Coupler Casa de Toad

One in a number of artists (Solvent, Lowfish, David Kristian, etc.) proving that Canadian electronic music is far ahead of Canadian rock (Loverboy, Bryan Adams, etc.) when it comes to creative sound creation, Quasimodo's full-length jaunts scattershot through a myriad of styles. One minute you are riding a Kraftwerkian monorail ("On EF Our Three"), the next minute you're launched into spacey jazz ("Jetlag 3 and Jetlag 4"), and then you're hearing Squarepusher at dub speed ("Spencer [Can't Stop]"). Of course, there are the *de rigueur* Autechre/Funkstörung/IDM hope-of-the-country distorted-beat sculptures ("Plug In Socket," "Hotel Ice (Tastes Better)," and "The 'Gay'" attempts to build upon the string-quartet serenity meets electronic spasms marriage that Aphex Twin's "Girl/Boy" birthed. At times, such disparity makes *Acoustic Coupler* seem yoked together (especially on "Spencer [Can't Breathe]," where acid-rock guitar gets mixed with Skam sounds), but there are enough good sounds here to make Quasimodo someone to watch.

—Sean Portnoy

Radio Radio Stereophonic Elefant Dance (SPAIN)

Spanish electronic music often goes unnoticed, regarded by many as something to fill the space between more "exciting" (i.e., non-Spanish) acts at each year's Sonar festival in Barcelona. Radio are an excellent example of what the country really does have to offer if only people would bother to investigate.

Essentially an ambient (with a small "a") techno album, the nine tracks that result positively glisten like crystals with their deep, luscious melodies. This has obvious antecedents in early-'90s techno but, unlike so much of the material from that era, Radio inject their music with a real sense of human feeling—introspection being a central theme. The result is that this record is much like the fluid string-based pulses of Wolfgang Voigt's Gas project. And, like Gas, this is clearly oriented towards a home listening environment. Its greatest asset is the manner in which the glacial riffs are welded to the earthy thud of techno to create a truly eerie sensation. Not a new idea, I grant you, but a juxtaposition pulled off to almost devastating effect.

A frequently haunting experience, shimmering in the heat of a Madrid summer. On this evidence, Spain appears as a hotbed of leftfield talent waiting to be discovered by people from afar. Catch an early train while you still can.

—John Gibson

Rehab ERD.00:14421-023Z Endpoint

As their name implies, Rehab are all about the "rehabilitation" of existing sound sources—environmental sound, band rehearsals, TV transmissions, and a whole host else. These sounds are then bathed in drones or other enveloping noises and contorted so their nature becomes impossible to pinpoint. Some fuzzy bitmapped photos of the three band members appear on the back, making them look like astronauts, or bio-technicians, and this appears in the album as attempts to create an ambience somewhere between space and cryogenics takes hold.

The band certainly of the original sound sources are buried or otherwise obliterated. This isn't necessarily a good thing, though. Some of the 13 tracks are far too heavy on the drone side. The opener, "Cherry," spends 5 minutes wrapped in choking, dark layers of obtuse fuzz before it finally gets its act together, with spectral marimba riffs creeping out of the swampy fog. "Dub 23" reminds me of recent Transient Waves efforts, with subtle rhythms passing through an altogether deeper series of sound signals. "Bells" could have come from Oval's *Dok* album. And both "Portland" and "Wind Tunnel" are along roughly similar lines to Chessie's last record; the former, in particular, seems to come from a live band recording before being given its "bio" treatment.

It might have been beneficial if Rehab had allowed more of the sources to show through, as 72 minutes of dense drone-based sonics can become irritating after a while. This particularly applies to the penultimate "Last Song" (nicely confusing), which is too long and too much like aural scree—until it gets interesting at the end. There are enough pearls lodged in this somewhat messy mud to mark Rehab as a band with potential.

—John Gibson

Repeat Temporary Contemporary For 4 Ears

Repeat is a German-Japanese collaboration, with Toshimaru Nakamura operating a mixing board and samples, and Jason Kahn on percussion and sampling. There is no hint of bass anywhere on the record and what results is a truly alienated stew of decaying sound loops.

Basically the mixing board and samples aren't exactly used to anything remotely bombastic (or even dynamic). Each of the seven tracks occupies similar territory—faint and high-end dissonance providing a backdrop to Kahn's not-exactly-dynamic—either loops of quiet, metallic drumming. The emphasis is certainly not on grooves. No bass, nothing to move to, 46 minutes of pretty much the same stuff. Is there anything to recommend on this album?

Well, yes there is. OK, this is *not* something to play before you step into town. But it does have certain meditative qualities. The gently chiming percussion does have a strangely haunting quality about it and comes across as quite eerie against the faint drones lurking in the shadows. Relaxing yet oddly unsettling—an extension of the territory carved by Main a few years ago. Definitely one for the dead of night.

—John Gibson

Alexander Robotnik Les Grands Voyages De L'amour Formic/Riot City (GER)

Remember "Problems D'amour"? If you don't, please look it up circa 1983—it's just one of those songs that makes you go, "Ohhh, that song!" It also happened to be one of those barrier-breaking hits across the world—an undeniably funky song. The producer of that Eurodance smash was Alexander Robotnik, who is really Maurizio Dami, an Italian producer. The newly released *Les Grands Voyages De L'amour* feature some of his '80s productions that never made it out of the studio. The result is an almost eerie listen, so brilliantly '80s.

A quick listen breeds familiarity like someone else wearing your favorite T-shirt—you could swear

This is not a new sound, but a new electro imitation—it's nouveau vintage. Two of the tracks are definitive standouts—"Celle Vache De Ma Mere" and the title track. These days Dami has moved on to world and ambient music productions, but those songs are danceable in any decade.

—Tamara Warren

Rubberoom Architechnology Indus Recordings

Armed with a pair of spitfire rappers, a brace of producers, and reinforced by a horde of Chicago turntablists, Rubberoom launches a relentless 74-minute hip-hop attack. "Isle of Weight" and "Meta Mo" deliver a dense, aggressive flow with a surprising range of reference, and the behind-the-scenes wizards respond by piling the samples, drum patterns, and cuts 10-feet deep. There are numerous treats here for the sonic connoisseur, like the lurching, industrial clang of "Lock Jaw," the slashing strings of "Smoke," and the eerie *Apocalypse Now* guitar and helicopter noises of "Operation Forever." Rubberoom puts Chicago on the indie hip-hop map with sounds as strong as the winds of their home base.

—Rob Geary

Scan 7 Resurfaced Tresor (GER)

"Trackmaster" Lou Robinson's first Scan 7 full-length, 1996's *Dark Territory*, surrounded a couple of sharp, club-targeted tracks with forgettable filler, his tinny drum sounds and rigid grooves wearing very thin over the course of an album. Scan 7 specialized in a jagged, mildly experimental tech-house hybrid that left little room for emotion or melody but plenty of space between its compressed, hollow-point grooves.

Resurfaced is a vast improvement. Scan 7 has tightened up his tracks, beefed up the programming, filled some of the empty space with warm synth, and allowed for such cautious detours as the shuttling "Black Wall." But if you're looking for the compositional elegance of a Carl Craig or Claude Young, stay away. Scan 7 likes to flog a solitary, well-hinged, telegraphic groove until it becomes all consuming. He'll sometimes take it beyond that point, to the taunting "which one of us will crack first?" extreme of "Custom Made" and "Invisible Invasion" or the metallic flagellation of "The Craft." Such endurance tests aside, *Resurfaced* is a much brighter album—funkier, more expressive, and a real delight, peaking with the piano rolls of "Digital Dream" and the melodic stabs of the effervescent, Surgeon-keen "Mind Trap."

Elizabeth Schimana Touchless: The Sensuality of Music Made Without Touching Kunstradio (GER)

Elizabeth Schimana supports her "non-singing" vocal improvisations with a 10-piece International Theremin Orchestra. The first three tracks were recorded during an Internet and radio simulcast, with the musicians wired in from such scattered zones as Madrid, Moscow, Melbourne, and Vienna. Purposely sounding more like a beached beluga

than a songbird, Schimana warbles in timbres that mimic, complement, and melt naturally with the ensembles' trebly tones and varicolored electrical hum. Contributors such as Christoph Kurzmann (of *Orchester 33/13*), Robin Rimbaud, André Smirnov, and Pedro López subject their oscillations to sampler and processing mutations, adding texture and a smattering of digital crunch. One might expect a melee of tangled frequencies and scrambled tones, but the concert is rather sedate.

Schimana's second concert, an hour-long performance of "virtual vowels," was set in an Austrian church. Using the acoustics of the cathedral as an oral cavity and the strategically placed theremin players as vocal chords, the configuration simulates the apparatus of speech. Schimana and her Orchestra carve out resonant grottos of sound, defined by the familiar pitch-sweeps and tremulous sighs of the massed theremins. With an understanding of the theremin's unique mechanics, these extraordinary performances live up to the album's subtitle. The sound hovers, throbbing and vibrating like a fleshy apparition, though no actual contact can be made as hands move between the instruments' antennae. "E" even manifests a quavering pulse, lending an orgasmic tension that builds relentlessly.

These tracks are like a good Victorian romance. The atmosphere of carnal electricity is all the more maddening and inebriating for the restraint that must be shown, and the charge of sexual tension is carried by even the thought of the slightest gesture within the theremin's excitable electric field.

—Gil Gershman

Schneider TM
Moist
To Rococo Rot
The Amateur View
Mute

One of the most notable free agent signings of the season in the electronic music world has been Mute's pick-up of these German acts (along with Tarwater) for domestic consumption. While *To Rococo Rot* is known to skirt the line between indie rock and electronic dabbling, Schneider TM continues the Teutonic tradition of engaging electronic melodies.

Although it brings back flashbacks of that annoying janitor on *One Day at a Time*, Schneider TM sounds a lot niftier than the real name (Dirk Dresselhaus) behind the moniker. While many of his fellow countrymates have become part of the minimalist chain reaction, Schneider TM provides a little more for the listener to pay attention to/grab hold of on the US release of 1998's *Moist*. "Masters" and "Camping" have meowing melodies that actually develop over their tech-house stylings, rather than derailing into a rut. Even better, "Starfuck" sounds like the type of pumping extraterrestrial engine that's straight off My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless*. Recommended.

The Amateur View also has a warm, analogue feel to it, especially on songs like "Telema," "She Loves Animals," and "This Sandy Piece," the last of which has the good taste to sound like a slow-motion version of Autechre's "Lowride." "Prado" is a moodier, more cinematic track, "Tomorrow" hints at electro with its 808 beat, and "Cars"—not a remake of the Gary Numan classic—has a Kraftwerkian touch to its simple melody and popping rhythm. As with *Moist*, *The Amateur View* could beef up the beats a little, but it's still another worthwhile release.

—Sean Portnoy

Si-{cut}.db
Rate of Living
Sprawl/Dutch East India

Since pulling up stakes and abandoning the suburbs of Hell, Douglas Benford has set up shop at the intersection of Blip, Bleep, and Glitch. The annual block party finds him tipping back punch in the company of O.S.T.,



Bisk, Hab, Solvent, and Atom Heart, noisily exchanging soundfiles and DSP plug-ins the way hausfraus fuss over guarded recipes. By now the bearer of a billfold stuffed with IDs and membership cards, Benford can scuttle beats and scramble sounds with the best of them. But the paper he waves most proudly is his membership in the melodicians' guild. Benford has never been one to mangle a tune so grievously that its dismembered remains collapse into a gasping, struggling heap. For all the mincing and filleting to which *Rate of Living's* beats and sequences are subjected, the level of stress is always just shy of melody's backbreaking point.

Benford piles permuted rhythms atop the carousels of "Stop London Sinking," "Indoor Relaxation," and "...hide!," but they keep on spinning—a little overburdened, slightly lopsided, yet otherwise none the worse for wear. "Tidal Pranks" and "(Life Without) Amnesia" heave and sigh under the weight of Benford's breakbeat mischief. But *Rate of Living's* complexified electroni-quadrilles and sambas are constructed to withstand such abuse. The melting synths of "Spectral Software," the splendid, vibe-festooned melodies of "Scream Like A Girl," "Private Drainage," "Fear Of Your Pals," and "Hi Kids, and the Radial rhythmic blends of "Pop-Up Jazz" (appropriate descriptive) are surprisingly rugged. Benford's most conspiratorial computer-aided anti-designs and programmed machinations only manage to bend them into amazing shapes.

—Gil Gershman

Signaldrift
060
Outward Music Company

Signaldrift is a pretty apt name for the sound this duo creates: sparse ambience that seems like it was shaped from transmissions floating through space. At times, *060* seems to reside in the same galaxy as later *Slowdive*, especially on tracks like "Pargo Theme" and the pretty, guitar-augmented "End of August," which have beats like cycling motors girded on to their underside. Otherwise, Signaldrift travel aimlessly (as the song title "Driving Somewhere" suggests) through the cosmos, creating engaging—if minimal—drony soundscapes that provide the perfect soundtrack to dreaming—whether you're asleep or awake.

—Sean Portnoy

Snd
makesnd cassette
Mille Plateaux

Named after the tag attached to computer sound files, snd takes a stab at minimal, glitch-ridden house using methods similar to those of Oval and

Nobukazu Takemura. With such acts as comparisons (whether they like it or not, the similarities are too numerous to discard), snd obviously has a task on its hands and doesn't quite rise to the challenge.

The bulk of the record is constructed from clicks and sparse bubbles of background sound that contain very faint traces of killer club tunes. Aiming for a chilly but funky effect, the 15 nameless tracks make up a largely continuous whole that begins to drag its heels some time before it ends. For a while, the quiet innovation on show holds the attention firmly and "02," in particular, makes use of a gently clicking rhythm that gathers momentum until it seems as if the whole environment is on the move. However, the rest of the record follows the same pattern. In this respect, it's reminiscent of Slam's lukewarm *Headstates*, another subdued, mildly perplexing exercise in chronic understatement, rather than the awesome digital nightmare of Fennesz.

I can see what snd are attempting to do—a new chill-out music that is determined to avoid the clichés of older ambient material. But this record is strangely amnesiac, as little of it is committed to memory once it's finished and is ultimately akin to sitting next to a leaky tap for 74 minutes. The constant patter of micro-beats is, by the end, quite boring. A target missed.

—John Gibson

Sonogram
Heartbeat Submarines
Simulacra Records

Sonogram is the underwater ambient technician known as Todd Gautreau. Besides the calming artwork on *Heartbeat Submarines*, Sonogram is guided closely by relaxing atmospheric drones that wisp around your thoughts. Mellow, drifting ambience is the focus, while leftover electronics collide with raw experimental field noise. "Dresdin Girls" combines faint whispers that breath in the background with spacious bleeps and whirls dissecting each other in the foreground. "Debris" vibrates nicely with a deep melodic vibe to keep things stable, while "Barfly" is an instant classic: Delicate chords intertwined with soft rays of sound that feel more like a brain massage. The title track is a 10-minute epic of bubbly rhythms and slippery ambience that hints at childhood memories that simply cannot be erased. Sonogram creates his own brand of intimate melodies that activate your senses with its dark undercurrents. Definitely one of the smoothest albums to grace the ambient community with one subtle sweep.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Soul Center
Soul Center
Soul Center/W.V.B. Enterprises (GER)

You get a very clear idea of what to expect by reading the (very short) credits: We have thanks to George Clinton, Thelonious Monk, Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, the Temptations, Anthony Shafir, Claude Young, Theo Parrish, and Jurgen Paape. I would expect to hear an odd record, combining R&B and soul with tech-house; this release is surprisingly not odd, however.

Thomas Brinkmann (as Soul Center) doesn't try to "fake the funk," if you will—he pulls his soul right from the source, sampling tiny chunks of acts totally unrecognisable to me. The cold, calculating nature

of Brinkmann's ultra-precise version of tech-house does not seem at odds in the slightest with the soul samples: As a matter of fact, this is one hell of a funky, playful record. I like to dance to tech-house, but often it's missing a human element to really lift you up. This record has got the human element, alright: Yeah. Alright. Funky.

—laerm

Spinform

To Hear Is Not To Listen

Recordings Under Construction (SWE)

Spinform (the audio-architect known as Erik Möller) is one of RUC's most recent signings. While Sweden's electronic music scene grows at an alarming rate (Saundart, Flora & Fauna, Audionaut to name a few), folks like RUC keep us tuned into the addictive pulse of disorienting beats. *To Hear Is Not To Listen* is one of the most satisfying releases my CD-player has had the pleasure of spinning. Of the nine tracks that shed several layers of crisp, clean, and coherently spaced beats, three of them deserve mentions: "In Search Of Lost Chord," "Higher Metaphysics," and "Webs Of Resistance." These tracks alone through a plethora of jazzy out-takes, skewed melodic hooks, and drum n' bass unlike anything that has been done in the UK and North America. Erik Möller generates a deep percussive groove within each track, proving that he's a digital-doctor of the beat. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for other pseudonyms, such as Onomatopoeia, Tonal, and Unai, all of which achieve a well-rounded electronic expansion of his musical soundscapes.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Stereolab

Cobra and Phases Group Play Voltage in the Milky Night
Elektra

Listening to Stereolab's *Dots and Loops*, I almost dreamt I was lying on a pristine beach with a few topless Mediterranean women, drinking champagne and giggling from the bubbles tickling their noses, as each take turns rubbing SPF 45 into my pale back—"you missed a spot, my dear"—a lazy fool's paradise, for sure. *Cobra* is less of a lecherous reverie and a little more mellow than *Dots*, with futuristic vibes and the usual dreamy vocals from lyricist Laetitia Sadier set up for a cool night on the town. Jim O'Rourke and John McEntire supply the standard Stereolab cheese-funk, with props given to 70s prog rockers Yes and Gabriel-era Genesis throughout the album.

With the album opening with "Fuses," a spaced-out jazzy number that pulses with an electric undercurrent of bass drums, cut-up trumpets and Laetitia's monosyllabic ba-ba's, the listener should have expected a real treat. Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, the release can't maintain the frantic, detached pace, allowing the sedating "Italian Shoes Continuum" and "Velvet Water" to carry too much baggage, dragging *Cobra* down with them. Some of *Cobra's* tracks are seriously overproduced—samples from tracks like "Blue Milk" are irritating and go on way too long. *Cobra* is not innovative or experimental sound, but it should still please the Lab fans out there. Pieces such as "People Do It All the Time," "The Emergency Kisses," "Infinity Girl," and the excellent (if short) "Come and Play in the Milky Night" redeem this album with the warm, bubbly, baroque arrangements that make Stereolab the interesting and unusual pop group it is.

—Alex Reynolds

Supercollider

Head On
Loaded/The Medicine Label

Loaded may be one of the more experimental "big beat" labels, but this goes way, way, way beyond the boundaries of that genre. On *Head On*, Supercollider take every type of electronic music, compress it to maximum density, and then record the shards flying off from the inevitable implosion.



Even vocals get atomized on tracks like "Cut the Phone," where only the title phrase seems intelligible over squiggle beats and synth and organ microbes, and "Under My Nose," which features some wicked drum programming that drill n' bassheads will lap up. Elsewhere, "Darn (Cold Way O' Lovin)" sprinkles synth fragments over a more straight-ahead house groove, while "Hide in From the Day" sounds like an electro track caught between a blender being turned on and off—one minute traveling along at warp speed, the next minute a mild funky jam. "Take Me Home" is sinewy funk not unlike Dub Narcotic Sound System—wiry guitar licks mesh with vocals that sound like Dave Matthews on acid—and "You Loosen Me Human" is like Prince's "Erotic City" teleporting in from another dimension.

In comparison, the four remixes that comprise the second CD seem little more than an aftershock. The "Harvey's Collision Course Mix" of "Darn" adds a funky guitar riff to the house beats, and the "Midfield General Remix" augments "It Won't Be Long" with bongos and horn snippets, but neither replicates the capturing-lightning-in-a-bottle feeling of the full-length. *Head On's* schizoid, hyperbolic energy wipes the floor with all the Warp sound-alikes placidly floating around out there.

—Sean Portnoy

Thievery Corporation

DJ Kicks
Studio K7

Far too many downtempo compilations bug the hell out of me by falling into the minimal, death-by-trip-hop trap. Thankfully, Washington, DC's Thievery Corporation avoid this problem for the most part on their contribution to the successful DJ Kicks series from !K7. While still sticking to a mellow, head-bobbin' vibe, Thievery Corp. manage to shuffle through a variety of sounds without a whole lot of monotony, whether lounge-y, Latin jazz (Les Baxter's "Tropicando," Ninja Tune downtempo (Up, Bustle & Out's "Emerald Alley"), or their own sitar-laden track with hip-hoppers Fun-Da-Mental ("Mother Africa Feeding Sista India/2001"). Unfortunately, their exclusive track for the compilation—"It Takes a Thief—isn't as memorable. But with choice cuts like the Rainer Truby Trio remix of Bobby Matos' "Guero Electro," this is, on the whole, a good mix with which to revisit warm summer nights.

—Sean Portnoy

The Timeout Drawer

Record of Small Histories
Someoddpilot Records

Another sign that indie rock is still taking a "one toe in" approach to electronics, *Record of Small Histories*—from the Chicago trio The Timeout Drawer—is a well-mannered, if not entirely gripping,

collection of tracks where Moogs and politely buzzing guitars navigate around one another. The opener, "Stair," sounds like an old gloomy Cure track with pointilistic guitar fingering and some drony synth sweeps (not a bad thing if you're a longtime Robert Smith fan like myself) and glides into the similarly tempered (though slightly more up-tempo) "Lull." Vocals emerge on "Applause," though they tend to distract rather than add "etherealness" to the proceedings, while "1,000 Reels" might be a Sonic Youth ou-ttake where they left an old synth on by accident in the background.

Nice, if you've teethed on torpid-tempo indie rock, from Joy Division's dirges to the shoegazers.

—Sean Portnoy

Tone Rec

Coucy Pack

Sub Rosa/Dutch East India

Subliminal progressions? Crystalline drones? From the outset of their new album, Tone Rec immediately strike out in new directions, principally involving a new-found sense of rhythmic urgency. This adds a greater sense of (non-)human energy to their music, but without sacrificing the surreal density of previous material.

The opening track ("Ten") hits you square in the face. A splattering of live drums (a common feature on this record) kick out two grooves in one, relegating the humming computerised drone to the background. And the treatments that they've always added to their dreamy tones (basically, constantly changing distortions in fidelity, volume and timbre, much like Fennesz) now devour this new-found love for more overt rhythms. Of particular note is "Discoglosse," a techno track with "thuds" for beats, an apparently accidental melody and sporadic digital fuckery. That's not to say *Coucy Pack* is faultless. There are odd moments of weakness ("No Stock Media" is pretty irritating) and a general sense that the album might have benefited from slightly more coherence but that's always likely to be a problem when foraging through new areas.

Tone Rec are building on some of the elements present in predecessor *Pholcus*. The tracks are becoming shorter and ever-more detached from any significant indicator of human involvement (you could never guess that this is four people, two male, two female, from its musical content). This bizarrely energetic-cum-disaffected-cum-restless music sounds like nothing else currently around, not really techno, not really post-rock or anything worth categorising. Another fine Sub Rosa excursion.

—John Gibson

Ubin

02

Various Artists

Food To Eat Music By

Elefant Traks (AUSTRALIA)

The Australian-based label Elefant Traks is a branch of individuals consisting of some of the most intriguing outfits covering electronica, breakbeat, rough-house, hip-hop and many other genre's that are not restricted to any particular "style." 02, the release of Ollie Chang and Joe Lamont's audio-spectacle called Ubin, is an eclectic mix of strange electronic drum n' bass structures with many of those "intelligent" distorted-beats that will appeal to fans of Proem (Hydrant), Funkstorung (!K7), and Colongib (Kracfive). Ubin's quirky musical approach is a multi-layered affair that combines an onslaught of squished beats and a strong yet coherent

backbone of melodies to keep your ears happy. File under: innovative electronic brain music.

With their latest compilation, *Elefant Traks* has invited 16 artists to represent the "freshest of Australian produce." With an abundance of danceable breaks and intricate headphone electronics, *Food To Eat Music By* is an intricate collage of audio delights that will keep your mind occupied for the next few months. Some of the highlights on here include tracks by Raven, Spanky, Ozi Battla feat. Alf, Deep Child, and Areito. *Elefant Traks* breaks the sonic barrier by releasing music that feeds your body and regenerates your thoughts. —Pietro Da Sacco

Ultra Milkmaids Vorely Relay Noctovision (JP)

Covert French ambience Ultra Milkmaids receive the strictly Eastern European remix treatment via a tiny Japanese label best known, if barely so, for reissuing Kim Cascone's similarly inclined *Poison Gas Research* works. The Milkmaids' patiently creased and crimped melodic folds and twinkling glitches are already a thing of wonder, often (and deservedly) compared to the alchemical enticements of the *Coil/Black Light District/elPh* family.

Countrymen (and Noise Museum familiars) *Etereo* *Expandium Club* and *Icon Zero* supply grounding heft courtesy of weighty beats of the sinister *Wordsound* hip-hop and stomping drum n' bass varieties, respectively. *Celluloid Mata's* "Lyr 40 122" instead takes the starfield road through ascendant ambience. The most empathetic treatments come from *Telepherique*, whose beautiful "Svemir" streamlines the Milkmaids' unbounded atmospheric designs with a subjacent vocal loop, from Switzerland's *Vance Orchestra*, and from *Troum*, the Hannover-based *Baraka[H]*'s post-Maeror *Tri* project. *Vance Orchestra's* "Vor You-Vrom Us" recalls the horizontal, phaze-shifted guitar-glint involutions and planar landscaping of *Labradford*, while *Troum's* spectacular "Exic" is a carpet of contoured melody and shadow rolled out across *Infinity's* threshold.

At the other extreme, *Netherlanders Goem* and *Captain Black* retain only a tenuous link with the Milkmaids' mold in their somewhat pointless translations of such exalted music into deliberately minimalist microwave pulses and superimposed hum. In the context of the seamless *Vorely Relay*, even these stark reductions make perfect sense. Something special indeed. (Contact: nocto@yo.rim.or.jp) —Gil Gershman

Unit The Narcoleptic Symphony Caipirinha

The enigmatic *Unit's* second disc for the NYC-based *Caipirinha* label, well known for their support of intelligent electronics. As the title would suggest, it's a disc suited for after-hours listening sessions. Click-and-whirr percussion totters along on tiny legs to a backdrop of melancholy ambience. *Unit* successfully uses melody and atmosphere to evoke a wide range of emotion absent in much of today's experimental electronic music. The solitude of tracks like "Ring" "Worm" and "Blue/Grey Wallpaper" is countered by the playful strains of "Crank." Imagine the eerie undertones of *Aphex's* two *Selected Ambient Works* releases merged with the

punctuated percussion of *Funkstörung* and you're not that far off. Tune in and nod off in a darkened room, but watch out for the final track. It's an abrasive *Panacea* remix certain to rouse the deepest sleeper. Good, but somewhat of a shocker after the delicate nature of the rest of the disc. —Brock Phillips

Mika Vainio Ydin Wavetrap/Dutch East India

A strange trip through the dark soul of the Land of the Midnight Sun, the cover art of *Mika Vainio's Ydin* ("Core") features a scratched, rough collection of several balding, creepy men holding oars, being led by a wooden angel (daemon?). Why are they all there? Where are they going? What is their intent? Without a proper grounding in Finnish, I will probably never know what those fellows were really up to, but the journey was definitely bizarre.

With a soundtrack as creepy as the individuals on the cover, *Vainio* serves up a banal analogue salad of spitting arcs, eardrum-splitting chirps, throbbing bass noise, and pulsating drum arrangements. *Ydin* does not change very much, with most tracks frequently testing the boundaries between noise and sound, never quite evolving to music. This release hits its mark, however, with its exceptions: the spellbinding "Kadonnut" ("Disappeared"), an evil, brutal ambient piece reminiscent of the scarier moments of *Aphex's SAW II*, and the subtle, bass-heavy, self-titled finale. Put the headphones on and keep your hand near the volume controls as necessary. —Alex Reynolds

Various Artists Across Uneven Terrain Various Artists Passageways Fat Cat (UK)

In the couple of years since they shifted from record store to record label, *Fat Cat* has gained a reputation for showcasing eclecticism (including on its series of 12"s that have teamed such pairings as *VVM* and *Third Eye Foundation*), which is certainly on display over 25 tracks on these past-and-present compilation discs. Of the two, *Across Uneven Terrain* is the "kindler, gentler" one, ranging from *Chain Reaction*-style tech-house minimalism (*Process' Calene*, *Grain's* bouncy untitled closer) to electro (*Insync v Mysteron's* "Old Dark House," complete with synth-wash drafts pressing against closed windows) to out and out indie rock (the *My Bloody Valentine* meets *Tortoise* sound of *Mice Parade's* "Organic Reproduction Attempt" and *Transient Waves' Slowdive* imitation on "Paradise").

The limited-edition (i.e., 300 copies) tour "document" *Passageways* is, at times, far less easy on the ears, despite crossovers from *Across Uneven Terrain* like *Fonn* and *Immense* (guitar-drenched ambience) and *Process* and *Grain*. (The *Mice Parade* and *Transient Waves* tracks here at least shift genres and explore trip-hop atmospheric, at varying BPMs.) The more distorted fun comes with *Antenna Farm's* "Prowler Reconstruction," which does indeed sound like a botched robbery attempt—complete with tripped-over trash cans, pets barking and

screaming, while *VVM's* "Disfigurement" and *Grindverk's* "The Twit & The Tower" are more microscopic in their fuzzed-out mayhem, both sounding like they are performing strip searches on white noise.

While *Across Uneven Terrain* is a bit more ambient- and rock-oriented, and the harder-to-find *Passageways* is more beat- and noise-friendly, both provide a broad survey of contemporary experimental sounds. —Sean Portnoy

Various Artists Artefacts Art-Tek (RUS)

Artefacts includes 13 tracks of electronic space music developed by artists on the Moscow-based *Art-Tek* label, which culls a series of chilling yet relaxed electronica that is directly in line with Russia's theory of "technology that moves the art." One of the best glitch-electronics compilations of 1999, *Artefacts* features highlights from *Fizzarum*, *Eu*, and *Lazyfish* that will leave you thinking about their wonderful and distorted beats. Many of these tunes may be difficult to assimilate in one full session, and *Art-Tek* are definitely a few years ahead of themselves on this one. Russia's sound-designers have released an excellent mix of digital trickery, slap-stick electronics, and purely complex beats. If this compilation doesn't receive constant playtime on your cd-player, you may as well have no pulse! (Contact: <http://mu.ru>) —Pietro Da Sacco

Various Artists Dated Töshöklabs

The first full length from *Töshöklabs* is this compilation of four artists (under seven monikers!), all of whom donate cohesive, deep tracks that work best as headphone fodder. Label head *Nate Harrison* continues to find great sounds, as evidenced by the opener, "Yesteryear's Frequency," which creeps up from total silence to the ambient sounds of a *Blade Runner* future, like *Brian Eno* plugged into the monolith. A few tracks are plagued by some dull minimalism, but the acid-tinged "Synthesis" by *Cardboardmen* and *Plex's* "Soft Hearted" are as good examples of complex, listenable programming as you'll find on this side of the Atlantic.

Plex also provides the highlight of the disc, "Pom Gratis," which manages to sound upbeat, epic, and digitally damaged all at once and packs a surprising emotional punch. *Harrison* closes the disc by combining his thick, distorted sonics, *New Wave* synths, and second-generation drum n' bass into a pair of standout tracks. *Harrison's* sharp ear for sounds and artists makes *Dated* the best compilation out of the North American indie electronic scene to date. —Rob Geary

Various ...eclipse of the moon and falling star Fi Sci (UK)

Fi Sci is a new label set-up by UK combo *Ute* in order to release their own material as well as work by friends and comrades who operate on the nexus where drum n' bass, trip/hip-hop, jazz and other musical forms meet and mesh. To launch the label they've gathered a dozen tracks that give a taste of



what Fi Sci is all about. Kicking off with a bit of atmospheric d n' b from Chalk Hill, the disc shimmies from there through funky Ninja-esque grooves by Hotel Full of Cops, New Era's eponymous slab of butt-shaking electro-dub, the off-kilter experimental weirdness of Luminous and more, before wrapping up with the lush and mellow "La Bella" by The Lord's Garden. Like most compilations, there are a couple of duds ("The Blessing" by Mikey B, for example, is 8 minutes of sickly sweet noodling that goes nowhere fast), but all in all, the hitmiss ratio on this one is pretty impressive.

—Greg Clow

Various Artists

Geology: A Subjective History of Planet E Planet E

With label retrospectives being churned out quicker and quicker these days—none of that 50-year anniversary stuff that Atlantic Records did a few years back—it shouldn't be surprising that it only took 8 years for Carl Craig's Planet E to put together this compilation. Of course, no one can deny the importance Planet E has had in launching Detroit techno beyond its May/Atkins roots, and so this stands as a vital collection of American electronic music as it's developed over the past decade (roughly), moving from the tribal funk of Craig's homage to Detroit radio legend The Electrifying Mojo (69's "If Mojo was AM") to the recent drum n' bassy and sax skronk-infused "Dislocate" by newcomer Reeloose.

Goldie has claimed *Geology's* centerpiece,

Innerzone Orchestra's "Bug in the Bassbin," as the progenitor of drum n' bass, and while its jazzy polyrhythmic pyrotechnics are still impressive, it doesn't grip me as much as its historical importance suggests it should. More to my liking is the closer—the Paperclip People's "Remake," a rare track that is every bit as propulsive as "Bassbin," but far richer melodically. In a similar vein is Common Factor's "Horizons," as sleek as a Motor City convertible (with even a hint of funky guitar strumming mixed in), while Flexitone's "Electricity" returns to techno's electro roots, dropping synth squiggles over a vintage 808 beat.

Obviously, an essential overview of one of the premier assembly lines for '90s techno.

—Sean Portnoy

Various Artists

Interior Horizons Interchill Records

Interchill's third ambient exploration, while culling tracks from Canada, Sweden, Japan, and the UK, combines an interesting venture of Middle-Eastern motifs with a relaxed, breaks vibe. With the revamped slo-mo mix of Legion Of Green Men's "Beyond The Borderless" making an appearance here, it's nice to hear a soothing mixture of obscure beats with some lyrics splashed on top. While Lumo's atmospheric whispers on "Seven Minutes Of Sun" takes the stage, Freeworm's sprinkling of casual, laid-back beats takes you to an area that has bubbly textures written all over it. With an abundance of ambient sound-sculptures, *Interior Horizons* manages to unfold an intriguing collection of

electronica tracks, sizzling yet hypnotic ear-candy that will attract fans of The Orb and Psychic Warriors ov Gaia. And if you enjoy listening to this compilation, then you'll appreciate the wonderful artwork that accompanies it as well.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Various Artists

Ischemic Folks Schematic

To the uninitiated, this introduction to the "Schematic sound" could have, at first, seemed either as an awkward, *Blech*-like pastiche of musical styles or an inspired knock-off of *Chiaotic*-era Autechre, as the abstract liner and disc renderings of the Designers Republic might imply. Disciplined editorial oversight on the part of Schematic management, however—and, in particular, the excellent individual efforts of artist Richard Devine—keep this release's tracks focused on the cool, reserved delivery of precision-engineered mechanical anthems. The listener will find no mistakes or "intentional randomness" thrown in to lend any part of the release even a modicum of humanity. If you're into this sort of thing, then you're in for a treat. Otherwise, run for it.

That said, the soulless, Kraftwerk-esque style of *Ischemic Folks* is mostly uniform through the entire disc, making it difficult to distinguish the efforts of the contributors. Perhaps *Folks* is not noteworthy or exciting as an introduction to the artists of the popular Schematic label, so much as what happens when a label pulls together to create a concept album at this level.

—Alex Reynolds



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Out Now

Him - Sworn Eyes

Doug Scharin enlists some help from the Chicago crew (Bundy Brown, Jeff Parker, Rob Mazurek and others) to create a brilliant concept album that could be presented as one piece of music, though the terrain it covers is vast. Trumpets, marimbas, and a multitude of beats from one of the best drummers I know. We have the double vinyl with an extra bonus track. If you need the CD look up Perishable Records in Chicago. - 2xLP Only (bc-024)



The Dylan Group

More Adventures in Lying Down
 An awesome array of tripped-out minimalism, live jungle, thick dub, and more from our favorite vibraphone nuts. This is a smooth, cohesive album that was recorded 100% acoustically, believe it or not. A nice addition to any collection, and we guarantee that it doesn't sound like anything you already have. - CD (bc-021)

Child's View - Funfair

The new album from Nobukazu Takemura, following the "Child's View Remixes" (Mad Professor, Roni Size, Coldcut, etc.). From trumpets, bassoons, children & vibraphones to jungle samples broken up as if improvised by someone on a hand drum, these recordings are his first ever released in America and they are absolutely amazing. Close your eyes. - CD (bc-022)

Him/The Dylan Group

Experimental dub from Brooklyn meets a drum & vibraphone duo. Crazy tests for your couch. - (split) CD (bc-013)

VA - The Corners of the Mouth

A benefit record for The School Of Sound featuring Oval, Mouse On Mars, E.A.R., Moby, Seefeel, Aube, Mice Parade, Hearing is Our Concern and many others. - CD/2xLP (bc-014)

VA - The Resonance Found at the Core of a Bubble

A compilation spanning the spectrum of modern minimalism. DJ Spooky, N20 (DJ Reese), The Dylan Group, Squelch, Bob Brass and others. Some live, some sequenced; ambient, trip-hop, vibraphone stuff. - CD (bc-007)

Mice Parade - Ramda

An album of oddly organic, cerebral tone that again succeeds in using all live performance to mimic sequencers and samplers. From heavy ambience to shimmering complexity, each track and mix on this follow-up to "The True Meaning of Boodleybaye" was also recorded in one take, using instruments like harps, drums, organs, vibes, synths and guitars. Groovy. - CD (bc-025)

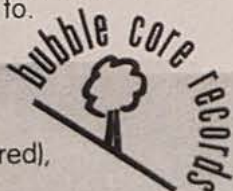


VA - Music For Listening To

In our constant attempts to avoid being pigeonholed as a label for any one type of music, we present a wonderful compilation that travels smoothly from haunting guitars to electronic experiments. Featuring the two songs from our out-of-print Rex single, as well as Maimos, Him, Dots Will Echo, Mice Parade, Velma, Kirsten McCord and more. Not a dub record; nor a rock record; this is simply music for listening to. - CD (bc-026)



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Various Artists
20·2000 series
Noton/Dutch East India

With one glaring exception, the next four releases in Noton's 20·2000 series delve deeper into exploring the relationship of sounds and the experiences of the fin-de-siècle human being. Interestingly enough, there is a definite move in the series towards evoking shades of the organic sounds of indigenous world cultures, perhaps as a response to the cold, harsh, mechanic voice of European electronic music.

May
Byetone

"A haphazard arrangement of various frequencies flying past one another in a cold, bored vacuum." This is one sentence I might have written if I cared about this release enough to write a detailed review. Very simply, the pieces are either incomplete expressions or are too abstract to lend themselves to any meaningful interpretation. Individual frequencies, sometimes ear-piercingly high ringing tones, are thrown into the mix without much in the way of conscious arrangement. In the end, Byetone tested the limits of my hearing, the limits of my stereo system, and the limits of my patience. It wouldn't have been so bad if the release went nowhere fast, but each of the three tracks takes its good time doing nothing but wanking off. This release is disappointing waste of time.

June
Senking

Jens Massel, a member of the Karaoke Kalk label from Germany, operates here under the pseudonym Senking. Massel gives us throbbing low frequencies folding into two muted world/electronic hybrids

remnescent of a hypothetical David Byrne/Peter Gabriel/Nusrat Khan collaboration, without the dramatic vocals or instrumental flourishes. Like a hushed secret shared between two close friends, Senking delivers intense and deliberated sounds in a powerful, bass-heavy mix, but there is something holding the pieces back, keeping them from breaking out of the cage. Why Massel wants to hold out on us is a mystery, but it is a captivating mystery, nonetheless. A worthwhile release — even outside the context of 20·2000 — and the highlight of the series, to date.

July
Ester Brinkmann

The way Brinkmann's "|||||—|—" starts off, you'd almost think you were listening to the start of a minimal dance music set of a Pan Sonic performance. But this intro is quickly replaced with an almost intoxicated loop of West African tribal downbeats and a slightly out-of-phase chord, with an organic gurgle or two thrown in. The track grows into a very hypnotic percussion arrangement but keeps the mellow ambience going. There's little in the way of melody, but the beats are altered slightly so as to keep things interesting. Almost dreamlike, a woman's voice whispers above the whistling of birds. A minute from closing, the reggae beats fight the progress of the song into your standard 4/4 dance track. But this fades out into a brief repetition of the hard, Pan Sonicesque introduction, implying that — like much of the history of man — the entire release could be played as a loop.

August
Scanner

Robin Rimbaud, a.k.a. Scanner, is a name usually synonymous with ambient work that fields the

interaction of viciously mutated fragments of phone conversations. This release is not the usual work you'd expect from Scanner, though, when a cursory sample of a woman's "Hello?" opens and closes whatever telephone exchange we could expect to eavesdrop upon. A throbbing bass line grows into an almost danceable piece of dark trance, looping the drumbeat and soulful moaning of a native American caught in a fragment of ritual, layered over the evil, low-frequency hums of electrical transformers and the counterpoint of a hi-hat cymbal. The beats decay and we are left with a piped, androgyneous—almost inhuman—voice looping "cys-tic" into the cold, empty space of a new millenium.

September
Noto

As Noto, the head of the series' label Noton, Carsten Nicolai contributes to the series with the ninth release, a trio of pieces entitled "noto.time.dot." The three interleaved tracks open with a simple 4/4 pattern, with the whirring blips of an electric cricket developing into a rolling framework of clicks, warming up like a newly-wound clock learning to keep time. The track decays, leaving the electric cricket to chirp alone. This progresses into the second track, a layering of a monotonal, wavering tone over the rolling clicks, sounding much like the drawing of a wet finger across the lip of a wine glass. The disc concludes with a subtly programmed dance track, a brief arrangement of layered clicks and high-frequency notes. A low-key and inoffensive release, nothing exuberant or showy— you'd almost expect something a little more provocative from the label chief—certainly not the weakest disc in the series, by any means.

—Alex Reynolds

Various Artists
B-2
Beta Bodega

Run out of Woodside, Queens, by renegade producer and DJ Mil Mascaras, the militant Beta Bodega label comes through with its second release, B-2. Titled after the name of the government-sanctioned Colombian death squads, responsible for thousands of deaths and missing people, the 12" helps to disseminate information about the past, and current, Colombian political climate, to generally unaware music buyers across the world, from Germany to Alabama.

Under the alias of Hamijama, Jake Mandell collaborates with Junko Asanuma. based in Tokyo, Asanuma, a studio producer for underground Japanese electronic artists, brings her polished studio sound together with Mandell's schizophrenic, complex programming skills, to create a track not completely like either of their solo projects. Also contributing to the social and musical education of the masses: Atlajala (minimal techno producer Stewart Walker), Patcha Kutek (a duo of two IDM heavyweights), Plug Research's Mannequin Lung, and a member of 8-man NY squad, TPM.

Only two releases old, Beta Bodega has become a label to follow, with rumors of upcoming releases by Hamijama, Houstra (upcoming IDM star, under alias), and a solo project by Asanuma. Check it.

—Chris St. Covish

V/VM
Machine (4x7")
V/VM (UK)

Bored with normal records? Looking to add some more decadence to your DJ sets? Witness V/VM's recent project, which immediately preceded the much more controversial *Wmpig 7*", itself a recording of pigs being fed (not butchered, as some were convinced). What we have here is a set of four components, as they are called, 7" marble gray slabs of vinyl with no information other than the component number, track titles (Such as "sdch1 <," "^^, ^^, ""*****q" or the slightly more usual "klw55e") and a handy leaflet introducing the package. In essence, each component is a simple machine tailored to achieve simple sonic tasks.

On the first disc, the initial track more than borders on an endurance test. But then the following one is surprisingly ambient. Side two is more fortunate overall but retains an austere development. For many records, this would be a major deterrent. But the point of this set is not so much to listen to it straight as it is to build new sonic machines out of the existing components. Of course, these discs aren't to be dismissed as turntable fodder for your wilder DJ sets either. This is intensive loop noise: grating, repetitive, and quite beautiful after a while. Very useful for those catharsis-inducing moments.

But the real surprise in here is that the tracks on *Machine* do not content themselves to being mere DJ tools and, for the most part, work as actual songs.

Take "^^, ^^" from the second component: a sophisticated collage that sounds like some noise opera, rich with samples and distortion. It is immediately followed by an exercise in grunged-out speedcore. And the set gets better as it goes, culminating into disc four, which ends into a tragical sonic assault of feedbacks and unidentified audio carnage that may be dubbed gut-wrenching. (Needless to say, disc four is probably the most essential of the bunch if you have to choose rather than collect.)

Machine is very good stuff. This is noise (obviously), but surprisingly focused and structured into a stark, powerful narrative. V/VM's music is based mostly on loops, which gives it some sort of a relevance in the universe of popular music; however strange the words "V/VM" and "pop music" may look in the same sentence. Actually, from the bare, uniform, colorless design, it would be easy for the casual record shopper to dismiss *Machine* on sight as yet another boredom-laden academic showcase. Despite a thoroughly prevalent minimalism, the songs contained therein have their fair share of surprises for anyone, including the most discriminating harsh noise enthusiast. Begin with disc one, let it sink in for some time, and uncover the songs that these components hide. Then find a loop or two you like, scratch the hell out of it, and build your own machine out of the remnants. Interactive listening doesn't get any better than this.

—David Turgeon



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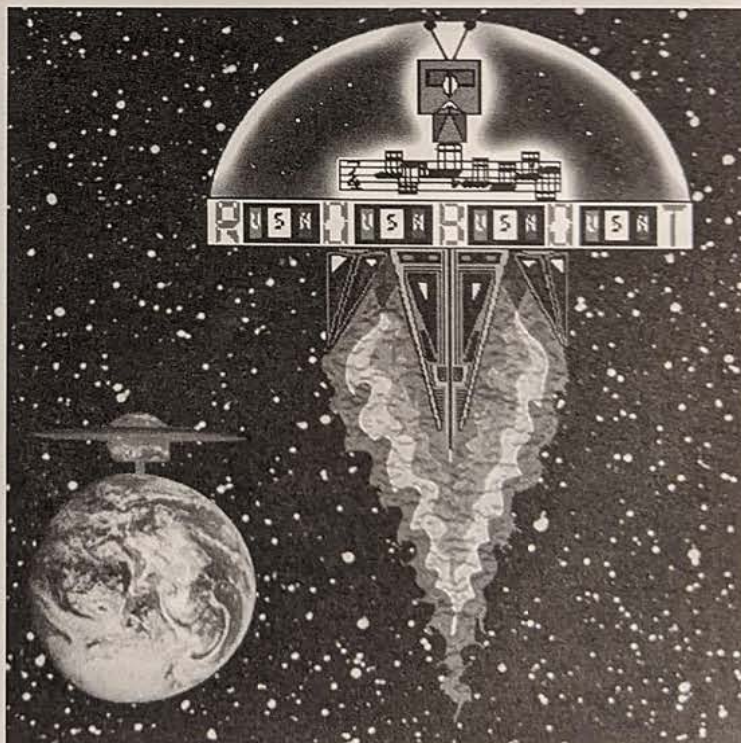
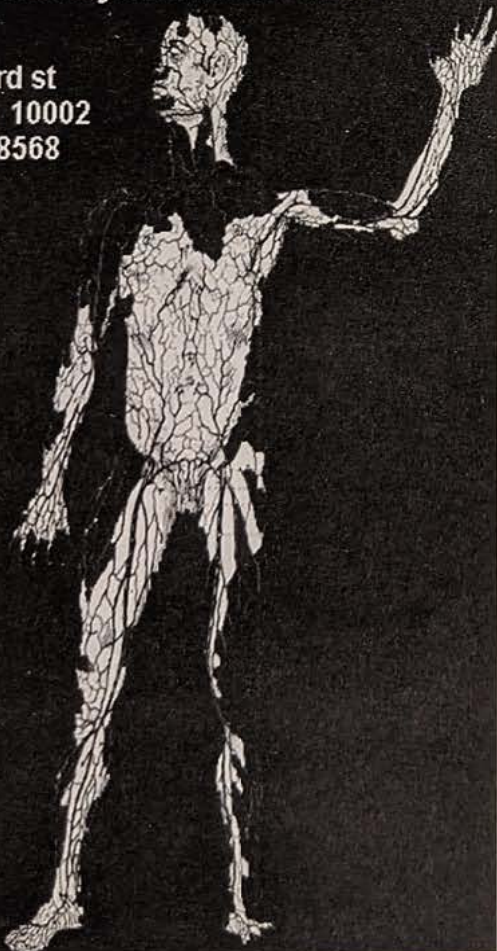
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—Gil Gershman

Various Artists Woodworking Alien8 Recordings

Woodworking is an all-star assault on David Kristian's *Cricklewood*, the Canadian's affectionate mash note to *Forbidden Planet* soundsmiths Louis and Bebe Barron, Notorious data pirates Rehberg & Bauer, Farmers Manual, and Goem represent remixology's melody-mangling and sound-spindling extreme, disrupting the flow of Kristian's oscillator burble by amplifying its choppy, square-toothed composition. In its overzealous efforts at deconstruction, FM's exceptional "dkRmx(crcklWd,rcNstrct,L-R/4)" actually comes closest to the stimulating out-sound innovations of the Barrons' original model.

Only Half Moon Dragster's Robert Mailloux and Stefan Figiel, who whip up a storm of tube-screams and wind wraiths with authentic "vintage" equipment, are truer in spirit to the source material's inspiration. Inchoate's take on the same piece ("Cookies") treads nearest to the soft, arhythmic popcorn-pulsations of Kristian's original. In contrast, Justin K. Broadrick's "Cookies" mix sees the Techno Animal torn between the concentrated corona-flare intensity of his Solaris identity and the reverb-laden, warped, and folded melodic distractions of Final.

Amusingly enough, Kristian's own entry, "Hiwatt," is just as deviant, taking the slow, steady road through resourceful bass-bump pseudo-house. The Root of Sub's Mark Poysden channels Kristian's crudely assembled echoes and gurgles in another direction, his "Woodwind" a rather brilliant concrete composite of mechanical and organic noises evocative of Tod Dockstader's tape-splice tale spinning. Solvent, Phoenecia, Kid606, and Lowfish all assemble Kristian's raw squiggles into beat-bent structures that pervert the background intent of *Cricklewood*. Kid606's squelchy, rhythmic debasement of "Pangolin" is the most effective of these. The others err on the side of craftiness: Their breakbeat acrobatics are on enderide (especially the frantic antics of Lowfish's "Toothpick Tree") but serve only to detract from the rawness of the Barron-esque whirs and sputters. Aube's arresting "Circlet" treads safer ground, its low-res dial tones accreting to an excited apogee of peals and high-voltage

—Gil Gershman

Stewart Walker Stables Force Inc. (GER)

Another week, another minimal techno release on Force Inc. And another winner. What is it about this particular sound? Maybe this is the perfect distillation of techno music— all bass and thuds, with faint, shimmering tones passing into view every now and then.

Stables is apparently based on the outdoor sculptures of Alexander Calder, which don't move very far (or at all) and suggest stability. I've never seen anything by Alexander Calder but I have listened to this album and I can see where he's

coming from. These 10 tracks build on their original starting points without venturing much beyond them. It starts with "Missing Winter," where a looping, elliptical bassline orbits 4/4 rhythms. Some distant, ghostly synth washes hover in the background, slowly arriving more in the foreground. Some more rhythmic elements muscle in. It builds up one hell of a momentum whilst staying rooted to the pattern set by the first thuds— revolving round a central point at speed. This is basically the approach to the remaining nine tracks too.

However, this is not an overly mathematical exercise. Tension resonates throughout the record, giving it quite a taut feel. And, like so much of this stuff, there are elements and sound patterns that take several listens to detect. Like the low grumble lurking in "Cocoa," or the way the bassline in "Slowness" treads a pattern all of its own, while managing to stay within the confines of the track as a whole. Walker definitely has the power of hypnosis and uses it to blistering effect throughout the whole hour. Excellent stuff.

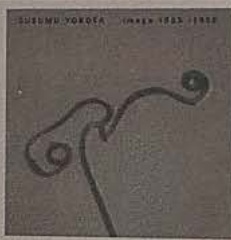
—John Gibson

Susumu Yokota Image 1983-1998 Skintone/Leaf/Dutch East India Susumu Yokota 1999 Sublime (JAPAN) Stevia Greenpeace NS-Com (JAPAN)

The concept of Kona ("powder") and an ounce of metaphysics explain how these three discs can all be the work of one fascinating producer, Tokyo's Susumu Yokota. *Image 1983-1998*, licensed by shrewd Leaf

majordomo Tony Morley from Yokota's own Skintone imprint, collects a handful of early acoustic (organ/guitar) pieces and more recent material inspired by these humble beginnings. Predating the techno phase represented by Yokota's work on Harthouse/Eye-Q (Yokota), Sublime (Ringo, Prism, Susumu Yokota), and Space Teddy (Ebi), *Image* presents rough sketches for the jolly, carnivalesque melodies that have been a Yokota staple. Fingerpicked musings ("Tayutafu"), tremulous, Vini Reilly-like delay-scapes ("Wani Natte"), taped voices, and analog rales and wheezes flower into spiral-form fantasias and budding tone poems. Like Yokota's paintings and sculpture of the same period, the shades are predominantly soft and fluid, bleeding in parabolic curves and streaks, directed inwardly.

At the time of these early recordings, Yokota envisioned himself achieving the sublime powder-state of Kona. He explains that the desire to transcend form and dissipate into the universe like grains of clay, sugar, or drugs led him to the glittering structures of Acid House and techno, whose rhythms he saw as Kona transformed into "ebi" (shrimp), "jumping up and down." His recent 1998 and 1999 full-lengths find him literally "lost in music," unstuck in temporal vortices, bounced between the glitter-daze of disco and the cut-up, DSP-intensive sound of the '90s. There's a feverish urgency to 1999, as though Yokota has been called upon to provide the score for a final dance that will



leave all party-people so enrapt by rhythm as to be oblivious to the calendar's inevitable triple-zero somersault. He mixes familiar disco riffs and streamlined house grooves into such intoxicating fits of funky abandon as "Future Memory" and "Unrequited Love For Andromeda." His diversionary tactics work brilliantly. As 1999 climbs from piano cascade to deep bass workout, drawing its rhythms tauter and more irrepressible with every near-final, irreversible forward-tick of the clock, Yokota leaves you too in thrall to the locomotive force of "On & On," "Lonely Comets," and "Endless" to heed What Apocalyptic Terrors May Come.

But Yokota can not subjugate the growing internal unease he feels as his millennial series nears its penultimate mark. The transitional *Stevia* album—named for a natural, hyper-sweet sugar substitute—reflects Yokota's thoughts, suggesting that the artist has half-awakened from what he calls the "mind-control" of techno and from the fractal images "flashing across my mind when I close my eyes." In fugue-like leaps, his mind turns to those early "Images"—to their essential, uncorrupted beauty; to their beatless whorls and involutions; to the purity of his art before his seduction by the fractal enchantments of techno and house. As rhythm's narcotic effects wear off, the raw reverberations of Yokota's inimitably funky grooves are shot through with jolts of electric guitar ("Black And White"), the vocal after-images of subconscious transmissions and Image-istic memories ("Cherry Girl," "Astral Spirits"), and the most tender of melodies—all screened through *Greenpeace's* hypnagogic, blossom-blinded haze.

—Gil Gershman

Savvas Ysatis Highrise Tresor (GER)

The metaphorical association of music-as-architecture is generally reserved for pundits and for such architects-turned-musicians as Iannis Xenakis. Overlooking their common Greek nationality, the academic father of stochastic process-music and the veteran of such popular techno/ambient projects as Prototype 909, Omicron, SETI, Unit Park and Arc have little in common. Little, that is, aside from that architectural metaphor. Ysatis' tracks are constructed from the ground up, level by level, on a solid foundation of Detroit bass-craft.

Efficient and aesthetically lean, such tracks as "Bubblin'" and "Alright" (previewed on Tresor 100 and treated to excellent remixes by Blake Baxter and Surgeon on Tresor 118) are built with stacked units—as though Ysatis is working from a special techno-builders' Lego edition. His thrifty, near-trance approach and longish tracks align him with artists like Riou and Starfish Pool, though there's a playful post-Maurizio dub current running through "Club Soda" and "King Size" that merits further excavation.

Highrise, Ysatis' Tresor debut, fits well with the Berlin label's stripped and refined brand of thoughtful but sometimes worryingly utilitarian techno. Ysatis is not so devout a Motor City acolyte that his own voice is lost, but he's not a risk-taker either. Although stability, safety, frugality, and uniformity may be desirable qualities in the construction trade, they do make for somewhat characterless dance music. And while *Highrise* is a good album, flawlessly executed and occasionally quite catchy, the impetuous maneuvers of Tresor's Brighton bad boys are missed.

—Gil Gershman

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Short Cuts

A quick survey of some new releases.

A.F.R.I. Studios Schwellwert BMB-Lab (GER)

An engrossing debut from Andrés Krause, partner in Köln's unheralded Barjazz mit Begleitautomaten coterie. Monochromatic standing-wave emanations extracted from analog feedback play stereo-headphonic games—lulling, lapping, fibrillating, and fluctuating—across a 21-minute mini-expanse of Aube-meets-Ryoji Ikeda spatial "sound architecture." Mental impressions correlate with the angle of aural impact, so hit the lights, play loud, close those eyes, and be sure to keep moving around. Limited (300 copies) and packaged with typical BMB flair (a white envelope and printed cellophane insert slipped into a recycled 5" floppy disk casing).

—Gil Gershman

D/Form What Are You Thinking? Zenapolae

"Pulsating" is the term to best describe this record, as D/Form sends legion after legion of throbbing soundwaves through the cosmos. Though there's nary a beat in sight, there's enough change in the patterns to keep this from becoming mere sonic wallpaper. Not for casual listening, *What Are You Thinking* will please minimal ambient fans listening on headphones.

—Sean Portnoy

if.then.else realizations Emanate

In the accompanying press release, *realizations* - the debut full-length from if.then.else - is given such frames of reference as *Boards of Canada* and *Bola*. While these comparisons are fair to a point, they fail to suggest the atmosphere of moodiness and melancholy that is prevalent through much of the album. With fittingly introspective titles such as "Induced States," "What If" and "Until," the nine tracks feature layers of dark electronic washes, fragile and crackling rhythms, ambient percussion, and fractured melodies, all falling together to form some first-class electronic listening music.

—Greg Clow

Laminar Ante-Chamber Soleilmoon

More like *anti-chamber*, as these eight soundscapes are as expansive and barren as the landfill cover art looks. Given the microscopic processes of sound synthesis and transformation that Laminar uses, *Ante-Chamber* impresses with windstorm-style decimation of any kind of "normal" audio input. At low volumes, it risks turning into white noise, but play it loud for some eerie ambience.

—SP

Mucho Macho The Limehouse Link Beggar's Banquet

With Fatboy Slim serving as a fratboy soundtrack and the Chemical Brothers going "psychedelic," the Big Beat movement has pretty much run its course, though no one has seemed to have told Mucho Macho, who add the female diva vocals and old-skool hip-hop and '60s garage rock soundbites to their familiar breakbeats. To MM's credit, "The Octamed Tapes" is a stately trip-hop instrumental and "Surrender" is a tasty little stomper complete with groovy organ. Not bad, but not really essential beyond a "breaks" DJ's crate.

—SP

Peace Orchestra Peace Orchestra G-Stone/Studio K7

Hot on the heels of the successful *K & D Sessions*, Peter Kruder (sans Dorfmeister) releases a solo outing under the Peace Orchestra moniker, to the excitement of headz everywhere. Like the duo's DJ selection (and production work), Peace Orchestra stays right around the head-nodding speed limit for BPMs, while adding some global music touches (effective on "Meister Petz," less so when "ethnic" vocals are sampled for that "tribal" touch). "The Man Part One" has a smoky, stutter-step feel to it (not unlike Portishead) and "Domination" features a groovin' percussion workout. A couple of acid-jazzy touches aside, convincing to a downtempo skeptic.

—SP

Period Three Folder No Type

Period Three is David Turgeon in his mutant IDM suit, abusing sequencing programs and churning out clicky, beepy loops haunted by distorted piano and spooky bass ("Xhopscentre Feed") and half-filled glass orchestras run through a demolished sampler ("Duplicator"). Everything sounds just slightly off-kilter, about to get real crazy, like a computer having its DeNiro moment in front of the mirror—you talkin' to me? (Contact: <http://www.notype.com>)

—Rob Geary

Pulse Programming Prelim Aesthetics

Talk about the perfect soundtrack for a dip in the ol' immersion tank. ten tracks of beatless ambience given an intergalactic luster. There's little to differentiate one song from the next beyond title (which either falls into the abstract—"Line," "Word," "Moment"—or negative—"There Aren't," "There Never Will Be"—category), yet the effect of lattice-like synth lines echoing into the nether regions of your brain is positively hypnotic. Definite last-night listening that would be the perfect soundtrack to a spaceship drifting through the solar system.

—SP

Tear Ceremony Emulsion Simulacra

The third album under the Tear Ceremony moniker from Texas resident Todd Gautreau (who also records as Sonogram), *Emulsion* doesn't stray very far from the groundwork laid by its pair of predecessors, featuring as it does 11 enveloping

tracks of lyrical and atmospheric ambience with a slight undercurrent of foreboding and uneasiness. It may not break any new ground, but if you appreciate deep, dark and dreamy ambient works, you'll likely find *Emulsion* quite welcome in your collection.

—GC

Terre Thaemlitz Replicas Rubato Mille Plateaux (GER)

One of electronic music's agent provocateurs, Terre Thaemlitz takes a reflective turn here, with a suite of somber piano versions of Gary Numan tracks that follow Thaemlitz's previous Kraftwerk piano tribute. At times discordant—as if Thaemlitz's hands can't keep up with the rush of music—*Replicas Rubato* turns classic synth pop into autumnal hymns, managing even to convert the groove of "Cars" into a dirge. Surprisingly affecting.

—SP

Tube Jerk Fold ILL (UK)

While our backs were turned, techno prophet Tim Wright (Germ, Pin) reinvented himself as housemaster Tube Jerk. Germ's swan song, *Parrot*, verged on truly groundbreaking terrain, and *Fold*, a propulsive, hard set of deep bassbin workouts, marks a swing towards conventional club sounds for this promising producer. Wright's customary finesse and exploratory bent shine through, fortifying a certain quality of 303-craft common to such U.K. producers as Si Begg, Jamie Lidell, and J. Saul Kane. The slowly uncoiling "Worm" makes for a nice coda, but *Fold*'s most memorable tracks are those that fall just this side of speed garage—complete with ghost-in-the-machine vocal wraiths and E-grooves revved up like chainsaws.

—GG

Twine Reference Twinesound/Adastra

I decided to pick this one up because it's breathtakingly simple and unbelievably complex. With strange sound sculptures of delicious noise, Greg Malcolm and Chad Mossholder—based in Kent, Ohio—have an ambiguous sound that reminds me of Pan sonic and Oval, with a moody backdrop of obscure beats and ambient outtakes. Pick this one up folks; you'll be supporting abstract-intelligent-music and your ears will thank you. (Contact: twinesound@hotmail.com)

—Pietro da Sacco

Various Artists Little Darla Has a Treat For You v. 13 Darla

Another low-priced sampler from the label that flies the electronic and indie-rock flags in equal measure. Warm and bubbly sounds are the domain of the imprint's techno stable, and they don't disappoint here. Highlights include the cloud-floating Jetsons pop of Lali Puna and Sweet Trip, the smooth melodies of Tleilaxu and Micromars, and the oceanic bliss of Junior Varsity KM (remixing *Color Filter* and blowing most jazzy ambience out of the water). At about \$6, it's worth skipping through the rock tracks.

—SP

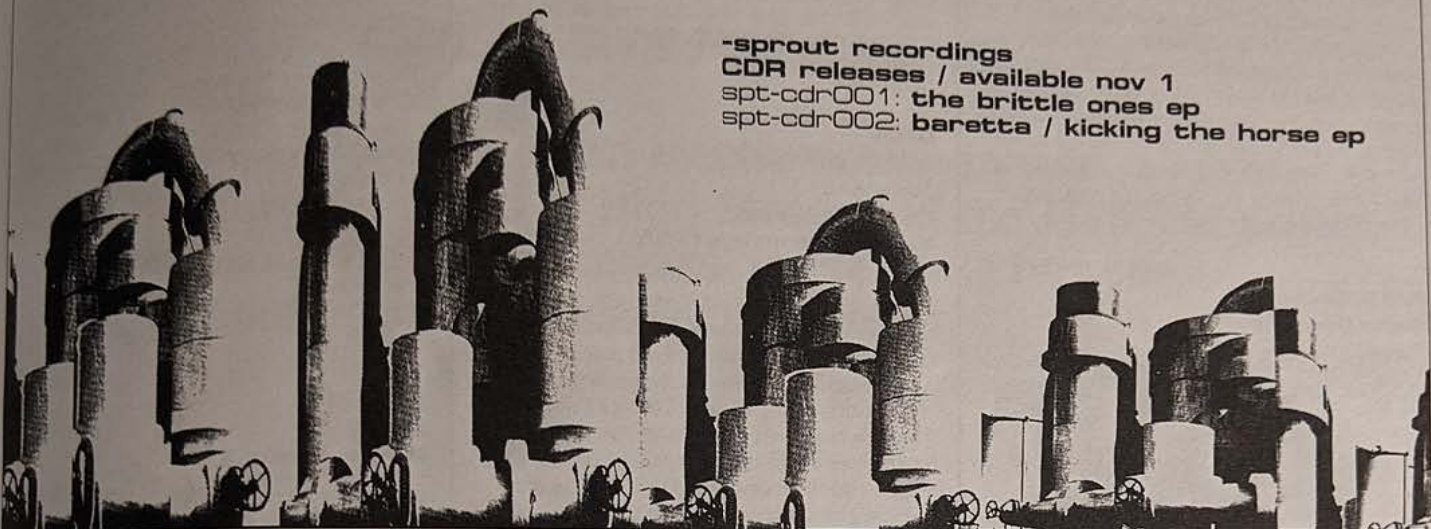


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obliq.net



Obliq Compilation CD 01.3

CD Compilation featuring tracks from Multicast, Ted Sturgeon, Freq Modif, Application Specific's Finder and devslashnull reworking Aquatic Ape.

Antarktika**Ak 99****Antarktika**

Drawing from acclaimed electronic pioneers such as Autechre, Aphex Twin and Boards of Canada, Antarktika is David O'Toole's subsonic creation of pure electronic brain music. Based in central Massachusetts, Antarktika explores the depths of experimental ambient frequencies while inserting syncopated melodies that drench the listener in a plethora of soundscapes. "Close to the Sea" is a prime example of this formula: a track that emerges slowly and reveals an inspiring dose of intelligent rhythms, crackling basslines, and underwater currents that flow into uncharted territory. Imagine Oval, Pole, and Mouse on Mars collaborating with Autechre and you have the track "Miskatonic." Ak 99 is a combination of crisp IDM melodies with just the right amount of textured ambience that will fit well with folks interested in exploring a new direction in sound manipulation. (Contact: dto@iname.com)

—Pietro Da Sacco

Brittle Ones**Brittle Ones
Sprout**

The newly established Sprout CD-R label based in Oakland has emerged from the depths of the Hydrant label's catalog of smart beats and electronic distortion.



Crispy lo-end percussion combined with the inertia of clean melodies puts Brittle Ones (also known as Jeff Allen) on a path that has been traced by very few artists. Imagine, if you will, the magnetic sounds of Boards of Canada combined with the experimental magnitude of Lexaunculpt and Funkstörung. As a result, you get a sonic platform of quirks, bends, loops, and beeps that are just as vivid as any color in the spectrum. "Crescent" leads the pack with an onslaught of coherent beats and crackling melodic hooks, while "Grape Tang" forges ahead with an extensive amount of soothing clicks and odd tweaks. Highly recommended, and probably one of the best CD-R EPs I've heard this year.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Dntel**Early Works For Me If It Works For You****Gerald Wenzel****Hollow Way****Phthalo**

The Los Angeles-based Phthalo CD-R label has been issuing an assortment of releases from both known and unknown electronic artists that span the globe. With the label producing "harder to digest" tracks, it may take a few listens to fully absorb and appreciate the Phthalo philosophy. With Phthalo 12, Dntel displays a collage of breaks with gritty substructures of drum n'bass that flow rather consistently. Combine those sweet electronica soundbytes with mind-joggling basslines and high-hats that flirt with your ears, and you have a glimpse of Dntel's music. With 12 tracks that are a solid workout of experimental melodies and soothing atmospheric rhythms, *Early Works For Me* will definitely appeal to fans of Squarepusher and various blip-beat artists. Just when you thought drum n'bass lost all its

original flavor, *Early Works For Me* unleashes subtle yet electrically charged beats that go far beyond expected boundaries.

With Gerald Wenzel's appetite for distorted frequencies on *Hollow Way*, the abundance of machine noises is served on a unique platter of reconstructed beats. Twenty-one tracks of bleepy brain music and short pieces of odd sounds takes an extreme left turn when you thought they would go right. With a variety of tracks to choose from, and no track titles to differentiate with, Wenzel offers a collage of strange musical patterns that will appeal to fans of Solenoid and Colongib, minus a few melodies. Hopefully, these digital bits of electronic debris will make your mind squirm as they've done for me. Difficult listening.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Dribs**In Dribs And Drabs****Juicehead****The Real Juicehead****Audionaut Recordings (SWE)**

Dribs, also known as Fredrik Östling, is a one-man project guided closely by the influences of Swedish electronic culture. *In Dribs And Drabs* displays a basket full of intricate melodies and purely constructive sounds. Who else would dedicate an entire track based on a Sound Interface Device chip from a Commodore 64 computer? Well, there may be a few obscure folks doing this, but "SID, You're The King!" is entirely processed and controlled by this medium and is definitely honest to the ears. *In Dribs* combines strange electronica, skittering beats and soft melodic frequencies molded to a platform of low-end emissions. As a debut full-length, *In Dribs* will unfold pleasantly on the first listen, guaranteed.

Besides Östling's solo outfit, he has also collaborated with other Audionaut and RUC artists Hans Möller and Daniel Skaborn to form Juicehead, a razor-sharp fusion of jungle and power-electronics with reference points to A Guy Called Gerald's recent material, Photek, and even Squarepusher. Their latest full-length, *The Real Juicehead*, shouldn't be bypassed, as Juicehead is electric machine music packed to the brim with squished beats and melodious soundscapes that will easily overload your audio equipment. Just the way it should be. (Contact: <http://www.audionaut.com>)

—Pietro Da Sacco

Hrvatski**Okapi Tracks****MP3.com**

Okapi Tracks is Hrvatski's basement tapes, most from around '95, yet despite their age, they contain numerous original takes on drum n'bass. The sounds range from the spacious, orchestrated drum n'bass of "Ad Veracundiam" to the mishmash of erratic drum patterns with acoustic guitar and piano on, appropriately, "Short with Guitar" and "Piano." "Patience" is most representative of the Hrvatski "style," if such a wide-ranging and individualistic artist can be pinned down, with its cheeky title, piano, familiar-yet-energetic breaks, and chunks of silence all happily coexisting. *Okapi Tracks* is by definition a dumping ground for those odd experiments, and a few go awry. However, when it all comes together, Hrvatski takes drum n'bass to a strange, noisy place all his own. (Contact: <http://www.mp3.com/hrvatski>)

—Rob Geary

Kumquat**Kumquat****Kumquat**

Sometimes amid all the beats, samples, and rhythmic madness, the sense of fun gets lost. In day, Kumquat's tunes are cut-and-past affairs reminiscent of early Meat Beat, EBN or Coldcut's better moments. Kumquat keeps it upbeat and often honestly funny, avoiding the political rambles or sheer randomness that can sometimes bog down sample heavy music. Instead he offers a wide palette of sound: "Proboscis" melds an 80's style guitar riff, of all things, with the voice of some poor guy confused as to which dimension he's in for pure Reagan-era flashback delight. Top tunes here are "The Lawn is Gonna Die," which matches a Bootsy Collins style bounce to the great title, and the sinister dwarf marching chant "Everyone is Afraid of Clowns." A well thought out set of tunes rounded out by nice packaging and a spot-the-sample game on Kumquat's website. Kudos to Kumquat for boldly brightening everyone's day. (Contact: bigkumquat@aol.com)

—Rob Geary

Lackluster**CDR#2****Monotonik Records**

Lackluster is the guise of Helsinki experimental electronic genius Esa Ruoho. Having previously released music under the alias Distance, Ruoho has been an active member of Finland's electronic music scene for the past 5 years. This individually numbered CD-R (limited to 100 copies) marks a fine line between abstract electronica and the more melodic side of intelligent noise. With an abundance of finely tuned melodies, rhythmic beat patterns, and ambient drifts, *CDR#2* has marked its territory and stretched the sonic barrier to a new limit. A few tracks that flow into finely shaped sound-sculptures include "Bothersome (Mother Max)," "Cull Streak," "Pie," "Today 8," and "Tilde 5." Simply put, *CDR#2* is smooth electronic IDM/techno with beautifully crafted melodies rounding off the edges. If you're wondering where the ambient side of Autechre disappeared to, look no further than Lackluster. (Contact: <http://www.mono211.com/monotonik/>)

—Pietro Da Sacco

Jacob Mandell**Healing****Kodama**

Some recordings are meant to be limited. Jake Mandell's *Healing* exists as a mere 100 copies on the Kodama label. *Healing* is over 70 minutes of extreme minimalism, music that is so barely there, and barely changing, that the mind balks at calling it music. A simple pulsating pattern repeats endlessly, formatted as a single track. It's hypnotic in a way, but also terribly boring. The package tersely explains the concept—*Healing* is not "music to listen to," but rather background ambience with supposed healing qualities. Unfortunately, I wasn't sick while listening to it, so I couldn't test its medicinal properties. An odd side trip for the usually brilliant Mandell.

—Rob Geary



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Octorock
K'ta
Doubtful Productions

Long before the CD burner became as much of a household staple as the toaster or the carbon monoxide detector, Adam Diangelo (a.k.a. Fingernail) and Eric Sherman put out an album the hard way. That's right, Magnet F's promising debut took the form of a "real" disc—complete with homegrown distribution, snazzy desktop layout work, and all the D.I.Y. trimmings. K'ta, Sherman's solo, no-frills CD-R, picks up where Magnet F left off. The beats are fairly simple, but Octorock's polygonal melodies are warm and resonant—far more sentimental and satisfying to these ears than, say, Boards of Canada's half-baked trifles. "Perimeter" struggles to keep its variations on a theme in Ae-mino rubbeat. "Interior" is more deliberate and mournful, ultimately crumpling into a somber, sob-wracked stupor. Triangulate Ken Ishii, the Markant label, and Beaumont Hannant (remember him?), and you're just about there.

—Gil Gershman

ojamoj
Live Set Version 4.2
The Red Record Machine
Verity Studios Production

Ojamoj is the duo consisting of Ethan Eves and Andrew Barker. Based in Methuen, Massachusetts, they established the Verity Studios label with various live ojamoj material back in 1996. Their style of gritty drum'n bass focuses on sounds that are both obscure and daunting at the same time. With samplings of some of the most deranged sounds, *Live Set Version 4.2* concentrates on creating a dark platform of technotic music that reaches into spaces that Squarepusher and Photek occupy quite well. Seven tracks of unusually textured noise seem to unfold into spacious yet simple melodies. "Look Into The Future," "All The Molecules," and the unusually propelling "I Don't Understand" are tracks that follow the same approach: feeding that abstract yet engaging techno soundscape.

With *The Red Record Machine*, ojamoj stays true to their form while introducing a funkier approach at techno. On "Has Anyone Seen," a nostalgic memory of past sounds reinterpret themselves, bringing back the friendly acid-house era. Putting the funk into such tracks as "Ocho," and "Talkin' bout Shaft," ojamoj creates a new breed of techno that will appeal to fans of older Plus8 material and the ever-persistent Detroit-techno sound. With their older material creating a vibe that complimented the drum'n bass movement, *The Red Record Machine* steers clear of those elements, while re-establishing mutated techno that drives a spike directly into your subconscious brain. (Contact: <http://www.ojamoj.com>)

—Pietro Da Sacco

Soluiore of Stareau
Soluiore of Stareau

The name suggests the workings of alchemy. *Soluiore of Stareau* could be a finding scribbled hastily in the margins of an archaic volume, or the label on a flask from within which cosmic material, dissolved in some vital humor, emits an unearthly luminance. In his pursuit of a means of transformation for dispersed digital sound, Nicholas Willischer Zammuto certainly rivals the ambitions of the ancient chemists. His astonishing 3xCD-R debut is a watershed work that elaborates on the primary texts of Berlin, Cologne, and Vienna.

Though the music's infinite melodic flowerings, fusings, and fissurings invite such conclusion, glibly dismissing the first disc as *99Diskont* would be unfair. Disc #2, which finds SoS whipping static and carbonated crackle into a frenzy of rhythms, tempts to the tip of the tongue the name of a certain dubplates and mastering magus. But Zammuto's original and unorthodox—not to mention entirely dub-free—approach to rhythm soon silences this too-simple correlation. Treat these two fascinating discs as sketchbooks, the aural scratch-paper upon which Zammuto doodled his ideas for the feast offered on Disc #3. This culmination of *Soluiore of Stareau's* advanced rhythmic and melodic techniques weds digital decay, tamed glitches, and uncommon percussive timbres to a distinctly "post-rock" signature. Here, the jittery textures of Zammuto's inventive electrickery support actual guitars and voices, embellishing harmonics and physical string effects, lithe bass and keyboard figures, and surprisingly solid song-forms.

Special mention must be made of the integrated *House EP*, remixes of a brilliant drum'n bass'n jazz-jam (!) based around the results of a congressional referendum vote (!!!). The original pushes all the right pleasure-squares; the SoS-styled electro-acoustic dismemberings that follow will only broaden your smile. Beautiful—if distressingly obsessive—design completes the splendid, "overstuffed" SoS package. (Contact: nzammuto@wso.williams.edu)

—Gil Gershman

Surge
Landslide
Microwave (NL)

Microwave is the CD-R offshoot of the legendary Dutch record store/label Staalplaat, including work from founder Frans de Waard (as part of Goem). Surge describe their 2nd release as starting with a number of samples in each track, but winding up only with their MS-20 speaking "for itself." The result is a series of loops masquerading as "tracks" that fail to develop in any substantial fashion. If nothing else, they manage to get the old synth to sound like a pencil tapping at a funky little rhythm on a piece of glass (Track 1) or two little steel balls banging against one another (Track 3) or fingers drumming on a table (Track 7). Yet like the nature documentary *Microcosmos*, which took a detailed view of ground-level minutiae, these studies start out intriguingly enough, but don't hold up over a lengthy duration. Only for extremely attentive lovers of microscopic sound processing.

—Sean Portnoy

The Boy Without Hands
The Automated Hygienist
Sensory Expansion

James Izzo, who runs the Sensory Expansion imprint, not only creates his music under the dark, minimal electronic outfit known as Thread, but also records as The Boy Without Hands, an experimentally challenging angle at creating those genuine Oval meets Pan Sonic soundscapes. *The Automated Hygienist* is SE's second official release (Thread's *A Need For A Sky* was his first LP) and is also available in



MP3 format at <http://www.sensoryexpansion.com/boy.html> as a free limited offer. While James crafts his peculiar sounds into odd shapes, this four-track CD-R EP combines CD-skipping mayhem with gurgling basslines and odd rhythm sections. With track names like "Cavity," "Novacaine," "AI Toothbrush," and the title track, TBWH is definitely not your average electronic wizard. If Richard D. James had to get a filling, he'd probably want to hear The Automated Hygienist on repeat mode until the job was complete!

(Contact: <http://www.pobox.com/~thread>)

—Pietro Da Sacco

Various Artists
Meshed-up Minds
Brooklyn Beats

It's nice to see when someone promises "extreme electronics" and actually delivers, which is what several tracks on this "Brooklyn meets Minneapolis" compilation do (further truth in advertising: The packaging for this CD-R is actually wire mesh). Though Cartesian Faith's "Shake the Morning Sensation" sounds like the distorted funk shuffle of Bomb 20 and the Birdwatcher's "Turn Away (rmx)" could have come straight off Alec Empire's *The Destroyer*, *Meshed-up Minds* mostly manages to eschew Digital Hardcore's stock dark'n'fuzzy breakbeats, instead experimenting with different percussive textures and grating frequencies. Beats are pitch-shifted up to hyperspeed, tinny thuds on Erion's "Reclamation Invocation" and Lost in Translation's "Sexy War," while Timeblind's digital cut-ups on "Stoopid" sound like a rawer Bisk. There are some beatless tracks as well—in fact, the middle section of the album crawls along—with the highlight being Radar Threat's "From the Paraphenalia of Oppression," which is a scrum of harsh frequencies piling up on one another. Impressive, and for listeners wanting a disruptive direction beyond DHR.

—Sean Portnoy

Various Artists
IDMlist Remix Chain
Kracfive

The folks at Kracfive have been at it again. This time around the concept of the Remix Chain was to collect a series of known and unknown electronic artists on the respected Intelligent Dance Music e-mail mailing list, give the first artist, in this case Noah Sasso (a.k.a. Pacman), a series of source sounds to remix, then pass the remix sources/samples onto the next person, and so on. The result of these efforts is spread over 18 tracks that follow no particular path, but remain true to each others previous structural arrangement. This concept contains familiar artists such as Mad Monkey Consortium, Grooves own Brian Rachielle as Point B, Aural Industries' Tim Koch (Thug), and Chris Graves (Colongib), who contribute tracks that are obscurely experimental in every genre. If you can decipher the connections between each track, and ultimately listen to this compilation as a whole, you'll notice a fine mix of soothing rhythms, engaging ambient frequencies, and some of the most complex beat patterns ever to hit IDM status. With a complicated series of remixes that take on shapes of their own, this compilation is nicely packaged with contact information and components for each artist involved.

—Pietro Da Sacco

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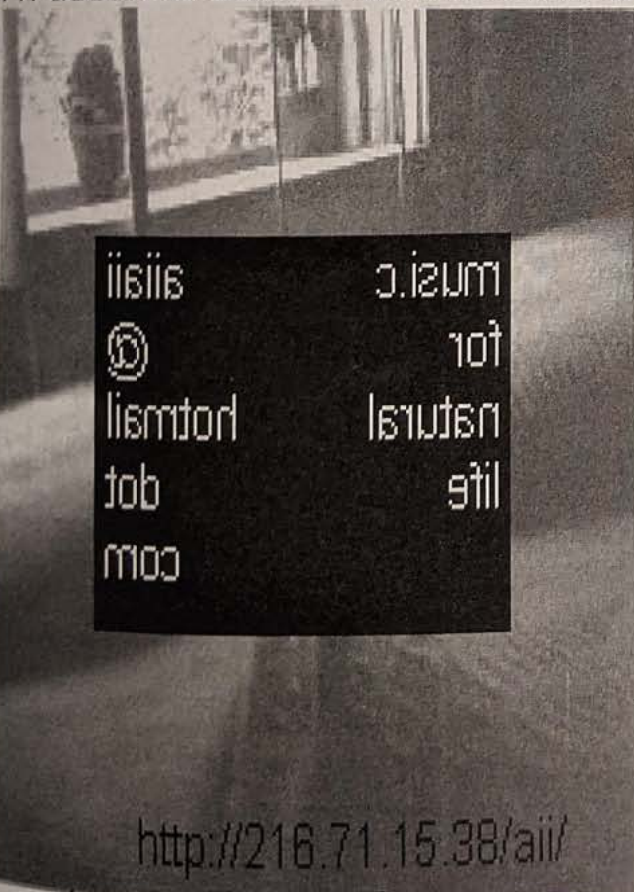
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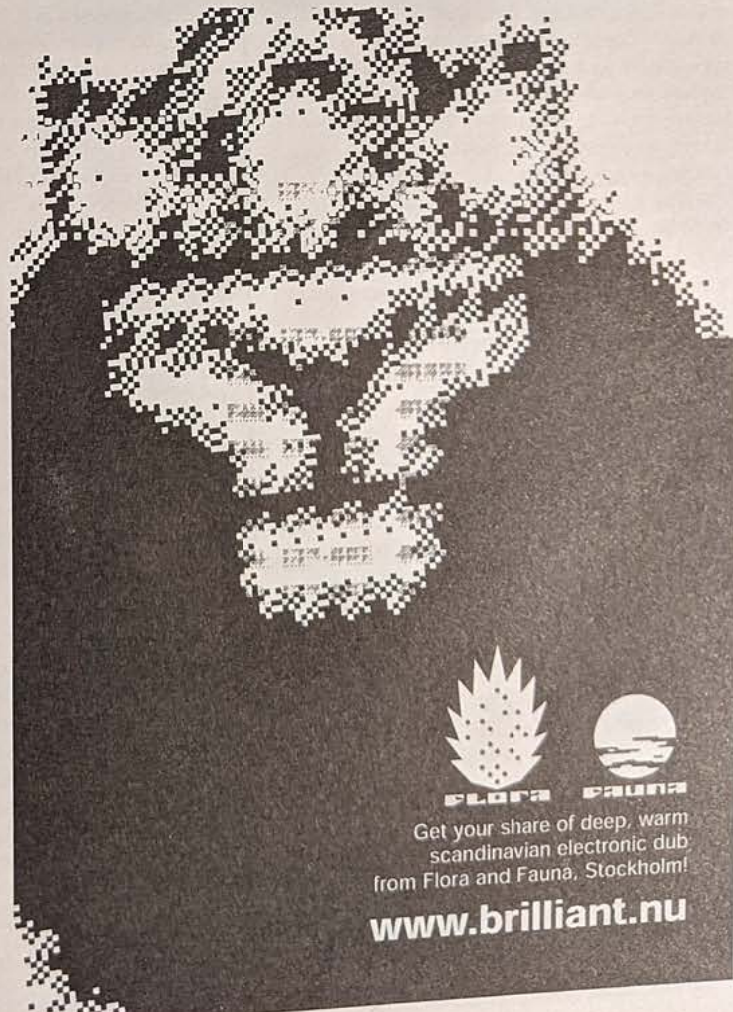
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English Muffin Records

Wherever a new label pops up, a record from Chris Jeely is sure to follow. It certainly seems that way of late. But prolificacy isn't such a horrible thing where Jeely is concerned. UK-via-Massachusetts label English Muffin's opening bid sees Jeely's return to his indomitable Accelera Deck alias—on clear, candy-apple red vinyl, no less. As ever, the keywords for these 2.5 tracks (the skidding "loop10" being just half a "track") are "bliss" (pearly dewdrops of oriental-sounding melody and mysterious shimmers), "beats" (tiny, jewel-like breaks strewn underfoot), and "bass" (nice fat kicks in all the right places). A generous assortment of inserts—including a custompainting, a signed New Years Eve confessional, and much miscellany—rounds out another limited (500 copies) Accelera deck-warmer.

—Gil Gershman

Adrien75
Adrien 75
Carpet Bomb

The quality of music on this 12," Adrien Capozzi's debut solo effort, is not surprising: Carpet Bomb has been releasing great music by Capozzi's other affiliations, Microstudio and Unagi Patrol, and is the label responsible for the amazing *Highways over Gardens* compilation from 1998. However, the Carpet Bomb back catalog has made its name with a slick take on drum n' bass, which makes the seven tracks on this EP a surprising deviation, albeit a pleasant one.

Adrien75 delivers some beautifully arranged tracks here, letting the beats take a more supporting role while the melodies shine under the spotlight. In "Home," Capozzi manipulates some catchy guitar arpeggiation for a delightful, Tortoise-esque effect. His beat programming is fluent and natural sounding, which complements the organic sounds and leaves behind any "locked down" or over-syncoated feel. The effect is a very original style humbly presented in an EP with a simple, catchy charisma.

—Rijyan Kidwell

The Advent
Monastic
Kombination Research (UK)

Monastic has the characteristic hard-driving beats of The Advent's sound—steadily pumping along. The infectious nature of this EP demonstrates Cisco Ferriera's consistent knack for incorporating funky bass undertones in 4/4-style dance music and all together is a refreshing dose of interesting polyrhythms. "Escapade" is a journey of angst that would work quite well as a steady jam in the right mix. "Reactor" is the most floor friendly and the most funky, with a surprising loop, twist, and turn here and there. "Visualize" is more along the lines of low-key background music, if there is such a thing with pounding beats like these. This limited edition 12" EP is further assurance that The Advent's success is not accidental, as the band is once again a one-man operation.

—Tamara Warren

Adult
Entertainment
Various Artists
Oral-Olio: An History of Tomorrow
Ersatz Audio

Along with labels like Interdimensional Transmissions and Suction, Detroit's Ersatz Audio imprint is doing all it can to keep the spirit of old-school electro and synthpop alive while throwing in touches of current IDM grooves. If you're looking for a good first taste of this retro-futurist sound, these two releases are excellent and infectious examples of what Ersatz is all about.

On their *Entertainment* EP, the label's "flagship" artist Adult present four tracks of cold, mechanical electro-pop of the highest order. The imagery of track titles like "Pressure Suit" and "Human Wreck" perfectly sums up the sounds pressed on the plastic, and the robotic female vocals intoning lyrics like "Do you like my handbag?/It's filled with lots of money" bring to mind some mutant hybrid of The Normal and The Flying Lizards.

Adult also contributes a nugget entitled "Lost Love" to *Oral-Olio*, a 12" featuring a quartet of songs that sound as if they escaped from some underground new wave club circa 1983 (and I mean that in the best possible sense). Kitbuilders and Perspects fill a side with a pair of tracks that are also worthy of attention, but the highlight is undoubtedly G.D. Luxxe's "Red," which is quite possibly the best track New Order (n)ever wrote.

—Greg Clow

Air
Premiers Symptomes
Astralwerks

Originally released as a five-track collection of singles on France's Source label, this record was only recently reissued on Astralwerks in the States. A very good thing, especially after Air's full-length *Moon Safari* failed to live up to the hype much of the music press bestowed upon it. This is what *Moon Safari* was made out to be—a blissful soundtrack for sipping martinis in the comfort of your space-age bachelor pad. It's got that retro feel without relying too heavily on the clichés of lounge and exotica, yet still manages to maintain a futuristic edge from start to finish. After all, how many other records have you heard lately which blended the sounds of organs and vocoders? The disc's first track, "Modular Mix," reveals Air's gentle touch of soft-focus melodies and hazy soundscapes crafted to bring you in for an easy landing. To top it off, the Astralwerks reissue comes with "Californie" and "Brakes On," two extra tracks that weren't included on the original version. Worth it for these two alone.

—Brock Phillips

David Alvarado
Ascension
Peacefrog (UK)

David Alvarado, hailing from the City of Angels, drops one of the best deep house records of the past year with this doublepack EP. His production style is subtle to the point of being subliminal—lush, resonant grooves abound on the five tracks included. Expect horizontal house with Latin

flourishes and soothing washes of sound, perfect for late-night sessions or headphone listening. If you dig this, check Alvarado's previous work on labels such as Plastic City, Yoshitoshi, and Guidance. Smart, soulful, and introspective.

—Brock Phillips

Arovane
Occer
Fizzarum
Phut of Plex
City Centre Offices (UK)

The first two 7" slabs of vinyl for City Centre Offices point in a direction that is on the forefront for introducing ambient frequencies with a heavy appetite of obscure beats. Uwe Zahn, based in Berlin, is none other than Arovane, and he incorporates fuzzy experimental rhythms with smooth electronica that pushes to the surface with relative ease. "Occer," a track that contains lush soundscapes, abstract melodies, and syncopated beats, has been receiving lots of attention in the IDM crowds these days, while the flip side, "Silicad," is a hybrid of intricate basslines that interact with snappy beats and a subtle crackling that flows rather nicely. Think of Bola, Proem, and Solvent, put them in the same room with all the gadgets, and you have a vague idea of what to expect from Arovane.

St. Petersburg, Russia is home to Fizzarum, who has created two beautifully constructed tracks that may cause you to emotionally break down. On "Ursa Majoris," a skittering beat unfolds to display intelligent robot sounds that will fit well with armchair listeners who enjoy spatial music. With "Phut Of Plex," a simple melody distracts the listener from the marriage of swift beats and an undying stutter of electrical scratches. With an abundance of clever beats, brain-teasing melodies, and a creative perspective for unleashing smart-electronica, CCO is yet another label that will make your turntable very happy.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Audio Totem Pole
You Are Tired and Beautiful/Touchtones
Eighth Dimension

As biographical information about Audio Totem Pole remains to be seen, ATP have been on promo-only status throughout the summer and are finally being distributed across the globe for public consumption. Two tracks loaded with minimal energetic funk, techno-house, and beat-throbbing simplicity form the backbone for ATP's luscious vibes. "You Are Tired and Beautiful" maintains a Detroit-techno mood with its 4/4 beats, breezy strings, and crisp high-notes. "Touchtones" is a venture through bubbly rhythms and straight ahead tech-funk that is more upbeat than the flip side. Much of the electronics being released these days relies on processed sounds that twitch rather than jiggle; Audio Totem Pole takes both of those elements and turns them into a deep and consistent piece of artwork. Dancefloor enthusiasts

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will enjoy this as much as sit-down-and-listen audiophiles.
(Contact: audiorotem@hotmail.com)
—Pietro Da Sacco

**Autechre
Splitmix
Warp (UK)**

Both sides of *Splitmix* throw cold, synthed strings against a driving, percussion-backed bassline—with widely varied results. The A-side, a remix of an "original composition" by the German rock group Neu!, is much more accessible than its evil twin. An excellent track that builds its intensity slowly, "weissensee..." throws a sinister electric shadow reminiscent of the aural experiments of *Chiastic Slide*-era Ae; almost as if by listening you become witness to some dark and mysterious secret.

On the other hand, the flip side is a excruciating experiment in tone-deafness: The Booth-Brown collective drops random, flat-or-sharp-bass notes on top of your standard 4/4 drum-kit programming. While they usually manage to make cacophony work in their favor, this side was too painful to listen to more than twice. If you already have the Neu! remix track in its prior release, I'd stay away from *Splitmix*—the second track is an unfortunate waste. Otherwise, the A-side makes this a worthy addition to any fan's library.

—Alex Reynolds

**Bochum Welt
Martians and Spaceships
Fuzzy Box**

This seven-track EP is the first American release for Rephlex staple (and Aphex Twin crony) Gianluigi Di Costanzo, who brings a lush, melodic sense to his vision of galactic music (the inclusion of the



acoustic piano-based "Claire de Lune" here should provide a hint about his romantic leanings). Tracks like "Vega" and "Blue Atmosphere" are beatless fugues that could soundtrack pastoral daydreams in a *Blade Runner*-like world, and even the beats on "Star Cluster" are well-groomed and provide a polite counterpoint to lavish synth sweeps. If this all sounds a bit precious, *Martians and Spaceships* also contains "Altre Forme," which sounds like a speedy Kraftwerk cover (in Italian), and "Interlude," an instant classic of melodic techno with a robust-enough beat for head noddin' or seat groovin'. In other words, what Boards of Canada should sound like.

—Sean Portnoy

**Broadcast
Echo's Answer
Warp**

This 7" is tinged with instrumental electronics that unfold quite well after a couple of listens. It's not too often that you get to hear a combination of smooth instrumentation mixed with a hip-hopish backbone. "Test Area" is the stronger of *Echo's Answer's* two tracks: live (sounding) beats spread over a soundscape of distorted basslines takes the stage, while a minor explosion of percussion closes this 6-minute track. The title track, a cross between

Hooverphonic's soundboard and Vanessa Daou-inspired lyrics, is a wispy connection of ambient undercurrents fused with softly spoken vocals. The sounds Broadcast create are so relaxing that you don't even realize you're listening until your brain begins to nod off in dreamland! Instrumental electronics, pure and simple in every form.
—Pietro Da Sacco

**Buffalo Daughter
WXBD
Grand Royal**

Cibo Mato has earned more hype, but Buffalo Daughter are similarly Japanese women with a Ginsu-chopping approach to postmodern sounds. This holdover-between-albums EP is a collection of remixes that mirror the breadth of riffs and samples that the trio's originals contain. Kut Masta Kurt turns "Great Five Lakes" into a dope-fresh old-skool jam—complete with a purring analogue synth—that complements BD's Smurfette vocals, while Cornelius creates a bullet-train bustle of the same track, emphasizing instead a groaning guitar lick.

A Ninja-Tune trip-hop vibe permeates Panda's "Goodvibe Mix" of "Super Bloop," whereas BD's live mix of it is in the angular funk vein not unlike Dub Narcotic's output (complete with DJ-scratching accompaniment). Other distinctive contributions are Jopolo's mix of "Sky High + Down Sea"—almost electro ambient, with a gentle 808 beat body-surfing on an oceanic soundscape—along with the Scratch Pet Land reconstruction of "Jellyfish Blues," which simultaneously manages to sound like "Dear Prudence" and a futuristic nursery song. Not for electronic purists, but definitely better than Luscious Jackson.

—Sean Portnoy

**Care
World of Today
Force Tracks (GER)**

Responsible for this little record is none other than Jurgen Paape (of Kompakt Records' fame). The A-side track, "World of Today," is a remix of the Pet Shop Boys' song "Being Boring." It's uncredited, of course, but everything in the song was sampled from that particular song. Here, it's been turned into a stripped-down, pulsing tech-house track. I got a friend to spin it out in Philly, (a city notoriously known for hating new music), and it kept the place jumping, so that's a good sign. Both on the B-side are staccato, rhythmic tech-house tracks, not unlike older Morgan Geist or some of the Brinkmann stuff.

—laerm

**Anthony Child & Andrew Read /
Speedranch ^ Jansky Noise
split 12"
Fat Cat. (UK)**

The first side of this split is a joint effort between Anthony Child—or Surgeon—and guitar player Andrew Read. The two tracks are called *Guitar Treatments #6* and *#7*, respectively, which sounds a bit dry, but then, so does the music: masterfully rendered ambient waves forming a massive, linear narrative that sounds soothing but not particularly engaging. Instead, the sounds resonate in the distance with high precision without forcing the listener to much implication. Not a coaster for sure, but the real show is on side two.

Speedranch ^ Jansky Noise follow the thread of their wayward vinyl and CD manipulations and begin their side with a semi-coherent breakbeat,

albeit one that doesn't loop right, with way obnoxious turntable scratches and equally obnoxious vocal samples to even it out. In true S^A^N fashion, the track doesn't follow any particular logic and eventually settles into a very sharp noise assault. So does the second track, which seems to aim for a quieter ride with its dry ambient whooshes, but then ends up into a powerful, driving screech, lastly drowning back into droneland. What's amazing about the obscure goofiness S^A^N (and cohorts V/V/M) like to throw around is that it doesn't act as a license to slouch. Split side of the year, for sure.

—David Turgeon

**Paul B. Davis
Untitled
Various Artists
The Spirit of Beige
Beige Records**

Despite having several releases under their belts, St Louis' Beige Records have yet to really pop up on the experimental electronic radar screen. Their two latest releases, a compilation called *The Spirit of Beige* and Paul B. Davis' untitled 12," are set to change that. *The Spirit of Beige* is an oddball collection of tracks ranging from the cut-up vocal weirdness of Oates' "The Clap" to bizarre analog-style bleep n' bass from the Bitwise Operators. The strongest track on the comp, though, is by Paul B. Davis, the artist responsible for the most recent 12" on the label. Davis' tracks combine moments of melodic synthwork with analogue drum tweaking and the occasional sampled and twisted breakbeat. All in all, two very fine records from Beige, who should have a few more coming out in the near future.

—Brian Rachielle

**DJ Scud
Gun Court Singles Series 7"
Wabana**

Toby Reynolds, a.k.a. DJ Scud commits the most vicious 7 inches (n)ever to see the light of day to vinyl, via MA-based label Wabana's *Gun Court Singles* series. "Re-discovered, re-mixed, re-worked and ruffed up," as the insert says. Scud shreds two tracks originally co-produced with evidently psychopathic comrade Shizuo. Powerful breaks get an intimate encounter with white noise and other ear-damaging sounds, spawning more of the cruelest drum n' bass ever to escape the grasp of Hades. Sick.

—Chris St. Cavish

**eM
Motor Sessions
The Foundry**

A short (four tracks, 15 minutes) but interesting EP that—as the title suggests—hums, whirs, and thrusts like the collection of motors recorded for the occasion. But there's a certain amount of warmth and strangeness built into the mechanics of these tracks: The digital debris of "Machine Cognates" is tempered with a "boing" sound bouncing up and down, while "Bee's House Burning Circuits" sounds like a spooky organ fed through some synth effects. The closer, "Dreaming of Nod," even manages to create what sounds like a purring robotic cat stalking a chirping robotic bird around. Not particularly "musical" in the traditional sense, *Motor Sessions* is infused with machinic idiosyncracies.

—Sean Portnoy

Flash Direct**Flash Direct****Anton Price****Double-Slith****Audioview/Lowlands (BEL)**

This imprint promises "dislocated electronic turbulence," though listening to releases 7 and 8 won't suggest the mayhem of, say, Digital Hardcore. Instead, these two 12"s offer rewarding takes reaching beyond the generic conventions of trip-hop (Flash Direct) and drill n' bass and "intelligent" techno (Price).

Flash Direct's A-side sounds like a DJ Vadim track, with a better-than-average blunted beat and dark, atmospheric string sweeps. "Batch Processing" on the B-side, ventures further afield sonically, using the trickery of dub to add some digital grit and warp to a slightly heartier beat. Despite being a bit slim at two tracks, this will appeal to the headz crowd.

Price's four-track EP sets a higher BPM threshold and updates some "vintage" synth sounds. "Syncopated Switches" is a clanking stomper that sounds like an exercise soundtrack for robots, while "Rapid Strides" sounds like a Squarepusher remix of the music from *A Clockwork Orange*. The melodic strokes on "Riverside Walk" would suggest countless Warp clones, except that gusts of beats rush by at double speed. "X Phase" closes things out with some funky fuzz grooves that cap off a thoroughly enjoyable slab of vinyl.

—Sean Portnoy

Funckarma**Part 2****Djak-up Bitch (HOL)**

Perhaps easily shrugged off as yet another contender in the Funkstechre soundlike competition, the Dutch duet Funckarma, although it shares the angular method with its oft-cited peers, has a way to build a song that makes it navigate effortlessly through different themes and song phases, rather than the more static approach to song structure that predominates in the Miami school.

In "Shuttles," for example, the beat starts, with its bass drum way overamplified. Later on, a melody embarks in some complicated way. The whole thing floats as some happy abstraction. And then come the strings. Remember when Autechre used strings? (Think *Amber*.) On here, they sound even more brilliant: off melody, seemingly coming out of nowhere, barely attached to the beat.

So who says you have to focus solely on beat architecture when you're doing this? This music has the advantage to provide some much needed breathing space between the columns of consonant sounds. And in Funckarma's language, space is translated literally, with titles like "Spatial Convolutions" or "Fog"—the latter a dreamy melody framed inside a loud beat just as lunatic. Good luck on finding a boring moment on *Part 2!* Funckarma's forthcoming 12" on Musik Aus Strom should be very good, and I'm eagerly waiting for a first full-length. —David Turgeon

Guineo**Tosstones****Chocolate Industries****Push Button Objects****Half Dozen****Schematic/Chocolate Industries**

As Guineo, Edgar Farinas adopts a female alter ego in order to, one assumes, produce some tracks that

deviate from his normal PBO fare. That doesn't exactly happen, however, as this 12" is pretty easy to identify as the work of Push Button Objects. I guess some boy thought PBO doing the PBO formula but substituting some noisier samples wasn't going to sound like PBO.

The first track, "Platanos," is a fairly interesting start, which skips around schizophrenically from theme to theme, grounded by a Gescom-esque beat. The next track, "Marudos," is a very noisy piece of work, with a grating melody and a beat like playing a set of trashcans with another trashcan. The PBO remix of "Platanos" is a funky reworking, and perhaps if the whole 12" sounded like this, it would be more notable. The last track is a nice exercise in Farinas' ability to craft a head-nodding beat, but ultimately can't lift this record up and into the "records that are exciting" category.

The *Half Dozen 12"* features six tracks from Push Button Objects that are labeled as being 3 or 4 years old. They're mostly funky electro numbers that approach but don't exactly equal the quality of success with hip-hop appropriation Farinas had with his first Schematic EP. There are some real good beats here, but they're very loopy, regular, "locked-down" beats, and what work Farinas does do with melody, atmospheres, or sonic texturizing isn't too remarkable. PBO definitely shows promise, but after five 12"s now, how many more records am I going to have to buy before he delivers something really exciting?

—Rijyan Kidwell

Richie Hawtin**Orange****m-nus**

Having proved himself in the experimental, conceptual realms of techno, Richie Hawtin (a.k.a. Plastikman) pays tribute to the classic warehouse set with the *Orange* EP. These three tracks are not as mentally stimulating as the unforgettable acid tracks from *Sheet One* or the dark ambient beats of *Consumed*, but they do make you want to dance. Of the three, the only one that truly stands out is the third, which starts with a bouncy kick drum and muted snare sound, then brings in the sped-up sample loop "oh, yeah" taken from Yello and a techno whine sound. The bass beat intensifies, the high hats come, and suddenly the sound just explodes with rhythm and groove, building and morphing to keep a floor moving.

On the first track, he takes a single echoey percussive sound, similar to sounds used on *Concept 1* and *Consumed*, and builds on it with a driving bassline and layers of rhythm. Track two is my least favorite: an intricate conga-rhythm and a bass line that drops in and out—enhancing the rhythm as he plays with it—are fun, but not uniquely interesting. With *Orange*, Hawtin proves he can still make classic techno, but since he's made a name for himself by mutating basic concepts and sounds in techno into something new, *Orange* seems like a bit of a regression. In my opinion, none of the tracks stand out exceptionally from the rest of the techno massive and earn the name that Richie Hawtin has made for himself.

—Carter Tracy

IQU with Miranda July**Girls on Dates****K**

The Olympia, Washington-based IQU (formerly ICU), with its acoustic bassists, synth player, and guitar-

playing, record-spinning wiz K.O., presented a novel fusion of indie rock with breakbeats on their 1998 debut long-player *Chotto Matte A Moment!* But they take a misstep on this collaboration with Miranda July, a female artist who's an earthier Laurie Anderson type: Like a lot of spoken-word performance backed by music, this one seems forced and, at times, just plain goofy. The title track's Mouse on Mars meets plucked bass fusion is marred by a wack narrative about a man covered in black liquid, while "Kida Co-Corna" finds a woman addressing a life-support patient over a metallic trip-hop beat. Much cooler, not surprisingly, are the instrumental mixes of these two, with both K.O. and DJ Swiggs taking turns chopping up Miranda July's words into verbal sushi.

—Sean Portnoy

Takako Minekawa**Ximer****Emperor Norton**

Minekawa's baby-doll vocals have made her a college-music darling, which should continue due to this charming collection of remixes. Fellow Japanese countrymates Cornelius and Nobukazu Takemura each take her voice on a bubbly, Nintendo-like adventure, with the former wrapping her in goeey-sweet electronics and breakbeats on "Milk Rock," while "Phonoballoon Song" finds Takemura adding a Latin shuffle and strings to her "la, la, la's." Mark Borthwick and Trevor/hollAnd add more urgent strings—along with pot-banging breakbeats—to "Telstar," but Kid Loco goes the '70s soul jam route, with a funky bassline and bongos almost overpowering Minekawa's cooing.

The CD adds two bonus tracks from Darla staples: Junior Varsity km goes on his usual drum n' bliss excursion with a version of "Black Forest," but more intriguing is Sweet Trip's minimal, Chain Reaction-like mix of "Cat House." A soundtrack for guilty pleasures—like Gameboy Color.

—Sean Portnoy

Meat Beat Manifesto/Mellowtrons**"Bittersweet Synthphony/Not Playing God"****Skam (UK)**

Meat Beat Manifesto on Skam? Who would have guessed? Being a fan of both Skam and Meat Beat respectively, I picked up the record hoping that it contain something different, something unexpected. However, this two-track is far from revolutionary, unless it's 1990 and "Not Playing God/Bittersweet Synthphony" are 99%-era B-sides.

This is not to say this record is not worth picking up, as both Meat Beat and the Mellowtrons provide an enjoyable track for those who miss that early-era Meat Beat Manifesto. "Not Playing God" finds Jack Dangers returning to the familiar formula of sampling a hip-hop rhythm, layering it with a funky bassline, and dipping it all in a sonic soup of strange samples and blippy synth textures. While a rerun of an earlier era is enjoyable, the backward step seems quite unusual. The Mellowtrons continue the early Manifesto vibe with "Bittersweet Synthphony," a pleasant track with an energetic rhythm and groovy bassline—yet nothing overly enticing or catchy. Overall, an unusual release, pleasant, if not a bit short, but a must-have for the Meat Beat completist, with high-quality artwork by the always impressive Studio Moo.

—Jasin Perez



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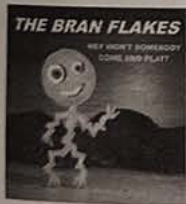
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ogcd13

The Bran Flakes - "Hey Won't Somebody Come and Play?"

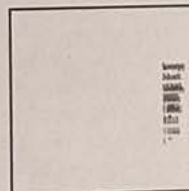
The breakaway hit from Seattlites Mr. Otis F-Odder and Sir Mildred Pit. Tight editing, fresh beats, and an impressive array of collage sources including plenty of vintage religion, sex-ed, sci-fi, and hi-fi. 39 Tracks.
1999 74 mins cdr \$10



ogcd10

Wobbly - Radio

Analog tape manipulation and innovative studio techniques abound in this triple dose of dense, dreamy experimental electronics. Originating from years of live radio improv, the end result ranges from atmospheric to melodic to downright creepy. Enjoy.
1999 3-cdr set \$20



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Multicast
EP 02
Obliq Recordings

Obliq Recordings' firm philosophy of dark-rooted ambient meets deconstructed beats is a signature that stands a clear distance from the crop of American experimental electronics trying to match the same sound. With the EP 02 10," Multicast covers three tracks that occupy a wide range of crackling basslines and distorted melodies. "Laura," a smooth electro-ish workout, concentrates on crunchy beats and a warm bassline, while "Hefehab (Ted Sturgeon vs Multicast)" is more on the experimental ambient tip. With subtle bass-bleeps, and syncopated beats to match, this one doesn't move too far in any direction.

"Equivii (M-Tec Remix)" is an instant favorite if you enjoy smart-beats, distorted high notes, and beautiful melodic lines wrapped nicely between the penetrating low end. Multicast generates an unusual assortment of beats that are tucked deep inside the machines used, and with that in mind, Obliq Recordings will receive much attention in the next few months.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Nightmares on Wax
Les Nuits
Matador/Warp

The first (and best) single off the latest NoW album: You might recognize it as a rework of "Nights Interlude," originally included on Compost Records' *Future Sound of Jazz Vol. 2* compilation. The title track fades in with sonorous orchestral strings, and soon afterwards, a gentle trip-hop beat drops to establish the rhythm. Light jazz keys are sprinkled throughout enhance the mood. Not mind-blowing, but it's a smooth record that goes down well in a chillout setting. A remix by DJ Spinna is included, but the original wins hands down. Recommended for fans of Air, Kid Loco, K&D, and the likes.

—Brock Phillips

Pope
Fridhemsplan
Moder Jord / Flora & Fauna (SWE)

With a track called "Pa Vag Mot Babylon Med Buss," it may be difficult to digest and to interpret the intended meaning Pope has for it, but the sounds emanating from this 7" are rather simple, relaxed, and entertaining at the same time. With a constant backdrop of subtle 4/4 beats in a similar vein to the German-based Profan imprint, Pope introduces an assortment of ambient undertones and quiet rhythm patterns wrapped beneath low-tech, crisp beats. The flip side, "2199 Dub," uses many of the same tools as the original track, while entertaining the listener's ears with a casual dub melody looped above the scattered beats.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Protocol
ndc
Isophlux

This debut from Florida's Nicole Caffarella is a lovely set of a half-dozen tracks that are reminiscent of classic early IDM work by artists like the Black Dog and B12, spiked with a touch of the Miami electro that she grew up listening to. Gorgeous melodies and subtle beats float over melancholy atmospherics, producing a warm and soulful sound.

For the final pair of tracks, she invites over some boys to make some noise: Label boss Shad T. Scott introduces some chunky beats and echoing sound squalls to his reworking of the title track, and Jeff McIlwain of L'Usine infects "Waiting" with a skittering beat that works its way into an aggressive bit of distorted drum n' bass.

—Greg Clow

Shortwave
Are You Receiving
Shortwave

Danielle Cunningham offers up a four-track enhanced CDEP, including one track, "Wait," in Real Video format. An extended version of the audio track—which features a mildly funky hip-hop loop, plaintiff piano, and muted buzzing guitar—is also included. "Tripping on the Way Home" offers a similar speed, though more distorted, drumloop along with an organ melody played like it was on a vibraphone and touches of sax and piano, while "DC.5" is a straight-ahead techno number, complete with requisite 303 tweaking. Not particularly innovative, though pleasant enough in lieu of new Portishead.

—Sean Portnoy

Slummer
The Lion That Flies / Clouds Away
Moder Jord / Flora & Fauna (SWE)

Flora & Fauna, the "dancefloor-oriented" side of the Swedish Moder Jord label, is also home to Slummer's latest output, an onslaught of fierce yet simple drum n' bass melodies flavored with crisp percussive elements. Dot also provides an enticing remix on this nicely packaged 12" that contains a varied selection of sequencing matched with subtle rhythm sections, proving to be one of the better tracks on "The Lion" side. To top things off, "Clouds Away" combines the rather quirky side of Lucky Kitchen's catalogue with a soulful melodic dub vibe that simply must be heard to be appreciated.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Squarepusher
Maximum Priest
Warp/Nothing

Though the bloom may be slightly off Tom Jenkinson's critical rose, at least he takes his licks and keeps on releasing tracks. Having wiggled out of the drill n' bass straitjacket with his fusion-y last full-length, Squarepusher has freed himself to dabble in various styles of his 1999 12"s. On *Maximum Priest*, which features four new tracks and three guest remixes (including work from Autechre and Wagon Christ), Jenkinson starts off with an aquatic ambient experiment (the uninspiring "Song: Our Underwater Torch") before turning things harder and harsher with the breakbeats and bells of "Decathlon Oxide" and the thumped bass of "You're Going Down."

The ae mix of "Two Bass Hit," with its repetitive clip-clop beat and minimal synth noodlings unfortunately sounds phoned in, while the Yee-King mix of "Circular Flexing" is a propulsive drill n' bass workout reminiscent of, well, Squarepusher. But the clear highlight here is the Wagon Christ mix of "Shin Triad," which lays down one of the funkiest beats ever committed to Warp vinyl. A new Squarepusher release may not cause the stir it did in the past, but at a domestic price, it's certainly worth a listen.

—Sean Portnoy

Squarepusher / Richard Thomas
I Am Carnal, and I Know That You Approve
Lo Recordings/Dutch East India

Many folks will probably pick up this single based on the involvement of Tom (Squarepusher) Jenkinson, but they may quickly find themselves scratching their heads trying to figure out why he received top billing on the cover. Aside from his distinctive bass on "Plate Core," Jenkinson's influence is pretty difficult to uncover amongst the record's quartet of tracks. In fact, he doesn't contribute to the quirky title track at all, and two of the three pieces he does appear on are bits of experimental noodling that wear thin after a couple of listens. Combine that with the record's short running time of around 11 minutes (assuming that my selected playing speed of 45 rpm is correct) and you're left with little more than a curiosity for the completists.

—Greg Clow

Starfish Pool
Rituals For The Dying 10"
Conspiracy/Dutch East India

Koen Lybaert is one of those Belgian producers whose appetite for hard techno is clearly apparent on this limited two-track 10". Having recorded with such luminaries as Ritchie Hawtin, Psychic Warriors ov Gaia, Mark Broom and Derrick May, Starfish Pool is more than likely to gain more appreciation with a packed dancefloor that is ready to absorb the dark and protruding beats emanating from this slab of wax. With an industrial-techno backbone that is reminiscent of the (older) Detroit sound, one might think that Starfish Pool is trying to recreate that style. However, Lybaert's minimal approach, the straight 4/4 beats, and harsh sound-structures unfold a new chapter for smooth atmospheric noise. *Rituals For The Dying* is one of the better sides of techno and deserves to be heard.

—Pietro Da Sacco

Terre Thaemlitz
A-MUSAK
A-Musik/Dutch East India

Looking back to his *Means from an End*, Thaemlitz argues that (electronic) music is not really apolitical in any neutral, detached sense, but rather a form of art that reinforces the status quo through impartiality, encouraging the listener's "passivity" and thereby reinforcing "existing [sociopolitical] hierarchies." Here, as in *Means*, theory is turned into reality. Jokingly referred to as "A(mbient)-MUSAK," abstract ambient music is "heard but not listened to" — it is art/product consumed by empty souls: a meaningless aural backdrop that could just as easily be replaced with elevator music, for all the social impact it has.

In the fight against this music's oppressive banality—to "take back the night," perhaps—A-MUSAK spins a pair of dreamy, lounge jazz tracks at 45 RPM, at times violently cutting up the arrangements with noise and chaotic disturbances in tempo. In a bit of levity, the B-side kicks off with a bit of chamber music, to play with the listener's expectations. It would be tempting to kick back and take a nap to this record's laid back sounds, but the obnoxious "residue" of noise layered in "multiple stages of production" is deliberately meant to jolt its audience into paying attention. Theory aside, the practice is interesting, albeit a little short. I would have preferred a more lengthy release, but A-MUSAK is still worthwhile for fans of the Thaemlitz sound.

—Alex Reynolds

Aboo



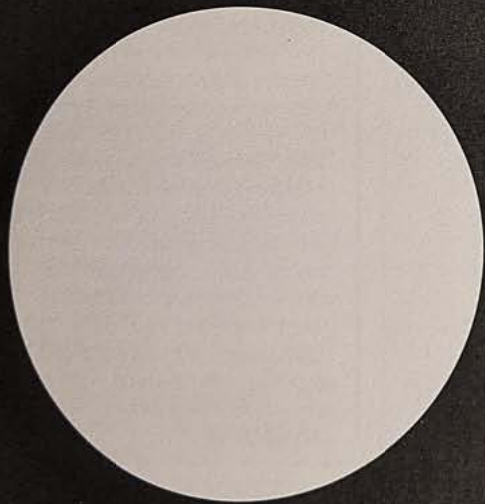
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Intrusional Schematics

Over the past few months, a plethora of Schematic vinyl has been flooding quality record shops. Bearing the raised and elegant markings of the Designers Republic, these new releases, and represses of the early Schematic catalog, are looking better than ever and, for most of the general public, are finally attainable. Based in Miami, Schematic is run by the duo Joshua Kay and Romulo Del Castillo, also known as Phoenecia and previously known as Soul Oddity. Ranging from electro to minimal to miscellaneous, there is no form of quality electronic music that can't be found somewhere on this label. Surely with these new releases, Schematic defines themselves as a leading label to look for at the forefront of electronic music innovation.

Metic Metic

Available for a limited time on a blue pressing, this first Schematic release accurately demonstrates what this label is capable of and showcases the amazing talent of each of its members. High fidelity is a must when tackling the sounds of Schematic, and Metic shows no fear at taking on the whole spectrum. There is no doubt that Metic is truly a sound designer. At times reminiscent of Polygon Window and in its glory like no other, this 12" is a must for any innovative electronic fan. Metic is also featured on the Schematic double pack, *Ischemic Folks* (see review in albums section).

Takeshi Muto Mud Dauber

The debut release (and Schematic's second release) by label owner Takeshi Muto, better known as Romulo Del Castillo, is the only Schematic release, thus far, about which I have reservations. All the tracks have interesting aspects, yet as a whole I feel the rhythms and samples Takeshi uses are repetitive and do not display the complexity that is evident in his duo Phoenecia and in other Schematic artists. On the title track, the development and ideas are great, but throughout the track the only things that get tweaked are still within that original rhythm setup. Ending this 12" is the best track, "Mello Me," which definitely displays the sense of humor evident in much of Muto's work. At times "Mello Me" reminds one of the video game *Kid Niki* or the sounds from a musical Mao tourist lighter. Available also on a limited pressing of red colored vinyl.

Tristeza Macrame Rocket Racer

This 7" from San Diego-based Rocket Racer has a schizoid time-warp feel to it. The A-side title track is pure jangle pop that sounds straight outta the mid-'80s—like a Johnny Marr track that Morrissey never got his hands on. But the flip side, a remix of "RMS2000" by Rafter, is as end of the millenium as you can get, sitting somewhere between Warp-style drill n' bass and the more melodic and textured quality of the Darla label's electronic output. If you still listen to these little slabs of vinyl, the B-side's probably worth a couple of bucks.

—Sean Portnoy

Various Artists Ischemic Strokes, Volume 1

This release is the first in a three-part series featuring remixes of Schematic tracks by Freeform, Push Button Objects, and Phoenecia. Being a huge fan of Simon Pyke, I was very optimistic about Freeform's "Waddle and Daub" remix of Muto's "Mud Dauber," which readily fills in the gap of a certain complexity missing in many of Muto's tracks. Recomposing with nice head-boppin' melodies and signature-carved samples, Pyke demonstrates the playfulness apparent in much of his music. The second track is another remix of Takeshi—under another alias, Patcha Kutek—and contained originally on the *Beta Bodega Coalition* album, which also features PBO and Jake Mandell (see review below). On the flip side is a Metic track, "Phase Inv," remixed by Phoenecia and an unlabeled remix by Richard Devine. Available on a limited clear-green pressing.

Takeshi Muto Swollen Glances One

The first in another multi-part release from Schematic, this more recent project of Del Castillo shows definite growth over his initial release. Muto takes us through the aural depths of what seems to be an underwater mining facility still in various stages of construction: Vocals bounce off walls from all directions and one can't decipher which way is out. My favorite tracks on this four-song release are the B tracks on both 12" sides—"Ntak" and "7ME7A," respectively. "Ntak" is Muto's greatest success, blending a beautiful melody, well-designed overlays, and a soothing underlying of bass that is reminiscent of Boards of Canada. "7ME7A" is totally the opposite—eerie, twisted, and gothic. This track is the finest example of Takeshi's ability to transform and develop ambience, at one point reminding me of (Aphex Twin's) *Hangeable Auto Bulb*. The meaning of the track name is elusive, but the feeling the track evokes is the wonder of sitting through a meteor shower with headphones plugged into the Arecibo Radio Observatory. Available on limited orange vinyl.

Phoenecia Odd Job

I have been eagerly anticipating the newest release by Phoenecia: Imagine my excitement when I read on the jacket back that the original version of *Odd Job* appears on the forthcoming Phoenecia album, *Brown Out*, which is also available on compact disk with remixes by Autechre, Richard Devine, Push

Various Artists Assorted Pieces Suction Records

The robots from Canada call upon some friends from abroad to help them fill this 10" slab of vinyl with four tracks of the blissful electronics you've come to expect from the Suction brandname. Swedish trio Pluxus (whose *Fas 2* album is a personal favorite at the moment) contribute "Era Majestät," a work that juxtaposes a simple beatbox rhythm and strange squirty synths with a lovely melody a la Boards of Canada, while Manchester's Brioche Kretzaal (a.k.a. Datathief) submits a track that quite simply has Suction written all over it (if you're a fan of the label, you'll know what I mean).

Button Objects, and Takeshi Muto! *Odd Job's* hilarious packaging, designed by Antenna Devices, will give any vegan a case of nausea, sporting a porterhouse steak wired and ready for rolling in the ghetto. Both tracks, "Get Fresh" and "Rhythm Box," are by Soul Oddity, Phoenecia's previous incarnation, and definitely display their Miami roots—hard electro blended with pulsating bass and innovative all around. Although labeled with a 45-rpm play speed, I enjoy it at 33 rpm, especially "Get Fresh."

Beta Bodega Coalition 2K Beta Bodega

With an incredibly abstract cover design, utilizing only a tone of red with a slightly matte application, the title, 2K, is initially hard to discern. What is made blatant is an emphatic military presence with a concern for the future of the Panama Canal. Their concern is that control of the Canal be successfully transferred to Panama, in accordance with the Torrijos-Carter Canal Treaties of 1977—but in disagreement with the United States' national interests. Beta Bodega Coalition has released confidential reports about American governmental actions attempting to insure occupation of the Canal past the millennium deadline.

Schematic artists and Mandell are members of this musical Beta Bodega Coalition, recording as Hamijama: Babylon, a.k.a. Mandell; TPM, a.k.a. PBO; and Patcha Kutek, a.k.a. Del Castillo. Hamijama features two tracks, both eerily dark and employ wonderful basslines while complemented by celestial organs and piano samples from what sounds like a children's toy. Kutek creates a track that sounds incredibly industrial, but smoothed over by a loop of a twisted child's melody and then concluded with syncopation similar to Funkstorung. Limited availability on 12" vinyl.

The Schematic label is getting stronger with each release. They have acquired graphic work from the exalted The Designers Republic, display limitless talent with each of their artists, and have invited the expertise of such minds as Freeform and Autechre to do remix compilations. Then why is the quality of their vinyl and pressing so inferior to other leading labels? The four limited releases that were available on colored vinyl were so thin that after only 2 months, one is already warped and the rest waver with any draft in the room. Even the *Ischemic Folks* double lp and *Odd Job* have edges sharp enough to cut themselves out of the packaging. With everything else related to Schematic attaining top-notch levels, their pressing quality needs to come affront as well—because in the end, what you're remembered by is what comes out of grooves.

—Chester Blaze

As for the Suction boys themselves, Amm (Solvent) and De Rocher (Lowfish) offer the first officially released track from their collaborative project Tinfoil Teakettle: a ditty called "1982 For You" that isn't nearly as retro as the title suggests. In fact, it sounds pretty much exactly as you'd expect a Solvent/Lowfish hybrid to turn out, which means it's damn good. Bookending the set are "Igloo Mux," a perky piece by Lowfish that seems to whip by in much less time than its 5" minute length, and a little uncredited bit that closes things down quite nicely.

—Greg Clow

Various Artists Mash the Place Up Ambush (UK)

In the hardcore underground, DJ Scud's Ambush label is respected as an outlet for the more extreme side of drum n' bass, a splinter sound that is finally developing here in the states due to such labels as Vinyl Communication, History of the Future, and Kultbox. This compilation—Ambush's first release on CD—maps out the subterranean sounds that emerge from distortion, super-pitched-up breakbeats, and obscene, in-ye-face samples. Some of it, unfortunately, merely rubs a harsh abrasive over familiar surfaces (the familiar breakbeat overload of Scud's "Something Stronger" and the hard/tech/whatever-step of the title track)—though Scud's "MTV Generation" actually returns some funk to the broken-down "Amen" beat.

But there's also some new nerve-wracking combinations here, including two slam dunks from DHR-regular Shizuo: With its gurgling synth drippings and mangled breaks, "Moshi-Moshi" suggests a riot breaking out in a scientist's lab, while "Trouble" finds a pitched-up disco sample undergoing some laser surgery. And Din-S.T.'s closer, "Search," is a vortex of screams, smudged beats, and creaky electronics. *Mash the Place Up* is convincingly tougher than the rest, while whetting the appetite for even more extreme noise assaults.

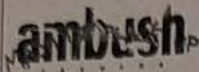
—Sean Portnoy

Various Artists Music for Listening To Bubblecore

This Rye, NY-based label is ostensibly of the indie-rock ilk, though releases from Nobukazu Takemura (as Child's View) and Mice Parade's recent *Fat Cat* recordings suggest an adventurous, post-rock/electronics kinship with the likes of Thrill Jockey and Hefy. Not surprisingly, this label sampler features several straight-ahead rock numbers, but also contains DSP experiments with "traditional" instruments, as well as electronic tracks—most notably from Matmos. The duo's "Sun on 280 to the 1" suggests a bizarre jam session between a jazz drummer, a synth player, a banjo plucker, and someone playing one of those mouth harps that sounds like a duck call (and is a signature of Matmos' live shows).

Elsewhere, Velma's "55'291" documents the tension between Stereolab-type vocals (albeit flatter) and a drum beat waiting to break out, but is constantly frustrated until about 5 minutes in, while Dots Will Echo's contribution is a symphony of various bell tones with warm, nearly subliminal synth sweeps. But the album's centerpiece is Mice Parade's "Galileo," which begins with almost-classical guitar plucking and then adds frenetic drum loops and a slightly distorted guitar counterpoint. A pretty epic acoustic instrument/digital editing track, especially if you haven't completely insulated yourself against anything that's not purely electronic sounding.

—Sean Portnoy



Various Artists Sub Rosa vs. Kompakt Sub Rosa/Dutch East India

If you are, like me, a little too attention-span deprived for the microvariations of tech-house from the likes of labels like the German imprint Kompakt, seeing acts like Autechre and Freeform getting their hands on material from Dettinger and Freiland 2 certainly makes for an intriguing listen. And Autechre's "battle" with Jurgen Paape sounds a lot more carefree than their usual output: They fuck around with the springy kick-drum patterns and drip a rinky-dink little melody on top of a more metallic layer of synth wash. Not quite nirvana, but clearly some inspired weirdness from the boys (and in contrast to DJ Olive's mix of Paape, which commits the sampling personal foul of yet again lifting the transporter sound effect from *Star Trek*).

Elsewhere, To Rococo Rot add a dub-meets-new-wave gloom bassline to M.I.'s stringy electronic repetitions, while Scanner's mix of "Freiland" features a jangly piano riff and a smooth organ undergirding. PCM's Neil Harvey offers up a bustling mix of Dettinger that kicks like a supercharged Detroit production, and Freeform's mix is, well, as off-kilter as his original tracks, with the basic elements of house chopped into microorganisms that circle in their own orbits but still manage to cohere (somewhat) in a fascinating manner.

Up against such alchemy, it's no surprise that original, untouched Kompakt tracks also included pale in comparison, too subtly shifting for impatient ears. Nevertheless, a highly recommended change-

up for fans of Chain Reaction and the like.
—Sean Portnoy

Various TranSonic 8 TranSonic (JAPAN)

Representing the friendlier face of Kazunao Nagata's secretive Shibuya-ku empire, *TranSonic 8*—seemingly the last gasp of the (defunct?) TranSonic label—is of a far more accessible breed than the output of his experimental Zero Gravity stable. For *TranSonic 8*, Nagata culls like-minded contributors from the rosters of three other obscure Japanese labels: Chilledisc, Nan, and Sonic Plate.

Those who know Nagata for the blisteringly abstract *World of Electronic Sound* albums may be startled to find him playing the lighthearted kitschmeister with the electro-disco boogaloo of his Fantastic Explosion's "VHS Communication." But Nagata's domain is a sphere where the elements of the commonplace are recycled as the building blocks of the new. Tigris and Eurphrates' weird, alluring "Sumerians" interfaces bass, horns, piano, electronics, vocal outbursts, and breakbeats in a fashion that owes little to the tedium of jungle-jazz.

House and salsa loops are the ingredients for Idol Taxi's snowballing "Instant Funk." Také Rodriguez, Tagomago, Animo Computer, and Inoyamaland construct their beguiling nesting-boxes of music box toytronic melodies, beatbox rhythms, and twiddly synth by ad-libbing on sparkling tropical motifs and familiar Western themes. Nagata keeps

Various Artists Warp 10+1: Influences Warp 10+2: Classics 89-92 Warp 10+3: Remixes Warp/Matador

Launched in 1989 in Sheffield, England by Steve Beckett and Rob Mitchell as an extension of their record shop of the same name, Warp Records has found itself part of that exclusive cabal of indie imprints who can lay claim to pioneering an entire musical movement. Just as the name Factory became synonymous with post-punk art rock, and 4AD with dark and beautiful ethereal soundscapes, Warp is known as the original home of the sounds known variously as intelligent techno, electronic listening music, or IDM. In celebration of their first decade of releasing (mostly) outstanding electronic music to the world, Warp has put together this sprawling trio of double-CD sets that chronicle their pre-history, document their early days, and offer a glimpse of their possible future.

First up is *Influences*, which features 22 seminal techno and house tracks from the late '80s that caught the ears of Beckett and Mitchell inspired the duo to create the label. Taken out of their mid/late-'80s context, it's hard to understand why many of these primitive and simplistic tracks caused such excitement. Some selections have aged especially badly and are almost painful to listen to, particularly vocal house tracks like Master C&J's "Dub Love" and "No Way Back" by Adonis. But then there are indisputable classics from the techno trinity of Derrick May, Juan Atkins, and Kevin Saunderson that remind you just how much of a debt today's producers owe to Detroit. Most of disc two documents the emerging acid house scenes of both the UK and America and is worth it simply for the coupling of 808 State's "Let Yourself Go" and A

Guy Called Gerald's "Voodoo Ray."

The accuracy of this first set's title is obvious from the first notes of The Forgemasters' "Track With No Name," Warp's first release and the piece which opens the *Classics* installment of this series. But while the influence of Detroit and Chicago may be obvious, it's the unique combination of bleeps and bass that made the track stand out and put Warp on the map. Aside from a brief dabbling in proto big beat with DJ Mink's "Can U Relate?," it was this "bleep" sound that the early Warp singles concentrated on, and *Classics* gathers a solid set from those 12" by Sweet Exorcist, LFO, Nightmares on Wax, and more.

And then along comes the ubiquitous *Remixes* album, a concept that has lost a lot of its novelty due to the seemingly infinite variations on the theme that are played out on the new-release racks every week. But, in this case, there is some cause for excitement, as a list of remixers that reads like an electronic/IDM/post-rock fan's wet dream (Stereolab, Luke Vibert, Tortoise, Surgeon, Oval, Push Button Objects, Four Tet and many more—not to mention most of the current Warp roster) were let loose to pick their faves from the Warp back-catalogue for de/re-construction. Inevitably, there are some stinkers among the 26 tracks, but when you've got such a stellar line-up of artists working with equally stellar material by folks like Aphex Twin, Autechre, Seefeel, and Squarepusher, it's hard for things to go very wrong. And generally, they don't.

Three ambitious anthologies, none of them absolutely perfect, but all of them important documents of an important label. Congratulations, thanks and kudos to Warp for a decade of top tunes, and here's to many more.

—Greg Clow

Etc.

Dionne Warwick is rich enough. Stop wasting money calling The Psychic Friends Network. Clairvoyance isn't available at \$4.99/minute. If you want to know the future, a handful of producers having been documenting it on vinyl over the last half of 1999. Check it.

Detroit-based: The ever-busy **DJ Godfather** released a solo 12", via *satellite from Detroit* on Jon Layne's Intuit-Solar label. The title track is a dope analog number, in regular Godfather style, while the flip is home to two press-release-tagged 'ghetto tech' tracks. On his Twilight 76 imprint, singles from **Digitek 2/3/4**, **Mas 2008**, and **Sektor 17** (DJ Dick, head of Throw) are released, while the **313 Bass Mechanics** set out to test the limits of your subwoofers with a 2x12", *Dress to Sweat*, on Godfather's ghetto label, Databass.

Also on Intuit-Solar, the third installment of the *Comin' from tha D* series is out. **Adult** remixes **Ectomorph**, and **Heinrich Mueller** remixes **Le Car** on the A-side, with either track more than worth the price of the EP, not to mention the tracks on the flip. **Alan Oldham** reworks the **Punisher's** drum n' bass track "Mirage" into a superb techno track spliced with breaks of the original, while **D. Wynn** remixes **Keith Tucker's** classic "Face Your Fate" into a chilled 4/4.

Ersatz Audio owners/married couple Adam Lee Miller and Nicola Kuperus, continue to both ignore, and redefine, boundaries of electro, with the release of their second effort as **Adult**, *Entertainment*. Bringing together Miller's talented and unique production (documented in various combinations as **Le Car**, **Plasma Co.**, and **Artificial Material**) and vocals dripping with chic attitude by Kuperus, **Adult** stands as one of the most innovative projects in current electro. Miller draws harsh, raw melodies out of his vintage analog synths, pairing them with tearing snares to create a sound vaguely evocative of '80s new wave, yet exclusively individual. Necessary.

V-Max releases an assault by producer **Silicon**, with the *Static*, *Groove*, *Tech*, and *Movement* EPs. Extremely sharp snares, overactive kick drums, and synths from the outer reaches of the galaxy define all three 12"s. The *Static* EP moves at a blistering pace, with the feel of a less stripped down **Ectomorph**, while the *Groove*, *Tech* EP (cut with NSC's x2 technology) slows the pace, but retains the same feel. The *Movement* EP takes two tracks, pairing the techno feel of earlier V-Max releases with piercing snare hits, and electro kick patterns—instead of the familiar 4/4—to complete the 12." Seek these out.

Electro master **Keith Tucker (K-1)**, part of **A.U.X. 88**, owner of Puzzlebox) licenses three tracks to German label Psycho Thrill for a hand-numbered, limited to 300 copies 12", *Speaker Worshipping*. Vocal / instr. versions of the title track, vocal/acapella versions of sci-fi inflected "Electro files", and one mix of "Freak me" comprise the single. Solid tracks, in Tucker's recognizable style, make a fine addition to any record collection.

California-based: Cytrax, label of skilful producers Joshua Kit Clayton and John Mendez (DJ Jasper), and sub-label Delay, known for its extremely textured, detailed, and intricately edited releases, have so far kept to the realm of 4/4. The ninth single, *Of Sarcasm and Exhaust*, by **Sutekh** (owner of Belief Systems, and sub-label Context) extends their grasp to electro. While two superb tracks stay in the

4/4 vein, twisting frequencies, the standout is "Underhanded." Ominous tones mutate, harsh, yet subdued, textures come into play, and coupled with the drum pattern, build a track (best at +6) that people in any genre (techno/electro/IDM) should not willingly pass over. Dark, ominous, maximal electro at it's finest. Not to be missed.

New York-based: **Richard Hinge**, part of Dietrich Schoenemann's NY Hidden Agenda crew, comes out with *Mental Static*, via German label Disko B. With one hard techno track holding down the B-side, two electro tracks occupy the flip. Incorporating a Speak n' Spell, yet side-stepping the cheesiness it usually confers, Hinge's productions resemble more of an Anthony Rother than an Ed DMX. Forbidding tones, thick basses, and storming kick drums (on A2, "Exit") mark this release as an excellent dark electro 12," necessary to anyone enamored of the style.

Canada-based: Owner of the Suction label (with partner Gregory De Rocher, D.B.A. Lowfish), Jason Amm, releases a solo full length as **Solvent**, entitled *Solvently One Listens*: a completely analog excursion into direct emotional expression via pop and new wave structures. Amm assembles 13 tracks with more human emotion and feeling than the entire crop of current DSP (ab)users combined. [See full review in album reviews section]

European-based: **Mr. Velcro Fastener**, the duo of 22 year-olds Tatu Peltonen and Tatu Metshti, put out *Lucky Bastards Living Up North* on i220. With garishly retro design—complete with directions to built your own Mr. Velcro Fastener from the record sleeves, courtesy of the Designers Republic—the music within is anything but. Nine tracks vary from the Kraftwerk-like "Robots for Life", to an almost I-F-like analog workout "Real Robots Don't Die", to "Blue Screens", a track so deep and dark it could have come from Carl Finlow. Mr. Velcro Fastener

embodies both the history and future of electro. Well worth the import price.

Long-running label Bunker releases LPs by **Legowelt**, **Pimpshifter**, and **Orgue Electronique**, *The Eye That Never Sleeps*. The former, credited to Daniny Blanco, is a six-track journey into the glamorous world of disco-tech. Not groundbreakingly innovative, yet still solid, it's an excellent example of the style so influential on many producers, yet mostly overlooked. The latter, by Brian Chinetti, is nine tracks of dark, minimal electro, in the fine Dutch style of Viewlax, Murdercapital, Clone, and other Hotmix labels. Fuck tarot card readings—even with 3 minutes FREE!—this is what you should be buying.

Another long time label from the Netherlands, Djax-up-beats, sees a release by **The Operator** (Frank de Groot/Fastgraph, Optic Crux, Sonar Bass, * of Urban Electro, etc.). Four tracks, and two hacker tones, 2600 and a dial-up sequence, expose this as an essential 12" of dark electro. From minimal tracks in the style, yet independent of, *Interdimensional Transmissions*' **Ectomorph** or *Viewlax's* **Pametex**, to a rough, pounding monster, "Commander Bomber", de Groot stands on the forefront of the genre. Again, essential.

Andrea Benedetti, recording as **Sprawl**, releases a 12" on **Plasmek**. *Voices + Beats*, the third solo release by Benedetti for the Italian label, which is more dope, futuristic electro. Vocals lifted from the *Star Wars* trilogy, hard snares and kick drums, and threatening bass hold down three tracks, while an Outcast remix of "2nd Strategy" could have found a home on **Autechre's** *Anvil Vapre* EP. Reinforcing the truth that good taste crosses geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers, de Benedetti and **Plasmek** spread their innovative, original music across the globe. Bother your record pusher until you own it. —Chris St. Cavish

Thermosphere
[110 miles]

Mesosphere
[90 miles]

Stratosphere
[9 - 12 miles]

Troposphere
[5 miles]



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Notes from the Soundboy Yakuza Tour, August 1999

Rjyan Kidwell, a.k.a. Cex, pulls no punches as he writes what he learned on his summer vacation.

Driving home at close to 3 in the morning after the last performance of the Soundboy Yakuza tour, the remaining Soundboys—Alex "Lexaunculpt" Graham, Michael "Kid606" Trost-Depedro and I, Rjyan "Cex" Kidwell—got a little lost and started discussing just exactly what I'd be writing for the "tour diary" I had volunteered to submit to *Grooves*. I had sort of forfeited the idea of an actual day-to-day account of our tour after realizing the first night of the tour that our schedule and my mood were working a 100 percent against anything like that and figured falsified anecdotes about our adventures on the East Coast would be infinitely more amusing than an accurate account of our 8-day escapade, which consisted chiefly of mundane drives from city to city punctuated by ridiculously long games of "Who'd-ja-do?" in generic restaurants and in the car. Oh, and the occasional live performance.

By the time we were navigating our way back to my parents' house in the suburbs of Baltimore, I was tired and confused. The Soundboy Yakuza tour had

Yakuza tour to make me realize that this apparent birthing of an American experimental electronic music scene isn't like the blissful celebration of a newborn baby... it's like the torturous, embarrassing, and awkward journey through puberty. It has bad acne and the names of obscure bands scrawled sloppily across its backpack. I think if I sat at the experimental electronic music lunch table, I'd get dirty looks and be ignored until I packed up my half-eaten cafeteria food and left.

I guess if there truly were a baby shower for experimental electronic music, it was over in Britain back in the '80s, and I was way too young to be there. One of the big problems with talking about experimental electronic music, even to someone who shares the same taste in music, is that no one knows what to call it, and no one knows exactly what you're talking about when you do finally call it something. "IDM," which stands for Intelligent Dance Music, is probably the most volatile term out there right now. One of the lessons I learned in earnest on the Soundboy Yakuza tour was that the term connotes a relationship to the IDM-list, which is considered by a vast amount of people involved in the production of experimental electronic music to be bad, because its members are either lame because they know too little about electronic music or are obsessive freaks because they know or care too much about electronic music. The list is

criticized as insular, elitist, sheltered, and apparently counterproductive to the goal of the growth of the experimental electronic music scene.

In a way, these conjectures are valid. But they're mostly being made by the artists and label heads who, in the same breath, disavow any relationship to any type of electronic music community and don't have any desire to help create one. The reality is, however,

that this music is unconventional and intrinsically harder to access for the average fan of the *Billboard* Top 40. And my experience with the tour showed me that the greatest example of elitism in the loose collection of personalities identified as the "American experimental electronic music scene" is not in the well-meaning fans who may or may not overestimate the importance of their cleverly written emails to the "scene" as a whole, but in the absurd catty behavior of the artists and label heads identified with this community against their will, who insist on slagging everyone else trying to do roughly the same thing as they are, arbitrarily incurring their scorn in much the same way middle school inter-clique drama operates. On tour, I was privileged enough to witness firsthand the ability of certain famous faces in the burgeoning American experimental electronic community to switch from congenial conversation to intense dissing at the turn of a back.

But maybe we should expect that. After all, we're dealing, for the most part, with artists whose fans do indulge their already well-fed egos. I can't think of another arena where being purposefully vague, mysterious, and inaccessible to your fans reaps as

much adoration as in this scene. And I'll admit, one of the main reasons I enjoy creating this type of electronic music is that working with other people in bands has proven to be a bit of a difficulty for me in the past, and I know many other musicians share this sentiment. But I don't think any cattiness or aversion to community affiliation is excused because most of these artists are rugged individualists. There are plenty of individualists who aren't jerks. You can maintain your own individuality without feeling the need to distance yourself from other labels and artists and listeners with a constant string of disrespect dangling from your lips.

Throughout the tour, I was pretty moody. It was a lot to take in. I was privy to quite a few conversations whose basic point was, "Fuck the listener. I'll put a piece of my turd on a record and they'll buy it." I wanted to object—and even tried—but I couldn't put it all together, I couldn't make an argument that stuck, everything I said seemed incredibly naïve. It got to the point where I was afraid of my own tape collection, and the soundtrack to our car rides ended up being assorted bad emo from the early '90s. It was so uncertain as to whether or not any tape of electronic music that I honestly enjoyed because of its musical content could've incited a casual tirade of insults against its creator, for whatever reason. It all finally started making sense that last night of tour, at about 3 in the morning as we were driving through back roads in the exurbs of Maryland. Alex had his ever-present headphones off long enough to talk to me about what I'd be writing about in this article here.

"You've got to put something in about how I was missing for a couple of hours—with two Asian girls," he said to me. I laughed. In a friendly way.

"Write something like, 'After the show we couldn't find Alex, he was talking to these two Asian girls but then he just disappeared. Two hours later we found him, and when asked about it, he just smiled.'" I played along, smiling, laughing, acutely aware of the venom collecting in my salivary glands. It didn't make sense to me until then, when it all came together. The tour hadn't dashed my dreams of a beautiful baby American electronic music scene. It wasn't a mean, deformed child with no hopes of growing up healthy... It's just that the baby was going through an awful, ugly, awkward adolescence.

Our scene is a gangly, voice-cracking, cliquey, poseur-hating middle schooler. But it'll grow up. We've got a lot of maturing to do, but I'm convinced that this is only a stage of development, and not the type of confused, spiteful and disassociative excuse for a "scene" that we have to live with forever. Keith Whitman, a.k.a. Hrvatski, one of the smartest guys I met on tour, said it best when he said, concerning the many jerks in this "biz," "I don't pay attention to them. They just don't really care, and pretty soon, some kid who does is going to come along and do what they do 10 times better than they can."

And, on the last night of that beast that was the Soundboy Yakuza tour, as I received my instructions on how to write an article about Alex's fake tryst, I realized that the jackasses of the experimental electronic music scene aren't untouchable, that they're not some new form of artist, and that they're not gods who walk among nerds. As I laughed with him in the car, and at him in my mind, I realized even I could be just like an expert electronic music jackass. But I guess I had good teachers.



RJYAN KIDWELL (CEX, L.) AND MICHAEL TROST-DEPEDRO (KID606)

made me sick of the schizophrenia of electronic music. It became a force of its own that was hell-bent on exposing every last disgusting eccentricity that lives stuck to the underside of the misshapen rock upon which we have planted this "IDM" scene. Writing this, a month later, I finally feel distanced enough from the experience to start sorting things out and deriving something worthwhile from the whole fiasco.

Before the tour, I was an optimistic kid who had pages full of fleshed-out plans for neat concept compilations for my fledgling label. I posted enthusiastically and pretty frequently to the IDM list, the email-based congregation for a 1,000 or so people with a vested interest in experimental electronic music, including actual and aspiring transpotters, disc jockeys, and label moguls. I was excited about what seemed to be a true movement blossoming before my eyes: in this list and between the great artists and labels that seemed to be sprouting up everywhere and getting bigger every second. I was honestly pumped about the mounting buzz around the music I had fallen in love with and been making in my basement since I was 13 or 14. It took only 24 hours of the Soundboy

Funkstorung

Static residents, and Cytrax/Context recording artists, Sutekh opened the evening with a wonderfully eclectic live performance, which wandered from dense ambient textures to engaging minimal techno with a twist. After a short DJ set by the Static crew, Funkstorung—a.k.a. Michael Fakeah and Chris De Luca—took their places behind the machines. With a tweak of a knob and the push of a button, we were transported into the shadowy Funkstorian depths. Heads bobbed and rears rattled, as the four hands of Funkstorung went to working weaving their breathtaking blend of expansive melodies and crisp complex rhythmic structures.

808 State

The Godiva Festival is a local arts-based event in its second year in Coventry and is held in a park not far from the city center. 808 State were last up on the main stage on Saturday night—and were late. After much adjusting and checking by techies, they finally appeared, including a guy that looked like a generic father figure (it's Graham Massey and he seems to be able to play anything) and a couple of younger guys (Darren Partington, who does a bit of drumming and all the talking, and keyboard player Andy Barker). Their bassist looked like he should have been in Creedance Clearwater Revival at Woodstock (the first time around), and they also had a live drummer. The crowd covered a whole range of ages and types, but consisted largely of New Agers, students, young teenagers, and some token ravers. Partington had great fun teasing the crowd into dancing and introduced each track—even though no one seemed to be able to understand

Static, San Francisco

Tweaking the controls of various electronic devices, it seemed as though Fakeah and De Luca had successfully discovered the perfect combination of complexity and listenability in electronic music. While their material was relentlessly dense and textured, there were cleverly hidden hooks in the mix, designed to move the mind as well as the body. Even the live performance was stimulating, as Michael and Chris manipulated their sequences and effects in real time, giving the performance a very dynamic and improvised feel. Another brilliant evening made possible by the wonderful Static Crew.

—Jasin Perez

Godiva Festival, Coventry, UK

what he was saying half the time (although that seemed to be the fault of the sound system more than anything else).

Playing a combination of new and old tracks, they got a great and increasingly enthusiastic response from the 200+ strong crowd. People danced wildly to the old tunes and carried on when the new ones kicked in. The new tracks ranged from manic drum n' bass to a track that consisted solely of a drum loop and a guitar riff, which was catchy enough in its own right, but got monotonous after 10 minutes. Listening to the new material for the first time, I was quite impressed and looked forward to hearing some new releases in the future. In a lot of ways, their music reminded me of Orbital live, layering sounds upon sounds to form intense electronica, but in a way that was more clubby and infectious than Orbital's enthralling spectacle of a show.

July 20th 1999



June 5th 1999

Unfortunately, technical problems meant that they lost the power at three random points during their set, allowing the drummer to perform an impromptu drum solo at one point. Partington amused to the crowd while techies frantically worked to restore the power. 808 State left the stage to huge cheers and a crowd that was screaming for more, but they didn't get it. The lights went up without an encore.

It was great to see 808 State again and even better to see them play a city that doesn't get the chance to see much activity on the big-name band front. People came expecting to hear some classic 808 tunes and got something better than they expected—classic old *and* promising new tracks. 808 State delivered, regardless of the technical problems.

—Merciless Boy

12K

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0/r (12k1006), a collaboration between Richard Chartier and Tokyo's Nosei (Yoshinari) Sakata, was already underway when Deupree was introduced to Chartier. Sakata operates solo as *0—literally, "sound multiplied by zero"—and his stark, reductive work complements Chartier's more expressive explorations. The *0/r* project began when Sakata mailed Chartier a minidisc containing 45 minutes of tones and sounds; a reciprocal gesture prompted an interactive exchange of material. The disc's coded titles indicate the nature of the proprietary multiplex processing involved. "For instance," Chartier explains, "r/0/r/0 = Chartier's soundsources/tracks mixed by Sakata, then remixed by Chartier, then remixed by Sakata." The entire disc is sequenced impeccably, offering the attentive listener an hour of sophisticated, progressively unfolding composed-electronic intricacy.

On the quite different *Spec* (12k1007), Chartier's flickering high-frequency pinpricks and evaporating glitches benefit from Deupree's honed cyclical-rhythm sensibilities and granular syntheses. At times, it seems that the artists are waging a war against silence. Battle plans encoded as chirrupy electronics and micro-percussive taps are wired back and forth across

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Hostage Kid606 Released with Minor Wounds

LAPD Capture Christina Ricci in Beverly Hills Motel

LOS ANGELES, November 5 (Reuters)—A dramatic, 36-hour standoff between the paramilitary arm of the Los Angeles Police Department and Christina Ricci—star of such acclaimed films as *Casper: The Friendly Ghost* and *The Addams Family*—reached its violent, bloody conclusion earlier this morning at the Beverly Hills Motel 6.

Gunfire erupted outside Ricci's window as the SWAT team attempted its covert siege under the cover of dawn.

Actress Ricci suffered 45 bullet wounds to the head, chest, and neck area and was immediately rushed to a local celebrity hospital, where she was pronounced in stable but pissed-off condition.

Hostage and electronica star Michael Depedro—known as "Kid606" to his adoring fans—was found cowering under a bullet-ridden waterbed with minor wounds to the neck, clothed only in a Sex Pistols T-shirt and a dirty pair of socks.

"Depedro's injuries could best be described as 'hickeys,' as my kids would call them," said LAPD Chief Bernard Parks at a hastily convened press conference outside the motel. "We suspect Ricci was somehow involved and are having our forensics people look into her dental records."

Asked for his motivation for the sneak attack, Parks replied: "Ricci began making numerous unreasonable demands: an iced bucket of Chardonnay and a pair of wineglasses, baby oil and various lotions, bath robes, Barry White records. We felt Depedro's safety was in jeopardy and decided to move in."

Strangely enough, it was Michael Depedro's alter ego Kid606 who was responsible for the two having met four months prior to the hostage incident.

After Kid606's involvement with the compilation album *Ricci's Pieces*, a tribute to Ricci, helped it hit the *Billboard* charts at number 26, he was invited to a number of Hollywood parties, at one of which he and his object of desire finally met. Ironically mirroring Hollywood's recent attraction for electronic music acts, Depedro/Kid606 turned on the charm and the two inevitably became an item.

"We were hot and heavy—for awhile, anyway," commented Depedro. "We traveled on the talk show circuit, you know, Sally, Oprah, Montel. We even had a guest feature on *The Dating Game*. Then she got weird."

Communication between the two took a decidedly sinister turn one afternoon. "Christina started to call me an 'unfaithful creep' when I couldn't answer her calls one day," explains Depedro.



Coby Solomen

"I was in the studio doing remix work for Ricky Martin and talking film deal with a producer, for Christ's sakes! I was in the middle of business, and she wanted to chat about puppies and love and other mushy girl stuff." Things quickly went downhill for the couple after that.

"It was sweet of her to send me the dozen black roses, but I didn't appreciate her trying to run me over with her Jaguar," said Depedro, who cheated certain death, suffering only a dislocated toe. "On the bright side, that experience gave me a few ideas for track titles."

"After I ended the relationship, she started doing all kinds of creepy shit, like crank calls at four in the morning. Heavy breathing, moaning, all of it. Normally I don't mind that stuff, but I knew it was Christina, and it freaked me out. Then the stalking and other assorted mayhem began."

For Depedro, the last straw was when Ricci released her own album *Michael Depedro—The Other Dead Meat*, co-produced with death-glam rocker Marilyn Manson. Tracks included "You're Dead Meat," "You're Dead Meat II," "You're Dead Meat (Reprise)," and the famous Autechre remix "You're Dead Meat (Don't Go There Girlfriend nightclubbing mix)."

"When I called LAPD, all I got was a bunch of static," Depedro explained. "That Ricci bitch is crazy

as fuck," I said. "It's just a PR stunt her agent is pulling," they said. "She had her security goons put me into a burlap sack and throw me off a pier," I said. "It's just show business," they said."

Approximately 2 days ago, following a bikini thong shopping spree at Frederick's of Hollywood, Depedro was gagged and bound walking back to his Porsche 911. Thrown into a non-descript white Bronco, the musician was followed by a convoy of police surveillance and media helicopters to room 129 of the Beverly Hills Motel 6.

"After the sounds of items being thrown against the wall and the unmistakable cracks of a whip, we could hear Depedro's moans and gasps of pain through the window. We assumed at that point that we were dealing with a potentially explosive hostage crisis, at which point I called in the SWAT team and a film crew from the Fox television show *Cops*," explained Chief Parks. After a tense day and a half of failed negotiations with Ricci, Parks decided to move in with the camera crews.

Despite numerous wounds, doctors assured reporters that the actress would be healthy in time to reprise her role in *Casper II*. Depedro, now free, appears to be back to work in completing a sequel to *Ricci's Pieces*, tentatively called *Christina Ricci: The Other Crazy Psycho Love Goddess*.

12K

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the still soundfield. On "specification.four," the tactics change. Chartier's chirping tones etch the glassy calm while programmed disturbances chip away at the music's frangible substance, leaving it weakened and susceptible to his assault. Throughout the engagement, low-end is evident less as tangible basslines than as a flux-form vapor that swirls behind the frequency cluster-bombings and pepperings like eddies of noxious wind ("specification.three") or as an insistent Morse-coded

throb.

Deupree gets excited about cooperative projects such as 0/r and Spec. "I think 12k is becoming a collective voice, and that's what I want it to be," he says. "I never wanted to single-handedly usher in this genre. I feel like I'm a part of a family...."

"Now that I've established the aesthetic for 12k, I feel I'm free to explore its boundaries. I've already got a few releases planned for 2000: my solo release in January, a new compilation, a new shuttle358 album, a Bretschneider full-length. We'll see where the music goes

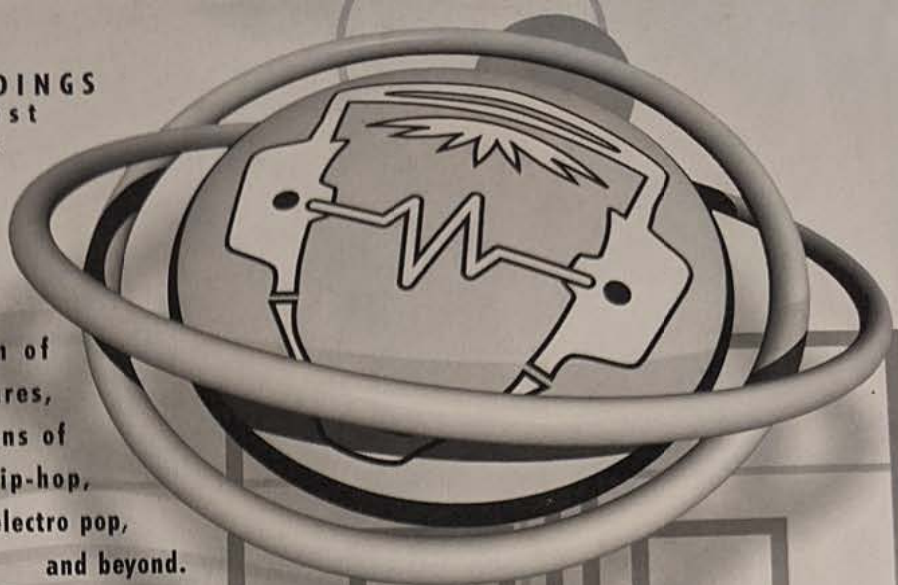
"I remember very clearly about 6 to 10 years ago, listening to an acid house record and saying to myself, 'This is so weird...I can't believe this is what music has become. I bet in the future people will just listen to pops and beeps.' And look where we are now. If 'the future' is here already, I'm really at a loss to hypothesize about what's coming next."

—Gil Gershman

Taylor Deupree and Richard Chartier's *Spec* is out now.

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-*Droopy, Thousand Words Magazine*.

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-*Andrew Duke, Cognition Audioworks*

Rehab. puts forth it's first major release on Endpoint Recordings. Drawing from influences of Oval and the Microstoria series, E.A.R., and older abstract jazz, Rehab. samples from it's immediate environment: videotapes, records, the city itself; and augments these collages with layers of analog noise/drones- soundz upon soundz.

The end result is an album that functions as a whole concept: The rehabilitation of sound into music.

"...An impressive fusion of heavily layered, fluid compositions that recall *Lifeforms* era *Future Sound of London*...equal parts drone, feedback, and organic ambient, the disc accomplishes a unity of, dare I say, "Woobian" proportions. Perhaps what sets this work apart from other forays into sample-laden audio soups is that there is a sad beauty to these tracks, straining to be communicated via sounds that might otherwise be thought of as harsh, ugly, or erroneous...there is an undeniable presence to these compositions which works towards revealing rather than obfuscating. An almost desperate urgency surrounds much of the restless editing, as channels of expression are vainly opened, quickly closed, and frantically discarded in hopes of finding alternatives...a soundtrack to "awakening from a coma" of sorts...the disc is a fascinating and vivid sonic interpretation of psychological semi-consciousness and the ramifications of psycho-rehabilitation, an operation which, in this case, was a complete success."
-*Mike Javor, UrbanSoundz Ezine*

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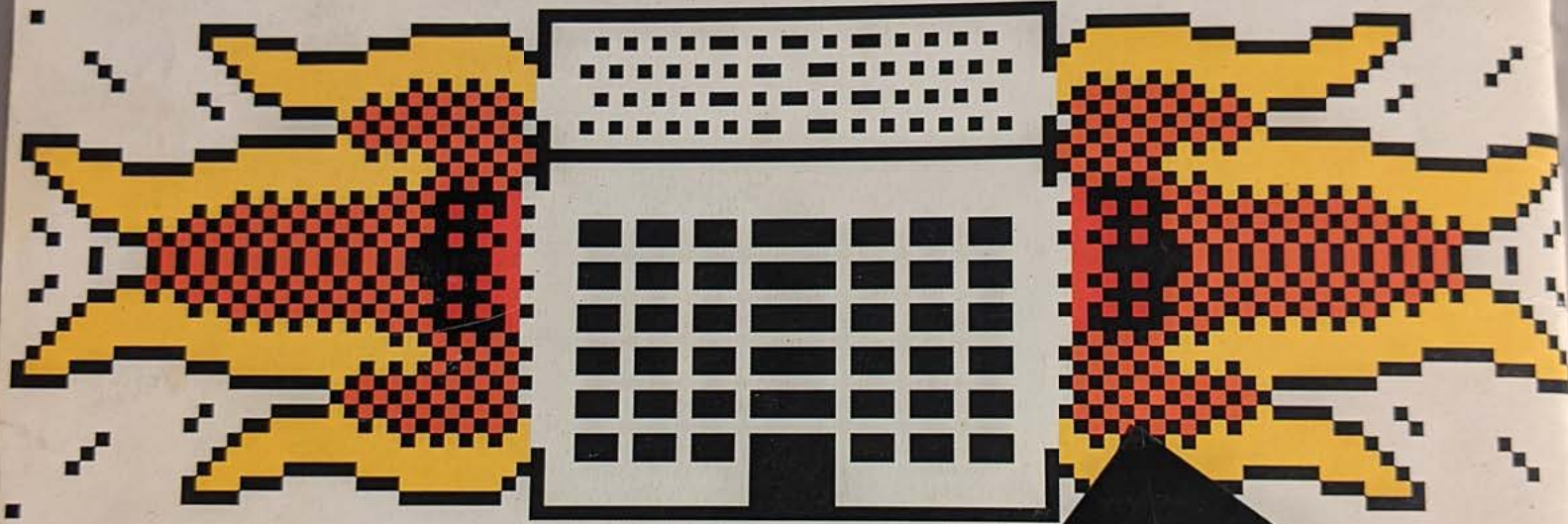
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