

ELECTRONIC SOUND



THE ELECTRONIC MUSIC MAGAZINE

ISSUE 22

£5.99

YELLO

THE RETURN

OF THE

ODD COUPLE



GARY NUMAN

SILVER APPLES

WRANGLER

CHICORY TIP

WARPAINT

FACTORY FLOOR

THE 30 MOST GAGA DADA PROVOCATEURS IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC

OH YEAH!

MOTHER-32 | SEMI-MODULAR ANALOGUE SYNTHESIZER



All rights reserved to Moog Music Inc. on all text and graphics here within. Reserved Mother-32, Moog Trademarks.

moog™

SOURCE

Exclusively distributed in the UK and Ireland by Source • T: 020 8962 5080 • W: sourcedistribution.co.uk/moog

 facebook.com/sourcedistribution

 twitter.com/sourcedist

WELCOME TO ELECTRONIC SOUND 22

EDITOR

PUSH
@PUSHTWEETING

DEPUTY EDITOR

MARK ROLAND
@MARKROLAND101

ART EDITOR

MARK HALL
@HELLOMARKHALL

COMMISSIONING EDITOR

NEIL MASON
@NEIL_MASON

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

FINLAY MILLIGAN
@FINMILLIGAN

CONTRIBUTORS

STEVE APPLETON, SEAN COEN,
BETHAN COLE, STEPHEN DALTON,
GEORGE FAIRBAIRN, COSMO GODFREE,
CARL GRIFFIN, ANDREW HOLMES,
VELIMIR ILIC, JO KENDALL, RUSS LITTEN,
SOPHIE LITTLE, KRIS NEEDS,
WENDY ROBY, FAT ROLAND,
SAM ROSE, MAT SMITH, JOACHIM SPERL,
JODLS STONE, DAVID STUBBS,
BRIAN SWEENEY, NICK TAYLOR,
NEIL THOMSON, ED WALKER,
ROBERT WEBB, CRAIG WILLIAMS,
BEN WILLMOTT

ADVERTISING

CONNORB@MEDIA-SHED.CO.UK
01354 818 011

SUBSCRIPTIONS

ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK/SUBSCRIBE
SUBSCRIPTIONS@WARNERSGROUP.CO.UK
01778 392 462

PUBLISHED BY

PAM COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED

STUDIO 18, CAPITOL HOUSE,
HEIGHAM STREET, NORWICH NR2 4TE,
UNITED KINGDOM

© Electronic Sound 2016. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced in any way without the prior written consent of the publisher. We may occasionally use material we believe has been placed in the public domain. Sometimes it is not possible to identify and contact the copyright holder. If you claim ownership of something published by us, we will be happy to make the correct acknowledgement. All information is believed to be correct at the time of publication and we cannot accept responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies there may be in that information.

WWW.ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK
FACEBOOK.COM/ELECTRONICMAGAZINE
TWITTER.COM/ELECTRONICMAGUK

WITH THANKS TO OUR PATRONS:

MARK FORDYCE, GINO OLIVIERI,
DARREN NORTON, MAT KNOX

So that was summer. Welcome to September! What have we got in store for you this month? Well, we've spent many an hour enjoying Switzerland's finest export. But enough about our Toblerone habit.

Yello, who also happen to be from Switzerland, make their almighty return this month with a new album and they've a couple of live dates lined up for October. Which will be the first time they've ever played live. Boris and Dieter are both on fine form, as you'll soon discover.

We had a chat with Wrangler, which is always free-wheeling when Mal, Benge and Phil are sat in front of our tape recorder.

Warpaint were in the UK over the summer for their first live show in a while, so we took the chance to find out what makes LA's finest band tick, there's also rather lovely pieces with Silver Apples and Sam Coomes, who you will know from Quasi.

Elsewhere, we pay a visit the sound archive at The British Library for a guided behind the scenes tour of their vast collection and a chat about their new multi-million pound Save Our Sounds project. Do you know what a shelf that holds 10,000 vinyl LPs looks like?

We do now. And last, but by no means least, we take a peek behind the scenes of a new film about Gary Numan and his family. 'Android In LaLa Land' is out later this month and it's a bit of a treat.

Our jam-packed reviews section includes albums from the likes of Jenny Hval, Hannah Peel, Factory Floor, Momus, Mike & Rich, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Pye Corner Audio, Jon Hopkins and many more. We've managed to cram in reviews of over 60 new releases. We hope you might find something among that little lot that will float your goat.

If you missed the last issue, fret not. Just visit our shop – electronicsound.co.uk/shop – where you'll find back issues with free UK P&P. The website is also the place to go for details about subscribing to ensure you never miss an issue ever again and save money.

Until next time...

Electronically yours

Push & Mark

TRISTRAM CARY'S PROTOTYPE VCS 3 SYNTHESIZER

Diss, Norfolk
August 2016

In March 2016, a small local news story alerted synth freaks in Norfolk that a tiny local history museum in Diss would be hosting a temporary exhibition of Tristram Cary's personal effects, timed to coincide with a performance of Cary's pieces 'Trios' and 'Narcissus' at a nearby church hall.

The English composer is probably best known for his soundtrack work on the 'Doctor Who' TV series in the 1960s, for which he provided a great deal of trailblazing electronic sound design and music. In 1969, Cary partnered up with Peter Zinovieff and David Cockerell to start the British synthesiser company EMS.

They produced several iconic synths, the first of which was the VCS 3 (Voltage Controlled Studio version #3). The idea was to pack several oscillators into a neat box which provided easy access to the oscillator and filter controls, with flexible modular-like patching via a matrix board. Cary designed the box, while all three EMS partners contributed to the electronics.

The centrepiece of the Diss museum exhibition was Tristram Cary's prototype VCS 3, built by the man himself during the design process. The legends are all handwritten in Cary's spidery script. After the recent exhibition came to an end, his son John Cary invited Electronic Sound to his house to take a closer look at the prototype VCS 3... and then he offered to loan it to us to examine more fully.

So far we've discovered that someone has pinched the reverb spring, and we've located its prototype keyboard, which is currently en route to us. Once we've sourced some pins, we can discover if it still works...





- 3 Welcome
 - 4 The Opening Shot
-

THE FRONT

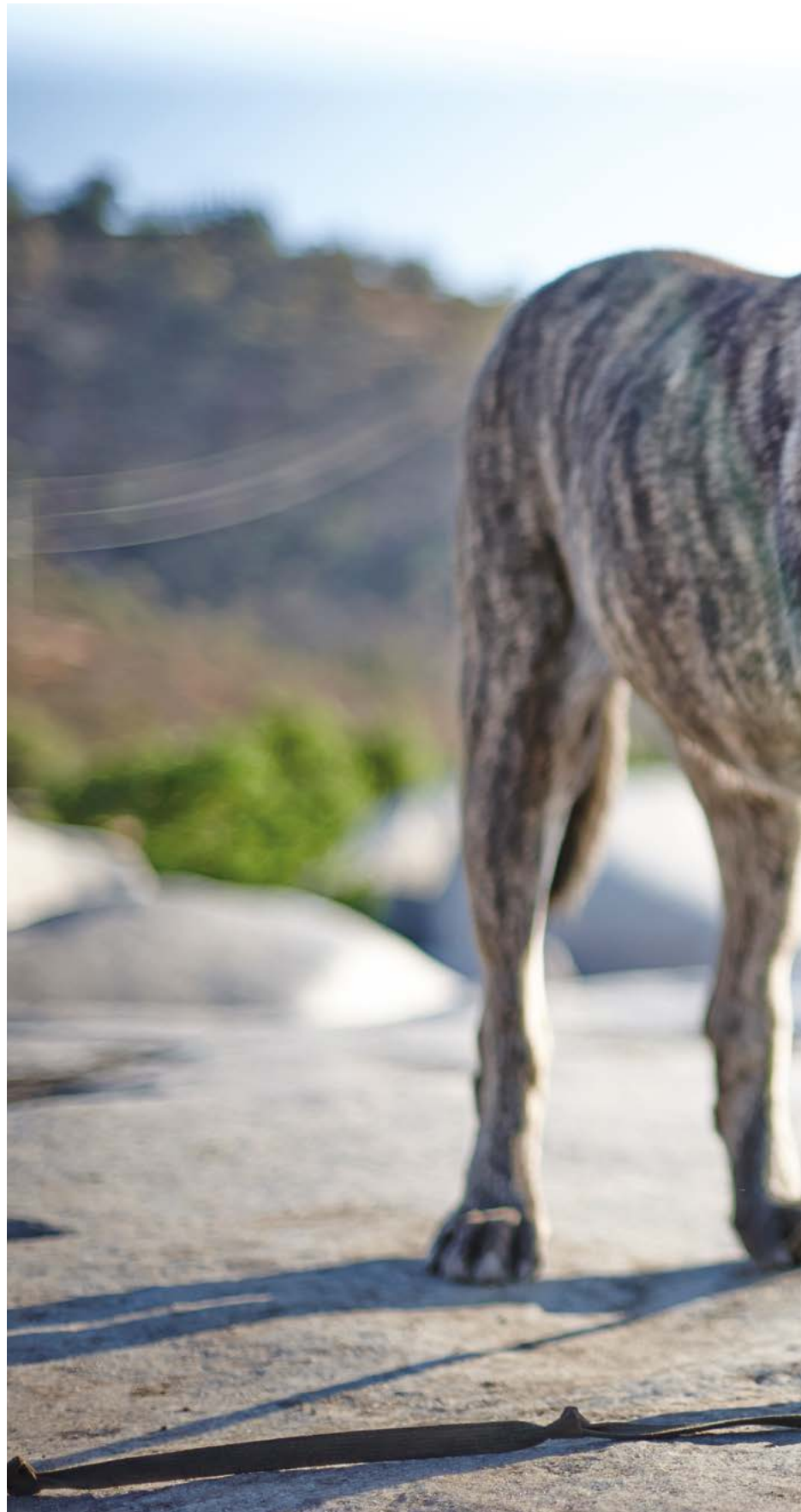
- 8 Covers Collection Volume.02
 - 10 Pink Floyd, Aaron Holm
 - 11 Collapsing Scenery
 - 15 Bob Moses
 - 18 Altern-8, Wes Borland
 - 19 Rope
 - 21 65daysofstatic, Kristin Kontrol
 - 24 Beastie Boys
 - 26 Jack Dangers
 - 28 Nik Colk Void
 - 30 Fat Roland
 - 32 Chicory Tip
 - 32 Synthesiser Dave
-

FEATURES

- 38 Yello & The Dadaists
 - 48 Wrangler
 - 54 Warpaint
 - 58 Save Our Sounds
 - 64 Silver Apples
 - 68 Gary Numan
 - 72 Sam Coomes
-

THE BACK

- 76 Jenny Hval
- 78 Ben Chatwin, Kemper Norton, Micko Westmoreland, Wwwings
- 79 Bernard Fèvre, Brutalist
- 80 Apothek, Building Instrument, COMBAT!, Medium Medium
- 81 Philippe Besombes, Alex Cameron
- 82 Baffo Banfi, Boxed In
- 83 Factory Floor, Das Blaue Palais, Bjarki, Fiona Soe Paing
- 84 Momus, Soccer 96, Mike & Rich
- 85 Tim Presley, Exploded View, Les Panties, Datach'i, Dave Ball & Jon Savage, Crispy Ambulance
- 86 Thom Sonny Green, Blue States, King Champion Sounds, Murcof x Vanessa Wagner, Hieroglyphic Being
- 87 Cassius, Tobacco, Betty Davis
- 88 Simon Shackleton, Eluvium
- 89 Patten, Roosevelt, Motion Graphics
- 90 Morgan Delt, Zomby, Preoccupations, Shield Patterns
- 91 Jóhann Jóhannsson, Hominid Sounds
- 92 Hannah Peel
- 93 Nonkeen, Vinyl Williams, Electri-City 2, Hush Moss
- 94 The Album Leaf, It's A Fine Line, Leverton, OY
- 95 Pye Corner Audio, Jon Hopkins
- 96 Kris Needs





GARY NUMAN'S DOG, WILBUR | PAGE 68

THE ELECTRONIC SOUND COVERS COLLECTION VOLUME.02



CHRIS CARTER
'THE MAN-MACHINE' (KRAFTWERK)

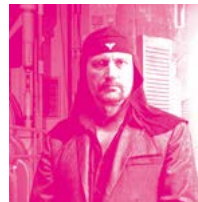
"In the summer of 1979 while on the road with Throbbing Gristle I had 'The Man-Machine' album on rotation on my Walkman, that and ABBA," recalls Chris Carter. "Nobody else in TG liked them, or ABBA come to think of it. Kraftwerk are often accused of being soulless and sterile, but they are so nuanced and crafted at what they do. Me and Cosey have been doing a lot of remixes recently so I approached this more like a remix than a straight cover. We've only ever done one cover in 40 odd years so it's not a natural process... obviously that's a lie because we covered a whole album, Nico's 'Desertshore'. Bloody musicians, can't trust a word they say!"



MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO
'ASBESTOS LEAD ASBESTOS' (WORLD DOMINATION ENTERPRISES)

"Oh Lordy, I first heard 'Asbestos Lead Asbestos' when it originally came out, in 1985," recalls Meat Beat Manifesto's Jack Dangers. "The lyrics hit home because my grandad, dad and brother all died of mesothelioma [a cancer caused by exposure to asbestos]. We all worked in heavy industry, mainly for British Rail, but asbestos was still being used into the 80s in some countries, so the song was still relevant and its effects are still being seen. When I made this cover version I pretty much kept it intact and recognisable. The scream at the start is from the film 'The Shout'. A John Hurt film with a scream that kills. It's not a happy song!"

Welcome to the second edition of our cover versions collection. It's been a real pleasure putting this one together, discovering that the fan impulse of the artists who created the cover versions is much the same as the rest of us. Chris Carter's version of Kraftwerk's 'The Man-Machine' was recorded exclusively for us, as was R.O.C.'s cover of Devo's 'Come Back Jonee'. Another coup for this collection is Anomy's brilliant take on Bowie's 'TVC15'. The band were based in New York City in the early 80s, and released just one, highly sought after single. Sourcing an original master tape wasn't possible, so it was mastered here from the only available source; a copy of the original vinyl. Tracking Kia Portafekas down for a chat about it was another high point for us.



LAIBACH
'WARME LEDERHAUT' (THE NORMAL)

"We first heard the Grace Jones version in the early 1980s," says Laibach's spokesman. "It was only later we heard The Normal's version. We were convinced it was a cover of Grace Jones's original. It gave us a good idea of how a cover can sound like a completely new song with its own meaning and form. We did it for Mute's Short Circuit Festival at the Roundhouse in May 2011, to celebrate the label as well as Daniel Miller's prolific genius. To mark Daniel's fascination with Germany's 1970s music scene we simply decided to 'translate' it into a German electro song, since no German version existed."



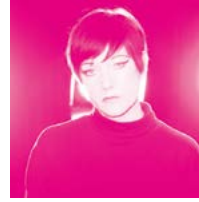
BIS
'SHACK UP' (BANBARRA)

"'Shack Up' first appeared on my radar during my teenage Factory Records obsession, a seven-inch by a Certain Ratio from the Benelux division if I remember correctly," says Sci-Fi Steven of Bis. "I'd never heard the clunky disco original [from 1975 by Washington DC funk band Banbarra] until one night at the Optimo Espacio club in Glasgow. Both versions share an awkward funk only humans can produce, so we decided when doing our version to stiffen it right up. It was recorded for a Factory Records tribute EP and was inspired by the European electro scene of the early noughties. It probably lost us our few remaining punk fans, but it's one we're still proud of."



GLOBO
'L.A.' (THE FALL)

"This version of 'L.A.' comes from 'Globo's This Nation's Saving Grace', our cover of The Fall album in its entirety," says the band's Paul Thompson. "We were partly inspired by Laibach's cover of The Beatles' 'Let It Be' album, which somehow managed to disregard the original, and revere it at the same time. Our version is a mutant synthpop distortion of The Fall track. The project took about a year and we played it live once for a DVD, which we presented at an academic conference on The Fall at Salford University where we met Mark E Smith's sisters and mum. They seemed very pleased with what we had done."



BILLIE RAY MARTIN
'THE CRACKDOWN' (CABARET VOLTAIRE)

"I covered two songs by Cabaret Voltaire, 'The Crackdown' and 'Just Fascination'," says Billie Ray Martin. "When 'The Crackdown' album came out, it changed a lot of things. These songs were played alongside all kinds of hits of the day, all without selling out or compromising their sound. I wanted to express the energy I felt bubbling inside of me for this music. I don't think my versions can ever match the quality of the originals, but I wanted to have a go. It was the blog AudioPorn Central who had the idea of creating a bunch of mixes and they contacted all these remixers I didn't know. I was thrilled with the results."



R.O.C.
'COME BACK JONEE' (DEVO)

"Devo did one of the best covers ever with '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction'," says R.O.C.'s Patrick Nicholson. "It honours the original by blowing it up. It's such a brilliant record, like Picasso rearranging a face. Their irreverence was a spur to us. I only heard 'Are We Not Men...' properly a few years ago, it's full of edges and angles, but 'Come Back Jonee' has a romance to it. It sounds like Roy Orbison, with an old fashioned pop tune among all the robot talk. Our approach was to try to get some distance from the original, so hopefully it ended up sounding like it's our song. It feels like pulling it apart and rebuilding it, ideally with no idea where you're going."



PENTATONIK
'JUST LIKE HEAVEN' (THE CURE)

"I loved this song as a teenager," reveals Simeon Bowring, aka Pentatonik. "It had the perfect mix of angst and a mystical whimsy, laced with that sense you'd lost something you might never get back, that love would never be the same again. I wanted to make a version where the vocals hung like poetry over a pulsating mass of synths. I really wanted to get a female take on the lyrics, a change of perspective from Robert Smith's original damaged boy feel. I was able to work with Sian Ahern [of experimental band Sian Alice Group and lead singer in Eaux] who has the most ethereal delicate voice, it hangs in the air like a whisper."



HANNAH PEEL
'ELECTRICITY' (ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES
IN THE DARK)

"'Electricity' is one of those riffs you just know," says Hannah Peel. "Maybe living in Liverpool I had it ingrained into my psyche. I was really lucky to meet Andy McCluskey one day after recording some violin for a band. At the time, I'd just punched all the holes out to 'Tainted Love' on the music box so it was a moment of, 'This is fate, I'll go home and start making another one'. I sent it to him and Paul Humphreys and thankfully they loved it! I made the track by scoring and then punching out every individual note. It's like the early computers reading from punched patterns. Like analogue synths, the music box has breath and nuances from the turning of the cogs."



ANŌMY
'TVC15' (DAVID BOWIE)

"The most inspirational artist for us was David Bowie," says Anōmy's Kia Portafekas of their ultra-underground 1981 release. "We heard the song when it was first released in 1976 and loved it immediately. It was a bit surreal with an intricate catchy rhythm combined with Bowie's lively vocal expression. We read that it was based on an Iggy Pop anecdote about a girlfriend who was eaten by her TV set. We wanted to do a Bowie cover, but it had to be a song that was linked with the musical avant-garde approach that Anōmy expressed through their own compositions. Our main goal was that it had to be fun and danceable, à la Anōmy style... and it was! Thanks Bowie."

WANT

POST ROCK

SNAFFLE LOVELY PINK FLOYD STAMPS

Seems the Royal Mail are celebrating prog gods Pink Floyd with a bunch of stamps. The gorgeous collections come in several flavours. There's 'The Dark Side Of The Moon' Maxi Sheet, numbered and limited to 10,000 and set against the iconic prismatic album sleeve. There's also a Syd Barrett Souvenir Cover marking the 10th anniversary of his death and featuring 'The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn' and 'UFO Club' stamps, all limited to only 3,000, while your basic set includes six album covers with the vinyl poking out of the side. royalmail.com/pinkfloyd



WANT

MARIO REVISITED

FORM AN ORDERLY QUEUE FOR NINTENDO'S PRELOADED NES REBOOT

While everyone else seems keen to move forwards with their tech, Nintendo are as usual bucking the trend and take us back to 1986. Kitted out with modern outputs for your HD telly, the Nintendo Classic Mini: NES hits the shelves in November and comes preloaded with 30 games, including classics such as Donkey Kong, Super Mario Bros and PAC-MAN. "We wanted to give fans of all ages the opportunity to revisit Nintendo's original system and rediscover why they fell in love with Nintendo in the first place," say their people. At just £49.99, it sounds like a nostalgia-fueled win in our books. store.nintendo.co.uk



LISTEN

TRUE STORIES

FROM INSECURE CHILDHOOD TO GLEAMING SPIRES OF HIGH-TECH START-UPS, WITH HIS NEW ALBUM SEATTLE-BASED CANADIAN AARON HOLM HAS CHARTED HIS JOURNEY IN ELECTRONIC TEXTURES

Words: MARK ROLAND

Rewind to 1996. Aaron Holm has recently paid his way through college by working at animation studios on the likes of the 'Care Bears' and 'The NeverEnding Story'. He's travelling on his own in Vietnam, in a country which has only just started welcoming US tourists after 20 years of post-war travel restrictions between the former bitter enemies. He's in the back of a truck, sharing the ride with a couple of chickens. This is starting to sound like something out of an advert for a smart phone, except this pre-the intensely globalised world of the 21st century, and the soundtrack isn't some cutesy faltering ukulele cover version, it's Scorn, the industrial/ambient electronic project from a guy who used to be in thrash metal monsters Napalm Death.

On the Sony Walkman (this is 1996, we're talking cassettes here) he's listening to a compilation put together by a pair of Polish brothers he used to work with at the animation studio.

"Those guys were really out there," says Holm now, chuckling. "The animation studio was a wild environment. We would listen to a lot of music while were working, doing transfers and audio breakdown and that stuff."

The music on the cassettes in the back of that truck were the soundtracks to those animation days: Future Sound of London, Aphex Twin, Shinjuku Thief, and the aforementioned Scorn... Alone, far from home, and immersed in dark, almost industrial ambient music with a couple of chickens for company in a country still dealing with the aftermath of a war with your compatriots. That's going to intensify your listening experience, right? "I learned how to handle isolation with that kind of music," he says.

When he got back to Canada, he put together a small studio (above a furrier in Toronto, it says here) and devoted himself to making his own electronic music and planning further solitary excursions to equally challenging destinations such as India and Pakistan. He made field recordings everywhere he went and released a couple of albums that were essentially abstract travelogues and then his life took a diversion when he became a 21st century tech entrepreneur and started several companies, each of which he sold for, erm, *quite a large amount of money*.

He's now based in Seattle, where he recently helped set up the first bricks and mortar Amazon bookstore and has started a new company called Blokable, who make high-tech single unit modular housing units. And it's where he made his new album, 'The Boy', after a decade-long break from music. It's quite the journey, all the more remarkable when you learn that his boyhood was an insecure tale of survival.

"There was a lot of violence," he says of the neighbourhoods he grew up in, "a lot of crazy folk killing each other. You didn't know if anything was going to be OK. Whenever I used to travel anywhere, I'd always think, 'Could I live here?', because when I was a kid there was a good chance that if we went somewhere new, it might mean were about to live there."

This itinerant and insecure boyhood is all distilled into Holm's aforementioned new record, a collection that welds ambient strategies to field recordings, and uses a simple sound palate to deliver emotional depth. Unlike the often neutral kind of ambient music designed to frame and colour your world, 'The Boy' allows a glimpse into someone else's personal interior world.

"This album's about reflecting on the process of moving through childhood, and moving into adulthood and trying to make a break, to make peace with it," Holm explains. "I developed a lot of patterns, and patterns

can run you if don't figure out which ones work for you and which ones don't. That transition, making that growth, coming though, is what the album is about. Also I wanted to make something musically that captured the violence and the uncertainty of how I grew up."

There is an edginess to 'The Boy', rooted in that influence of the heavier end of 1990s electronics, but it's skilfully folded in with shifting organic sounds, captured from various sources, including a particularly poignant recording of his daughter's school class stumbling through a rendition of 'Catch A Falling Star'. The recording was sent out by the class teacher on the morning of the Sandy Hook school shootings in 2012.

"I pulled to side of the road and cried," Holm says about the moment he heard about the tragedy. "I realised that a lot of the ways I interacted with the world was based in the feeling that everything could drop out at any moment, everything could go to shit in a second and it's just not true. I mean, it still could, but it doesn't need to govern you. Part of it was that, part of it was having kids, and wanting to give them a different world."

'The Boy' is out now on Dissolve



PHOTO: MATTHEW FELTON



INTRODUCING...

COLLAPSING SCENERY

ELECTRONIC PUNK BARNSTORMING FROM THE HEART OF THE LA UNDERGROUND

WHO THEY?

The arrival of an electronic music art project this fully formed has got to have some back story, right? Sure enough, Collapsing Scenery is the work of Don Devore of Sick Feeling and Ink & Dagger (me neither) and one-time member of The Icarus Line. Guitar bands all with impeccable deep underground CVs and a list of friends and collaborators that includes Nine Inch Nails and Giant Drag. All of which places Devore at the heart of a very groovy scene indeed for the best part of 20 years. He describes himself as an artist and curator before mentioning any of eight million bands he's been in.

WHY COLLAPSING SCENERY

Their debut EP, 'God's Least Favorite', which kicks off with 'Metaphysical Cops' (a phrase pilfered from Nabokov's novel 'Invitation of a Small Evening', in itself a literary influence all too rare these days) is a kickass electro brute lavished with a bubbling modular sequence, some atonal textural interventions and a great vocal delivery which recalls Suicide's passion and the political commitment of, say, Consolidated. How long has it been since we heard something as thrilling as that?

TELL US MORE

Despite being LA-based, the band seems to be focussing their attention on Europe, determinedly self-contained, touring with their own PA system and even their own power supply. "We want to play in basements, warehouses, garages and travelling with our own soundsystem, power supply and visuals, that's exactly what we do," says Devore. "Not being beholden to club promoters or the existing way of doing things is important. We're 100 per cent self-contained." Warehouse punk electronics? We're in.

MARK ROLAND

'God's Least Favorite' EP is released by Metropolitan Indian on 23 September

WANT

WIRELESS FOR SOUND

TOP-NOTCH CAR AUDIO BODS SERVE UP STORMING HOME UNIT

Naim are the British high-end audio people who make the in-car entertainment systems for Bentley cars. Their entry into the wireless speaker market came with the original Mu-so last year and blew the socks off most reviewers for its hi-fi performance. The new Mu-so Qb is a 20cm cuboid version, and is every bit as impressive (and, at £599, nearly £300 cheaper).

Seven speakers lurk under the removable mesh, cleverly angled to push the sound in all directions. The Electronic Sound office is a 54m² warehouse space with high ceilings, so you need a pretty convincing wireless speaker to fill that amount of air, and the Naim Mu-so Qb certainly delivered the Daft Punk (from an iPhone), 'Predator The Musical' (off YouTube) and Fugazi (from iTunes on a Mac) we streamed to it, pushing orderly soundwaves into every corner with quite alarming clarity.

The volume control (which took a few minutes to locate, it's the big circle of aluminium on the top that is also the stylish white-on-black display) rotates so satisfyingly that changing the volume becomes an experience so pleasurable you will happily jump up to alter it. It also makes this highly engineered cube go very loud indeed, 300 watts worth. Throw in a glowing perspex plinth that the Qb appears to float on, and this may be the last wireless speaker we ever need. naimaudio.com



WANT

THEY'RE A MODEL . . .

GERMAN SCULPTOR CRAFTS KRAFTWERK IN CLAY

"Kraftwerk belong to my youth, like Morrissey, The Jam and Orange Juice," offers Berlin-based ceramist and sculptor Marina Schmiechen of the Dusseldorf quartet who have recently found their way into her schraegetypen (weird types) collection. Marina, who has spent much of her life up to the elbows in various mouldable materials, has created quite a collection of these one-off caricatures in clay, including the likes of David Bowie, Nick Cave, Frank Zappa, Lemmy and The Beatles. This very Kraftwerk piece could be looking good on your mantelpiece for €3,500. schraegetypen.com



PHOTO: STEVEN HABERLAND

READ

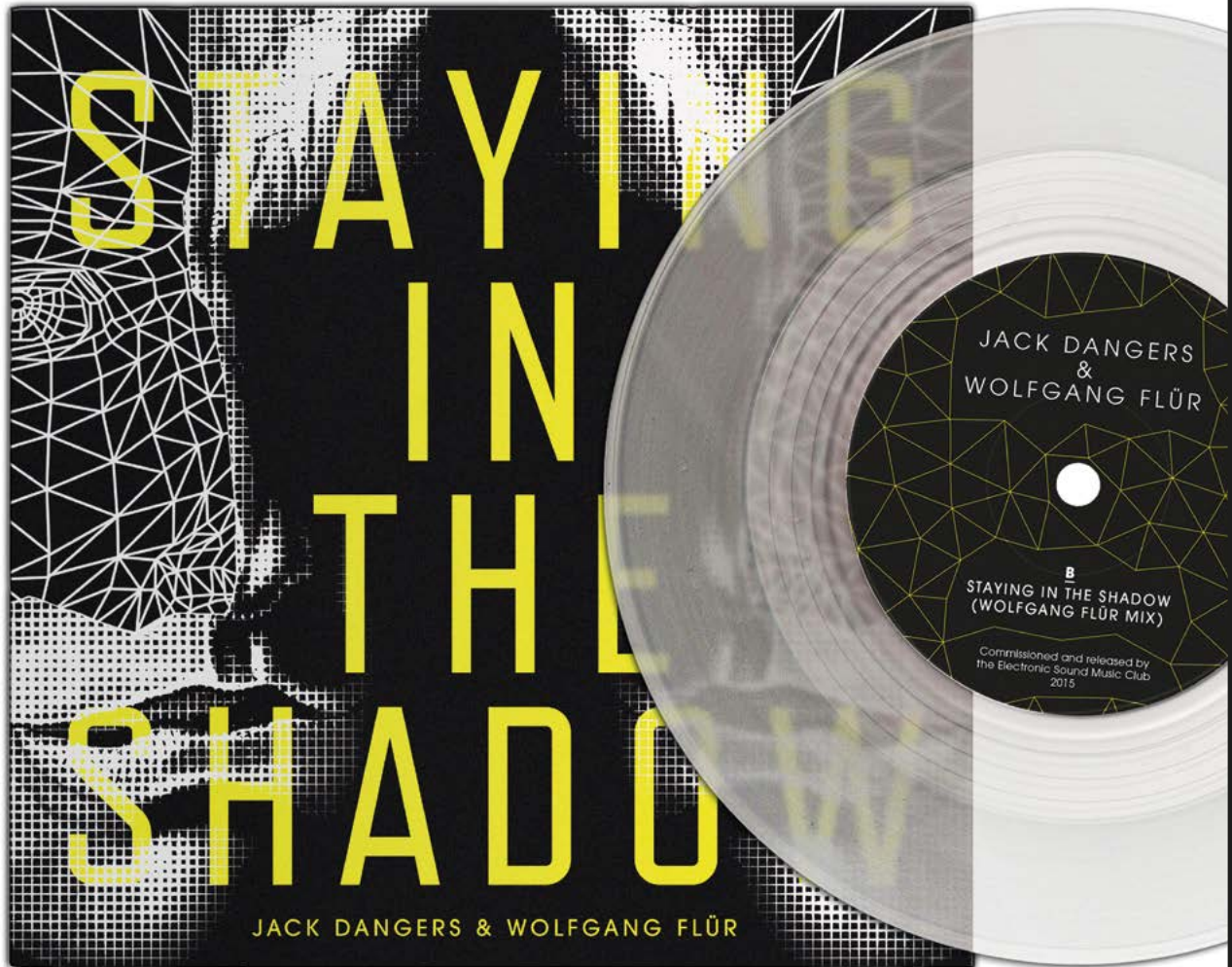
CHATTY MAN

SCROOBIUS PIP PODCAST SPAWNS BOOK SPIN-OFF

Following on from his chart-topping podcast, spoken word and hip hop artist Scroobius Pip has released 'Distraction Pieces' in paper form, collecting the very best of the interviews he's conducted over the years. Grouped into chapters such as 'Comedy & The Movies' and 'Social Media', the book features interviews and contributions from the likes of Russell Brand, Alan Moore and the late Howard Marks. If you fancy having a go yourself, Mr Pip also includes a handy little how-to guide on being a podcaster. scroobiuspip.co.uk

LIMITED EDITION SEVEN-INCH

£4.99



ONLY AVAILABLE FROM ELECTRONIC SOUND

ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK/SHOP

PLAY

SWAP SHOP

POCKET SYNTH WITH CHANGABLE CARTRIDS

Teenage Engineering pioneered the tiny synth with their Pocket Operators, and it was only a matter of time before someone came along and built on the idea. It's not due until autumn of 2017, and there's no pricing yet, but if New York-based designer Pavel Golovkin gets it right, the Zont could be a killer, mainly due to its interchangeable sound cartridge. The cartridges, which come in Noise, Rhythm, Bass and Lead flavours, trigger much retro Game Boy nostalgia and old skool Korg M1 sensations. The Zont is tricked out with all the connectivity you could wish for (RCA, MIDI, USB-C, Wi-Fi and a 3.5mm jack) not to mention a pair of speakers. And it looks swish too. zontsound.com



PLAY

EAT, SLEEP AND DRINK TO THE BEAT

MAKING MUSIC FROM ALMOST ANYTHING

A device that gives a new meaning to "musical chairs". MogeEs are small, circular vibration sensors that can turn any object into a musical instrument. Currently only compatible with iOS devices, plug it in, stick it on a surface and marvel as it translates your taps, knocks and bumps into music. You can also calibrate your gestures to specific notes or sounds so you can get bit more orchestral. It's a snip at £106, so how long will it be before we see the first IKEA-themed electronic act? mogeEs.co.uk



VISIT

MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS

WHILE ENO'S IDEA STILL FASCINATES, TWO NEW SOUND INSTALLATIONS AT CROATIA RIJEKA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT POSE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT AN AUDIENCE IS AND THE VERY IDEA OF RECORDED MUSIC ITSELF. **SCANNER**, WHO IS BEHIND ONE OF THE WORKS, LETS HIS MIND WANDER...

Words: **ROBIN RIMBAUD**

Imagine you are at the airport, your flight has just been announced and you join the channel of fellow travellers passing through security, a mixture of excitement, weariness and anxiety shared among you. What you will also share, quite literally if you happen to be passing through Rijeka Airport in Croatia, is a gentle immersion within a newly commissioned soundscape called 'Interactive Sound Field For Istrian Scale' by Håkan Lidbo, Matt Black of Coldcut and sound artist Jack James. My own work, 'Water Drops', is a discreetly located sound installation, and can be found on the staircase just as passengers enter the departure lounge, an interim location, a kind of non-place.

Interestingly, both of the works were commissioned by the local Department for Culture, Sports and Technical Culture who were looking for a musical sound environment for the airport, with an emphasis on the cultural and traditional characteristics of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County in western Croatia where the airport is situated.

The works are reflective of the location and add value by creating rich, evolving, self-adjusting sound environments in a space where ordinarily we only hear flight announcements and frequent reminders to take care of our baggage. As such, this meant careful negotiations with the director of the airport, the security team and strictly timetabled visits to "the other side", beyond security, which is not quite as dramatic as it might suggest.

'Interactive Sound Field For Istrian Scale' features elements of the Istrian musical scale, which is protected by UNESCO World Heritage and sounds like nothing you can imagine without googling it. Usually played on a wind instrument, the sopele, it's commonly heard in harmony with another player, but in this case the public themselves also trigger sounds by their movement so they inadvertently become players in the work.



My piece 'Water Drops' takes recordings of the original music and transforms it into thousands of musical shards that spiral and spin across the space, echoing off the concrete walls and immersing passengers in this sense of place.

Notice that I've not used the term audience, as that suggests a group of people who have generally chosen to encounter a work of art and share this experience with others. Indeed, when you create work there is usually some kind of feedback process. A magazine will review your album, an audience will clap and cheer at your performance (hopefully), and Tweets and Instagram pictures will capture the magic of the moment, but here in the airport is something really rather more unique. It's work that takes on the form of architecture in some sense, in that it becomes ignorable yet listenable at the very same time.

Experiencing music in such an environment is not a new idea, but it got me thinking. When Brian Eno conceived of his 'Music for Airports' in 1978 he spoke about music as background, ambient sound as a tint, a painterly term that many have subsequently used to describe music that exhibits calming and atmospheric moods. Legendary American composer and thinker John Cage famously never listened to recordings of music, especially of his work, so what is the value of recorded music in itself? Indeed in the bigger picture has music ever needed to exist in recorded form?

"Music is not just four minute love songs with verse and chorus," mused Håkan, while we installed the new works. "As sound artists we can explore the outer limits of what music can be. Technology will allow us make music dynamic and adaptive to the listener's mood and thoughts, so it can change the arrangement, duration and instrumentation depending on the situation and even location. But I think that most of us will still be listening to fixed recordings of songs we've heard hundreds of times before."

Certainly the way in which we listen to and experience music has radically changed in the last 100 years. In 1890 when a group of musicians gathered in Russia to admire the latest modern technology in the shape of the Edison phonograph cylinder, they did what many do when faced with a lens pointed at them or recording device, they simply made silly noises and talked rubbish. Let's not forget that these playful characters were celebrated composers Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and the pianist Anton Rubinstein, radical figures of their day. Little did they appreciate at the time the influence this technology was to have on us all.

Taking the question of recorded music to Twitter, responses were varied. People generally agreed that repeated listening and familiarisation with a piece of music can be rewarding, but frequently the first listen was invaluable. Live and recorded music are different art forms, but how intangible is music? Does a live recording of a show you attended really capture that energy and dynamic you experienced? Or is that just your own memory and visualisation of the show having an influence? Most interestingly I found that many folk actually like the physical product more than the music itself, which reminds me of a recent BBC survey which found that the vinyl revival has meant sales increased by more than 60 per cent in the last year, but almost half the people never even listen to it... or perversely even own a record deck.

I'm of a generation where vinyl, CDs and objects have always carried memories, more so than photos at times. I treasure my music collection and would be lost without it. I would argue that music is one of the most powerful art forms we have and definitely the most social and if an object such as a vinyl record offers a way to connect with others then all the better. Technology has already isolated many of us so here's hoping that the future does not take that away from us. In the meantime, please do not leave your luggage unattended.



INTRODUCING...

BOB MOSES

SYNTHPOP SERVED UP WITH A STYLISH DEEP HOUSE TWIST, NYC-STYLEE

WHO HE?

Not "he", but they. New York-based duo Tom Howie and Jimmy Vallance. We're as disappointed as you that neither of them are called Bob or Moses, but you'll instantly forgive them when you hear their deep house/mellow synthpop hybrid.

WHY BOB MOSES?

The pair knew each other from school in Vancouver, where Howie played in punk bands and Vallance knocked out trance in his parent's basement. Bumping into each other some years later in New York, their music styles squigged nicely and the result was last year's debut album 'Days Gone By', whose recent reissue with bonus tracks, remixes and live cuts, is well worth the ear time. 'Tearing Me Up' has a delicious 21st century Steely Dan vibe to proceedings, while the breezy low-slung groove of 'Nothing At All' only improves with repeated listens.

TELL US MORE

They don't half cut it live. We caught them at a Rough Trade instore over the summer and it was deliciously noisy, while earlier in the year they turned in a rip-roaring version of 'Tearing Me Up' in front of an audience of four million plus on US talk show, Ellen, at the personal request of presenter herself. Oh, the name Bob Moses? It was suggested by the good folk at New York's Scissor And Thread imprint who put out the duo's first fruit. Robert Moses was the original Bob The Builder, a notorious mid-20th century city planner responsible for much of the New York Metropolitan Area. His big thing was shunning public transport infrastructure in favour of highways. Thinking that swept the States like wildfire. So now you know.

SAM ROSE

'Day Gone By (Never Enough Edition)' is out now on Domino

WANT

YOU SPIN ME RIGHT ROUND

MIND-BOGGLING WIRELESS RECORD DECK KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE LISTENING TO

Bear with us, because what we're about to tell you sounds NUTS. Vowel-fearing US subscription service VNYL, which hand-picks records for you based on your online listening pleasure, has a new pal. Meet TRNTBL, which is indeed something to play your handpicked vinyl on. As it stands, TRNTBL streams full-fat, uncompressed audio to Sonos' entire range of top-notch audio products and there are plans for it to hook up to AirPlay and Bluetooth devices, which is pretty helpful as not only doesn't our pocket money stretch to lovely Sonos kit, but there are no actual wired analogue or digital outputs on the unit at all.

Head is beginning to fry a little, but so far so good. Here's the bit that makes our brain leak from both ears. The makers say TRNTBL is the "first Internet Of Things record player" because it not only does the wireless audio streaming thing, but it KNOWS WHAT YOU ARE PLAYING. After sitting a quiet corner and rocking gently for a bit, we discover TRNTBL uses some sort of vinyl Shazam, which grasses you up to Spotify so your friends can see your platters that matter. Apparently, TRNTBL can also build Spotify playlists. Automatically. Like that boy at school, the one with greasy hair, who used to keep giving you compilation tapes and looking at you all funny. Like that. A bit. "We look forward to connecting a new generation of vinyl lovers by way of the built-in sharing and community features of TRNTBL," said Nick Alt, VNYL's Founder. They come in creme and gold or black and gold and are a very reasonable \$420 considering all the witchyness inside. Now where did we put our ducking stool. trntbl.co



WANT

TOTAL RECALL

PLAYFUL BOT RECOGNISES AND REMEMBERS YOU

We like robots at Electronic Sound, so we were quite excited at the prospect of our own robotic pal in the form of the Anki Cozmo. The cute, Pixar-esque machine is real-life robot with its own personality and social needs. Cozmo is self-aware, and his AI will learn your name and recognise your face and voice. He'll nudge you if he gets bored, will know what your favourite games to play are and the more you play with him, the more his personality will develop. A bit like a pet then, but without the mess and clean up afterwards. Mind you, it's hard to dislike his emotive pixelated eyes. anki.com/cozmo

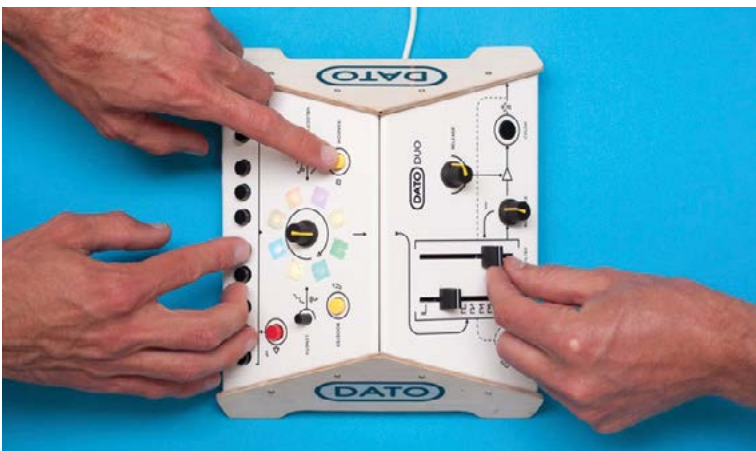


PLAY

DAISY DAISY

A SYNTHESISER BUILT FOR TWO

You love synths. You have children. You love them too. Wouldn't it be fun to share your passion with them? Course it would. However, there is NO WAY ON GOD'S GREEN EARTH your precious children are ever going to be allowed within a country mile of your only slightly less precious analogue synth collection. Enter a possible solution in the shape of the Data DUO synth. Designed by a couple of Dutch engineers specifically so that two people can play together, it looks like a whole heap of fun. One player gets to create sequences and fiddle with note length, while the other side filters the shit out of it for hours of synth-based family fun. The Kickstarter reeled in over €77,000 and orders are due to start shipping in May 2017. You can pre-order one for €329. That's a lot of dipping down the back of the sofa, but your kids need to start learning about financial planning, right? dato.mu



LISTEN

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

STEWART LEE 'PEA GREEN BOAT' SKIT GETS VINYL REPRESSING

The one-time TV comedian sees his 2007 take on Edward Lear's 'The Owl And The Pussycat' reissued on pea-green vinyl by Go Faster Stripe. This 21-minute version of the fretful tale, over an ambient gurgle by Jane Watkins, points out the peril of the situation in fine Lee style. "The ambient undercurrent calls to mind the slowly moving atmosphere of Eno's 'Thursday Afternoon', albeit if Ted Chippington popped over for a brew, the raindrop piano keys replaced by Stewart's hushed words", says the press release. Drop us a line if you wrote that, we've got some album reviews need doing. gofasterstripe.com

PLAY

TAPE LOOPS

MAKE SOME NOISE WITH QUIRKY HANDMADE CASSETTE SYNTH

A cassette synthesiser you say? This little boutique noise maker requires a tape machine to work (included in the \$285 price tag). A cassette provides the sound source, while the synth has eight buttons that alter the speed of the cassette so changing the pitch of the sound produced. A pressure sensitive pad controls the volume of each note and there's a basic attack control too. Add a sequencer like Korg's SQ-1 and you can get it synced up via CV/Gate. They're handmade to order by a chap in New Orleans, and there's a waiting list. ondemagnetique.com

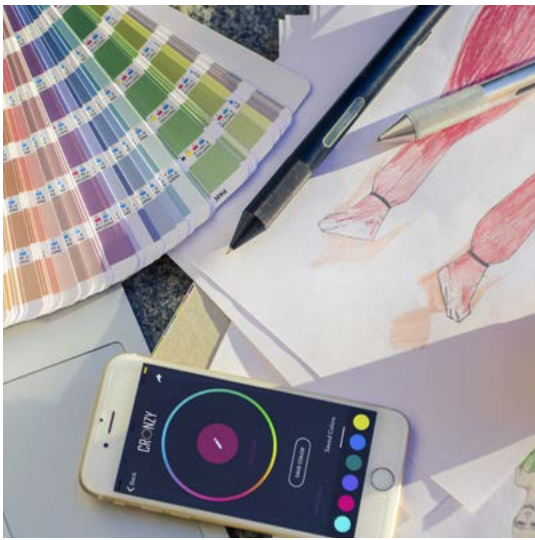


WANT

QUICK ON THE DRAW

CRONZY PEN SCRIBBLES WITH CRAZY 16 MILLION COLOURS

So there we were chewing on the end of our four-colour Bic and along comes the Cronzy pen, which, the makers say, can write in 16 million colours. 16 MILLION? *stares blankly at Bic, marvels that more than four colours exist*. So anyway, this nifty slab of stationary comes with a built-in scanner that allows you match the ink colour with that of the scanned object. Sounds like black magic to us, but the whole thing runs via an app (course it does) with the pen itself taking ink cartridges, which some rather clever tech can mix on demand to create the different colours. It comes with a charging case, power supply, five sizes of interchangeable tips and two sets of cartridges. Want one? Of course you do. That'll be \$219 please. cronzy.com



READ

RAVE ON

NEW BOOK TELLS CORKING TALE OF ALTERN-8'S MARK ARCHER

To say that 'Mark Archer – The Man Behind The Mask' tells an up-and-down tale might be underselling it slightly. Telling his story to former Loaded magazine scribe Andrew Woods, rave legend Archer takes you on a trip through the glitz and the glamour of smash hit singles and worldwide tours to a string of his *slightly* less glamorous jobs that included flogging white goods, packing prawns and cleaning offices. The book also has contributions from the likes of Moby, 808 State, LFO, Bizarre Inc, Utah Saints and many more and comes in three editions, where a mere signed copy will set you back just £20. You can only imagine the sort of unhinged gung-ho joys of the £40 super deluxe edition. musicmondays.databeats.com

LISTEN

SURPRISE SURPRISE

LIMP BIZKIT ARE ONE OF THE LAST BANDS YOU'D EXPECT TO SEE MENTIONED IN THESE PAGES... AND THEN ALONG COMES THEIR GUITARIST **WES BORLAND** WITH A BEAUTIFUL ALBUM OF DELICATE ELECTRONICA

Words: **MAT SMITH**

"It's a mix of things that inspired me in my own life, a collection of different places and ideas," says multi-instrumentalist Wes Borland, explaining the origin of the evocative songs he recorded for 'Crystal Machete', an album of imaginary soundtracks to Borland's own backstory.

"For example, I was in Prague in the winter of 2005," he continues. "It was about midnight and I walked out to the Charles Bridge by myself. The statues on the bridge were perfectly covered in snow. There was a couple walking on the bridge towards me, with the castle behind them. It only lasted a few seconds, but it's burned into my brain forever. I was going through a break-up at that time and everything seemed like it was going to reset somehow. That mood became the inspiration for track 'Vltava' on the album."

It was a visceral experience that made Borland realise he was totally alive, but he is keen to avoid a suggestion that the album is a fully introspective endeavour.

"I never wanted the record to be too serious, and I also never wanted it to be too much of a joke," he muses, inspecting his hands earnestly. "I didn't want to have no sense of humour and I didn't want to be completely rigid. Every time I've ever done that I've been embarrassed."

Poised between both as it might be, the album – inspired by soundtracks such as 'Blade Runner' and the original 'Miami Vice' series – found Borland bound by weighty, self-inflicted principles. He stipulated that this was to be an entirely solo enterprise, that the album should include no human voices, and that the songs couldn't use distorted guitar.

"It was to keep myself from going big," he explains, but it's all the more surprising given that Borland is a guitarist known for his role in Limp Bizkit.

In the place of distortion is a delicate, understated and textured album revolving around evocative warm guitar tones, woven through which



are accomplished – but never showy – synth sections. If it sounds like Borland is operating with complete and utter abandonment, he reinforces the appeal of the rules he set himself.

“When people give themselves too much time, or freedom, or are constantly fiddling with plug-ins, you end up taking much longer to focus,” he theorises. “I want to continue to restrain myself. It gives creativity a chance to thrive if you give yourself fewer tools to work with and get rid of the things that you always fall back on.”

Partly this is a consequence of Borland having accumulated too much kit over the years, but it also reminded him of being younger and poorer.

“When I was 12 years old, I had a guitar and an amplifier. That’s pretty much all I had up until I was about 20,” he reminisces. “I ended up hitting the guitar, pulling it, moving it in different directions to manually create effects. That definitely made me grow as a player. With electronic instruments, I often think that people don’t use them to the full capabilities of what they’re able to be used for. They just don’t dive in enough.”

Another important factor in the development of ‘Crystal Machete’ was upping sticks from LA. “I couldn’t take the traffic or the people anymore,” he says with a pained grimace. Borland and his fiancée, Queen Kwong’s Carré Callaway, moved to Detroit last year, joining an invigorating arts-led renaissance as people priced out of Brooklyn and Chicago took advantage of incredible spaces they could never afford elsewhere.

Moving to the Motor City coincided with an amazingly fertile period of creativity for Borland: ‘Crystal Machete’ was executed in a solid five-week burst, from start to final mix, almost as soon as he set up his studio during their first brutal winter in Detroit. He also resumed painting and even started a cat rescue project with Callaway. He talks about everything with an even sense of passion and enthusiasm, but admits that the pet rescue initiative feels like the most important thing right now.

Despite the call on his time that the worthy cause represents, he’s looking forward to the colder weather rolling in again so he can set to work on a follow-up to ‘Crystal Machete’. It will no doubt find Borland acting with yet more restraint, and if the results of this album are anything to go by, it will be an ambitious, unexpected and ultimately engaging prospect.

‘Crystal Machete’ is out now Edison Sound



INTRODUCING...

ROPE

SPACE IS THE PLACE FOR SCI-FI OBSESSED OUT-OF-NOWHERE LONDONER

WHO HE?

The name is taken from the Hitchcock movie, where tension builds to near unbearable levels in one-take directorial genius. An apt reference for this secretive producer who’s gravitated away from performing in live bands and switched to the other side of the mixing desk. His ear for the unhurried sonic equivalent of white space has drawn fair comparisons to the likes of Aphex Twin and Space Dimension Controller.

WHY ROPE?

Rope’s audio sculptures inhabit an imagined world created by his favourite writers Isaac Asimov and “Dune” author Frank Herbert. Check his Soundcloud and ‘The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress’ will have you revelling at the wonders of its cinematic otherworldliness. It glitters in the dark, revealing startling glimpses of iridescent melody. ‘Chromatography’ references bleepy arcade game electro and sticks it in the pot with minimal ambient techno and deconstructed synthpop hooks and deftly so, with enough space to take in subtly changing perspectives.

TELL US MORE

The Rope electro-epiphany came as a result of mucking around with a Juno 60. “That was the moment I realised how powerful synths can be,” he told us from his Finsbury Park studio. “I used to play in a noise rock band and used the Electribe, as well sampling anything I could. That was like a gateway drug for me, I was drumming in this project and used more and more sequencers until I basically wasn’t drumming anymore.”

Much is to come from this enigmatic newcomer and it’s difficult not to think his days in the shadows are numbered. A debut album is slated for later this year, with live UK dates starting in London this October.

CARL GRIFFIN

For more, see soundcloud.com/ropeybeats



WANT

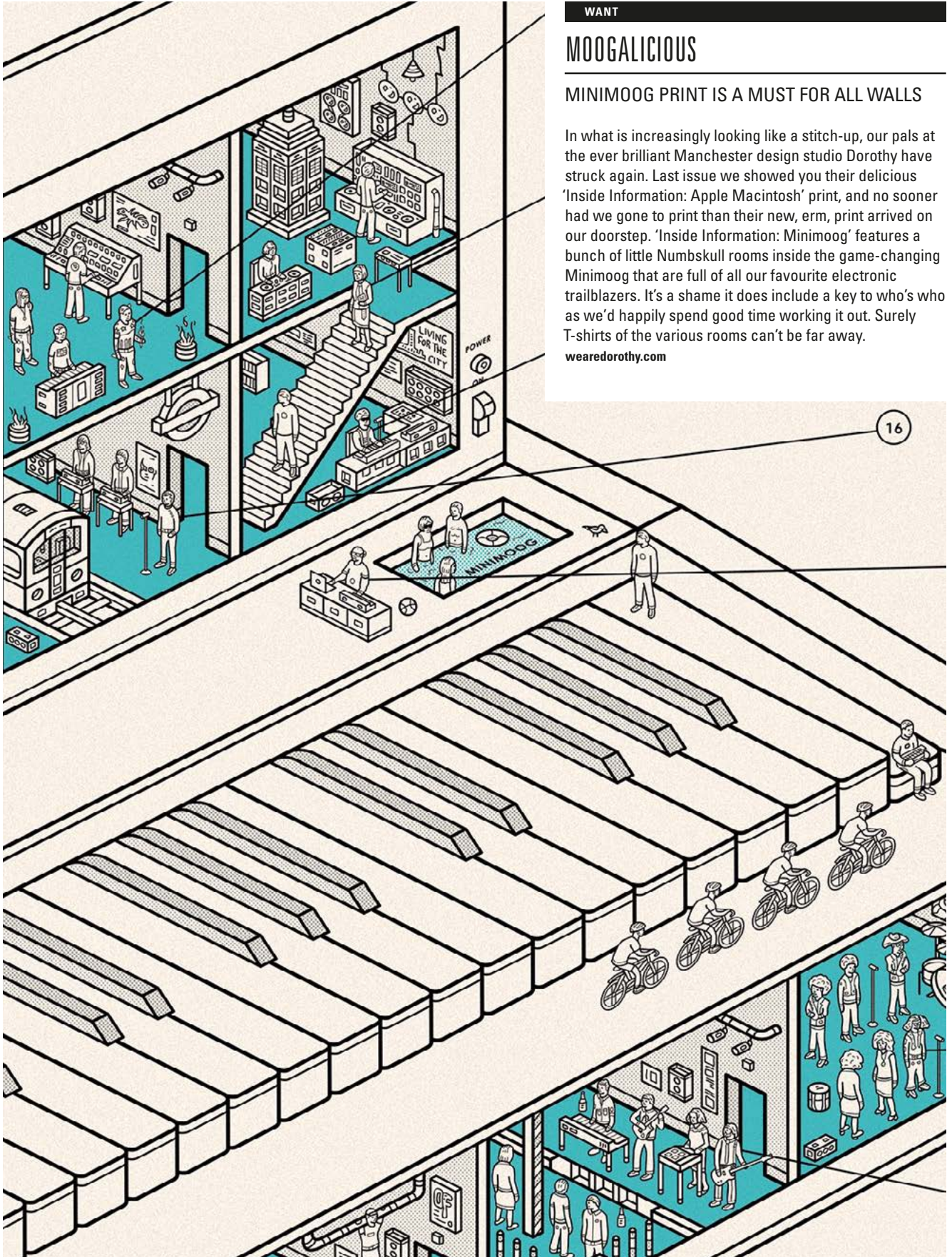
MOOGALICIOUS

MINIMOOG PRINT IS A MUST FOR ALL WALLS

In what is increasingly looking like a stitch-up, our pals at the ever brilliant Manchester design studio Dorothy have struck again. Last issue we showed you their delicious 'Inside Information: Apple Macintosh' print, and no sooner had we gone to print than their new, erm, print arrived on our doorstep. 'Inside Information: Minimoog' features a bunch of little Numbskull rooms inside the game-changing Minimoog that are full of all our favourite electronic trailblazers. It's a shame it does include a key to who's who as we'd happily spend good time working it out. Surely T-shirts of the various rooms can't be far away.

wearedorothy.com

16



LISTEN

THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

65DAYSOFASTATIC'S ALMOST ENDLESS GAME SOUNDTRACK

It seems that everyday the gap between science fiction and reality continues to close. We've got virtual reality, a synthesiser controlled by organic matter and now 'No Man's Sky', a space exploration video game with 18,446,744,073,709,551,616 (as words, that's over 18 quintillion) planets to discover.

So how is this game so big? The ambitious project by Hello Games (a small, Guildford-based development studio) is procedurally generated, meaning everything in the game is rendered in real time. Using deterministic algorithms and random number generators (i.e. a lot of fancy maths), the game can create this vast array of planets to investigate. If one planet was discovered every second, it would still take 585 billion years to explore the entire game. Still with us?

You're going to need some music to go with that kind of epic space journey ahead of you. Which is where Sheffield post-rockers 65daysofstatic enter the fray. 'No Man's Sky: Music For An Infinite Universe' is a collection of 10 original songs as well as six soundscapes that act as a soundtrack and a new 65dos record in its own right.

It doesn't stop there though. The album, along with a library of "loops, sound textures and melody" has been fed into the game's audio engine to create music in a similarly, procedurally generated fashion. In theory, this means that the game will make music from 65dos that no one has ever heard before.

"Being involved with 'No Man's Sky' is as unlikely as it is exciting," the band said. "The project has pushed us to explore new processes and techniques, to rethink our relationship with our own music and to essentially soundtrack every narrative thread of a 'choose your own adventure' novel that exists only in our minds."

'No Man's Sky: Music For An Infinite Universe' is an attempt to answer the question "What does forever sound like?". Considering how big the 'No Man's Sky' game is, it's probably the perfect place to find out.

'No Man's Sky: Music For An Infinite Universe' is out now on Laced



INTRODUCING...

KRISTIN KONTROL

SMART MOVE AS DUM DUM GIRL SWAPS SIX-STRINGS FOR 80S SYNTH POP

WHO SHE?

Trading in her "Dee Dee" pseudonym, Kristin Welchez has parked her rock outfit Dum Dum Girls and going it alone as Kristin Kontrol. But the moniker isn't the only thing that's changed. There's a new sound that swaps the guitars for synths.

WHY KRISTIN KONTROL?

Her album 'X-Communicate' is all very 80s, mixing new wave and synthpop. "I didn't want to make a record with typical rock vocals," says Welchez, reinforcing her move away from that Dum Dum Girls' sound. "The first music I really identified as my own was very poppy, classic 80s... Debbie Gibson and Tiffany to Janet Jackson and Madonna."

She also enlisted help from the very best, with long-time Dum Dum Girls producer Richard Gottehrer (who has also had a hand in producing Blondie and The Go-Go's) offering "sonic consultation" on the record.

TELL ME MORE

Welchez wrote 62 songs for 'X-Communicate' before filtering them down to the 10 tracks on the album. Cuts like 'Show Me' wouldn't be out of place in a John Hughes movie while '(Don't) Wannabe' loops vocals reminiscent of Enya and features Welchez' first reverse guitar solo. Morphing from Dee Dee to Kristin Kontrol is a definite departure from her time fronting Dum Dum Girls. She saw the change in name as a smashing of the boundaries that she set herself artistically. "For me as leader of Dum Dum Girls it felt very stoic and serious, and I am serious, but anyone who really knows me knows I'm silly, too; I smile a lot," she explains. Funny that, we've definitely been smiling listening to her debut.

FINLAY MILLIGAN

'X-Communicate' is out now on Sub Pop

CALLING ALL ROBOTS



SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

**THREE
ISSUES OF
ELECTRONIC
SOUND
FOR ONLY
£4.99**

DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

SAVE £13

**USUAL ISSUE
PRICE £5.99**

WWW.ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK/SUBSCRIBE

FREE IRON-ON INSIDE!

GRAND ROYAL



EVEL KNIEVEL'S
HIGH-RISK ART

WEIRD AL SABOTAGED
POLKA IN THE TEA ROOM WITH; MIKE D,
RUSSELL SIMINS, SPIKE JONZE AND YOKO ONO

THREE IS THE MAGIC NUMBER
THE ADIDAS STORY

SWITCHED-ON MOOG

A 32-PAGE HISTORY OF EVERYTHING
ANALOG; WITH: BOB MOOG, DICK
HYMAN, WENDY CARLOS, WALTER
SEAR, STEREO LAB KEYBOARD MONEY
MARK AND A CAVALCADE OF STARS



ISSUE 3 \$4.95

TIME MACHINE

IT'S AUTUMN 1993 AND IF YOU WERE VERY, VERY LUCKY, YOU WOULD HAVE MANAGED TO LAY YOUR HANDS ON A NEW MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY NONE OTHER THAN THE **BEASTIE BOYS**. THEIR SHORT-LIVED GRAND ROYAL TITLE WAS A TOTAL DELIGHT DESPITE ITS UTTER CHAOS. HERE'S WHY...

Words: NEIL MASON

Scratch a random music fan and under the surface you'll probably find that, at one point or other, they produced a hastily assembled photocopied fanzine and sold it out of a Tesco bag at gigs for 50p. In 1993, the Beastie Boys turned that whole idea of the fanzine on its head with the publication of their own, Grand Royal magazine.

It was a strange time for the Beasties. 'Ill Communication', which appeared the following year, would catapult them into the serious big-league and would be the first in a run of three US Number One albums. Eyes were firmly on the musical output and there seemed little interest in their diversifying business interests, which also included the quirky but brilliant Grand Royal Records, and the X-Large clothing range.

At the time, many wondered why they were bothering, what with 'Ill Com' about to ride roughshod over pretty much everything. The Beasties didn't help matters, with increasingly rare interviews. One of the few times Mike D talked about the empire was when Select magazine's Sam Upton visited the operation in LA in early 1997. It was quite the eye-opener.

"We didn't sit down and think, 'Hey, let's make a magazine,'" Mike D told Sam. "We had all these people writing to us about the band and we weren't getting back. We had this simple ambition of a newsletter, but then we saw a couple of other bands' fanzines and they were just like, 'This is what the band's up to now'. We were like, 'No way!'. So we made it into a proper magazine."

"It was an entirely unpredictable publication that would have a feature on Ted Nugent followed by a piece about Bill Clinton's dog," recalls Sam Upton, who these days runs marketing agency, Soul Content. "Because there wasn't much commercial control, Mike D, the two Adams, and their mates could do pretty much whatever they liked, which resulted in a situation where you'd never know when the next issue would come out – or if it would at all."

The first issue of Grand Royal, with Bruce Lee on the cover, appeared in the autumn of 1993. Its 76 pages were a total riot: Lunch with Kiss at a fan convention, art with the colourblind George Clinton, fashion tips from the idiosyncratic Long Island auto body shop owner Joey Buttafuoco, and a raft of interviews by Mike D, including The Pharcyde, Q-Tip and Def Jam's Russell Simmons. Inevitably there was stuff about Tibet and there was even a bit of Beasties album news.

The print run was just 7,500 and it sold out in double quick time. It's rare to see a copy of Issue One today. The last time I saw one a couple of years ago, it went for upwards of \$150.

The original aim was to publish three issues of the magazine a year, and there was talk of a worldwide distribution deal being inked, but with six editors, including all three Beasties, all doing what the hell they liked, the operation was a study in organised chaos.

"We visited the office – a small warehouse on the outskirts of the city," remembers Sam. "There were about 10 or so young Californians wandering around, some working, some not, and in a room overlooking the warehouse space was Mike D, fielding calls like

a New York businessman. I didn't expect him to be as hands-on as this. I assumed there would be layers of management and an editor he left the decision-making to, but he was involved in every aspect of the magazine.

"I wasn't told about any great plan for Grand Royal other than 'We do it for as long as we enjoy it'. The place wasn't exactly a hive of activity – there was a lot more happening on the indoor basketball court there – so it was perhaps no great surprise new issues would come out months late."

Or in the case of Issue Two, a year overdue. Sam (who remember worked for a successful UK monthly) questioned the sense of the magazine coming out so late. He asked if the advertisers ever complained.

"Oh yeah," replied managing editor Jamie Fraser. "They get pretty irate, but that's part of the allure. You can advertise in *any* magazine that comes out on time."

Issue Two, which included a Biz Markie seven-inch flexi-disc and was twice the size of its predecessor, and featured the famous mullet haircuts article ("Our impassioned plea for all peoples to stop doin' the do that's hair, there, and everywhere") and a 24-page guide to cover star Lee "Scratch" Perry. Despite being brilliant, the 50,000 print run was wildly ambitious and they found themselves (probably literally) sat on tens of thousands of unsold copies in the office.

Grand Royal called it a day with Issue Six in 1997. Issues Three and Four really saw them hit their stride. The former featured an iron-on transfer (which is still in my copy) and the cover pointed to an utterly brilliant "32-page history of everything analog with Bob Moog...", preceding our own recent Moog cover by 20 years. Great minds and all that, though.

Inside, there were a number of great articles, including Spike Jonze's 'The perpetrator's guide to Hollywood hotel swimming pools', a 10-page history of Adidas, and a piece about the paintings of Evel Knievel, while Issue Four's masterstroke was 'The Turntable: A visual Hi-fi history', which included a giant poster featuring 100+ record players. According to beastiemania.com, Mike D often compared the mag to a fine wine, claiming "each issue is designed to age gracefully, with mellow undertones, and a fruity finish." It really was a total treat of a publication.

"Looking back, I don't think there was a Puff Daddy-style desperation for world domination, just a desire to keep being creative in the increasingly large gaps between records," says Sam. "There was the hint of very rich and periodically bored young men ploughing their money into business ventures rather than hand it to the taxman. There certainly didn't seem to be too much panic that their offices were full of cardboard boxes containing unsold back issues of Grand Royal."

THE SCHOOL OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC

OUR RESIDENT ARCHIVIST LOOKS AT 'TRIOS', THE EXCEEDINGLY RARE AND IMPORTANT DOUBLE ALBUM AND PERFORMANCE TOOL FROM BRITISH COMPOSER **TRISTRAM CARY**

Words: **JACK DANGERS**

Tristram Cary was a composer who wrote scores for television and film. His first big film was 'The Ladykillers' in 1955, starring Alec Guinness and Peter Sellers. Not all of his scores were electronic, but he did a lot of important work with electronic music, and is well-known for his music on 'Doctor Who' in the mid-1960s, when he wrote music for nearly 30 episodes. He built the first electronic music studio at the Royal College of Music in 1967 and he, Peter Zinovieff and David Cockerell (who designed the ring modulator for the voice of the Daleks in 'Doctor Who') founded EMS in 1969 and made the first British synthesisers, including the VCS 3 and the huge Synthi 100.

EMS also released a handful of records which showcased their synths. One of the more important EMS releases was a double album of Tristram Cary's called 'Trios', which came out in 1971. The full title is 'Trios for Synthi VCS 3 Synthesiser and Turntables'. He used a transcription cutting machine to make 12-inch records of parts of his electronic music, and then used them in a performance with two turntables. Dice were used to choose tracks at random, and an operator would place the needle on the track chosen. At the same time, a synthesiser player with an EMS VCS 3 followed a score which, like a lot of electronic music scores, was pretty wild, with instructions and diagrams and shapes rather than notation. The sound patches were written out, so the player knew where all the knobs should be placed, and where to put the pins on the patch bay. It was first recorded with Cary playing the synthesiser and his two sons on the turntables. The idea was that the piece

would be different each time it was performed. So Cary didn't just help to pioneer electronic music, but also inadvertently the art of DJing, presenting the idea of using turntables as musical instruments, and the idea of records as performance tools.

It is incredibly scarce. There weren't that many pressed to start with, and a large batch was ruined when they were left next to a radiator at the EMS studio in Deodora Road in Putney, London. They were all badly warped. I've actually got two copies of it. I got in touch with Cary because I bought the Synthi 100 that he had installed at the University of Adelaide in the 1970s when he taught there. I mentioned that as well as buying his old Synthi 100, I was planning to perform 'Trios' with a VCS 3. To perform the piece you need two sets of the album, so he sent them to me, both signed. A copy went for \$1,000 on eBay a couple of months ago.

He'd been experimenting with electronic music as far back as the 1940s. He wrote the manuals for the EMS equipment, and did the narration on the records. Tristram Cary really is the godfather of electronic music in Britain.



UNDER THE INFLUENCE



NIK COLK VOID OF FACTORY FLOOR
TAKES US ON A TRIP THROUGH
HER FORMATIVE INFLUENCES, FROM
HER DAD MAKING CONCRETE TO
A CHANCE MEETING WITH SONIC
YOUTH'S MANAGER AND BEYOND.
STRAP YOURSELF IN, IT'S QUITE A RIDE

PERFECT CONCRETE FLOORS

“My dad was a builder and he would take me to work on my weekend visits. It was the early 80s and seatbelts were for front seats only, so kids like me could crouch in the boot of the car or in the back of a truck full of sand with the dog.

“I’d watch him shovel aggregate into the cement mixer, it was so loud, tossing around rocks and stone with a slushy grey matter, which he’d then pour into his crusty wheel barrow. All his tools had broken handles and rust and decay, the wheel on his barrow was almost flat as it bounced along planks of wood balanced on stacked bricks to keep it level. When he tipped the cement, he would shake every last drop as it clung to the sides of the barrow then he’d reach for his mallet and tap the wood frame until all air bubbles came to the surface one by one. Finally, he would get a length of wood and run it over the top to level it out. On a dry day it would set pretty quick and when it set it was perfect.

“I never took for granted the effort that went into making something so perfect. I would miss my dad so much during the week that I took to making things with all kinds of materials. Mum used to say she knew where I’d been sitting because there would be stuff everywhere around a small space on the floor. I would try to make everything perfect. And I don’t think I have ever stopped.”

MAGAZINES AND FANZINES

“When I was in my teens, we moved to a village in Norfolk that had 67 houses and no shops. Everyone around me seemed old. At school, all anyone was interested in was rugby, the rugby team were the prefects and they’d boss around everyone who wasn’t like them or they didn’t fancy. It made me introverted and shy so I’d hang out in the art room at lunchtimes and draw from magazines – The Face, NME even Kerrang! Handmade fanzines became my thing, I’d draw people like Tupac and Kurt Cobain alongside some weird life drawing.

“I started a band called Scully and we made a self-released cassette tape with a cartoon cover, John Peel played a track from it called ‘Big Knife’. A little further down the line a guy from a fanzine in Peterborough called Vibrations From The Edge of Sanity put out the first seven-inch by another band I was in, which was picked up by a fanzine in California called Devil In The Woods. The guy who ran that released our first LP and introduced me to the world of touring the US. From San Francisco to Montreal, Detroit and Chicago to New York, I met the aftermath of riot grrrl in Olympia, people like Bikini Kill’s Tobi Vail and Beth Ditto, I met Spiral Stairs in Texas, Death Cab For Cutie in Seattle, Lou Barlow in San Francisco, Elliot Smith in LA. People were happy letting me into their gangs, sleeping on their floors when passing through. My world had totally opened up.”

BLAST FIRST

“I was still living in Norfolk after experiencing all this and I’d come to a place in my life where I was getting bored again. I ran a club where I would play records that I’d picked up from touring – The Slits mixed into LCD Soundsystem followed by Aphex Twin. There was no agenda, it was just loud, but it really wasn’t doing it for me. Luck was round the corner. I met this guy at a London gig one night and we had a healthy chat. When he left people ran up to me saying, “Do you know who he is? That’s Paul Smith. The guy who signed Sonic Youth!”. And I was like, “Oooohh”. I looked at what he had done and especially his label Blast First. I got my hands on a boxset called ‘Devil’s Jukebox’, which was 10 seven-inches including Sonic Youth, Head Of David, UT, Butthole Surfers, Big Black, AC Temple, but the golden ticket for me was [experimental guitarist and composer] Glenn Branca.

“I bought Branca’s ‘The Ascension’, ‘Symphony No.3’ and ‘Lesson No. 1’ and watched his video ‘Solo 1978’ a billion times. I bought a Telecaster, read John Cage’s ‘Silence’, rewired my brain, reinvented my way of playing guitar, altered my singing style and began to make solo records as Nik Void.

“Paul Smith came in and out of my life. When I joined Factory Floor he managed us, he also orchestrated my meeting with Chris and Cosey who asked me to join them in the Carter Tutti Void collaboration, which brings me to the next phase...”

THE FASCINATING WORLD OF GEAR

“Hanging out with geekheads like [Factory Floor bandmate] Gabriel Gurnsey, Chris Carter and occasionally [New Order’s] Stephen Morris, you get sucked into this fascinating world of gear. I was happy using my guitar like my dad used his rusty shovel. I know it inside out, and I know where I can push it. Using gear has helped me turn the corner again. It’s set me a challenge: I know what feedback is good, I can take that section, sample it and feed it through some gear. I’ve been doing this for a while now and it’s helped me work out how to run my own studio set-up because I’d feel uncomfortable putting an engineer through hours of running a two-second length of guitar sound through various compressors, distressors, delays and reverbs.

“I put vocals through the Deltalab Effectron, which I sought out after a big [NYC underground dance don] Arthur Russell phase when I’d read about the equipment he used for his hauntingly beautiful delayed vocals. I discovered that I could define how my voice would sound, cut it up, manipulate it, make me sound like a man or like an old school hip hop artist from the 80s.

“After Dom left Factory Floor, there was a big hole for me to fill. I’m not afraid to try modular synthesis. I’m not afraid to play it live and mix on a desk while going through the set. Gear has taken away my shyness just like DJing helped me in social situations. I wonder if those rugby boys are still playing rugby? Probably not.”

Factory Floor’s ‘25 25’ album is out now on DFA

BANGING ON

HIGH ON POWDERED CHOCOLATE, AGAIN, OUR RESIDENT COLUMNIST **FAT ROLAND** ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN WHY FLORISTS CALLED CLINT ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SYNTH CONSTRUCTION...

Words: FAT ROLAND
Illustration: SEAN COEN

I'm going to tell you how to build a synthesiser mainly because I've been snorting Cadbury's Highlights and I want to drizzle you with my knowledge juices before everything dries up.

"Synthesisers", or in the modern parlance "synths", are guitars made of digital. They were first used on such 1970s classics as The Whom's 'Toblerone Sunset' and Roger Dogbat's prog epic 'Eagle Beef Trouser'. Years later, rave kids licked synthesisers to get high because the government introduced the poll tax. And that, pretty much, is the entire history of the synthesiser.

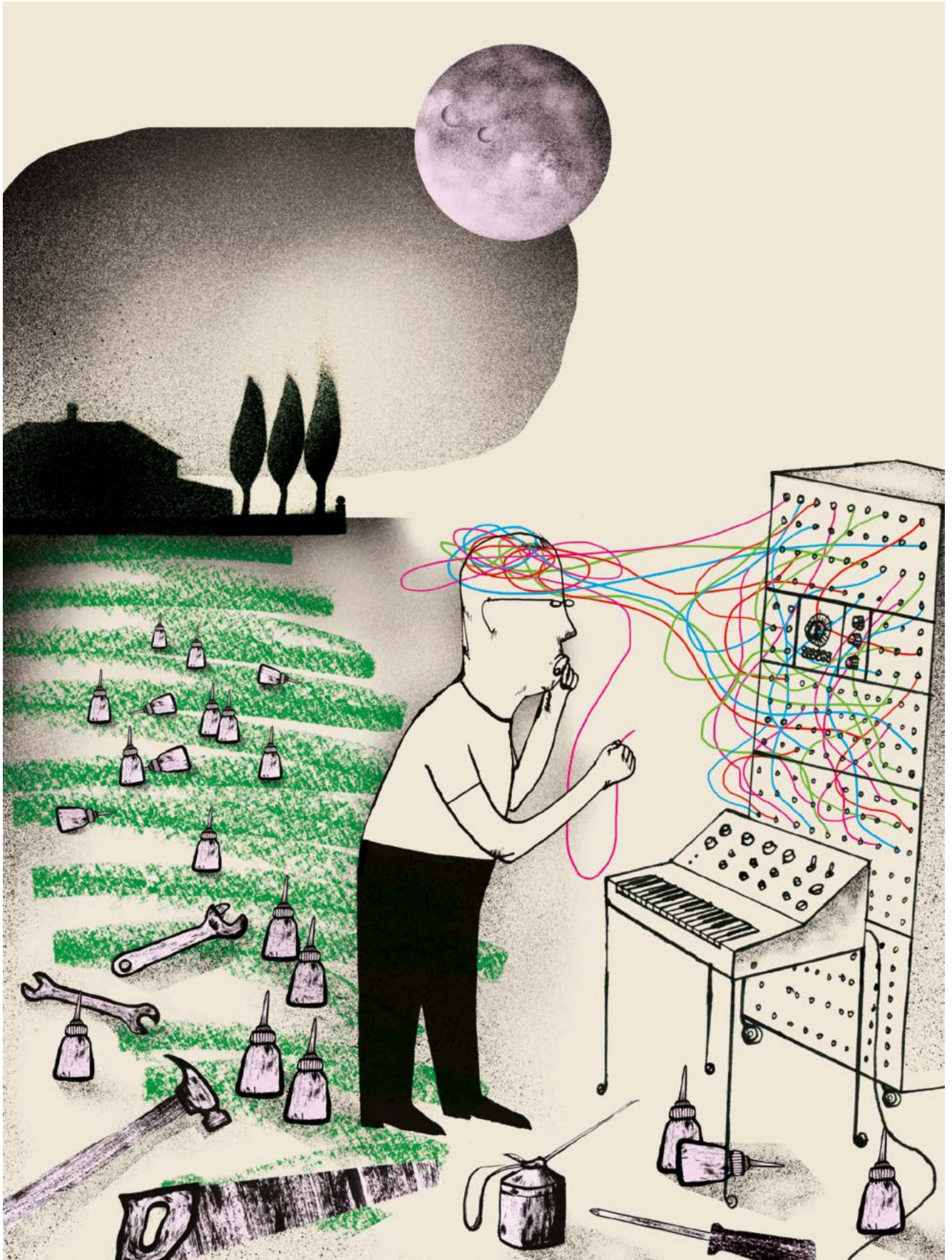
Making one is as easy as assembling a washing machine from bacon, or fashioning Phil Oakey's face from carpet fluff. You will need the following materials: plastic, metal, wood, buttons, sliders, electricity, 17 cylinders of glue, an outside generator, the contents of the nearest drawer to you and a sticker with the word 'Casio' on. Lay everything out on two trestle tables, a hedge, an airport runway, or anything that's long.

Firstly, connect A to B, looping D over C. I've no idea what those letters refer to: trust your best guess. Then connect the flange tube to the MIDI shafter, being careful not to molest the modwheel harness. If you hear a croaking sound, this has gone badly wrong and you should tip everything into a furnace. Now cover it all in glue. This doesn't help construction, but the gentle wooze from the fumes will pass the hours.

This next bit is crucial. Telephone a florist called Clint. Feel the vibrations of his soft voice as he tells you of his wilted petunias. "I used to know a milliflora," he rumbles, "but it broke my heart." Record his manly timbre into the synthesiser's vibrato port, which you can access by unclipping the trombone holder. This will give your keyboard's output an illusion of "emotion" and "meaning". Probably.

Allow six days for everything to settle before playing your first notes. It's very important that, in the early fragile stages of your new instrument, you only attempt funeral marches or Coldplay songs. Anything more adventurous will lead to audio mould, sonic gas, or in very extreme cases, Elton John.

Good luck following my instructions. If you want me to teach you anything else, please let me come and live with you. Please. I don't have much powdered chocolate left. I need to snort chocolate. Can I look in your cupboards? Bournville will do. Anything. PLEASE.



LANDMARKS

THE INSIDE
STORY OF AN
ELECTRONIC
CLASSIC



RICK FOSTER RECALLS THE MAKING OF **CHICORY TIP'S** 1972 HIT 'SON OF MY FATHER', THE FIRST UK NUMBER ONE RECORD TO FEATURE A SYNTHESISER AS THE LEAD INSTRUMENT

Interview: PUSH

CHICORY TIP

Son Of My Father
CBS

“We’re all Kent boys. We’re all Maidstone boys. We all went to South Borough School in the town. We left there in 1961, when we were 15, and started playing music soon after. Barry Mayger, our bassist, came round my house one day and said there was a group doing covers of Cliff Richard & The Shadows at our youth club that night. So we went along and were shocked to find they were just kids of our age. It was very inspiring. Barry and I got some cheap instruments, roped in a couple of other friends, and that was it. We were a group.

“We called ourselves The Sonics. We had several break-ups, various people came and went, but then we settled on a nucleus of me on guitar, Barry on bass, Peter Hewson on vocals and Brian Shearer on drums. That was the line-up for ‘Son Of My Father’. It was Barry’s idea to change our name to Chicory Tip. He came up with it after seeing ‘chicory essence’ on a bottle of Camp Coffee, which I think you can still get. He suggested it after we came off stage one night when we were playing with The Mannish Boys. Most of The Mannish Boys were from Maidstone too. Their singer was David Jones, later better known as David Bowie.

“Chicory Tip was managed by a guy called Roger Easterby and he got us a record deal with CBS. Roger was also a record plugger and towards the end of 1971 he was asked to work on a record by Giorgio Moroder. Giorgio had written the music for this track, which had originally been released in Germany [issued under the title ‘Nachts Scheint Die Sonne’ (‘In The Night Shines The Sun’) and sung by German schlager star Michael Holm], but now it had English lyrics by Peter Bellotte and was renamed ‘Son Of My Father’. When Roger heard the English version, he thought it would be a good song for Chicory Tip to cover.

“In those days, there was a strange rule about covers, whereby a record had to be played on the radio for the publishing to be logged, and once that had happened anyone could record a version of it. So Roger took Giorgio’s record to a little radio station somewhere out of the way, I think it was down in Bristol, got them to play it, and then straight away put Chicory Tip in the studio to do our version of it. Which was a bit naughty really. We did the dirty on Giorgio and there’s no denying it.

“We recorded the track at AIR Studios, George Martin’s place in Oxford Street. We recorded and mixed the whole thing in a couple of days, finishing on Christmas Eve, and then CBS released the record in January 1972, a week or two before Giorgio’s version came out. I remember George Martin popping in when we were mixing and saying, ‘This smells like a hit to me’. Those were his actual words.

I think we all knew we’d done something a bit special too. It got to Number 30 in the UK charts on the strength of just three radio plays and that put us on ‘Top Of The Pops’. After that, it went all the way to Number One.

“‘Son Of My Father’ was a good pop song, but what made it so different was the Moog. There are actually several tracks of Moog on there, but everybody knows it for the lead melody. I think I’m right in saying it was the first track to have a synthesiser as the lead instrument.

I also think it was the first Number One record in the UK to feature a synthesiser at all. Like most musicians at the time, we were aware of synths, but we didn’t really know much about them. The guy who set up the Moog for us was Chris Thomas, the main engineer at AIR [whose later credits include mixing Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side Of The Moon’ and producing Roxy Music and the Sex Pistols].

“I remember watching Chris doing all the set-ups and being totally gobsmacked. It was incredible. I’d never seen anything like it before. And all the time I was wondering how on earth we were going to recreate that outside of the studio. We were a gigging band and we did lots of promo stuff when the record came out, but we got ourselves a Minimoog, which had only just been released at the time. I played a bit of keyboards, so I played the Minimoog at the gigs. I used to have all sorts of trouble with it though. It was always going out of tune and it was quite difficult to handle.

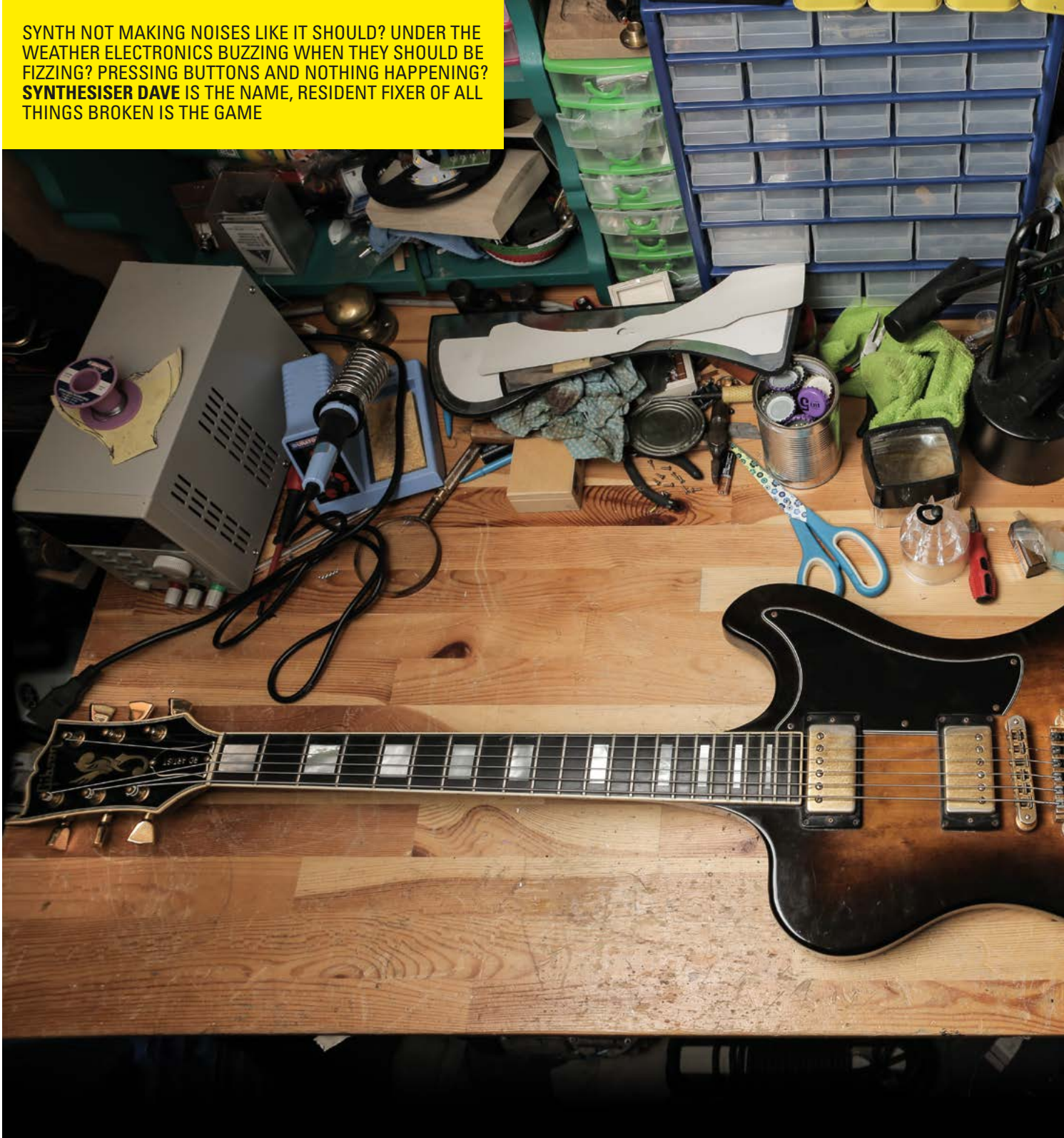
“‘Son Of My Father’ ended up being a hit all over Europe. Which was good for Giorgio Moroder, as well as for us. As it happens, Giorgio was in touch with Roger Easterby and he was fine about what we’d done. In fact, Giorgio and Peter Bellotte wrote our next few singles, including ‘What’s Your Name’ and ‘Good Grief Christina’, both of which also featured the Moog. Giorgio was a smashing bloke. He was great to work with. I think the records he did with us put him on the path towards being a figurehead of electronic music. The next thing Giorgio and Peter did after working with us was Donna Summer.

“I left Chicory Tip in 1973 and spent the next 25 years playing guitar with Edison Lighthouse [best known for their 1970 hit ‘Love Grows (Where My Rosemary Goes)’]. But then a few years ago, Barry, Brian and I started playing gigs as Chicory Tip again. Barry lives in Portugal now, so these days it’s me, Brian and Peter Giles. Peter went to South Borough School too. We play most weekends, pubs and parties and so on. There’s no Minimoog though. When I left the band in 1973, I must admit I was glad to have seen the back of it.”



SYNTHESISER DAVE'S WORKSHOP

SYNTH NOT MAKING NOISES LIKE IT SHOULD? UNDER THE WEATHER ELECTRONICS BUZZING WHEN THEY SHOULD BE FIZZING? PRESSING BUTTONS AND NOTHING HAPPENING? **SYNTHESISER DAVE** IS THE NAME, RESIDENT FIXER OF ALL THINGS BROKEN IS THE GAME



IN FOR REPAIR: GIBSON RD ARTIST

'ERE, WOT'S THIS DOING HERE,
IT'S GOT STRINGS ON IT...

Back in the 60s and 70s, a company called Norlin were buying up instrument makers like it was going out of style, among them Gibson Guitars and Moog Music. For some reason, they decided to take Bob Moog away from producing synths and set him the task of designing guitar effects instead.

As a result, in 1977 they launched this tasty beast with active electronics designed by (and in half of them, hand soldered by) the man himself. From a build quality and electronic point of view it is arguably the best guitar Gibson ever made, but weren't very popular and the full Moog version was discontinued in 1979.

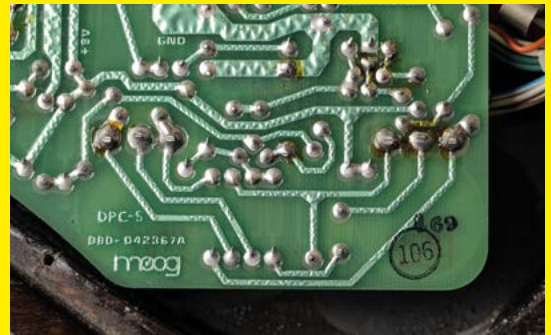
There were later versions, and a recent anniversary reissue, but none of these have the Moog electronics. The originals are super-rare, we're talking a few hundred, and are highly sought-after especially as the unusually long neck length makes them ideal for using the increasingly popular low-A tuning.

The circuit gives you active tone controls based on a Moog module, a compressor and an exciter, all of amazingly high quality. But looking at the circuit board he obviously had other ideas that never made it, there is the unmistakable track layout for a ladder filter and an unused trigger circuit, so who knows?

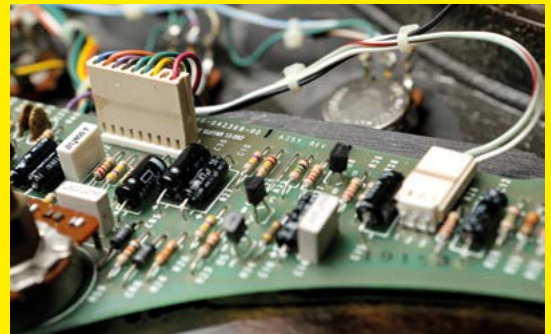
There's not a lot wrong with this one, just a basic service needed. The battery clip has gone a bit wonky (technical term) so we'll replace that, and one of the tone controls is a little stiff. I'll try a spray lubricant/cleaner first and see if that does the job. I can always replace it later on, but I'd rather leave the original if I can. That, and a bit of de-clagging on the compressor and expander toggle switches and the jobs a good 'un. Now, where did I leave my Todd Rundgren songbook?



VOLUME POT AND PICKUP SWITCH



ALL NICELY HAND-SOLDERED AND A SHINY MOOG LOGO



A RANDOM BIT OF CIRCUITRY... NOT MUCH HAPPENING HERE TO BE HONEST



FITTING THE ELECTRONICS INSIDE NECESSITATED ROUTING AN UNUSUALLY LARGE HOLE IN THE BACK

SYNTHESISER DAVE'S WORKSHOP

SPARES & REPAIRS

EVER WONDERED WHAT ALL THE BITS AND BOBS IN A SYNTH DO? THIS ISSUE, DAVE IS TALKING **TRANSISTORS**

The first "active" component we're looking at is transistors. Generally speaking they have three legs sticking out the bottom, and their most basic use is as a switch. If you apply a small voltage to the middle leg, it allows a larger voltage to pass between the other two, but varying the small control voltage will also let a variable voltage through. In plumbing terms, it's a bit like a tap. Just to make things more interesting the middle leg isn't always the one in the middle, so you need to look at lots of badly printed specification sheets.

The transistors in the photo are generally known as small signal transistors, and are the ones you're most likely to come across in old synths. They come in two flavours, NPN and PNP, where P stands for positive and N stands for negative, but we don't need to go into all those Ps and Ns as it only relates to how they're made. The only important thing is to make sure you use the right type! That said, different types of small signal transistors are optimised for low noise, speed, etc and they are often interchangeable... as long as you use the right polarity.



SYNTHESISER MEMORIES

TRANSCENDENT 2000

My first foray into full-on synth building, the Transcendent 2000, was a kit designed by Tim Orr (of EMS and later Akai fame) and sold via Electronics Today International magazine. I took the cheapskate option, buying the circuit board and hard-to-find components and then searching out the rest from the electronics shop that used to dominate the top end of London's Edgware Road. In the end I swapped a guitar with a friend for his unfinished (and somewhat bugged) complete kit to get the keyboard and case.

Despite a few quirks, it was very nice little synth. There was none of that 1v per octave stuff, just purely linear oscillators (one was standard, but mine ended up with two), which made it incompatible with anything else, but there were ways round that. I remember having discussions about it on the forum (back then they were in magazines and involved proper writing and stamps and all that) with someone called "Martin". I suspected it was Martin Hannett, who was building one at about that time.

The rumour has always been that EMS refused to market the Transcendent 2000 because they were worried about the possible "variable build quality" (which makes me smile a bit having seen inside a few VCS 3s!) so the Powertran company was formed. They produced a four-note polysynth as well, but I've never seen one of those.

I ended up selling my 2000 to finance building an Elektor magazine Formant synth, a modular beast that I never got round to finishing. Still got bits of it though, so it might get done one day...





analogue synths

music electronics for
electronic musicians

www.analogue.solutions





DA-DA-DA

DADA, HUGO BALL'S QUIRKY ANTI-ART MOVEMENT THAT INSPIRED BANDS GALORE, CELEBRATES ITS CENTENARY THIS YEAR. FROM 1916 AND ZÜRICH'S CABARET VOLTAIRE IN 1916 TO 2016 AND THE RETURN OF YELLO, WE SQUINT AT THE COGS INSIDE THIS CUCKOO SWISS CONCEPT

Words: MARK ROLAND

In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.” Orson Welles as Harry Lime in the 1949 film ‘The Third Man’ wasn’t to know that Yello would later appear over the mountainous Swiss horizon of the 20th century. But his airbrushing from Switzerland’s history the contribution to European culture made by one Hugo Ball and his Dada movement of a hundred years ago is less forgivable.

Dada, short-lived as it was in its original incarnation, endures as an influence in pop music, where it infiltrated both the mainstream, allowing Yello and the Pet Shop Boys to carve out territory, to the avant-garde underground of Cromagnon and The Residents, and in-betweeners like Devo. One of Dada’s architects, Tristan Tzara, came up with the cut-up technique for creating poems from newspaper and magazine text, later used by both William Burroughs and David Bowie.

Dadaist ideas and are so entwined in some of pop music’s most interesting chapters, it’s difficult to separate the threads. Even if some of these bands have never heard of Hugo Ball, they’re influenced by Dada whether they like it or not. Today, strong traces of Dada might be found in the high def videos and live spectacles of Lady Gaga and Miley Cyrus, and in Japan with the synchronised salary man absurdist pop band World Order. Dada was strong in Japan; the 1960s Japanese TV show Ultraman featured a monster called Dada, who was invited to meet the Swiss ambassador earlier this year on the 100th anniversary of Dada. If that’s not Dada, nothing is.

Hugo Ball was an artist and a poet, a German citizen who had fled to neutral Switzerland during the First World War to avoid being forced to take part in it. He opposed the war, calling it a “glaring mistake”, and his revulsion at the bloodshed was sublimated into his Dada Manifesto of 1916. Hugo and his hip artist pals cooked up Dada at a time when art movements with manifestos were all the rage. It came hard on the heels of Futurism and while there is some crossover with the conceptual nature of the two movements, Dada has the huge historical advantage of not being keen on either fascism or war. Futurism also had “scorn for women” written into it, whereas one of Dada’s main movers was Sophie Taeuber-Arp, a performer who went on to create some of the best known textiles pieces of the era.

“All living art will be irrational, primitive, and complex; it will speak a secret language and leave behind documents not of edification, but of paradox,” Ball said. And to prove the point, he wrote the Dadaist poem, ‘Gadji beri bimba’ and performed it, dressed as a weird lobster/robot thing with reflective blue cylinders for legs and a cardboard cape, at the club he founded in Zurich, Cabaret Voltaire.

The poem later earned him a co-writing credit on the Talking Heads track ‘I, Zimbra’ on 1979’s ‘Fear Of Music’, not that there was any risk of Byrne and co. having to pay out royalties; Hugo Ball died of stomach cancer in 1927, aged just 41. One of many Dadaist sound poems, or verse ohne Worte (poems without words), ‘Gadji beri bimba’ is a series of sounds, rather than language, purposefully devoid of meaning, but delivered with passion. The event took on spiritual and even religious overtones, with Ball saying that he found his voice taking on the intonation and delivery of a high priest. At the end of his performance, the lights went out, and Ball was carried off the stage “trembling like a magical bishop” according to eyewitness accounts.

Viewed in that context, the costume he wore becomes a parody of the garments of religiosity, a kind of uniform, and it’s not a huge leap to imagine the parody stretching to military uniform that so many young men went to their deaths wearing in the four years of the First World War. Dressing up is, and should be ridiculous, Dadaism seemed to be saying, and they took every opportunity to do so.

“How does one become famous?” asked the Dada manifesto. “By saying dada,” it answered. It ends one section with the immortal lines, “dada m'dada, dada m'dada dada mhm, dada dere dada, dada Hue, dada Tza.”

Under this apparent nonsense was a very real and visceral reaction to the horrors of the First World War that was engulfing Europe at the time. The desire to shock and confound went hand-in-hand with the idea that the irrational had become the norm, that slaughter on an industrial scale was somehow a reasonable outcome of human interaction. If that was the kind of world we live in, then what was needed was a purging, some kind of mantra which would cure all ills... as long as you dressed in your favourite robot/lobster outfit.

Dada was a multi-discipline movement, incorporating collage, painting, photography, poetry, performance, design and fashion, and it was as much about the artist’s behaviour as the work they made. Any self-respecting band will be immersed in all of these aspects of their output. It inspired Situationism, which informed some of the intellectual energy driving punk and what came after it. Dada is the blueprint. Dada is the primal soup from which so much interesting music emerged.

Dada is, perhaps, what you get when artists are pushed into a corner by an insane society and can only defend themselves and their humanity by responding with an entertaining but scarily unhinged outpouring of psychedelically gibberish. Dada set out to freak people the fuck out, while making them laugh. When people start asking if an artist is serious or taking the piss, Dada is lurking in the shadows, and it’s that impulse to embody paradox and weirdness that lives on in Dada influence in music. Dada. Dada m'dada, dada m'dada dada mhm, dada dere dada, dada Hue, dada Tza.

THE DADA EFFECT

INSPIRING ARTISTS AND SHAPING RECORD COLLECTIONS FOR 100 YEARS

WE PICK OUT 30 ACTS RIDDLED WITH ANTI-ART MISCHIEF

THE RESIDENTS

Steeped in mystery (largely solved in the pages of Reddit via voice recognition software and other next-level sleuthing) The Residents are best known for their eyeball headgear and Dadaist moves like recording themselves jamming along to well-known tunes and then stripping the original tunes out and releasing the results on an album they called 'The Third Reich 'n' Roll'.

DEVO

Named in part to sound like an art movement, Devo's wackiness was a trojan horse for their deeply held revulsion at the stupidity of their fellow apes, with a manifesto that outlined their theory of de-evolution. Hugo Ball would have approved of the multifarious costumes and masks, many of which were available to purchase via album inner sleeves which doubled as order forms in a cake-and-eat-it satire of American consumerism.

SIGUE SIGUE SPUTNIK

Roughly shagging the 80s with an exploding day-glo love missile of hair, runaway drum machines and breakneck synths, with Moroder producing.

RENALDO & THE LOAF

An architect and a pathologist who made acoustic instruments sound like synths thanks to mucho tape loops, muffling and detuning.

THE SCREAMERS

Mystifyingly, Los Angeles' The Screammers remained unsigned for their lifespan (1975-81) and therefore released no product. No guitars, instead two keyboard/synth players and the jerking intense persona of singer Tomata Du Plenty allowed them to deliver an apparently awesome live experience of electro punk performance art that electrified audiences. They held out to make a video album, and early visual experiments of it lurk about on YouTube which certainly give us a good feel for their confrontational strangeness.

SPACE

French synth leftfielders pre-dated Daft Punk by a good 15 years with their space helmets and synthesised disco beats in 1977.

LAIBACH

The musical wing of political Slovenian art collective, their visual style and sonic deconstructions appropriated much from Dada. Made a hell of a racket.

THE TUBES

The Tubes piled props, characters, sex, drugs and explosive technological flash into their live shows, creating an extravaganza that teetered between burlesque and insightful critique of contemporary society. The Tubes' thrilling and absurdist live show was recorded in the great double live set 'What Do You Want From Live', recorded in London, capturing them at something of a career high.

THE KLF

Among the The KLF's better known public (anti-)art interventions is the collaboration with Extreme Noise Terror at the BRITS in 1992, which ended with Bill Drummond spraying the audience with pretend bullets from a machine gun in scenes reminiscent (and probably inspired by) the climax of the film 'If...'. They also burned a million quid (or did they really, etc), and performed with huge horns protruding from the cowls of their monk habits.

THE FLYING LIZARDS

Made cover versions interesting in the early 80s with quirky takes on standards. Their deadpan version of 'Sex Machine' is a treat.

TIK AND TOK

Two guys pretending to be robots parlayed a pretty handy career out of being Tik And Tok in the early 80s, becoming the house automata for the early 80s electronic/new romantic music scene.

KLAUS NOMI

Klaus Nomi's strangeness has the power to startle more than 30 years after his death. The three sticks of hair spiked heavenwards, the plastic suit, the black bee sting lips and the voice... Nomi was a countertenor, which means he was able to suddenly unleash a voice so eerily beautiful and at odds with the synth pop he generally purveyed that humans would stare at him with their mouths open. Pals included fellow travellers of the strange, David Bowie and Man Parrish.

CROMAGNON

They made one album in 1969 which was so monumentally strange that it still ranks as one of the oddest ever made. The story was that the album's architects Austin Grasmere and Brian Elliot sought out a demented hippy tribe to provide the shouting and primal beats (made with bones and stones, apparently), and that future members of both The Residents and Negativland were in that tribe. Not true, it turned out, but the album is a ferocious noise-fest which incorporates tape music and wild group improv and includes bagpipes.

BUTTHOLE SURFERS / JACK OFFICERS

Because obviously the Butthole Surfers weren't challenging enough, Gibby Haynes and Jeff Pinkus had to make an album of sample collage ('Digital Dump') that was. Live shows involved them doing little more than pressing the play button on their Sony Walkman.

NASH THE SLASH

A Canadian violin player bandaged à la 'The Invisible Man' won Numan's patronage and a release on The Residents' Ralph Records. He once claimed his real name was 'Nashville Thebodiah Slasher' and in 2008 released an album called 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Nash'. Nash died of a heart attack in 2014.

SPARKS

The cool dude singing, the odd-bod playing keyboards, chart success beckons. Tacky tigers?

KRAFTWERK

Forty-odd years of German inscrutability on an industrial scale has led to Lycra 'Tron' suits on late-middle aged men. Kraftwerk are the masters of odd.

BJÖRK

She wore a dress that looked like a swan for the 2001 Academy Awards. And laid a big swan egg on the red carpet.

THE ART OF NOISE

The partnership of studio genius Trevor Horn, business brain Jill Sinclair and clever music journo Paul Morley birthed the ZTT label in 1983. The label was named after the Futurist poem of the same name, and the label's Dadaist/Futurist/Situationist thievery was mostly poured into the Art Of Noise, a suitably anonymous studio project which needed some conceptual cladding for it to make any sense, which it still failed to do, but that didn't stop them selling bucket loads of records and being very odd indeed.

ROCKETS

France's Rockets flew the flag for weird in the 70s, never more so than when covering Canned Heat's 'On The Road Again' with a vocoder and synths, dressed in their trademark sci-fi outfits with their bald heads painted silver.

APHEX TWIN

Quiet country boy he might have been, but the unsettling videos that went with the bananas tunery sure made up for it. His obsession with grafting his own head onto other people just scratches the surface of his visual freakery.

FAD GADGET

Frank Tovey (for it is he) was the first artist Daniel Miller signed to Mute in 1979. Tovey didn't think of himself as a musician, and used kitchen implements, drills, razors and anything else to hand to create music in his studio, which was a cupboard under the stairs, eventually adding a drum machine and synthesiser. Live shows included Tovey tarring and feathering himself, songs about depilation ('Lady Shave') and a backing band dressed as bakers. Tovey, who had always suffered from heart problems, died of a heart attack in 2002, aged 45.

YACHT

Arch post-modernist anti-art in the form of sleek synthpop from L.A. couple with their own manifesto. In what turned out to be a complicated and 'problematic' hoax, they got caught out leaking a sex tape... of themselves.

THE PLASTICS

Angular ultra-Devo influenced spiky synth/new wave/stylish art pop from Japan circa 1980 with heavy pals like David Byrne and The B-52s.

FRANK CHICKENS

From Edinburgh Festival comedy cabaret (1984) to a hit single ('We Are Ninja') to the anti-TV TV show 'Kazuko's Karaoke Club', Frank Chickens might lean a bit heavily on the 'wacky Japan' cliché, but they're a 30-year performance art project.

REVOLTING COCKS

RevCo were the transgressive industrial supergroup, lacing their gigs with nudity, scary masks and cowboy hats, Euro-redneck confrontation style.

FINITRIBE

Sonic extremists whose early live shows were battlegrounds of blood and mayhem gradually honed into merely bonkers. Dressed up a Hoovers once.

ALTERN-8

Wore facemasks so people didn't twig they were the same group who played last week under a different name.

PET SHOP BOYS

Pilfered liberally from Dada with their own must-have fashion accessories. Namely big pointy hats just like Hugo Ball in 1916.

DIE ANTWOORD

The spirit of Dada lives on in South Africa's Die Antwoord whose commitment to their schtick is unwavering. Are they hip hop? Are they rave? Are they serious? Really? They take inspiration from a South African style known as zef, which makes an art form out of the naff, and say they use their art "as a shock machine to wake [people] up". Everything they do is challenging in all kinds of unexpected and often quite horrible ways.



DEATH

GYPSY FORTUNE TELLERS, CHOCOLATE FACTORIES, GAMBLING HABITS, JAPANESE PLATE-JUGGLERS, WATCHING TREES GROW... ALL IN A DAY'S WORK WHEN INTERVIEWING YELLO'S BORIS BLANK AND DIETER MEIER AS THEY PREPARE TO RELEASE THEIR FIRST ALBUM SEVEN YEARS AND PLAY THEIR FIRST LIVE SHOWS EVER

Words: STEPHEN DALTON

Fifty years ago, future Yello singer Dieter Meier visited a funfair in England. There, in return for £10, an Irish fortune-teller forecast a very long life for the debonair young dilettante who would later become the dapper don of disco Dadaism. "Looking at my hand, he said he had never seen anything like this," Meier recalls. "His name was Prince Gypsy Lee and he predicted that I was going to live to be 127 years old. And I believed him."

This is how interviews go with Switzerland's most eccentric art-pop elder statesman. A sprightly 71 years young, Meier has a lifetime of stories to share, all of them incredible, most of them true. A one-time professional gambler, punk provocateur, conceptual artist, cattle rancher, globe-trotting tycoon and Jimmy Hill lookalike, the Yello singer is the last of the famous international playboys. Suave and urbane, with just a hint of subversive mischief, Meier may even be the Willy Wonka of Swisstronica. He owns a chocolate factory after all. Yes, for real.

Meier and his younger Yello collaborator, 64-year-old Boris Blank, are about to release their 13th studio album, 'Toy'. It's a real beauty, full of deluxe glitch-pop, rubberised twang-funk and fondant electro-soul chansons. Imagine Leonard Cohen sharing a studio with Pet Shop Boys, Massive Attack and Daft Punk. The album's title, Meier explains, reflects Yello's perennially childlike love of music as a sonic adventure playground.

"Our studio has always been our toy since we first started to make music," he explains. "Boris really is like a child with his sound toys around him. The studio is what he likes most in life, diving into his deepest feelings for sounds and music."

Yello's musical driving force, Blank typically works on dozens of tracks simultaneously, sometimes for years on end. Meier only joins the process in its final stages, providing lyrics and vocal melodies as well as directing the band's strikingly surreal videos. In the seven years since their last joint album, 'Touch Yello', Blank has been busy putting together his career-spanning retrospective 'Electrified' and his collaborative album with the Malawi-born jazz singer Malia, 'Convergence', both released in 2014. Malia's voice, breathy and sensual, also appears on 'Toy'. Blank has also been occupied with launching his Yellofier mobile app, developed in collaboration with Swedish programmer Jonatan Liljedahl, which allows users to sample everyday sounds, then instantly mix them into a Yello-style sound collage.

"The idea is, for less than the price of a cup of tea, you have a pocket studio which you can record whatever you want," he says. "You can use all kinds of noises, even ugly noises, to make a whole little symphony."

Musician friends including Carl Craig, Trentemøller, The Orb, Henrik Schwarz and Booka Shade have all contributed tracks to the Yellofier app. According to Blank, two schools in California are already using it as an educational tool. During our chat, he samples my voice and plays it back to me as an instant techno-pop remix. I have been Yello-fied. He also plays me the yodelling ringtone he uses to embarrass his teenage daughter when they are out in public. Swiss humour.

Yello are launching 'Toy' with their first ever live shows, four "operatic" performances at the Kraftwerk Berlin, in October. The pair have always resisted playing live before, partly because Blank dislikes the stilted, pre-programmed format of most electronic shows. So why now? Meier says he changed his mind after touring with the acoustic group Out Of Chaos, while Blank picked up the performance bug during live Yellofier demonstrations. Years of gentle persuasion from their long-time British collaborator and co-producer Ian Tregoning also played its part.

Plus the need to promote a new album after seven years away, of course.

Staged inside the same disused power station complex where the Tresor club now resides, the Berlin shows will be as live as possible, Blank promises, with guest singers and players joining Yello on stage.

"We are also working with a lot of visuals and light installations," he says. "Yello live on a rock and roll stage, like a heavy metal band, wouldn't be our business, which is why we are using the whole building like a theatre. The building is part of the show."

The Berlin shows are a tentative first step towards a world tour. Yello are already fielding offers from more than 80 promoters.

"I'm very confident that if it does work out, we will go on a tour," nods Meier. "We already had quite good interest from international bookers, some very important ones."

The venue for the Berlin shows is a neat coincidence. "Kraftwerk" simply means "power station" in German, of course, but Yello are sometimes lazily tagged as Swiss cousins of Kraftwerk, their fellow founding fathers of Germanic techno-pop. Neither Meier nor Blank seem convinced by the comparison.

"For me the only parallel is that we both use electricity to make music," says Blank. "Kraftwerk started with being robots, being their own instruments, and I was the opposite. I always wanted to make music with soul, even with a synthesiser, because it was built by human beings. At the time I was not a big fan of Kraftwerk, but now I think they have a genius concept, something unique that just exists once on this planet. Yello was always going different ways. I am using synthesisers as well, of course, but I was always more interested in sampling technology."

"I like Kraftwerk a lot," Meier confirms, "but Yello is really a chaos of sounds, it has nothing to do with the minimalism of Kraftwerk. It's more like an overloaded jungle of ideas and sounds. If you want to compare it with painting, Kraftwerk is more like Mondrian, and Boris is more like Jackson Pollock."

Most electronic artists, Kraftwerk included, prefer to present themselves as faceless technicians. By contrast, Yello have always embraced their image as flamboyant showmen. Like a René Magritte canvas come to life, they are a living artwork, clown princes of arty eccentricity. But Meier argues Yello's colourful public face is not a calculated pose, simply a distillation of their true selves.

"This we cannot change," he shrugs. "Other people are like musical chameleons, like David Bowie. He changed his outfit, his attitude, his style many times, which I think is interesting by the way, I am not criticising. But we cannot do this. Our music was never a speculation or an artificial project."

The key to understanding Yello, says Meier, is their "self-ironical" humour and Swiss outsider attitude.

"There is no Swiss tradition in rock or pop music," he offers. "Of course we had lots of rock bands, but it's always imported, it had no real roots in Swiss cultural tradition. Every Swiss artist creates their own tradition. They are like flowers somewhere growing high up in the Alps, and you have never seen anything similar. Famous Swiss writers and artists are always unique plants that can only grow in Switzerland. Boris' jungle in the mountains is a unique Swiss thing because he had to create his own roots, his own climate. This is typically Swiss."



"KRAFTWERK IS MORE LIKE MONDRIAN, AND BORIS IS MORE LIKE JACKSON POLLOCK"



The odd couple behind Yello come from very different backgrounds. According to the singer, Blank grew up so poor that he initially had to use his mother's kitchen implements as makeshift instruments. He worked as a truck driver before forming the band in the late 1970s, initially as an experimental duo with fellow tape artist Carlos Peron, then a more pop-friendly trio with Meier providing vocals and lyrics. Meier, by contrast, was a millionaire even before he joined Yello. Born to a banker father who worked his way up from extreme poverty to great riches, the singer has never concealed his wealthy family connections, but nor does he romanticise them.

"People think if you come from a wealthy background things are easier, and this is not really true," he says. "I would be lying if I did not admit this, but from when I was maybe 12 or 13, I knew that if I did not want to do anything I did not have to. But if you do not have to do anything to survive, you are a very strange part of society, because late capitalist society is all about work and making a living. Even if you are an artist, you have to focus on making money."

Meier's novel solution to his acute case of affluenza was first to become a junior golf champion for the Swiss national team, then a professional gambler. This obsessive lifestyle, he says, gave him some much-needed focus and discipline.

"When you are sitting at a poker table, you are like a boxer in the boxing ring, you are busy surviving," he explains. "Every three or four minutes you get a new hand of cards, and what you do with it, that is your fate. All the questions about what you should be doing in the world are non-existent. It's basically like when you become a junkie. This reflects how desperate I was to create a sense for myself. I was a lost child."

Before Yello, Meier's occasional musical performances were raw, provocative punk statements, sometimes improvised over a one-string guitar. Meanwhile, Blank was developing Yello's future sound using cut-up magnetic tape, then splicing together random samples into rhythmic loops. The band's use of sonic collages, absurdist humour and wordless vocal jabbering reach right back to the Dadaist "anti-art" movement of the early 20th century, which has strong roots in their native city of Zürich, home of the fabled Cabaret Voltaire. Blank and Meier concede the Dada connection, but insist their motives are much more straightforward.

"I think Dada was a bit more a statement, a concept to be different, a much more academic process than Yello," Blank argues. "I'm doing music a little bit like a dilettante, because I'm really not a musician. I try to bring together sounds like a patchwork, I try all different colours of sounds, but not on purpose."

Meier claims Blank is more like a naive folk artist than a Dadaist rebel.

"The Dadaists basically wanted, in a very humorous way, to ridicule art tradition," he explains. "They made radical new statements ridiculing the so-called important and classical development of art, the whole bourgeois aspect of art. With Yello, we had a similar approach to creating something new when we started. Rightly, Boris is considered one of the godfathers of techno because he sampled with tape loops and collected sounds that were the basis of his music. But it was not a comment on existing music. He just did this because there was nothing else he could do."

Dadaists or not, Yello have always had an avant-garde streak, thanks largely to Meier's early years as a conceptual artist and experimental filmmaker. In 1972, he installed a plaque at the train station at the German city of Kassel with the inscription, 'On March 23 1994, from 3 to 4 pm, Dieter Meier will stand on this plaque'. He duly turned up 22 years later. In another art performance, he had 100,000 small metal components delivered to a public square in Zurich, then spent five days counting them into bags of 1,000.

"There was no justification for this, only because I wanted to do it," Meier shrugs. "It was as unimportant as myself on this planet, but it is a kind of a guideline for whatever I do. My approach to singing is pretty much the same."

In 1983, shortly before the band hit their commercial peak, Yello became a two-piece when Carlos Perón quit to pursue a solo career. In 1986, 'Oh Yeah' featured on the soundtrack to 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off', a lucrative boost to their US profile. Two years later, they scored a UK Top 10 hit with 'The Race', which featured Meier rapping in his signature high-velocity Crazy Frog mode. This imperial phase also produced Yello's sumptuous collaborative single 'The Rhythm Divine', recorded with both Shirley Bassey and with the song's co-writer, The Associates' late, great singer Billy Mackenzie.

"Billy was always easy to work with because he always worked so fast," Blank recalls. "He would say: 'Boris, Boris! Fast, fast! Next, next!'. He always wanted to do something new, he rarely talked about the Associates. It was really great to work with Billy, you never had to fight over anything. It was a very harmonious working process."

After working together for four decades, Meier and Blank also have a harmonious relationship. But it was not always mellow Yello.

"In the beginning, Boris was not happy at all with my approach to performance," says Meier. "He is a total perfectionist. He expects his session musicians and even the singer to come with perfection from the beginning. But I am working more like a Zen Buddhist calligraphist, it depends on the moment of doing things. In the sense of Spanish flamenco, I am looking for the duende, when you are one with what you are doing emotionally. In the beginning Boris expected me to be like a singing machine, but this is not what I will and I can do. This is where we had arguments."

The solution the bickering duo finally worked out was for Blank to leave Meier alone in the studio for hours to work up his "alchemical" lyrics and melodies from nowhere.

"For many years, maybe 25 or 30 years, this is how we work," says Meier, "and since then we have very few arguments."

Throughout his time in Yello, Meier has continued to build a global business empire that now includes a cattle ranch in Argentina, a restaurant in Zürich, an upmarket watch company and several organic vineyards. His latest pet project is a Swiss chocolate factory that uses a radical new method, cold-pressing the cacao bean to preserve the natural aromas and flavours that are usually lost in production. With typical understatement, he says his "chocolate revolution" will shake up the industry when it launches later this year.

The founding father of Willy Wonka-tronica has also directed feature films, most recently 'Lightmaker' in 2001, a phantasmagorical fairytale about a magical violin. Blighted by technical problems and a long-running lawsuit, this cult oddity never received a proper release.

"I am still very proud of that film, it was like a damaged kid for me," Meier sighs. "Filmmaking is probably my biggest passion out of everything. If I had to make a decision, if I could do only one thing on this planet, I would probably want to make movies."



"I NEED TO SEE TREES
GROWING RATHER
THAN GOING OUT IN
CLUBS EVERY NIGHT"

Can Yello go on forever? Embarking on your first world tour at 71 may seem like an eccentric career choice, but this is Yellowworld. They write their own rules. Even outside his musical commitments, Meier maintains an insanely busy lifestyle, jetting between his six houses and the various business ventures in Switzerland, Berlin, California and Argentina. He remains a fanatical golfer, is writing a novel, and has just completed his first children's book.

"Sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I go through all the things in my head that I am doing in parallel, and I say: 'Dieter, you are a total nutcase, you should stop this!'," he laughs. "I feel like a Japanese plate-juggler, but I'm going to be dead for millions of years, billions of years. So I am going to enjoy this very short time of being alive."

Blank prefers a gentler pace of life nowadays. A self-styled "nature freak", he gets his main creative inspiration from fresh air, flowers and woodland rambles with the family dog.

"I need the quietness," he explains. "I need to see trees growing rather than going out in clubs every night. I did this when I was younger, but today I am a big fan of the nature."

Yello's musical driving force admits he may want to swap pop music for more sedate alternatives in the future, possibly film soundtracks. But he remains as obsessed with excavating new electronic noises as he was when he first began slicing up magnetic tapes four decades ago.

"There are so many sounds on this planet that you can get better and better with the new sampling technology," Blank nods. "Like a scientist, you can go closer to a certain sound, deep in the molecular structure of the surface of the material. You can change even the DNA of a sound and build something almost completely different. This is what still fascinates me in working with sampling and glitching."

Meier likes to joke that, even at his own funeral, Blank will somehow sample the sound of the coffin nails and turn them into a Yello track.

"For Boris, making music is like breathing," he explains. "It's as important a part of his life as breathing. And for me to be invited into the sound paintings of Boris Blank, to give my little contributions, this is such a joy for me. As long as I can sit in a studio and somehow use my voice, I will enjoy doing this even when I am 127 years old. Yello is not a project. Yello is a way of life."

'Toy' is released by Universal on 30 September





STICK
ING

TOG
ETHER

ON THEIR NEW ALBUM 'WHITE GLUE', **WRANGLER** HAVE TEASED A GROOVE-FUELLED SOUND FROM THEIR GLORIOUS VINTAGE MACHINES. THE TIGHT-KNIT TRIO TALK OLD KIT, NEW KIT AND WHY LESS IS MORE

Words: **DAVID STUBBS**
Pictures: **NEIL THOMSON**

"It was a fucking long journey from you to Kylie Minogue that night," laughs Stephen Mallinder, one third of Wrangler. He's recalling a comment made by a friend following the band's recent performance at the Royal Albert Hall as guests of John Grant, who was joined onstage by the timelessly adhesive Kylie for a duet on his hit 'Glacier'. It's hard to think of a more leftfield and electronic proposition than Wrangler to have been hosted within the booming, cavernous circles of such a venue. But they certainly weren't overawed by the occasion, nor did it go to their heads. Rather than go for a giant screen backdrop, they filled the stage with TV screens.

"Instead of going big, we went really small," explains Benge, antique synth collector and Wrangler percussionist, who is also known for his work with John Foxx. "Mind you, we had the full light show, which was really cool, they don't normally do that for a support band."

Wrangler laugh a lot. Stephen Mallinder is, always has been, a far more affable proposition in person than his icy, seething presence as Cabaret Voltaire vocalist suggested. And despite the nervy tautness of his latest outfit's sound, as if on the edge of boiling and breaking point, there's no tension whatsoever between the three of them as we chat away on the sofas in a coffee bar in Crouch End, the morning sunshine streaming in. Mal was the last to join the project, which was initially a duo of the equally cheery Benge and Phil Winter of the folktronic Tunng.

They laugh at and with each other; at Benge, when he's not allowed to finish and clarify his thought that on the new album they explore "newer genres like disco"; they laugh when I comment on the terseness of the titles on the new album. "We don't like to use too much ink when we're doing the set lists," says Mal. They laugh that I'm required to bring along my 11-month-old son to the interview, whose manic insomnia is only cured when I embark tangentially on a Keith Jarrett anecdote and he finally dozes off, jazz-bored, in my arms. They laugh the way serious people do. They laugh with the absolute ease of electronic elders who know what they are about, what each other is about, know their way around the circuits and are fluent in negotiating electronic circuitry, navigating fresh pathways using decidedly old-fangled equipment, analogue, modular systems of a certain vintage, but still humming with warm juice.

"It's the technology that other people have discarded or forgotten, even while there's so much potential left in it," says Mallinder.

"Although it wasn't so much rejected as displaced," adds Benge. "Electronic music as a genre regenerates a lot quicker than others do. Rock bands have been using the same instruments and technology since the 1960s. Funny, I've been using analogue synths since the 80s, but people were never interested in preserving or collecting them back then, people always wanted the latest or most convenient thing."



STICKING WITH YOU: STEPHEN MALLINDER, PHIL WINTERS AND BENGE



Electronic music used to be synonymous with futurism, but that's no longer the case. Now it is both haunted and inspired by its own past, its unfulfilled dreams and thwarted ideals. It is more often to be found dwelling on 1960 and Joe Meek's 'I Hear A New World' outer space utterings than thinking about year 2060. Plus, there is the factor of "built in obsolescence" when it comes to the hardware of electronic music, in which new products are deemed to have a limited shelf life as new trends and fashions accelerate. This has led to older technologies being discarded before their time.

"The idea of wanting what everyone else has got, that's like capitalism," says Mallinder. "Whereas the idea of wanting a better way of doing things, for better worlds, represents a sort of ideology, or utopianism. It translates into making music, where you reject the same old rock thing, or plug-ins, and instead find better ways of doing it. You're applying that sense of idealism.

"A LOT OF PEOPLE
PROBABLY HAVE
SYNTHS IN THEIR
LIVING ROOMS,
A DISPLAY THING"

"There's also the aesthetic. There's a beauty in those old machines. I was watching 'Escape From New York' last night and it has these wonderful neon colours to represent Manhattan. There's a whole aesthetic with synths and modular stuff, right down to the fonts. It was from a time when people made things, they weren't just cobbled together and put in a black box. A lot of people probably have synths in their living rooms, a display thing."

Wrangler's new album, 'White Glue', represents an upgrade of sorts on their excellent debut, 'LA Spark'. More streamlined, more honed and gleaming, it's the result of focussed and intensive sessions at Bengé's studio (which has recently been relocated from East London to Cornwall) and road-testing the tracks live.

"For me, it's having the confidence to do less," says Winter. "To be more minimal, less jamming, see how that affects the crowd."

The record's sleeve features an inflated acid house smiley face spattered in black ink, and lyrically the album is antithetical to the chemically induced happy-clappy fervour of 1988. And yet, Wrangler wear a smile of their own; smiles shouldn't be the preserve of the inely optimistic, a sentiment with which Mallinder heartily agrees. The Wrangler smile is borne from a love of the work, of the uneasy routes they take in these songs, the new shapes they bend from the old, like a TV aerial sculpture, the sense of renewal through revisitation, of chance discoveries on temperamental machinery.

"With an old synth, the first idea is usually an accident from which you build," says Winter.

"When things are perfect it's pretty fucking boring," agrees Mal.

A certain spirit of the Cabs' heyday pervades 'White Glue', shot through with contributing guitars from Julie Campbell, aka Lonelady, a modern day carrier of the post-punk torch. If every Cabaret Voltaire track felt like a four-minute warning, Wrangler bristle with an abundance of fresh, anti-nostalgic permutations wrought from the antique. Today, Mallinder is an unnervingly youthful looking 61, working in part as an academic and lecturer at Brighton University. I wonder how his music sits with the current studio generation and their more immersive relationship with technology.

"Actually, we got the students to do a remix," says Mal. "There were some really interesting results. One guy translated all the sound into pure data and built another track altogether, one that had no sonic resemblance to the original track.

"There's a massive fascination with the world we come from. Their terms of reference are house, acid; slightly different from ours. But they've come from a world of plug-ins, they see a massive authenticity in what we do. They were given a breakdown of the equipment we used to record with and we talked through some of the processes, the fact that the album was made in a studio captivates them. It's a mystery to them. It's 'proper music'."

DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME?

WRANGLER DISCUSS THEIR OPENING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ELECTRONIC MUSIC

MAL: "It was back in 1972, when Cabaret Voltaire formed. It was Brian Eno using the VCS 3, and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, but only the stuff like 'Doctor Who' and 'Quatermass' soundtracks. That was the kick start for us."

WINTER: "Donna Summer. Totally. I was a 13-year-old pop fan and after I heard that I just thought, 'Fuck that!'"

BENGE: "For me it was the film 'Forbidden Planet'. We used to go to the same holiday camp and they'd show it every year. When I was little it made this huge impression on me. Later, groups like Suicide were a revelation; that you could use synths in an angry way. Before that, it had all been things like Vangelis for me."



"A BAND IS ACTUALLY EXPECTED TO HAVE SYNTHESISERS. IF A BAND JUST GOES UP AND PLAYS GUITARS, PEOPLE WONDER WHEN THE SYNTH BASSLINE IS COMING"



One of the attractions of seeing Wrangler live is that they present a very physical spectacle of work being done, wrought from equipment that looks like it might fight back. It's the antithesis of the less inspiring onstage sight of chaps bathed in the light of their own laptops.

"The first time I saw that it absolutely fascinated me," laughs Winter. "What's he doing behind there?"

But how do Wrangler crowds compare with the crowds of yesteryear?

"It seemed there were a lot of people coming down to see Mal and because we played a few Cabs tunes, which we don't do any more," says Bengé. "But now I think people are coming along out of curiosity or to see us for our own sake."

"One thing I noticed from having played at Latitude this year is that crowds these days are made up of very young people and older people," says Mal. "People between 18 and 28 don't go. That seems to be the demographic of the gig-going public."

Is "synthophobia" (the suspicion that electronic keyboard instruments are soulless and inauthentic) extinct among the young? A relic of an older mentality?

"I think in the last five years it's gone the other way," says Bengé. "A band is actually expected to have synthesisers. If a band just goes up and plays guitars, people wonder when the synth bassline is coming."

"It's an expected part of the armoury," adds Mal. "Every band has a token synth. The day the world stopped turning is when Coldplay put that picture up of their modular synth and I was thinking, 'Take that down immediately'."

'White Glue' follows hot on the heels of the recently released 'Sparked: Modular Remix Project', in which guests including Daniel Miller, Abul Mogard, Scanner and Chris Carter were invited to rework tracks from the first Wrangler offering on the caveat that they used "just one analogue modular synthesiser system of your choice." From Mogard's mournfully cloudy take on 'Mus IIC' to Daniel Miller's electropop-ish vehicular take on 'Theme From Wrangler' to the band's own lengthy 'Theme Meme', the album is a formidable array of current analogue practice. As Mal says, "It was intended to showcase the full modular range: it's the last word."

Or maybe evidence of a continuing, ongoing conversation between man and machine, even machine and machine. Because, as Wrangler are aware, the machines do talk.

"Definitely," says Bengé, the synth collector, like a loving zookeeper. "You have to let the machines do their thing. Let them talk to each other. They do stuff by themselves sometimes and you have to be open to that."

'White Glue' is released by MemeTune on 23 September



"LET'S JUST MAKE SOME GOOD OLD FUCKING ROCK AND ROLL..."

DESPITE THEIR CONFRONTATIONAL MONIKER, **WARPAINT** ARE A HARMONIOUS BUNCH, BOTH MUSICALLY AND PERSONALLY. BASSIST JENNY LEE LINDBERG OFFERS SOME WISE WORDS ON HOW TO BE IN A BAND THAT MATTERS THESE DAYS

Words: SOPHIE LITTLE
Pictures: BRIAN SWEENEY

Let's start a band, I want to be Warpaint," said a friend a couple of years ago. She wasn't the first and won't be the last. The Los Angeles foursome incite a cult-like passion in otherwise ordinary human beings across the world. They've recruited slowly and meaningfully with intense and captivating live shows, but recently Warpaint have shut themselves away to record a third album to satiate their followers – and it's ready.

'Heads Up' is a meaty listen. There are more voices on this record, more harmonies. The opener, 'Whiteout', is a track to be particularly proud of, boasting a three-part harmony, something that Warpaint hasn't tried before. It works. The whole thing is dancier and catchier, but retains the layered experimental pondering and meandering ideas that have always set them apart. They sound closer than ever before, a force immune to the wax and wane of the tempestuous music industry that has surrounded them for the past 12 years.

It's early summer, and they're in London playing their first gig for a year. It feels like a good time to harvest some tips on being in a successful band like Warpaint.

"If you're starting off as a band," says founding member and bassist Jenny Lee Lindberg, "don't be directly influenced by

other music or other bands. Just be inspired by them and figure out what it is that you like about them and how can you evoke the same kind of feeling that you get listening to them through your own music. I think people get a little carried away with wanting to sound exactly like somebody else. It's a shame and a bit of a waste because every single person on this earth, as similar as we all are, is unique and has their own voice and their own way to express things."

Jenny speaks slowly, drawing out her words, leaving you hanging on every syllable. She seems to like imparting advice, sagely drawing buckets of the stuff from a deep well.

"Communicate and be open and don't take things personally," she says.

The tone and delivery of what you're saying is very important too, apparently. Communication is the buzzword here, Jenny uses it liberally. It makes you wonder what sort of squabbles she's endured with Emily, Theresa and Stella in the past in order to place so much value on one term. Among other pointers, she suggests taking a break between touring and recording. Each of the band recently indulged their separate creative endeavours with Jenny herself releasing her first solo record.

"Always trust your gut when you're

writing a song," she continues. "Go with what first comes out and have fun. If you're not having fun then you're not doing something right. Tap into your child-like self and your imagination and create from there. That's always the most magical. It's real, it's vulnerable and it's you."

Listening to Warpaint, it's easy to picture these four women sitting around, jamming out new song ideas without having to utter a word. They're wholly comfortable around one another, seemingly even moving as one. Ask them for a photo and they curve and mould together like it's the most natural thing in the world. But surely they're not immune to the self-examination and circumspection that the rest of us battle with. Does Jenny feel like there are limits or restrictions in what she can say or do, musically or otherwise?

"I honour myself and come from a place of integrity and humility," she says. "Every day I try to be as good a person as possible; be kind, be compassionate. I'm not trying to be anyone else, I'm just me and that's just the way that it is and I'm happy with that."

What if she had a time machine and could travel to any era, any place, where would she go and who would she be? In short, which band would Jenny Lee Lindberg be in if not Warpaint?

"IT'S GOT A LITTLE BIT OF AN
EDGE TO IT SO IT'S NOT DISCO
AND IT'S NOT PUNK BUT IT
DEFINITELY GETS YOU DANCING"



"I'm an 80's baby, it's the music that I loved when I was growing up," she says. "I still love it now and I'm still discovering bands from that period that I almost prefer to any new music."

Fully expecting her to launch in to a list of prophetic artists and hungry for specifics, I press her on this question to no avail. A hypothetical time machine! Surely she's going to take that for a spin. But her answers lack any examples and she quickly tires of my line of enquiry, trying hard to elaborate on that sound she's thinking about.

"I guess you'd call it post-punk. It's got a little bit of an edge to it so it's not disco and it's not punk but it definitely gets you dancing."

A little surprised at her vagueness, I form a new theory about Warpaint. Perhaps they're a creatively introverted bunch, purposefully distanced from music past and present. It transpires that around the time of this album's creation the only things Jenny listened to were mixes of it, or silence. She drives in silence, and rarely listens to music at home. She doesn't engage with reviews because, in her mind, they've already created their art and she feels the subsequent perception of it is almost none of her business. She's not online. Maybe the ultimate key to being in a band like Warpaint these days, is to maintain a clean canvas to work on.



"I know that there's a gazillion amazing bands," she says, "but maybe there's just too much music to listen to with the internet, with Spotify and streaming. These are things that weren't really available 12 years ago. All music is so accessible at this point, but sometimes it's a little bit overwhelming."

Anyone who's lived through this change can empathise. Keeping up with new music is more than a full-time occupation. Attempting to give everything a listen can leave you feeling numb and worn and uninspired.

Warpaint have experienced quite a turbulent time and seen a lot of change within music; not only the rise of internet dominance, but the fall of record sales and the pressure to tour the hell out of every single release. I wonder what other changes they've seen during their tenure.

"We've seen people say 'This is what is happening right now!', and then that trend gets exploited and burnt out. Then something new happens, and people grasp on to it, then that starts to burn out," she says wearily.

I begin to worry that my questions are somehow depressing her. There's a pause in our conversation as she waits for another question. Jenny's eyes when resting are so intensely hazel and wide that they look animated, then without cue, those eyes grow even larger.

"I was in a coffee shop and I heard The Shins' first album come on," she says, suddenly. "There was something refreshing about it. I thought I really miss this kind of music, I miss bands. I miss... I want to say indie rock, but that's become a genre of music that's not even really happening anymore."

A little mental arithmetic places the release of The Shins' first album a few years before Warpaint got together. She's talking passionately now.

"There's a lot of albums and music that I feel was exciting at that time," she offers. "It was new to me. There was just a bunch of bands like The Shins, The Rapture, Modest Mouse: a whole movement that had a big following, but they weren't mainstream. It's not that they weren't popular or respected or well known, they just weren't on commercial radio. At that one time there were so many bands that I loved. I haven't felt that in a really long time."

Here's the real answer to the time machine question and possibly the answer most people might give. Jenny isn't asking to be Bowie or Fleetwood Mac, or to live through the 60s, she's excited about revisiting that time when you're a teenager and just getting enraptured by new music for the first time. I'm watching her have the

emotional swell that occurs when you think back to your first gig or festival, or the album you coveted so much that waiting for its release date was painful. Perhaps this is the music that acted as the catalyst, sparking the creativity that nurtured Warpaint in the first place.

Having spoken of the past, it feels right to end on the future, but it all gets a little awkward when I ask her what the musical landscape might look like.

"I feel like it's been very electronic based," she says. "It was really great when it came out... but let's just make some good old fucking rock and roll. I would really love for that to happen."

I shuffle about and consider whether I have a duty to remind her that this interview is for Electronic Sound and we have a vested interest in the electronic, after all, communication is key. But I don't, because the thought of her censoring her zeal seems to be so in conflict with all of the advice she's already imparted.

'Heads Up' is released by Rough Trade on 23 September

SAVE OUR SOUNDS

AS THE BRITISH LIBRARY SOUND ARCHIVE LAUNCHES A MULTI-MILLION POUND PROJECT TO SAVE THE NATION'S SOUNDS, WE TAKE A GUIDED TOUR OF THEIR EVER-GROWING COLLECTION TO GET AN IDEA OF THE TASK AHEAD

Words: NEIL MASON

There's libraries and there's The British Library. Its Grade I-listed building at 96 Euston Road, built on the site of derelict St Pancras goods yard and opened by The Queen in June 1998, was the largest public building constructed in the UK during the 20th century, and no wonder when you realise what it houses.

Before we get started though, let's step through an unassuming door on the first floor and into The Sir John Ritblat Treasures Of The British Library Gallery. Right in front of your eyes are handwritten Beatles lyrics, Da Vinci's notebooks, Handel's 'Messiah' in the composer's own hand. There's ornate Buddhist and Hindu texts, scientific and literary works from Charles Darwin to Charles Dickens. The Magna Carta? Got its own room. Just wander in off the street and there it is. For free.

And this is just the tiniest snapshot of a truly mind-blowing collection. As the UK's national library, it is entitled to receive a copy of every publication produced in the UK and Ireland and its wider collection is in excess of 150 million items, including manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, prints, drawings, music scores, patents and stamps. Head not spinning enough? What we're here to see isn't open to the public, but lurking below the ground, in one of the library's five high-security basement levels, is a collection that will fry your brain.

Deep beneath the hustle and bustle of King's Cross, Popular Music Curator Andy Linehan ushers us into a huge warehouse-like space filled with shelves as far as you can see. This is the sound archive's unreleased collection, racks full of recordings that may have not been heard since they were made. Each box contains new treasures, anything from several thousand demos sent to Glastonbury Festival by bands hopeful of a booking to boxes of quarter-inch tape recordings of television and radio programmes, from horse racing commentaries to the Queen's coronation, made by enthusiastic home recordists.

The British Library was recently awarded a £9.5m grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to help save many sounds like this from being lost forever. Archivists estimate we have just 15 years in which to digitise many recordings before the equipment required to play them becomes obsolete or formats, such as wax cylinders and acetate discs, start to naturally decay. This funding enables the library to undertake a five-year plan to not only save the recordings, but to make half a million rare, unique and at-risk sounds available to the public for the very first time. Those tapes of 'Top Of The Pops' or your gran telling her war stories again might have been worth hanging on to after all.

"We are interested in hearing about what people have got," explains Andy. "And then it's either 'Thanks, but we have that from another source' or 'Wow, tell us more'. The first step is that we know about the recordings that might be out there."

Having attended the world music festival Womad almost without fail since it began in 1982, Andy has been part of a team recording each year's proceedings. Standing in front of a shelf housing those recordings, what strikes you is the range of media. It's immediately apparent why time is of the essence with this new project.

"When we were first recording the festival, we'd use quarter-inch tape and we went through half a dozen other physical formats in 30-odd years," says Andy. "They were all the future of sound recording at one stage. Now we record on flash cards so there's nothing to actually put on a shelf any more."





Sharp left, through a door at the end of the room and we enter the collection of commercially released material and the first thing you notice is the smell – old records. We lift the lid of an unassuming brown cardboard box to reveal wax cylinders.

“They’ve survived quite well,” understates Andy. “We’ve got four and half thousand of these commercially issued ones and a similar number of home recorded ones. They were patented in 1877, the original idea was for an office dictation machine, but very quickly people saw the potential for entertainment.”

It’s a rather beautiful artifact packed in a neat cylindrical cardboard box. You can see its title, but it is secondary to the unmissable Edison Company branding. “Would you have needed an Edison cylinder player to play it on,” muses Neil, our photographer. “Like a 19th century Apple?”

A quick squirt past the enormous 16-inch broadcast discs – “They were used as a way of syndicating radio programmes in the days before tape,” explains Andy – and we’re round the corner and into shellac, or 78s, each one already digitised and catalogued and stored in a generic cardboard sleeve.

“Within about 10 years of Edison patenting the cylinder, Emile Berliner patented the disc,” explains Andy. “It was more efficient – you could get a longer recording and you had two sides which doubled the capacity. So that was the first format war. We’ve got about 200,000 78s, which is pretty amazing. We put them in our own envelopes because the sleeves were mostly generic, either relating to the label or the shop from which they were bought. We keep samples, but there’s no point in keeping them all when there’s no information directly pertaining to the actual recording.”

"IN TERMS OF LPS,
WE'RE UP TO 240,000,
ROUGHLY SPEAKING.
THERE'S ALSO ABOUT
90,000 12-INCH
SINGLES AND
110,000 SEVEN-INCHES"

And so to the main attraction.

“We’ve got vinyl,” says Andy, who clearly never tires of the look on visitors’ faces when he pull his next trick. Mechanical floor-to-ceiling shelves house the collection and, with the push of button and a warning siren, the shelves, each holding some 10,000 records, slowly open up and a corridor appears down which we wander pulling out random vinyl. Oh look, The Andrew Oldham Orchestra’s 1966 album ‘The Rolling Stones Songbook’ where The Verve nabbed their sample of ‘The Last Time’ for ‘Bitter Sweet Symphony’. Near mint, current value is £120.

“In terms of LPs, we’re up to 240,000, roughly speaking,” says Andy, matter of factly. “And that’s individual copies, there’s no duplication. There’s also about 90,000 12-inch singles and 110,000 seven-inches.”

And this is just the half of it, the other half lives at the library’s Boston Spa site in west Yorkshire. We wonder if they know how comprehensive the collection is.

“It is something we’ve been trying to do,” he says, “but it’s difficult to work out the number of releases even in one year, and what percentage of those we have. We’re making some positive moves on those grounds, but it’s like trying to nail down jelly. In terms of physical releases alone the last U2 album had seven or eight variations. Does that still count as one?”

Back above ground, in a new part of the building, lie the restoration suites, which will soon be alive with sounds from the new project, having just completed work on the excellent ‘Punk 1976–78’ exhibition showing until October. Piled up on the floor, stacked in cupboards and lined up against walls, there are machines galore ready and waiting for the process to begin.

“We have lots of equipment that will play old formats,” explains Andy. “We’ve got a big cupboard full of machines they don’t make anymore, which is another reason why we’ve got to digitise now. In 10 years’ time we won’t be able to get the machinery of this standard to get the signal off the media coming in.”

Save Our Sounds aims to digitise and publish many rare and unique sounds from their own collections and those from around the UK which are most at risk, including local dialects and accents, oral histories and previously unheard musical performances and plays, and vanishing wildlife sounds. The funding also means they can develop a national preservation network via 10 regional centres as well as run a major outreach programme to schools and communities to celebrate the UK’s sound heritage and raise awareness of a treasure trove of living history held in archives across the country.

“A big part of Save Our Sounds is to make people aware that all those old tapes you’ve got up in your attic, they are not going to be playable in 10 years’ time so do something about it now,” says Andy. “Talk to us.”

For more information about Save our Sounds visit bl.uk/save-our-sounds. ‘Punk 1976–78’ is in the Entrance Hall until 2 October



SPARKLE AND SHINE

WITH AN EVENTFUL CAREER THAT BEGAN IN THE 60S, **SILVER APPLES** HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO ENJOY A QUIET RETIREMENT. BUT FOUNDER AND LONE SURVIVING MEMBER **SIMEON COXE** IS HAVING NONE OF IT AND HAS, INSTEAD, PRODUCED HIS MAGNUM OPUS

Words: KRIS NEEDS

Silver Apples are one of the last acts radiating from the seismic revolutions which gripped New York City in the late 1960s. As sole surviving member of the world's first two-man electronic band, Simeon Coxé is one of the few original electronic pioneers still pushing forward rather than trading on past innovations.

Defiantly, he still sounds like nobody else and, in a world that may have finally caught up, he has just released what is one of the landmark electronic works of the 21st century. Remarkably, 'Clinging To A Dream' is the first full Silver Apples album since the late 90s. While boldly continuing the original mission of using primitive components to create space-age psychedelic dream soundtracks, the album dares to venture into compelling new sonic vistas as Simeon's voice and oscillators shimmer in a lustrous alien greenhouse built with the help of Hackney-based producer Graham Sutton.

It's oddly reassuring that, although Simeon recently turned 78, he can still raise such heavenly hell on the oscillator set-up he started building in New York City nearly 50 years ago. He still transmitting sizzling satellite globules and spectral melodies at a time when much electronic music seems in danger of letting technology do the heavy lifting while it replicates existing formulas into a new form of nostalgia.

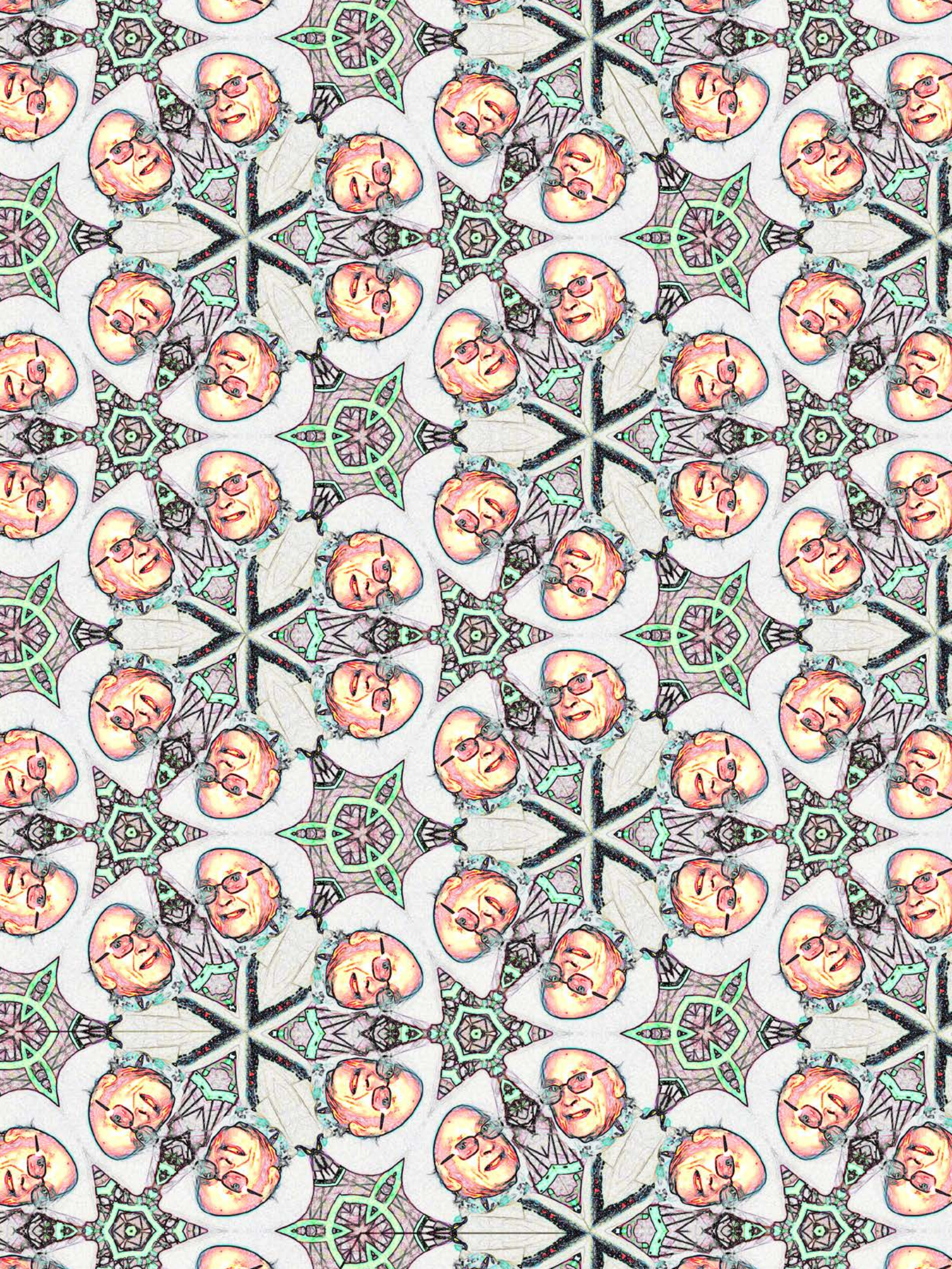
Four of the songs on the new record are from an 'opera' I had been working on," reveals Simeon. "It was conceived as a digital, animated saga involving a group of immortal beings who were at war with blood-drinking vampires for thousands of years. They thought the vampires' breath stank because of the rotting blood and that they were basically disgusting. The immortals felt their purpose was to protect humans from this scourge. They had many beneficial encounters with humans without the humans being aware of them. The opera chronicled a series of these encounters. I felt some of the songs could stand on their own so I included them on the new record... the rest are from all over the place."

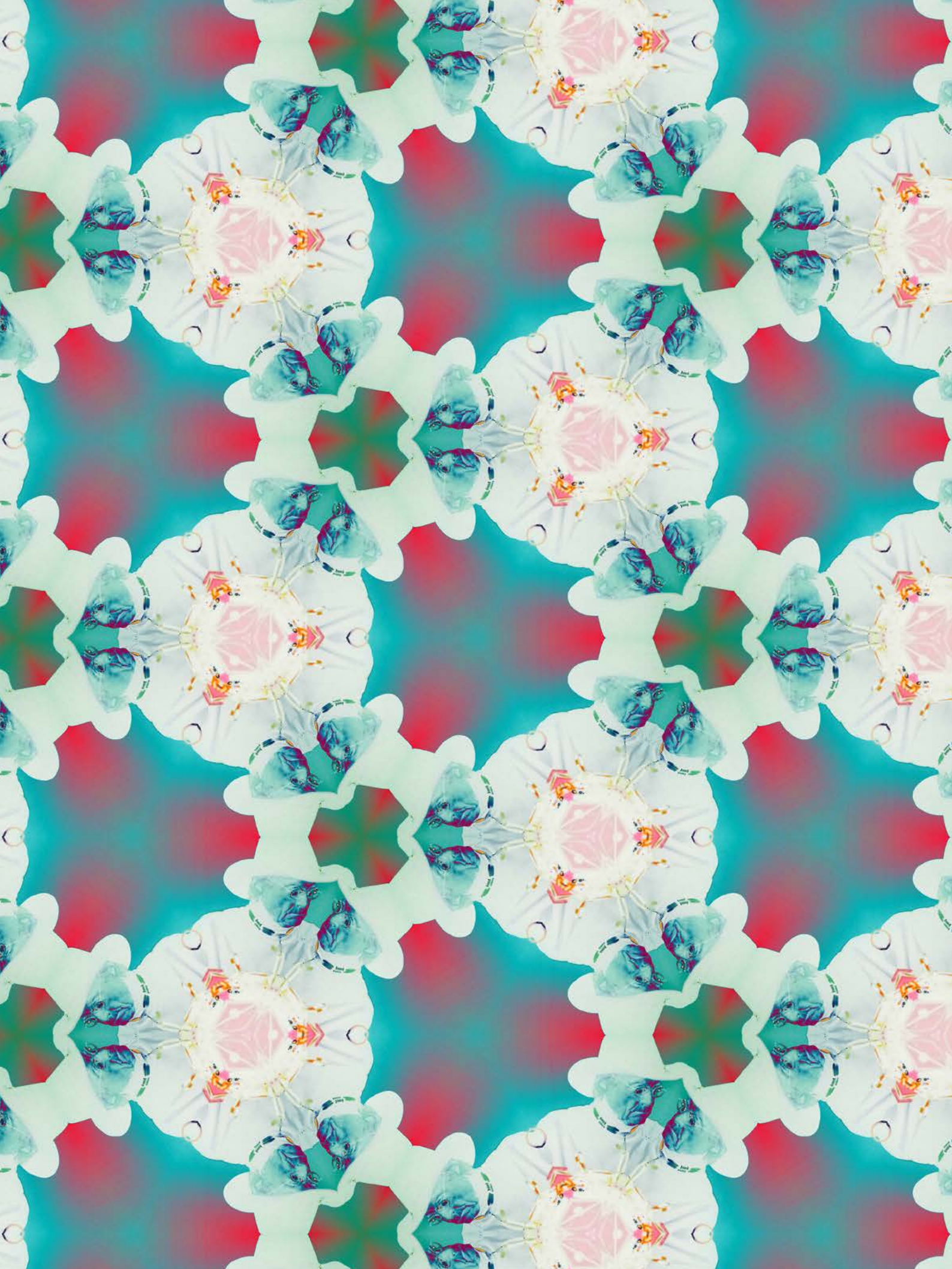
The album starts with the lights coming up on a distant planet before the familiar bass motif of 'The Edge Of Wonder', previously unveiled as a single in 2012, pulses into life. In a strange way, Simeon's quavering Martian nursery rhyme intonation recalls the fragile other-worldly innocence of Syd Barrett, Pink Floyd's vastly misunderstood doomed genius who spoke from a world rarely glimpsed in music. In some ways Simeon is a fellow messenger, carrying on the mission of infusing pop music with endangered magic and sense of cosmic wonder.

As a long-time believer that the main ingredient lacking in most music is imagination, Simeon's still seems to know no bounds; a principle reinforced by the queasy proto-techno stealth missile of 'Concerto For Monkey And Oscillator', with its radioactive bass snakes, corroded African piano riff and samples from what Simeon describes as "various animal sanctuaries" (shouting out to Amsterdam zoo in the credits). The album finishes with the demo of 'The Edge Of Wonder', which seems to have taken over from 'Oscillations' as a kind of Silver Apples' theme song. It's a fitting finale to this astonishing album, just Simeon alone with the invention he's always called The Thing (others often refer to it as The Simeon), his one remaining friend from Silver Apples' 60s gestation. The hazardous birth of The Thing is well documented but, for those just clambering aboard, it's the electronic battle weapon Simeon started building a few years after arriving in New York City in 1960.

According to Simeon, he and The Thing have finally reached a degree of understanding after years of him having to deal with what he once described as "a temperamental diva". For the first time, he feels he's coming out on top after nearly 50 years grappling with her.

"I used to feel like the beast was steering me," he says, "but now I feel like I'm in control. I'm finally learning how to play my creation."





Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and growing up in New Orleans with piano pounders such as Little Richard, Fats Domino and Big Joe Turner ringing in his ears, Simeon had shone as an art prodigy as child. After hitting New York's vibrant melting pot in his early 20s, he hung out at the Cedar Tavern on University Place, favoured watering hole of the Abstract Expressionists, beats and musicians.

"The Cedar Street bar was the artist hangout in the early 60s," he remembers. "You'd go in there and see people like Bill De Kooning and Jackson Pollock. New York was an open-ended cauldron of creativity. You were not just encouraged to do something completely different and off the wall, it was almost necessary to get anybody's attention. If you wanted to be taken seriously as someone doing something experimental, it had to be pretty blatant. We felt that way so that's the atmosphere we were creating in."

To try and sum Simeon up as just a musician is like trying to describe Alan Vega as a singer. Like the Suicide frontman, Simeon was an artist before he started making noise from electronic circuits. This artistic sensibility is a key element which informs Silver Apples and he has carried on painting and creating visual art ever since, including the new album's striking sleeve.

In early 60s New York, many different forms of art co-existed and often spilled into each other. Simeon's passion for groove-driven R&B dominated his first band, The Random Concept before he hooked up with local composer Harold Clayton who took him to jazz clubs, including edgy Alphabet City niterie Slug's Saloon where synth pioneer Sun Ra was in residence for six years from 1966 and showed Simeon how far into the cosmos musical boundaries could be pushed.

Through Clayton, he met a musician called Hal Rogers, who introduced him to the influential 12 tone technique, which ensures the notes of the chromatic scale are given equal importance in compositions. It inspired many riffs and basslines later used by Silver Apples "and even today in my paintings, which are an aesthetic exploration of Chaos Theory". Simeon was fascinated by the World War Two oscillator Rogers had hooked up to his stereo. Although normally used in radio and TV transmitters, Rogers liked to get pissed and play along with Beethoven.

"I played it with an old rock 'n' roll record and was absolutely hooked," recalls Simeon. "That's where my fascination with electronics came in. Without that I don't know where I would have been. I eventually bought it off him for \$10."

In 1967, Simeon joined covers outfit The Overland Stage Electric Band, but his noise-generating contraption caused the whole band to flee in disgust, leaving just drummer Danny Taylor. Simeon found more oscillators in junk shops, which he used to construct a crackling, sparking tower that he controlled through operating 86 telegraph keys with his hands, feet and elbows.

The Thing was born and, after Danny joined in with his two drum kits, so was Silver Apples. The name came from Simeon's teenage years immersed in Romantic poetry and an 1899 W.B. Yeats poem called 'The Song Of The Wandering Aengus' ("And pluck till time and times are done/The silver apples of the moon"). Along with Suicide, they were like lone warriors carrying space-age weapons when taking those first tentative steps in New York. After their first major gig in Central Park, Silver Apples played the downtown circuit, particularly Max's Kansas City. Like Suicide would soon experience, Silver Apples provoked hostility and violence from crowds.

"People would shout because Suicide had no guitar," recalls Simeon. "We got the same. They'd say 'You're not a rock 'n' roll band unless you got a guitar'. I was very fortunate to have a drummer who was so good that an audience would identify with what he was doing and latch onto the rhythm."

Alan Vega was one of Silver Apples' earliest champions.

"They were so way out, man," he once told me. "I loved the minimalism of their stuff. I'd rave about the Silver Apples, but nobody had heard of them. We stole from the Velvets, Iggy, Question Mark And The Mysterians and Silver Apples. That music was part of us."

Silver Apples' first phase saw two albums, 1968's self-titled debut and 1969's 'Contact', which are now so frozen in timeless cryogenic suspension they can never sound dated. The plane-crash cover design of 'Contact' famously incurred the wrath of Pan Am, who smashed a legal boot down on Silver Apples effectively squashing any further activity. The duo had embarked on a third album, recording at the same time as their old friend Jimi Hendrix (who enlisted Simeon's oscillators on the studio version of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' after the pair compared gadgets), but it never saw a release at the time.

The return of Silver Apples in the mid-90s was a joy. Prompted by a chance hearing of his old albums in a New York gallery some 20 years on from their release, Simeon resurrected the name and released two albums in quick succession, the Steve Albini-produced 'Beacon' and, consisting of just the one track, 'Decatur'. Then, in 1998, he got a call from a radio station telling him they'd tracked down Danny Taylor.

"That was wonderful, that was amazing," Simeon told Electronic Sound back in 2012. "Danny and I got together to play and it was like we'd never stopped. Someone rented him some drums and I took my gear up to his place and we set up in his living room. I said, 'OK, what do you wanna do?' and he said, 'Let's start where we started, let's start with 'Oscillations''. So that's what we did. It had been nearly 30 years, but it was like we'd played the night before at Max's Kansas City."

It turned out Danny had a rough dub of the unreleased third Silver Apples album, 'The Garden', which the pair reworked and made ready for release. By this time, the gigs were coming in. They'd played just three shows when, leaving a gig at The Cooler in New York, their van was involved in a serious accident. Simeon broke his neck in two places. That he survived at all was a wonder.

After two years in recovery, he was able to start playing music once more. But by this point, Danny was in poor health, having been diagnosed with a degenerative muscle illness. The gig at The Cooler in 1998 was the last time the pair played together. Danny died from a heart attack in 2005, by which time he was confined to a wheelchair.

'Clinging To A Dream' is Simeon's crowning glory and also his ultimate tribute to Danny, whose beats still haunt modern sets as samples. Simeon recorded the new album at his home studio in Fairhope, Alabama.

"It literally used to be a chicken coop," he says. "It's behind my house and I just repaired some holes in the roof, put in insulation, and started laying down tracks."

Which also explains why he calls his own record label ChickenCoop Recordings. The tracks were then sent to Graham Sutton, who harnessed, hotwired and beefed them up into the finished album. Sutton has an impeccable pedigree.

"It's the same Graham Sutton who is in Bark Psychosis and worked with Jarvis Cocker," says Simeon. "I basically gave him the raw tracks along with a suggested mix, just so he'd know what I had in mind. He also came to a few live concerts so as to get a better feel for the material. Then he went to work."

As a result, Silver Apples has never sounded so good, or seemed so splendidly isolated in the electronic arena which, if it was a noisy, crowded playground, would see Simeon standing zen-like at its centre, bathed in dazzling luminescence, several feet taller than everyone else and beaming a beatific, unmovable smile. After all, after nearly half a century, Simeon has painted his masterpiece.

'Clinging To A Dream' is out now on ChickenCoop



PARANOID ANDROID

PART-DOCUMENTARY, PART-ROAD TRIP AND PART-LOVE STORY, **'GARY NUMAN: ANDROID IN LA LA LAND'** LIFTS THE LID ON THE NUMAN FAMILY'S RELOCATION FROM LEAFY SUSSEX TO LOS ANGELES. WE MEET THE MAKERS FOR A SQUINT BEHIND THE SCENES

Words: **JO KENDALL**

I mpulse. Sometimes, just like in the old 80s perfume ads, you can't help acting on it. And that's exactly what filmmaker Steve Read found himself doing after watching Gary Numan play the Hop Farm Festival in Kent in 2012. Read had just completed a documentary about boxing for Channel 4 called 'Knockout Scousers' and had an eye out for his next project. He didn't expect to be bowled over by a synthpop icon whose heyday, according to Joe Public, was 30 years ago. And he certainly didn't expect to be following him, accompanied by collaborator Rob Alexander, across the Atlantic as part of a four-year adventure that would eventually become 'Gary Numan: Android In La La Land'.

"I wouldn't class myself as a Numan fan," says Read, "but Rob and I are certainly fans of electronic music. Gary's performance that day was amazing. He was flying around the stage and looked great, I loved it."

While hanging out in the backstage area following the show, Read bumped into Numan and his wife Gemma.

"It didn't take long for me to see he was a very engaging character. He and Gemma had a lot of chemistry and were really funny together, so I just blurted out, 'Gary, I wanna make a film about you!'. It came out of nowhere, I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I had to do it."

A lot of research later, Read and Numan met up and started the ball rolling. Read, a former art editor at pop culture pinnacles such as *Select*, *Loaded* and *GolfPunk* before turning to photography and film, brought working partner/producer Rob Alexander into the mix.

THE NUMANS MAKING A SPLASH WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS; GARY, GEMMA AND THE FAMILY DOG WILBUR; DIRECTOR STEVE READ AND NUMAN ON LOCATION; THE FAMILY'S MODEST LOS ANGELES PAD

"The first I heard of it was when Steve came back from Hop Farm and said 'I want to make a film about Numan' and I was a bit taken aback," says Alexander. "I knew Gary's importance, but I worried that the only thing to talk about was music, and it didn't seem a very modern story."

Although more of a cult concern since his UK Number One hat-trick of 'Replicas', 'The Pleasure Principle' and 'Telekon' from 1979-1980, Numan had been prolifically issuing albums ever since with a growing fanbase in the US. So here's the thing: The Numan's were about to pack up and head for a new life in Los Angeles, with their three young daughters, where Gary would finish 'Splinter', his 20th album.

"As a documentary maker you need certain building blocks and themes," says Read. "We were lucky to have a great backstory, then we had him moving to LA, which was a huge risk. There'd been documentaries about his music, but I wanted to do something more observational."

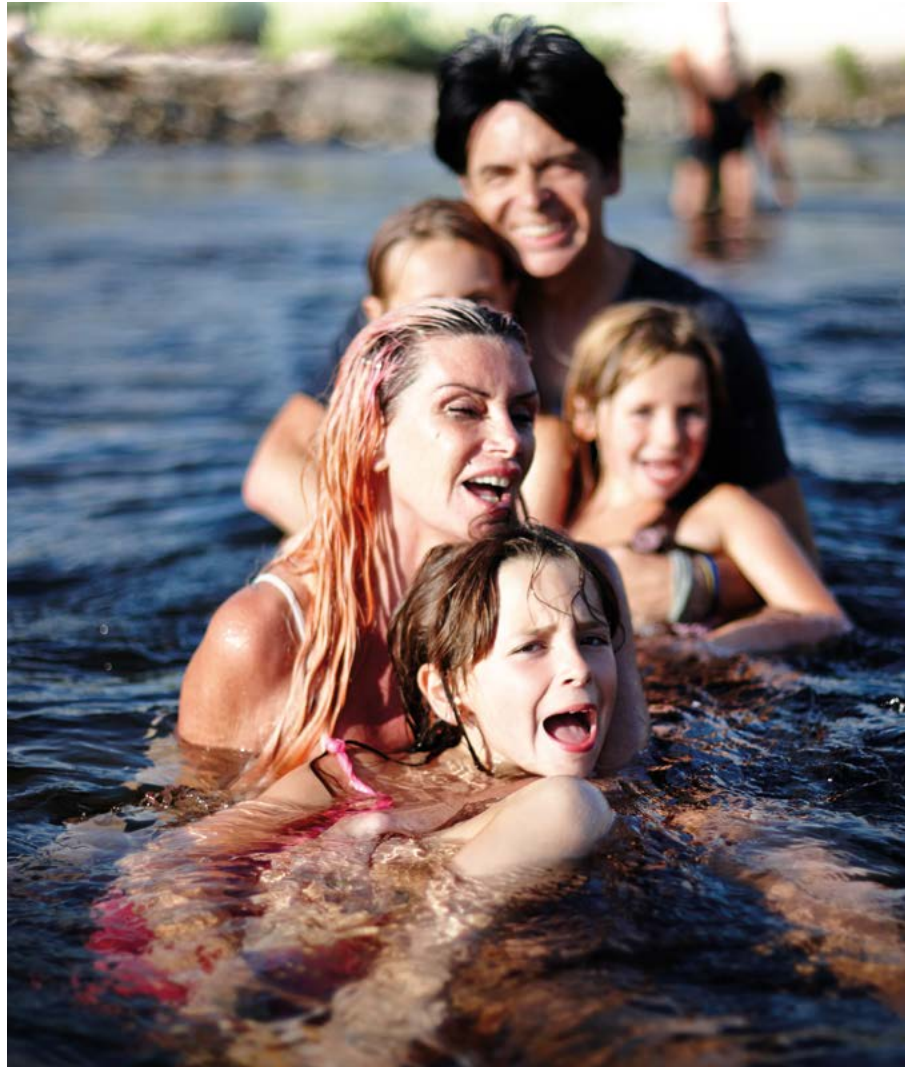
For the first session of filming, Read and Alexander visited the then-family home in East Sussex. Sitting in his garden, Numan was, as ever, surprisingly candid. He talked about his turbulent childhood, his blunders as a young star, his sometimes rocky relationship with his parents and his soul-saving union with Gemma, the former fan who once told a careers officer that she didn't need a job because she was "going to marry Gary Numan".

"We connected fairly quickly," says Read. "I've got three girls too, had moved to LA and been through the things that he was experiencing. I liked similar music too, so we got on well."

Mrs Numan, however, was having adjustment issues.

"Gemma was in tears and panicky at first," says Alexander. "I sensed she worked herself up about two guys turning up with a camera wanting to probe their life. By the time they'd left for America we'd done a little filming with her backstage at a gig and she was amazing. We knew how important Gemma was to the story. When you're making a film, you hope for one really important character. We had two."

"Gemma is pivotal to turning Gary's life and career around," says Read, who concentrated more on Numan while Rob looked after Gemma. "The film is very much a love story."



That love story also includes the couple's spunky daughters, Raven, Persia and Echo, Gary's parents Beryl and Tony (Gary's manager for 30 years), Gary's producer Ade Fenton and even the family dog Wilbur, all willing participants in what became, according to Alexander, "a film not just about an extraordinary musician, but an extraordinary family – they all played a big part in getting Gary to where he needed to be."

If it sounds like it could all get a bit emotional at times, it does. The couple detail their long struggle to have kids and Numan reveals recent years of depression and anxiety, feelings that were fuel for 'Splinter'. Talking of a time when he'd fallen out with Beryl and Tony, he breaks down.

"Gary doesn't open himself up to people like that so Rob and I knew that these were special moments," recalls Read. "Gary treated those sessions as a form of therapy. He was dealing with some of the things he writes about on the album for the first time, it was quite raw."

"That was really surprising," says Alexander. "There were some points where we were starting to get protective of him, feeling maybe he was revealing too much on film."



Over 18 months of filming there were many moments of joy too, such as seeing his band and fans' reaction during a mammoth tour across the States, plus insights from his three little girls, cheeky and charming and not half bad as fledgling musicians and singers themselves.

Then, of course, there's Gemma, who masterminded their LA relocation and radiates a doty mischief and positive magic that's been in force since the couple got together in 1992. Her affection and unconditional support thawed Numan's purported iceman character and they formed a hilarious double act.

Numan's early public profile was shaped by the media's negative response to his shy and awkward social behaviour. He would eventually be diagnosed with a form of autism, Asperger's syndrome, but this is less touched on in the film.

"You talk to Gary about Asperger's and he'd dismiss it," says Alexander. "He's never not had it, so doesn't know what a burden or a blessing it is for him, but he wouldn't have made this music without it."

"Out of everything, Asperger's was less of a battle in his life," Read explains. "He told me he's got this tunnel-like ambition that helped him see through the bad press

and nothing was going to get in his way. That detachment turned out to be a benefit."

Welcomed into a warm and loving family unit, Read and Alexander were astonished at how trusting the Numans were of them.

"Gemma had organised a camping trip in the Winnebago to Northern California," says Read. "I overheard them mention this and said 'Er, can we come?' and he said, 'Yeah, why not?' so we went on holiday with Gary Numan... camping out, fry-ups, swimming in a river, which I still love saying."

"Those things don't normally happen," laughs Alexander. "But small crews get that luxury. You don't go in and take over someone's life, you become part of it. You can be in the same cars and rooms with them so long as you get on all right."

Back in the studio, Numan explained how he brought synths into his sound and gave unprecedented access to the songwriting process on 'Splinter', which turned out to be a huge success and a return to the UK Top 20.

"People hadn't seen that before," says Read. "It's a bit like in David Bowie's 'Cracked Actor' where he shows his cut-up lyrics technique. I think 'Splinter' is his best album. It was really exciting, and relieving, to hear it was brilliant. It might not have been! All the fans who've seen the film are going, 'Wow, that's such an insight, so much stuff that we didn't know'."

Ah, the fans. Notoriously, Numanoids are a formidable bunch. And being vigilant, they got wind of 'Android In La La Land' very early on.

"I sent a link to someone in 2013 that I'd made live for one night and by the morning it had been ripped and put online," says Alexander. "The fans were trying to work out what was happening, so we got a Facebook page up quite quickly. You're always working on something, but you choose your moment to announce it. With this, we had an army on our case, so we put photos up as we were going along and gave them a form of backstage access."

Premiering at Austin, Texas' South By South West festival in March this year, the reaction so far has been extremely positive. At the East End Film Festival's July screening in London, Alexander got his first taste of Numanoids close up.

"They were tweeting and Instagramming on the way to the event," he laughs. "There was such a good atmosphere and full-on chanting by the time the credits started going. Not something I'd seen before!"

Self-financed, four years in-the-making and with Read dreaming of Numan every night over this all-consuming undertaking, do they know how Gary feels about the finished product?

"Some things he likes, some things he doesn't so much, but that's the best we're going to get when it's so close," says Alexander.

"It's got heavier stuff in it, but it's about a guy you want to like at the end of it," says Read. "That's the film I wanted to make. Gemma *really* likes the film. She now likes it more than Gary."

'Gary Numan: Android In La La Land' is out now.
For more, see numandroid.com

PLAYING SILLY BUGGERS

PERHAPS BETTER KNOWN AS ONE HALF OF QUASI, **SAM COOMES** REPLACES JANET WEISS WITH A RHYTHM BOX AND WRESTLES US OUT OF OUR HOLES WITH HIS ONE-MAN PRIMAL ELECTRONIC SCUZZ

Words: **MARK ROLAND**

Sam Coomes is one half of the revered Portland-based duo Quasi, the other half being drummer Janet Weiss of the recently revitalised Sleater-Kinney. Their 20 or so years of explosive noise together as Quasi got going just as their marriage ended, which must have had the irony meter needles twitching pretty hard. It maybe also explains the air of jovial defeat that abounds in their clutch of must-have albums, the first three of which, 'R&B Transmogrification', 'Featuring "Birds"' and 'Field Studies', have just been re-released by Domino. If you don't already own those, you probably ought to get hold of them now.

So why should you be interested in a Sam Coomes' solo album, 'Bigger Me'? Well, at times, it sounds like John Lennon trying to play his favourite early Motown tunes on a Vox Continental with a junk shop drum machine keeping time. Elsewhere it moans and groans like primordial, pre-record deal Devo. Which makes yet more sense of the gritty R&B feel underpinning this album given the intent of Devo's Jerry Casale to mutate the beloved early Motown and Chicago blues from his youth with wonky electronic interjections and Dadaist provocation.

Sam's take on these lofty influences, however, comes from the perspective of the perpetual underdog with a finely honed sense of failure hardwired into any expectation of success.

"I honestly didn't set out to make a solo album," he says wryly. "I'm not really interested in the whole concept of solo albums or solo careers, but you gotta play the bounce, you know?"

And that bounce is the rebound from the last Quasi long-player, 2013's 'Mole City'. Sam and Janet reached something of a high water mark with it. The sheer breadth and quality of that record is why he finds himself on his tod for this outing of mutated drum machine, distorted organ workouts and scary processed voice interludes.

"I had a batch of songs that were a little different from Quasi songs," he explains. "I brought them in to Janet and, well, she was not interested! But meanwhile I'd already booked a show. I'd said, 'Hey, let's play a little show, not as Quasi. Let's try out these new songs and it'll be a little underground show with a different name, and we'll work out the songs'. But because she wasn't interested I had to do the show by myself. I had to rethink the whole way I played the songs or presented them, and that's how I came up with the basic concept, the sound and approach to these songs. Once I had worked out a little set like that, I got interested in the process and just kept on at it."

Although it's important to mention that Quasi haven't split up, it is true to say that Janet was replaced by a drum machine for Coomes' latest venture. A particularly primitive one, at that.

"It's not even a drum machine," says Coomes. "I'd call it a rhythm box. It's called a Conn Min-O-Matic, maybe mid-60s vintage, certainly no later than the early 70s. It's just a rhythm section of an old mall organ in its own box. You press a button, 'Latin', or 'Waltz' and that's it. No programmability at all, and that's intentional. The worst thing in the world to me would be to make a Quasi record without Janet. I really tried to make the percussive element entirely different."





"I'VE BEEN DOING THIS
FOR A LONG TIME...
I'M REALLY NO GOOD
FOR ANYTHING ELSE"

What's the organ you play... it is an organ isn't it?

"It is and it isn't," he says. "Years ago, in Quasi I used to play this instrument called a Rock-Si-Chord, but it broke. It was an old keyboard and to replace it I got a sound module that's got a little chip on it that had some Rock-Si-Chord modelled on to it."

That bland phrase "it broke" covers a multitude of sins. If you haven't experienced Sam Coomes' unique interactions with a keyboard in the flesh, I'd recommend getting yourself a ticket the next time Sam or Quasi hit your hometown. He can get really quite physical. It's not unusual to see the organ he plays collapse under him because he was sprawled on top of it, lost in a frenzy of destructive abandon while it howls and screams in protest. It's quite the spectacle.

"Yeah, indeed," he laughs. "That's how the original ended up dead. So with these digital things, if they break you just buy another one."

You're the Pete Townshend of underground keyboard guys.

"Well, that's pretty high praise, I'll take it, thank you."

The most obvious antecedent for 'Bugger Me' is the down-at-heel scuzz of Suicide. It's been described as "Suicide meets the Beach Boys", also as "Suicide meets Plastic Ono-era John Lennon", which edges it for me. With a dash of the aforementioned Devo influence. Primal electronica, pre-punk, 1970s-style...

"That's more of the electronic music that I tend to like," says Coomes. "The earlier stuff, pre-digital, where it was difficult to coax sounds from it, and people were just dealing with a new thing, and trying to figure it out."

And if you want to follow this particular thread of Sam's influences, there is YouTube footage shot in the early 1990s of him playing in a Devo tribute band with his old friend, the late, great Elliott Smith, yellow boiler suits and all. There's also a smattering of The Fall in there; the typically scabrous 'Everyone Loves A War' sounds like The Fall's 'To Nkroachment: Yarbles' from their 'This Nation's Saving Grace' album.

"Ha ha! You tagged it, that's pretty good! It's a rip off of that for sure," confesses Sam. "In fact, when I first started playing the solo shows I didn't have enough songs so I'd throw in a couple of covers, and I did that one. Then I thought, 'You know what? Why don't I change the words and tweak it a little bit'. I ripped that off pretty blatantly, and now the cat's out of the bag, I didn't think anyone would notice it..."

There's something in Sam's doggedness in the face of Janet's lack of interest in his new batch of songs that followers of Quasi will recognise. There's always been an air of amused resignation in his lyrics, sung with a melancholy but uplifting melody and good humour in the face of suffering, staring at the stars from the gutter. At times, the organ and the full-throated singing puts you in mind of a kind of miserable white gospel.

"Certainly I'm white," he laughs, "and gospel is a music that most people can relate to. It's a very emotional and simple kind of music. So, that kind of makes sense, but it's not only miserable. People like myself and many others get caught in, you know, little holes. I often wrestle my way out of these situations with music. A lot of music comes out of a place that's miserable, but you know, I'm just working with it and trying to move forward, keep the yang balancing out the yin. I try to put some vitality into it, and a little bit of humour, even if it's black humour, so that it's not just a 'woe is me' thing, you've got to balance it out with the fact that we're all out there trying to get it done. It's not all tears..."

Is depression something you suffer from?

"It's a spectrum, and at what point on the spectrum does it become an illness, and at what point does it become a serious illness?," he offers. "It's hard to pin it down. Someone like me, I wouldn't characterise it as mental illness, I think it's relatively typical. It was a lot more of a problem when I was younger and I thought that those years were behind me, but it actually came back, unexpectedly, and that was also part of the origin of this record. But I don't mean to paint the record too bleakly."

But it came from a dark place?

"Right, but by the time I'd finished the record I was still totally depressed," he says. "I made the record really quickly; it was written pretty quick and then recorded really quickly, but by the time it actually came out, all of that was far back in the rear view mirror, so now when I go out and play, I'm not necessarily identifying with the person lying on his back staring at the ceiling, mind going at a million miles an hour. For me it's just another semi-fictional character that I inhabit to perform the song."

There is a part of being a creative person that is a bit of a curse, that the urge to create forces a lifestyle on you that gets harder to live with as you get older. It's something Sam knows all about. He's been in bands all his life, joining Elliott Smith in Heatmiser, a bit of keyboard work for Built To Spill. Playing to packed venues one night supporting Kurt Veil, then back to a couple of hundred the following night with Quasi. It's a psychological rollercoaster for the middle-aged man, especially with a family to provide for.

"I've been doing this for a long time," Sam nods. "I'm no spring chicken, and I'm really no good for anything else. It was pretty early when I decided I wanted to live a musical life and be a musician, there was no plan B, and now when things aren't really working out economically as a musician, which is fairly common, it gets pretty tight. It's a constant hustle, and sometimes it can be pretty sparse, but being a creative person is very schizophrenic. On the one hand it is a burden, it's difficult, but it's also wonderful. It's excellent to be able to create something. Just as a fan, listening to music is such a gift, to even have a chance to give that same gift to other people, it's something I don't take lightly. It's a tremendous privilege. It's an ego trip also."

An answer to a question about whether he's ever had any classical training (he hasn't), seems to serve as a suitable final word from Sam Coomes, a man in his 50s with holes in his T-shirts and the soul of a teenager who still clings to a living defined by his music.

"I have no idea what I'm doing," he admits.

Bugger me.

'Bugger Me' is out now on Domino

TRANSFUSION VAMP

JENNY HVAL

Blood Bitch
Sacred Bones

The latest album from Jenny Hval, Norwegian singer/songwriter and cross-arts experimentalist, is, she says, a “fictitious story, fed by characters and images from horror and exploitation films of the 70s”. It is, then, on one level, a homage to the gaudy source material that inspired the theatre and imagery of both the Goth and Black Metal scenes.

‘Blood Bitch’ is, however, as is always the way with Hval, many things. It is a meditation on menstruation, the common thread “which ties together the virgins, the whores, the mothers, the witches, the dreamers and the lovers”; in other words, all of the multiple roles conferred on women, one of the central preoccupations of Hval in her ongoing investigations of the role and characterisation of womanhood in pop and rock, which led her to invent the challenging formula of “soft dick rock”.

The album is also autobiographical, reminiscing on her 90s past as singer with the Goth metal band Shellyz Raven, as well as her present day existence, the hectically transient one of an artist who spends a lot of time shuttling internationally between events and festivals.

Having made her first solo outing in 2006, Hval’s first few albums were deceptively orthodox in terms of arrangement and production, sometimes lulling the listener with trip hop, her enervated but insistent voice reminding a little of Stina Nordenstam. However, in 2014 she met Norwegian producer and versatile avant-garde musician Lasse Marhaug when he interviewed her for his fanzine. They began working together and it’s fair to say Marhaug has had a shattering impact on her music, encouraging her to express herself in concurrent, simultaneous ways, juxtaposing pop with brutalist noise broadsides, field recordings and use of studio technology to recreate something that at times recalls the German form of radio play known as Hörspiel – using various tactics to create a sonic theatre that reflects the many strings on her bow: writer, performer, artist (with faint overtones of Tracy Emin and Cindy Sherman) as well as musician.

‘Blood Bitch’ begins, ceremoniously, with ‘Ritual Awakening’, a brief prelude which sets the atmosphere of what is to come, one of charcoal and red hues, of smoke and mirrors. ‘Female Vampire’

follows, driven by a skeletal, stalking, arpeggiating riff and reverb used, as with Maria Minerva, to suggest a multiplicity of being rather than as a mere effect. This bleeds, as it were, into ‘In The Red’, whose frantic, cyclical, panting enables us to break through the fourth listening wall, as if hastening deeper into the personal labyrinths Hval is exploring.

‘Conceptual Romance’ is quite the loveliest track on the album, its pop centrepiece at least. It revels in its dark chocolate-sweet changes, its tremulous vocals always teetering on the verge of prose rather than lyric, as Hval purringly contemplates the perpetual bliss of a “sexual holding pattern”. ‘Untamed Region’ follows and is disquieting by contrast, its spectral keyboards recalling early Pink Floyd. The word “immersive” is over-used, but this music really does situate you in the place it is outlining, an interior space, the attic of the lively mind where memories, like past electric toys, are still charged. All of a sudden, however, its atmospheres are cut across by a narrator, which I had to check wasn’t the sound of a radio coming from another room. It speaks, in a way that has wider political applications, of the impossibility of oppositional forces to settle on a coherent narrative.

‘The Great Undressing’ is another tableau, set against the distant cantering of sequencers and a preamble in which a friend asks, “What’s this album about, Jenny?” and Hval answers laughingly and evasively that it’s about vampires. The production offers a welcome scent of wind and air, of liberation. The overdubs of ‘Period Piece’ lend an effect similar to the sepia tint on old photographs, while ‘The Plague’ begins with furious tabla before Hval declares “I don’t know who I am”, falling backwards morosely into a five minute abyss of reverb.

‘Secret Touch’ is a return to pop mode, with its tinny ‘Funky Drummer’ riff, but it sits in the aftermath of all that has preceded it, another argument for listening to albums in sequence rather than cherry picking. “Ravishing, ravishing...” declares Hval. “Most of all, absolutely necessary.”

Finally, ‘Lorna’ whirls as if on a rusty carousel, an infinitely spinning memory, unresolved. It’s a fittingly vivid, haunting climax to an album whose modern artistic detail deserves repeated listening.

DAVID STUBBS







BEN CHATWIN

BEN CHATWIN

Heat & Entropy
Bad Da Bing

What on earth are they putting in the water up in Queensferry? This Edinburgh 'burb has seen not one but two of its classically trained offspring serve up excellent debuts this year. Anna Meredith's 'Varmints' is one. Chatwin's 'Heat & Entropy' makes two. Where Meredith goes straight for the wow, Chatwin's exploration of electronics meets obscure stringed instruments such as the metallophone, diddley-bow and dulcitone is a rich, rewarding listen as it unfurls. And no, we haven't made those instrument names up. **SR**

KEMPER NORTON

Toll
Front & Follow

The music of Kemper Norton is perpetually poised between the profound and the inconsequential. Phrases that should have emotional impact get neutralised through repetition, while Eno-esque ambience is all but scrubbed out by distortion. But on this album inspired by the Torrey Canyon oil spill, Norton turns the atmospherics all the way up to 11. He centres this brilliant collection around slowly-evolving electronic mutations on 'Agnes And Louisa', all fractured rhythms and beautifully disintegrating loops. **MS**

WWWINGS

Phoenixxx
Planet Mu

The post-Soviet sound-destroyers Lit Internet, Lit Eyne and Lit Daw collaborated via social media for a debut album that will do little to dispell your worries in 2016. This dark work draws a twisting bridge between gaming culture and grime, the numerous collaborations doing nothing to deflect the civilization-collapsing doom on offer. That the Andy Stott-ism of the vocal in 'Arcane' feels like light relief will tell you everything about Wwwwing's robust, singular vision. **FR**

MICKO WESTMORELAND

Remixes
Landline

In the 90s, Micko's band The Bowling Green had the music press a-quiver with their off-kilter drum 'n' bass. Here, for the first time digitally, he collects remixes from his solo albums – last year's 'Yours Etc Abc' and 2009's 'Wax & Wayne' – as well as Bowling Green rerubs. Highlights? A Bowling Green trio – Si Begg's sought-after 'Tigons & Liger' mix, Luke Vibert's Plug remix of 'Strange', but the killer is Mike Paradinas' 'Bi Numbers (Old Skool Mix)' which is a laugh-out-loud-brilliant samplefest. **NM**



BERNARD FÈVRE



BRUTALIST



SAM COOMES



SILVER APPLES

BERNARD FÈVRE

Orbit Ceremony 77
Lo Recordings

In which Black Devil Disco Club's head doorman finds a lost album. Releasing three classic volumes of library music between 1975 and 1977, it seems there was a fourth, 'Orbit Ceremony', which Bernard discovered after nearly 40 years when looking through some mastertapes. A man ahead of his time, with this volume, remixed and remastered, he serves up the sound of outer space from 1977. All 'Blake's Seven' Moogs, 'Doctor Who' squalls and cosmic drum thrills. Highs include the fabulously titled duo, 'Nebulous Melody' and 'Foxy Spleen'. **NM**

BRUTALIST

Brutalist
Good Manners

This new collaboration melds the classical nous of Melbourne's Lucianblomkamp and the power-production of John Hassell, best known as one third of Sydney's Seekae. The lodestone here is the sharply atmospheric 'Strep', a track begging for a Moderat remix. Beyond that, this mixtape – yes, it's a mixtape – provides introverted electronic whimsy that packs more punch than first appears. It does quiet-loud brilliantly as cross-chained bass thumps and swelling electronic frenzies are bookended by tender piano. **FR**

SAM COOMES

Bugger Me
Domino

When an artist describes their solo debut as "Suicide meets The Beach Boys" it's gotta be worth a spin. Stepping into the late Alan Vega's nuclear shoes is Built To Spill/Elliot Smith/Quasi collaborator Coomes, roaming the lo-fi landscape with just an organ and Conny the drum machine for company. It's Pee-wee playing with The Residents, the cute/creepy axis in overdrive on 'Stride On' as a sat nav from Hell gargles fantastic cosmic gibberish on 'The Tucchus pt. 1' and 'pt. 2'. **JK**

SILVER APPLES

Clinging To A Dream
ChickenCooop

Sole surviving Silver Apple Simeon Coxe doesn't need to be doing this. He's 78 years old and earned his stripes as one of our true pioneers a long time ago. Yet this, his first album in nearly 20 years, is so full of delicate melody and gentle charm it's almost like he just picked up where he left of. Tracks like opener 'The Edge Of Wonder' and 'Concerto For Monkey And Oscillator' are loaded with the sort of invention that put Silver Apples at the top of the tree first time around. Effortlessly brilliant. **NM**



APOTHEK

APOTHEK

Apothek
Propellor

Ploughing a similar indie-electronic furrow as the likes of The Postal Service, Lali Puna and The Notwist (all at their peak about a decade ago) means that Norwegian duo Apothek sound curiously dated and, in the contradictory way of these things, refreshingly different. 'Inheritance' is epic, while 'The Pulse' has an appealing crunched-beats aesthetic. Factor in Morten Myklebust's vocals constantly veering on the edge of utter anguish and the effect is like Radiohead minus all that fanning around. **AH**

BUILDING INSTRUMENT

Kem Som Kan Å Leve
Hubro

Scandinavian trio Building Instrument create weightless electronic dreamscapes, draped by singer Mari Kvien Brunvoli's floaty wordless vocals, delivered in the Molde dialect or her own invented language. Two years in the making and including selections composed for an exhibition of the work of pioneering sound poet and collagist Kurt Schwitters, their sweeping sound is frequently gorgeous and evocative while sometimes recalling a modern update of the 1990s new age ambient washes emitted by Moby or Enigma. **KN**

COMBAT!

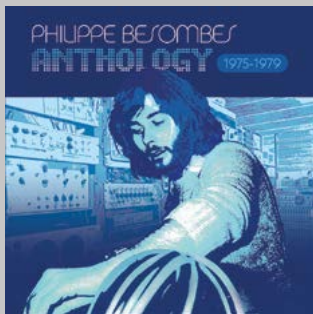
COMBAT!
Friends Of Friends

COMBAT! is the shouty moniker of Mark Nieto, whose debut album was conceived as a soundtrack to driving around LA. This could explain his anger. Nieto is both an electronic artist and a guitarist, and tracks like 'Heavy Accent' blend together chunky beats with a laid-back West Coast guitar style. The best moments come when Nieto hangs up his axe completely, opting for jazz-inflected house and deep synth hooks as on the blissful 'Olive Skin'. **MS**

MEDIUM MEDIUM

The Glitterhouse
Optic Nerve

Nearly 35 years after its original release in October 1981, the sole studio album by self-described "extreme dance music" enthusiasts Medium Medium is given a limited re-release as a deluxe triple coloured vinyl set. Stripped down dub and dance rhythms populate the 21 tracks, as staccato guitars rub up against funkadelic bass licks and intermittent saxophones to create a sound that's impressive in its originality. One that, given dance punk's seemingly endless revival, can't help but feel remarkably fresh. **CW**



PHILIPPE BESOMBES
Anthology 1975–1979
Purple Pyramid

LITTLE-KNOWN FRENCH PIONEER PRESENTS JAW-DROPPING BOX OF DELIGHTS

Just when it seemed that the last century's most vital electronic innovators had been recognised and given suitable reissues, along comes Philippe Besombes who's well-known enough in his native France to be honoured by Daft Punk and Air but seems to have been ignored everywhere else (apart from major fan Julian Cope, who calls him "one of the greatest electronic musicians and sonic creative geni that we have ever had").

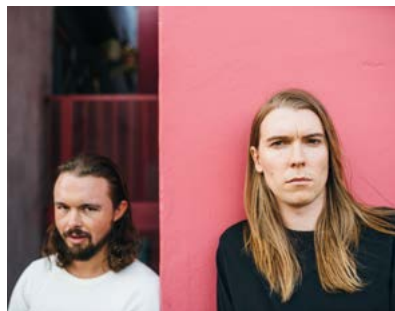
Besombes was at the forefront of experimental electronic music from the early 70s, but most only know him as a name on the cover of a 1979 Nurse With Wound album. By then, he had made around six albums, four of which have been gathered in this fabulous box set. Opening it is like discovering a hidden planet full of sounds that could have changed music if they'd been heard at the right time.

After coming up in France's nascent music scene, Besombes found his wings in 1966 with free jazz and Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry's electro-acoustic experiments. He started creating music in his ever-growing laboratory, collaborated with friend Jean Michel Jarre and was commissioned to score the film 'Libra', which had been edited around Pink Floyd's unobtainable 'Ummagumma' so meant replicating another score. Instead, Besombes created a 47-minute collage masterpiece, hot-wiring various exotic musical forms with his expansive visions into one of the truly startling early electronic creations.

Besombes continued exploring synths while working for dance companies, resulting in 1976's remarkable 'Esombeso (Ceci est Cela)'. The title track's other-worldly vocal flurries, deep space globules of the astonishing 'Pawa 1' or atmospheric theremin sweep of 'Géant' confirm the ferocious talent hatching here. In 1977, he formed Hydravion with guitarist Cooky Rhinoceros to explore post-punk electronic rock, echoing Kraftwerk, Moroder and Eno while predicting mutant disco on their two albums (included here).

In the 80s, Besombes opened the Versailles studio he still runs today (and has entertained the likes of Air and Daft Punk) so the astoundingly great thing is that this is just the tip of a mighty iceberg which has continued floating on its own wayward course until now. Unreservedly recommended to ES questers!

KRIS NEEDS



BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

ONE THIRD OF SYDNEY-BASED ELECTRONIC TRIO SEEKAE, FRONTMAN **ALEX CAMERON** CUTS LOOSE WITH A DOOZIE OF A SOLO ALBUM. HE'S A MAN WITH STUFF TO SAY

Your album is called 'Jumping The Shark'. When did it all go tits up?

My life went tits up years ago and I'm just getting it back on track. 'Jumping The Shark' is a big part of that and that's how I intended it to be, start through finish. The first sound on the album is strong. The second tune is a curveball. Same with three. Four is a straight-shooter.

You describe yourself as a "musician, delivery man and clerk". That's one hectic schedule.

I think you'll find the majority of musicians have a day or night job and that musical talent has very little to do with that. You gotta pay your rent and pad the pantry in the meantime. I ain't afraid of a little work. You just gotta find what burns and if anyone tries to pour water on the spark, break their fingers.

As a clerk, you work in anti-corruption? How far does that rabbit hole go? Straight to mummy rabbit?

I left that job for stress related reasons and can't talk about it due to a non-disclosure agreement. I'd like to mention you're the second person who's said the word "mummy" to me this month. I don't know what that means exactly, but I worry it's got a link to Brexit.

Tell us about your business partner, Roy Molloy. He's a man with opinions, right?

First time I met him we were six years old and he was stuffing lemons in a drain. Not much has changed since then. He's got zero criminal convictions against his name and once drove for 43 hours straight to make a business meeting. All opinions are his own.

We very much like that you have an interview policy...

I don't want anyone wondering why my business partner chucked an ashtray across the room or called some guy a coward. So we're upfront about these things. I can be an interesting person. But it takes having an interesting discussion. That's your job.

The policy stipulates all "in person" interviews are held at AMF Bowling, Randwick, New South Wales.

Unfortunately the AMF facilities have been shut down, some sort of incident involving a school excursion. I don't know how to update the website, but I'll speak to someone and get it fixed.

You say "The internet is a sham" and "email is a hoax designed to shrink your brain". What do you know that we don't?

I see things in slow motion, so I'm behind the times a little. At the same time history is cyclical, so I see things coming from a mile away. All I know is everything changed after 'You've Got Mail'.

And yet, here you are, handing the album out online for free...

It ain't free any more friendo. That ship has sailed.

What's the dumbest question you've been asked?

No such thing as a dumb question, brother. Every day's a school day.

'Jumping The Shark' is out now on Secretly Canadian



BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING ELECTRONIC GOLD

BAFFO BANFI

Ma, Dolce Vita

Innovative Communication (1979)

Looking back, I see now that I spent my mid-90s university years in Colchester buying excessive amounts of music as a defence against a largely miserable existence. My spending was hardly discerning, and that's how 'Ma, Dolce Vita' by Italian synth player Giuseppe "Baffo" Banfi came to be in my collection. It was purchased from a charity table-top sale that I chanced upon one Saturday morning.

Nothing about this record should have appealed to me at the time, but I bought it regardless. Looking back, I'm not sure what I disliked the most. I was programmed to abhor anything with printed liner notes as I detested being given someone else's opinions before listening (strangely ironic given that I now write music reviews myself) and I found the picture of Banfi in 1970s garb really cheesy. I think I ultimately bought it because it listed the synths that Banfi used, and I also liked Ezio Geneletti's sleeve.

It suited the pretentious, artsy air I was (unsuccessfully) cultivating at the time.

'Ma, Dolce Vita' was released in 1979, Banfi's second album following the split of his previous band, Biglietto Per L'Inferno, in 1975. The record was produced and mixed by Klaus Schulze and released on Schulze's Innovative Communication label. Entirely instrumental apart from some vocoder effects, it affixed classical structures to clanking rhythms and what I thought was a proggy sense of self-importance. It was clearly part of the German synth legacy, only delivered with an Italian sense of style.

I played it once, felt queasy like I'd eaten a huge bag of sweets and filed it away, annoyed with myself for wasting the money. Having grown up with electronic music, the album represented the worst excesses of 70s synth music. It seemed to be trying too hard to humanise the electronics and play traditional music using new technology. Despite five house moves, some 20 years later 'Ma, Dolce Vita' remains in my collection, unplayed save for that first time. It was only when I started the sacrilegious process of selling vinyl that I rediscovered it.

My musical tastes have evidently evolved. A recent immersion in fusion jazz, where synth solos are nothing short of Wakeman-esque, made me appreciate the virtuoso playing that Banfi delivered so effortlessly on this LP. I can now also appreciate the depth and resonance of his percussive compositions, and Schulze's masterful production, that my arrogant younger self had no patience for.

'Ma, Dolce Vita' might possess a forgivable period charm, but I now can hear it for what it is – an excellent, mysterious, inventive instrumental album by a cult figure that the storied history of synth music has sadly overlooked.

MAT SMITH



BOXED IN

Melt

Netzwerk

BOXED IN BY NAME BUT NOT BY NATURE AS SOPHOMORE ALBUM DEMONS GET FLEA IN THE EAR

After garnering high praise with their self-titled debut, it's difficult second album time for Boxed In. So, have Oli Bayston and co. managed to keep up appearances following such a promising start? Well, yes. And quite deftly so.

He's got quite a full calendar, Oli. Fronting Boxed In, singing, songwriting and record producing doesn't leave you with a lot of free time. He's currently working with Zola Blood, as well as lending a button-pressing hand on the debut album from on-the-up London synthpop duo Nimmo. "It's all about balancing the two roles," he says, "I'm fortunate to be in a position where I can be producer and singer. The two inform each other – I get to see from both sides of the lens."

With the debut album only released in early 2015, Bayston has wasted no time in creating 'Melt' and boy, does it pay off. It's experimental, but not in a leftfield, weird way. 'Intro' eases us in with its slow piano and brooding synths, then 'Jist' rouses through groovy bass and poppy electronics. Good start. Enter the melancholic 'Shadow Boxing' before the mood picks up in the title track, jingling percussion set against soft vocals.

But it's the second half of the record that really shines. 'London Lights' cranks up the 80s to 11, throwing in some funky guitars and piano chords for good measure. 'Forget' is darker but danceable, with Bayston *almost* sounding like Thom Yorke in places, followed by 'Black Prism' which warps this way and that while slowing the pace. This is key to the album as a whole. There's an underlying tone, but it's not afraid to try something new in every track.

What next? 'Melt' is rich, layered and a modern journey through the musical eras. With the final track of the album titled 'Open-Ended', it does seem that Boxed In could go anywhere from here. Boxed in, they are not. However, if this record is going to be as big as we think it might be, we might have to wait more than 18 months to see what Bayston and co. do next.

FINLAY MILLIGAN



FACTORY FLOOR

FACTORY FLOOR25 25
DFA

Following their acclaimed, self-titled 2013 debut, '25 25' finds Factory Floor – now just core duo Nik Colk Void and Gabriel Gurnsey – evolving into new, dancefloor-centric sounds and textures. Inspired by their late-night club shows, and Void's switch from guitar to modular synth (a move of some tactical genius) it's a blissfully sparse, hallucinatory, head-nodding onslaught. Its mesmeric, techno-ish throbs are steeped in acid-like hues, Sheffield bleep and eerie minimal house. The after-dark hedonists will lap it up. **VI**

DAS BLAUE PALAISWelt Am Draht
Bellerophon

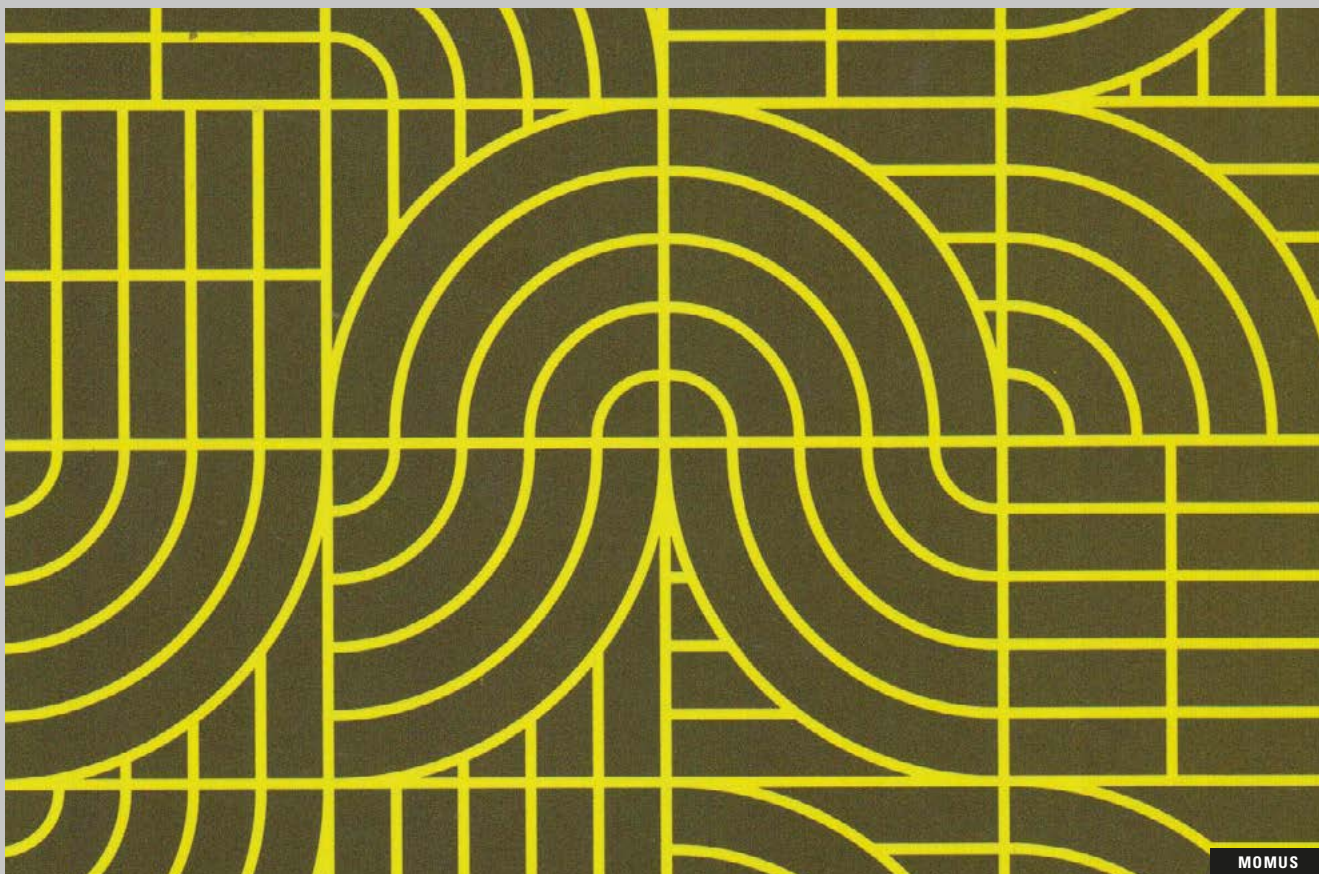
Schöne Grüße aus Düsseldorf indeed. Clearly an attempt to summon the spirit of Neu! and Harmonia, as well as the UK bands inspired by them, like Ultravox and OMD, Das Blaue Palais have taken the motorik/krautrock blueprint and given it a growth hormone injection, creating a big beast of big beats and user-friendly melody. Karl Bartos collaborator Mathias Black is on production duties, and he delivers a driving, muscular sound. At times you could almost believe that Michael Rother himself was involved. **MR**

FIONA SOE PAINGAlien Lullabies
Colliderscope

The stunning debut from Scottish-Burmese sound artist Fiona Soe Paing epitomises an ugly beautiful aesthetic. Across 'Alien Lullabies' Soe Paing deploys meditative textures and bluesy, tri-lingual vocals. It's peaceful and serene, yet interspersed with sudden disquiet. 'Heartbeat' is the album's abraded romantic centrepiece, a squelchy pop song laced with soulful transcendency, while 'Tah Stin Koh Mpor' is improv electronica transmitted by an abandoned AM station. **MS**

BJARKILefhanded Fuqs
Trip

Iceland's excellent Bjarki returns with part two of his LP triptych, the tracks for which were handpicked by Nina Kraviz for her Trip imprint. From his bulging hard drives, 'Lefhanded Fuqs' collects his more experimental side (i.e. no trademark four/four bangers). His machines gurgle away with a real warmth and frantic cuts like 'Basketball Smile 9 (Bbbbbb mix)' are irresistible. "Lefhanded"? Misspelt, but it remained that way in honour of left-handers making mistakes because of tools made for right-handers. One day we will rule the world. **NM**



MOMUS

MOMUS

Public Intellectual: An Anthology 1986–2016
Cherry Red

The title of this retrospective might sound like hubris, but Nicholas Currie has always balanced brazen self-mythology, outlandish ideas and a pathological need to pastiche a bewilderingly broad scope of cultural references.

Disc one chronicles his gilded era, veering between the salty Brel cabaret of 'Morality Is Vanity', the confessional chamberpop of 'Bishonen' and the goth-house Pet Shop Boys drama of 'The Hairstyle Of The Devil.' The mid-90s finds him in more reflective mood, showcased here by the balladry of 'The Sadness Of Things'. By the third disc in the 2000s he becomes hyper-prolific and seems to revel in his own obscurity on 'Hypnoprism' and the jaunty lurch of 'The Manticore.'

In another culture he would be exalted as a maverick auteur, like his hero Serge Gainsbourg or perhaps David Cronenberg. Instead he's left sidestepping the "clever pop" tag, blanching, "Don't you know what happens to clever people? They fail commercially, and they're ignored critically". JS

SOCCER96

As Above So Below
Slowfoot

Known for representing two-thirds of Planet Earth's apocalyptic space funkateers The Comet is Coming, keyboarder Danalogue The Conqueror (Dan Leavers) and drummer Betamax Killer (Max Hallett) pay homage to the unstructured energy of improvisation through their own brand of absorbing dance grooves and poly-rhythmic drums.

Drawing on influences like Can, This Heat and Flying Lotus, 'As Above So Below' is submerged in old school analogue waters, sparkling with experimental composition as one track flows effortlessly to the next.

From the 'Predator'-esque jungle feel of opener 'The Swamp' and the crisp, immersive 'Megadrive Lamborghini', the diverging impulses deliver a translucent quality and flare that burns bright for the album's duration. Avant-garde, pop and even hip hop elements are combined on tracks such as 'Up And Down' and its splendid Pharoahe Monch feel to the dystopian 'Ancestors' in what is both an ambitious and impressive album of diverse and gratifying inputs. CW

MIKE & RICH

Expert Knob Twiddlers
Planet Mj

Aphex Twin aka Richard James and Mike "μ-ziq" Paradinas were inextricably linked in the early part of their careers. They met at college in south west London, toured together and recorded for each other's labels, but the only significant piece of work they collaborated on was this superlative album.

Reissued to mark its 20th anniversary, with a bonus set containing seven previously unheard tracks, it remains as fresh as ever. The weirder, darker Aphex sound and the more playful, optimistic Paradinas hallmarks combine to create a unique new dynamic, its roots in rave's euphoric giddiness rather than the more balanced world of techno.

From a hypnotic alternate mix of 'Vodka' and the jumbled but beautiful 'Portamento Gosh', the unreleased material keeps up the quality levels and little excuse is needed to revisit the original with the swaggering 'Mr Frosty', the effortlessly funky 'Jelly Fish' and cheeky 'Giant Deflating Football' still sounding quirky yet accessible. Clearly, if you need a job doing, best to call in the Experts. BW

TIM PRESLEY

The Wink
Drag City

From its 'Atom Heart Mother'-esque opening, which is all strange Mellotron flutes inhaling and exhaling while a clown car horn honks away happily (or mournfully, depends on how that sound makes you feel...), Tim Presley's debut solo outing makes a great deal of its purposefully limited sonic resources.

Guitar and simple percussion are pressed into creating expressive canvases for Presley's outsider surrealist observations, embellished with artful piano and electronic interjections. It's produced by Cate Le Bon, and her grubby fingerprints are all over it; scratchy unadorned guitar, unexpected and satisfying chord choices, the overall sense of strangeness which, when it's working, envelops the listener. Presley's stint as a member of The Fall (he co-wrote a sizeable chunk of the 2007 album 'Reformation Post TLC') should fill in any gaps in your expectations.

Singular and, like Cate Le Bon's recent, peerless 'Crab Day', somewhat addictive. **MR**

LES PANTIES

Cold Science
Les Disques du Crepuscule

Collecting together the singles and EPs originally released by these ice-cool Brussels new wavers on their own Fantomes label between 2011 and 2015 promises to be strong, but Les Panties impress for many reasons.

Euphoric pulsing synths, tom-heavy drums and fuzzy guitars all come together for big moments and reappear throughout, each time like an old friend you're rather pleased to see. Opener 'Velvet' couldn't be more aptly named. It is dark, seductive and strokeable, with Sophie Frison's barely-there vocals radiating pure desire. 'White Tiger' is a highlight, a meditative break from an otherwise driven sound, that inevitably creeps up into fervour until everyone flops over and gives up. Hats tipped to 'The Gate' too, which leaves the snappy vocal ringing in your ears a long time after it's all over.

What's more, it's on the excellent Les Disques du Crépuscule, the label formed in 1980 by Michel Duval and Annik Honoré and run by former employee James Nice. It doesn't get much cooler than that. **SL**

EXPLODED VIEW

Exploded View
Sacred Bones

Vintage synths blend with no-wave guitar distortions and aloof Teutonic vocals to head-turning effect on this self-titled debut, led by Bristol-born Berliner and ex-political journalist Annika "Anika" Henderson, a protégé of Portishead's Geoff Barrow.

Anika's take on "singing" will inevitably lead to comparisons with Nico, though there is also something of VU in the band's dissonant dramatics, deftly delivered (fully live, first take only) by the crack Mexico City triumvirate of Martin Thulin, Hugo Quezada and Hector Malgarejo. Part-wave, part-minimal electro, 'No More Parties In The Attic' thrills with icy force and 'Orlando' is haunting yet uptempo, its sparse analogue keys brilliantly underpinned with elevating alt-disco bass. Then the raw, empty warehouse ambiguous energy of Joy Division shows its hand on 'Disco Glove'. Thulin's drums are blinding, and Quezada's darkly hypnotic bass really injects the rushes.

Substantial, granite-serious and challenging stuff this, but narcotic and resolutely of the night. **CG**

DATACh'i

System
Timesig

Datach'i disappeared a decade ago to turn his attention to commercial work for the likes of Squarespace, Gatorade and VH1. It was only after he made videos demonstrating his synth set-up that he decided on the challenge of making 'System' on a modular synth. For the uninitiated, that means lots of knobs and a spaghetti junction of wires.

Venetian Snares did a similar thing with 'Traditional Synthesizer Music', and indeed this is the first non-eponymous release on Snares' Timesig label. The result sounds incredible. The metallic drums will jangle your nerve endings, and you can almost lick the hazy ambience covering the spangly Aphex-ian acid. The brisk IDM has that meticulous feel of former labelmate Wisp: sometimes too clinical for me. But 'Monarchs' and 'Omni 2' are true stand-outs: there's emotion in those oscillators. When it's the heart-strings being twiddled as well as the knobs, Squarespace's loss is our gain.

FR

DAVE BALL & JON SAVAGE

Photosynthesis
Cold Spring

No, *not* that Jon Savage. Ganging up with Soft Cell/The Grid big cheese, this Mr Savage is a concert-grade classical pianist who first met Mr Ball at the height of The Grid's powers. The pair have worked on a variety of projects over the years, from a KitKat ad to a cover of 'Hello' with Margarita Pracatan.

And so to 'Photosynthesis', an hour-long soundscape in eight parts. Describing it as "some quasi pop/classical pieces that gradually morphed and evolved", it not only mixes analogue and digital, classical and electronic but there's a theme, marvelling at how organisms use sunlight to synthesise nutrients while mankind is hellbent on destroying everything through pollution and war.

Opening with the dark, fearful 'One Night In Helmand Province', a distant broadcast fades in and out while synths ebb and flow like the machinery of death whirling around you. The whole album fizzles and hums and rumbles like this throughout and then, at the end, there's the utterly beautiful 'Dead Neon' gently swaying like a poppy on the battlefield. Glorious stuff.

NM

CRISPY AMBULANCE

Random Textures / Compulsion
Factory Benelux

These two albums from Mancunian post-punks Crispy Ambulance – a band who, despite a couple of lengthy intervals, have had the same line-up since they formed in 1978 – make for an intriguing double pack.

The largely instrumental 'Random Textures' was written over the last 12 months, whereas 'Compulsion' consists mainly of material performed live in the early 1980s but never recorded at the time. So while 'Compulsion' is angular, urgent and angsty, 'Random Textures' is an altogether more subtle and supple trip. There's still plenty of jeopardy, mind, especially with the longer tracks, like the sultry 'Integra' and the clanging 'Karpadia'. And full marks to Graham Massey from 808 State and Biting Tongues, whose production work on both albums ensures that, whatever their differences, they neatly complement each other.

With Section 25 having recently joined Crispy Ambulance back in action, all we need now is for fellow early Factory act The Stockholm Monsters to announce their return. What a joyous day that would be. **P**

THOM SONNY GREEN

High Anxiety
Sudden/Infectious

Thom Sonny Green is best known as the drummer in superstar indie heroes alt-J, and if his debut solo album is anything to go on he's also the man who gives the band the interesting experimental edge that separates them from their competition.

That quirk is subtly interwoven into alt-J's song-based sound, but on 'High Anxiety' Green has a chance to really let it run free. The results may be spread across 21 tracks of differing lengths and diverse moods, but they're uniformly uncompromising, instrumental and, give or take the odd sample, completely electronically generated. Among the highlights are 'Blew', which, with its nightmarish sampled voices and techstep bass warfare, is almost certainly the most twisted tune ever made about Christmas. 'Grounds' is another high watermark, its tense instrumentation struggling beneath hulking great big (but crawling) beats.

Vivid, colourful and challenging, there's plenty to get your teeth into here. **BW**

BLUE STATES

Restless Spheres
Memphis Industries

There's something both nostalgic and timeless about Andy Dragazis's work. It's a thread that ties his dad's history of jamming in Greek clubs alongside progressive groove gods Aphrodite's Child to Dragazis Jr finding his own artistic voice at the family home, in late-90s Sussex, through experimental electronica.

Spending nine years away from the fray – his commercial highlight being 2002's 'Season Song', included in the soundtrack to '28 Days Later' – on his fifth album, Dragazis presents a cinematic jewel that is by turns Air-cum-Roy Budd ('D-Day'), Saint Etienne chill-out ('Statues') ethereal night bus paeon (yes, really) 'Alight Here' and evocative philharmonia ('Hiatus'). Other standouts include the dreamy folk-symphony 'Vision Trail' and the Pond-like psychedelic sci-fi adventure 'Beyond The White Light' featuring whimsical labelmate The Squire Of Somerton (aka Toby Jenkins).

Now that he is a dad himself, Dragazis's worldview is wary and observational; the music a graceful rendering of turbulent times, within and without. **JK**

KING CHAMPION SOUNDS

To Awake In The Heaven Of Freedom
Excelsior

The official description of this is "a music lover's delight reigning in psychedelic krautrock jams, post-punk dub, free jazz spirituals, hauntological soundscapes, spoken word poetics, blazing electronica, and more." All of this is true, especially the "and more" bit. It's a glorious, sprawling, groovy, jumbled head-fuck, 19 tracks of eclectic-tricity. Gorge on that.

Opening 'Mice Rats Roaches' sounds like Captain Beefheart gate-crashing a Stooges jam. 'What I Mean' is Black Grape hooligan funk. Lead singer/orator Jos is a veteran of the Amsterdam squat scene and sounds like he's seen a few things. Some of the spoken word interludes recall Alabama 3 and The Blue Aeroplanes. The rest bounds all over the place, like a gleeful chimpanzee. It is utterly, completely ace.

'To Awake In The Heaven Of Freedom' is a heady prospect. Unfettered freedom – what would you do with it? Maybe make an album as fearless and absorbing as this. **RL**

MURCOF X VANESSA WAGNER

Statea
Infiné

'Statea' serves as a veritable who's who of minimalist avant-garde classical music of the past century – Cage, Ligeti, Feldman, Glass, Pärt and, er, Aphex Twin – reinterpreted by two musicians who themselves are schooled in classical traditions yet have followed very different paths. The result is exactly what you'd expect from a pianist (Wagner) and an ambient musician (Murcof): delicate piano blended with textural noise, skipping sort-of-rhythms and subtle synth interjections.

Aphex Twin's 'Avril 14th' takes on a graceful, moving quality, while Ligeti's 'Musica Ricercata' becomes an abrasive, almost industrial piece. Elsewhere, the duo's interpretation of Morton Feldman's 'Piano Piece 1952' detaches itself frustratingly from the minimalist oeuvre, with Wagner's faithful piano swamped by increasing distracting maximalist electronic constructs.

John Adams's 'China Gates' is where the two operate with the greatest sense of balance, the piece structured like an atmospheric synth track with piano flourishes that Vangelis would be proud of. **MS**

ALEX CAMERON

Jumping The Shark
Secretly Canadian

Three tracks into the debut solo outing from down under's Alex Cameron and cohort, "saxophonist, good friend and business partner" Roy Molloy, comes 'Real Bad Looking', which would've been a hit all day long back in the 80s.

Cameron, who you may know from Sydney three-piece Seekae, does infectious stripped-back electro torch songs, killer tales revolving around excess and the internet's dark underbelly. On cuts like opener 'Happy Ending' or 'The Comeback', he sounds like a synthpop Springsteen, on others, 'She's Mine' or 'Gone South', he ghosts The Human League and on the epic closer 'Take Care Of Business', he comes on like his hero Billy Idol. Cameron is very ably egged on by Molloy (note: we couldn't hear a sax on the album) regularly getting shit off their chest via the internet. Their hilariously sharp-tongued words of wisdom are worth reading, their corking album is more than worth hearing. **SR**

HIEROGLYPHIC BEING

The Disco's Of Imhotep
Technicolour

To the over-besieged brain, Chicago's Jamal Moss, aka Hieroglyphic Being, is one of the most vital electronic-based producers operating in the world today. Fearlessly prolific, diverse and mystical, he seems to have inherited the restless, star-spangled baton from music's original electronic visionary Sun Ra, while remaining paradoxically close to his roots in primal acid house and free jazz.

After ten years of relentless releases, it's already practically impossible to collect everything Moss has released on his Mathematics label and other imprints, but this – his first high-profile UK album – can't be recommended enough as he explores its message of what he calls "frequency healing". Tracks such as 'The Shrine of Serpent Goddess', 'Spiritual Alliances' and 'Nubian Energy' course with rough-shod analogue beats, glisten with other-worldly deep house textures, early Detroit techno soul and sounds of his own devising, displaying a restless, ever-questioning mind at the peak of its undoubtedly extra-terrestrial powers. **KN**



CASSIUS

CASSIUS

Ibifornia
Interscope

Cassius have always incorporated black music into their sound – Philippe Zdar and Boom Bass were producing MC Solaar back in the 80s – but even so, the full-on embrace of funk and soul in significant parts of this LP is going to shock a few people.

The spirit of Prince looms large over much of it, from tight funk workouts ‘The Missing’, ‘Go Up’ and ‘Love Parade’, the latter seeing the guest spot for Beastie Boys’ Mike D namechecking Lemmy, to the more theatrical epic ballad ‘Feel Like Me’, one of three tracks voiced by Cat Power. The pair of them hook up to offer call and response vocals on the show-stopping ‘Action’

Fans of the duo’s more house-slanted side do get a couple of tunes though, and the closing pair of ‘The Sound Of Love’ and ‘Ponce’ are proper corkers.

Varied and ambitious, this is the sound of the rulebook being ripped up in style. **BW**

BETTY DAVIS

The Columbia Years 1968–69
Light In The Attic

These Betty Davis sessions are the stuff of legend; never released, not even bootlegged. She’s the model turned funk singer who married Miles in 1968, and introduced him to the hip psychedelic underground. The result was his 1970 crossover monster ‘Bitches Brew’. These recordings, made just a few months before, helped Miles shape his own imminent triumph.

“Sing it just like that, with the gum in your mouth and all, bitch,” growls Miles on the intro to the amazingly sleazy ‘Politician Man’, which rather sets the tone for this collection of super-heated explorations. But it’s life-affirming stuff. Miles and Teo Macero nudge the world-class musicians into creating a suitable frame for Betty’s huge personality, a funk/jazz/rock hybrid that couldn’t be any more urban 1969.

It was several more years before Betty made records, and despite being brilliant, they failed to deliver the life in music she deserved. Her powerful and unapologetically sexual and political presence perhaps too unsettling for the sexist 70s, but these jams, scraps and sketches reveal the extent of her talent. **MR**

TOBACCO

Sweatbox Dynasty
Ghostly International

Tobacco. It’s addictive, dirty, smelly – the list goes on. So, with such a moniker, are there any risks to listening to the fourth album from US analogue enthusiast Thomas Fec? Well, “addictive” and “dirty” definitely spring to mind.

‘Sweatbox Dynasty’ is a slice of chaos – a tarred-up Frankenstein’s monster of a record, the stitches bursting at the seams and sounding beautiful. Take ‘Human Om’ which hums into a cacophony of anarchic clatter. Then there’s ‘Wipeth Out’ which sounds like a post-apocalyptic air-raid siren, robotic vocals deafening against a sonic growl.

Even if listening to ‘Sweatbox Dynasty’ possessed any health risks, we’d happily ignore them and carry on ‘til we were forced to quit. There’s something rebellious about Fec when he proclaims “I do know how to ruin a good song”. If this is his idea of “ruin” then he is welcome to hone his craft. **FM**



YELLO



SIMON SHACKLETON | PHOTO: RICKY LESSER



ELUVIUM | PHOTO: NOEL JAVIER



WRANGLER

YELLO

Toy
Universal

Yello's first outing in seven years and up they pop sounding, as always, like they are Europe's heartbeat. Nor would it be a Yello record if it wasn't daft and thrilling in equal measure and the noises alone on this, their 13th studio outing since their 1980 debut, are enough to fuel every bland Top 40 outfit with juice to spare. Pay special attention the trio of 'Give You The World', 'Tool Of Love' and 'Dialectical Kid'. Oh and the ambient closer 'Frautonium' is delicious. **NM**

SIMON SHACKLETON

Piece of Me
Scene & Herd

A first album in over a decade and a debut under his own name for prolific Londoner Shackleton who has worked with everyone from Thom Yorke to Felix Buxton, ran labels as brilliant as Fused & Bruised and composed for scores of film and TV soundtracks. 'Piece Of Me', which appeared a track at time running up to release, is rich, danceable electronics ranging from the clubby beats of 'All These Strange Ghosts' to the more ambient atmosphere-dripping 'We Are Alone'. That Shackleton hasn't confined himself to the dancefloor has really paid off. **FM**

ELUVIUM

False Readings On
Temporary Residence

The latest in a long line of albums from Portland's experimental composer Matthew Cooper is an emotionally bruising record. 'False Readings On' is constructed in the form of a loop. It starts optimistically with passages from stirring classical motifs and fragments of processed opera, before decaying into sonic entropy via layers of white noise and static. By 'Rorschach Pavan' positivity has been restored, but it's loaded with the despair that comes from alighting upon the memorabilia of a personal history you no longer recognise. **MS**

WRANGLER

White Glue
MemeTune

The second album from one of the nation's most exciting electronic outfits is a welcome arrival indeed. With Mallinder's vocals more polemical than before ("Stop spending money you don't have / On things you don't need" he implores on 'Stop'), it's more dance-oriented than the trio's excellently moody and textured debut 'LA Spark'. 'White Glue' recalls early acid house in its somewhat bleak electronic sparseness, and serves as a pretty whopping reminder that mid-80s Cabaret Voltaire had the underground British dancefloor absolutely nailed. **MR**



PATTEN



ROOSEVELT



ELECTRORITES



MOTION GRAPHICS

PATTEN

Ψ
Warp

The experimental London-based duo known only as “A” and “D” add to their cannon of super-limited CD-R releases and giveaway sample-packed ‘RE-EDITS’ EPs with a further blast of deconstructed club music on this, their third LP ‘Ψ’ (pronounced ‘Psi’). Reminiscent of Alice Glass-era Crystal Castles, ‘Ψ’ is rippling chaos. ‘Used 2 b’ thrums along with alien bleeps and vocals warping in and out, while icy synths and frenzied percussion are littered throughout ‘Blade’. It’s one breakneck, trippy blur that leaves you eager for more. **FM**

ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt
Greco-Roman

Cologne-based electronic producer Marius Lauber is Roosevelt and boy does he have a killer tune. Although ‘Sea’ has been bobbing around for a while, when it drops on this debut album you just want to stand up and cheer. Released on the excellent Hot Chip-fuelled Greco-Roman label, ‘Roosevelt’ is deeply embedded in the dancefloor, but takes everything from electropop (‘Night Moves’) to yacht rock (‘Fever’), a bit of krautrock and some 80s pop for good measure. Plug me in, late summer sun here I come. **SR**

ELECTRORITES

Structures
Nightmare Factory

Italy’s Electrorites (one guy, Luca Valloro) forms part of a largely ignored movement that updates the kickdrum-driven techno of the 90s, adding an industrial edge and millennial angst. With tracks simply numbered 0-11, this debut is dense and forbidding, and although Valloro uses the album format to stretch his crow-like wings, occasionally veering from his relentless stock-in-trade drum and drones, this is unapologetically techno for dirty underground chambers, and all the better for it. **AH**

MOTION GRAPHICS

S/T
Domino

New York-based Joe Williams has been here before, but not for nigh on a decade when he released the well-received ‘Smoke’ LP as White Williams. Keeping himself busy producing, playing and composing, ‘S/T’ is the sound of diode-y spooks in a very modern machine – skittish Twitter feeds, humming fridges, car menu systems and game consoles all provide inspiration. So ‘Anyware’ sounds like a purloined Facetime ringtone, while the shimmering ‘Airdrop’ is the bitty sound we imagine Mac files hum to themselves in like-magic transit. **SR**



MORGAN DELT

MORGAN DELT

Phase Zero
Sub Pop

Pulsating invocations from Delt's Californian studio evoke the near-lost spirit of the first summer of love, and his sun-drenched optimism is just the tonic. Though Byrdsian harmonics form the backbone of standouts like 'Sun Powers', there's something vital about their delivery that banishes any thoughts of derivation. Elsewhere slow, heat-summoning chords of comfort balance beautifully with the intricacy and pace of numbers like 'Mssr. Monster', and revitalise like a weekend away in LA. **CG**

PREOCCUPATIONS

Preoccupations
Jagjaguwar

Forged from personal upheaval and emotional turmoil, the second album from the Canadian quartet previously known as Viet Cong is a suitably tense and crepuscular affair. Its dead-of-night darkness is punctuated by barbed guitars and frontman Matt Flegel's ululating, melodramatic growl. Like some holy trinity of The Psychedelic Furs, Future Islands and The Horrors, it's blisteringly, imperiously good, spiked with heaps of post-punk attitude, collars turned up, shooting a baleful look into the middle distance. **VI**

ZOMBY

Ultra
Hyperdub

Zomby's much-hyped return to the label where he made his name makes his fourth album something of an event. And that's before you factor in attention-grabbing collaborations with Burial and Darkstar. The Burial track, 'Sweetz' is the album's highpoint: bass-heavy, atmospheric, unsettling and witty all at the same time. Elsewhere his oft-criticised habit of presenting sound sketches as fully formed tracks is much in evidence, but when the album soars, as it tends to do whenever tracks top the three-minute mark, the hype looks justified. **AH**

SHIELD PATTERNS

Mirror Breathing
GIZEH

'Mirror Breathing', the second album from Shield Patterns, steps through the looking-glass into a surreal dreamworld. Claire Brentnall's breathy vocal and the electronic landscapes crafted with Richard Knox give these songs a supernatural quality, with 'Sleepdrunk' taking the prize for graceful understatement. The album comes into its own with the addition of Julia Kent's stately cello, slicing straight through the electronic texture to add a mournful dimension to the duo's sound. **MS**



**JÓHANN
JÓHANNSON**
Orphée
Deutsche
Grammophon

NEO-CLASSICAL INTERPRETATION OF ORPHEUS MYTH FROM HOLLYWOOD SCORE KING DU JOUR

When you hear music as transcendent as this, you experience one of those rare epiphanies and realise you're listening to a new work of genius rather than to something merely brilliant.

'Orphée' is the award-winning Icelandic composer's debut on the heavyweight German label and his first studio album for six years. Having recently moved from Copenhagen to Berlin, it offers "an oblique reflection on personal change" and takes us on an Ovid-inspired, ever-rising harmonic escape from the darkness of the underworld into the light, defying genre at almost every turn. Intimate string and piano pieces and large-scale orchestral works seamlessly incorporate heavily processed electronics and immersive elemental drones, as well as enigmatic shortwave radio broadcasts, to hypnotically expressive effect.

And so the autumnal melancholy of 'Song For Europa', with its echoes of Barber's elegiac adagios, is almost tear-inducing. But then 'Fragment II' astounds in a quite different way as colossal, electronic waves engulf pensive strings, perhaps as our hero emerges transformed from the underworld. Then analogue bleeps and cathedral organ drones combine mightily in 'The Burning Mountain' to speak for his first cognisance of sunlight.

One of the most subtly affecting tracks, 'A Deal With Chaos', was inspired by a more recent retelling of the myth that also provided the composer with an opportunity to introduce a chilling element of grainy retro-futurism. Jean Cocteau's 1950 'Orphée' depicts Jean Marais as a modern day Orpheus listening obsessively to cryptic messages emanating from the radio of a Rolls-Royce. "The words sound to him like avant-garde poetry," Jóhannsson notes. "They reminded me of the mysterious 'number stations' that broadcast coded messages during the Cold War and appear still to be used by secret agents today."

In homage to Cocteau and to Berlin, he began to incorporate recordings of these unsettling transmissions. In this respect there are similarities with the gentle experimentalism of Max Richter's work, particularly in the way that grand, infinite space can quickly give way to the intimate and even claustrophobic. But Jóhannsson's ability to shift with astonishing elan from the tectonically elemental to the melodically-filigreed is, quite peerlessly, his own.

CARL GRIFFIN

LABEL PROFILE

THE INDIE IMPRINTS CATCHING OUR EARS



LABEL: Hominid Sounds

LOCATION: London

EST: 2016

POTTED HISTORY: "I'd been releasing music in the gabber/breakcore scene for years with a project called Ladyscraper," says label co-owner Wayne Adams. "When I was done with raves and staying out until 6am, I decided to set up a studio to record the DIY bands I'd met over the years."

Adams, who is half of our favourite drums 'n' diodes duo, Shitwife, opened the doors of his East London Bear Bites Horse studios meeting the likes of Matt Rideout from Casual Nun and Gordon Watson from Terminal Cheesecake/Luminous Bodies along the way. With pal Graham Dyer, who he met "because he was at every single gig going", they all fancied starting a label and Hominid Sounds was born.

MISSION STATEMENT: "We all have very varied musical backgrounds," says Adams. "So we put out pretty varied stuff, from weirdo noise rock through to spazzy glitchy electronics, modular drone to full on doom metal. We decided we would release a bulk of records to get things moving, so the name of the game is breaking even so we can release more records. If the label still exists in five years then we are winning."

KEY ARTISTS AND RELEASES: So far the label has released the woolly electro jams of Max Hardy (Adams and cohort Aron Ward of YCVN and Olanza), the wild modular messages of Mark Dicker's 'Frogs Eggs' and the swirling psyche rock of We Wild Blood's 'How About Never?' album (on pink cassette no less).

"As well as some split 12-inches and a label compilation, we've got three vinyl releases lined up," says Wayne. "Casual Nun, Death Pedals and psych dirge supergroup Melting Hand."

FUTURE PLANS: "There is a massive variety of excellent bands and musicians around at the moment," offers Adams. "We wanted to create a home for them that wasn't based around a genre but more of an approach to music. A lot of the music we are interested in isn't anything too polished, whether it is electronics or a more guitar, bass, drums set-up, it has to have a kind of soul and energy that translates on to record. We are totally in our infancy as a label, but the way I see it every release is a triumph if someone listens to it and takes something away from it."

NEIL MASON

Melting Hand's 'High Collider' 12-inch is out now. For more info, visit hominidsounds.bandcamp.com

FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS



JOHN FOXX BANDMATE AND MUSIC BOX MAVERICK **HANNAH PEEL** REVEALS THE FIRST AND LAST RECORDS SHE BOUGHT AND THE ONE SHE ALWAYS RETURNS TO

FIRST **SUZANNE VEGA**

Solitude Standing
A&M (1987)



My best friend's older sister had this record when we were at school. I didn't realise until now that it was released a long time before we found it, but it sounded so different to our ears. We would sing together for hours over the a cappella version of the single 'Tom's Diner'. This was the first album I bought on CD just as the only music store in Barnsley town centre, Our Price, closed down.

LAST **VESSEL**

Punish, Honey
Tri Angle (2014)



I'm actually streaming this now. I went mental for this album when it first came out and it still surprises me. It's about the only record lately that has pushed my mind into holes I didn't think were possible through its sounds and feelings. It's more like a foley electronic dance album: physical organic sounds from bikes and metal sheets and home-made instruments. It really fires me up for making more music.

ALWAYS **CLUSTER**

Zuckerzeit
Brain (1974)



It's like wiping a slate clean when warming up the speakers in the studio... it is there as a bubbling undercurrent when the audience enter before a show... it's the cup of tea at the end of a day... it's there for when you need distance from the world.



HANNAH PEEL
Awake But Always
Dreaming
My Own Pleasure

ELECTRONICA'S NEXT BIG THING SEARCH SUDDENLY GETS QUITE A BIT WARMER

Think Northern Ireland-born South Yorkshire-bred Hannah Peel is all plinky plonk music box cover versions? Think again. There's sooooo much more to her than cute takes on OMD, New Order, Soft Cell et al played on a hand-cranked machine using home-punched cards.

For starters, she plays in John Foxx And The Maths and with her geographically themed side project The Magnetic North, not to mention choice guest spots for her show-stopping pipes, most recently on the excellent Wizards Sleeve album. More interestingly, she debuted a new work earlier this year. 'Mary Casio', for brass band and analogue synth, draws its influence from pioneers such as Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram. It tells the story of 86-year-old Mary and her lifelong dream to leave her Barnsley home to journey into space via hand-made machines.

Scoop all this up and you can see how Peel is fast becoming an electronica leading light. She's clearly something special with an ear for the out of the ordinary. And yet the first few tracks of 'Awake But Always Dreaming' the follow-up to her gentle 2011 debut 'The Broken Wave', find her frustratingly ordinary. Soaring opener 'All That Matters' is sleek pop, 'Standing On The Roof Of The World' a dark folk Massive Attack, 'Hope Lasts' is sweet pop... you somehow expected more.

Thankfully it's very much a record of two halves, the shift happens quite subtly with the hypnotic 'Don't Take It Out On Me' and the whole thing threatens to burn the place down with 'Octavia'. Its deep woodwind arpeggios, throbbing heartbeat bassline and whirlwind melody is exactly what you hoped a Peel album would be – inventive, challenging, glorious. The title track finds an unsettling backwards speech loop marking out a sinister sparking rhythm as it builds over nearly eight minutes towards a down and dirty almost techno ending. And it gets better. With its incessant typewriter clang of a rhythm and growling synth backing growl, the nine-minute 'Foreverest' is a total show-stopper.

A whole album of envelope-pushing creativity in this vein and we'd be calling Peel the new Björk, a modern Kate Bush. It seems she's just sharpening an edge we hope we'll be hearing a lot more of. Ignore her at your peril.

NEIL MASON



NONKEEN



VINYL WILLIAMS



ELECTRI-CITY 2



HUSH MOSS | PHOTO: JOYCE OZU

NONKEEN

The Oddments Of The Gamble
R&S

The other half of this Hamburg trio's debut album 'Gamble' from earlier in the year revisits the same bunch of informally recorded tape sessions used to create the debut and the results are similarly delightful. While the trio insist chance and a toss of a coin often play a role in their post-rock, ambient, experimental tape recording, there is real skill at work here. Tracks like the swirling hypnosis of 'Diving Platform' and the huge ebb and flows of 'World Air' are a treat. **SR**

VINYL WILLIAMS

Brunei
Company

This third outing from LA experimenter ace Lionel Williams is an electronic soul-glazed, synth-washed beauty. Though a concept album based around the dichotomies of life in stable Islamic countries (balancing the high life with conservative restrictions), Williams' echoed vocals are opaque at best, so any overly earnest intentions are lost amid a vast and beguiling sound palette. Encompassing motorik constancy, celestial future-psych and 70s kif-infused Arabic pop, 'Brunei' will leave you stunned. **CG**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Electri-City 2
Groenland

A second compilation of relatively scarce tunes from Düsseldorf's electronically oriented history throws up some gems. There's Topolinos whose cheap drum machine and playground melodiousness is nicely subverted by eastern scales and features vocals from a pre-Propaganda Claudia Brücken, while 'Studieren', the B-side of minimal synth primitivism from a rare 1981 seven-inch by Teja Schmitz, would set you back £50 on Discogs. There's no Kraftwerk, but with DAF, Neu!, La Düsseldorf, Rheingold, Die Krupps on board, who needs 'em? **MR**

HUSH MOSS

It Takes A Lot
Average Negative

A silky smooth Berliner who combines jazzy riffs and soulful vocals, Hush Moss's debut LP takes us straight back to the 1980s. 'It Takes A Lot' is funky, upbeat and very aptly described as "elevator jazz". Which is not a bad thing, mind. 'Take Me By The Hand' is full of wah-wah guitars and James Blake-like vocals, while 'Slowly Disappear' is evocative of Prince in places. It's romantic, dreamy and will make you wish you were in a jazz club post-watershed. **FM**



THE ALBUM LEAF

Between Waves
Relapse

Contrasting elements combine on this sixth album from songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Jimmy LaValle, the man behind influential San Diego-based group Tristeza. Partly instrumental, partly song-based, and combining live and pre-programmed musical elements, the eight tracks here vary from the lushly orchestrated, Tortoise-like 'Lost In The Fog' to 'Glimmering Lights', driven along by sharp hip hop beats and shuffling live drums working in unison. Instantly listenable and accessible, but with plenty of depth and complexities. **BW**

IT'S A FINE LINE

It's A Fine Line
Kill The DJ

Fresh from their collaboration with Franz Ferdinand singer and new-found foodie Alex Kapranos, It's A Fine Line cook up a grand banquet of low-burn analogue house. The middle ground between Parisian DJs Ivan Smagghe and Tim Paris is clearest when they find a, er, fine line between post-punk and techno, or between Faust and Factory Floor. The simmering psychedelia that circles these bass-led cuts perhaps lacks some killer bite, but nonetheless this is a rather satisfying set of metronomic cool. **FR**

LEVERTON FOX

Velcro Bird
Not-Applicable

The third album from this London-based experimental jazz/electronic trio creates a complex listen unbound by time keeping, rhythm or normality. There's a vast range of electronic noises to decipher; sometimes palatially spaced but often en masse. They also explore some interesting themes with two songs about helicopters ('Annika' and 'Rice', naturally), a ditty on styling products ('Salon Selecta') and an ode to the soft underbellies of cows ('Onglet'). However, the title track steals the show, paying tribute to a faithful cockatoo. **SL**

OY

Space Diaspora
Crammed Discs

Based in Berlin, Ghanaian-Swiss vocalist-musician Joy Frempong and producer-musician Lleluja-Ha invoke comparisons to Laurie Anderson and Grace Jones with the ecstatic electronic panoramas they've been unveiling since the former launched the OY concept in 2010. 'Space Diaspora' is a multi-textured, full-blown space opera, built on intricately mutated then woven vocal loops and drum patterns to conjure a heady gumbo of African melodies and intergalactic future bombast. There is something very special going on here. **KN**



**PYE CORNER
AUDIO**
Stasis
Ghost Box

ATMOSPHERIC OUTING PROVES COMPULSIVE LISTENING FOR ANALOGUE HEADS

With six albums under his belt, not to mention remixes for everyone from John Foxx to Mogwai, 'Stasis' is the sound of Martin Jenkins, aka Pye Corner Audio, coming of age. And yet 'Stasis' is an odd title, in one sense at least, because although it has a reflective, introspective quality, what it does so effectively is transport you.

Each of its 14 tracks has a very distinct atmosphere, one that you can't help but get sucked into and enveloped by almost instantly. Inspired in equal parts by early electronic pop experiments – his sonic palate certainly retains a pleasingly gritty analogue rawness – post-rave electronica and film soundtracks, Jenkins' sound is as unclassifiable as it is compulsive.

Comparisons have been drawn with pioneering 70s score composer John Carpenter, and the tracks 'Lost Ways' and 'Autonomization' definitely have a touch of Carpenter's natural grandeur and bold brush strokes about them. But 'Sleep Chamber', coming straight after them, has a much more intimate and vulnerable feel about it, with more of a 90s ambience that continues into 'Ganzfeld Effect', where wispy pads, arpeggios and a subtly deployed theremin lead the way to chunky electropop that nods to Vince Clarke's early Depeche Mode genius.

The rest of the LP continues in a flurry of twists and turns with many of the pieces preferring to present themselves in tantalisingly short form, something which is a definite development from the more expansive (and dare we say sometimes self-indulgent) compositions of the past that Jenkins has been inspired by.

'Pulse Threshold' is a clear highlight, a great example of what his publicity refers to as "slow disco" but in fact sounds like a slowly opening acid house experiment designed more for the chill out room rather than the main dancefloor. But the less obviously structured moments like 'Ways Regained' and 'Verberation Lab' are just as essential, the latter echoing the dubby effects of The Orb at their finest, but in a much more freeform fashion.

'Stasis' shows that it's possible to keep the homely, approachable atmosphere that a name like Pye Corner Audio immediately suggests, while pushing your musical horizons on to ever more ambitious and experimental areas than before. Definitely going places.

BEN WILLMOTT



JON HOPKINS
Opalescent
Just Music

SUBTLE HINTS OF THINGS TO COME FROM REMASTERED AND REISSUED DEBUT OUTING

Here's a thing then, a reissue of a 21st century album getting the double vinyl/gatefold/liner notes treatment. Back in 2001, when the fag end of the 1990s was still smouldering in the ash tray, much electronic music was still leaning on the smokiness of trip hop, the downtempo shuffle of the post-club demi-monde, imbued with melancholy, and its more ambient big sister, chill-out. A lot of it was serviceable enough, but ultimately forgettable.

And for sure, some of this album – the bits that introduce Leo Abrahams' pretty guitar into the electronics in particular – wouldn't be out of place on a mixtape alongside The Aloof, Groove Armada, Faithless, Morcheeba and the like. But, as with the criminally overlooked Beaumont Hannant a few years earlier and his soaring experiments with beauty and techno, Hopkins was already working on a different plane altogether from many of his contemporaries. The opening track, 'Elegiac', with its laid-back Fleetwood Mac melodiousness makes the point pretty quickly.

Hopkins was just 20 years old when he made this album. He was yet to catch the ear of Eno, and was a way off the deal with Domino and the creation of the somewhat landmarky 'Immunity' with its Mercury nomination and *that track*, the spine shuddering 'Open Eye Signal', but you can hear where he's headed. There's an unusual subtlety and maturity at play, despite the on-the-nose album title, a minor crime that extends to naming songs 'Halcyon' and 'Inner Peace' and reaching for the thesaurus for 'Elegiac' and 'Cerulean'.

This signposting of the album's overall sound and texture in a Cocteau Twins kind of way is forgivable, mostly because Hopkins' instinctive gift for melody, and the ability to marry it to texture, makes for such a pleasurable hour of listening. It's a self-assured debut for someone who'd just been bought a PC by his record company and instructed to use it to make an album for them.

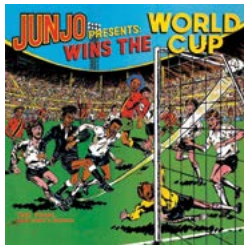
Highlights include the moist 'Private Universe', the chilly 'Cold Out There' and the title track, which sounds like an attempt to channel Eno's slow moving spatial music. All of it would be equally at home on an Ibiza terrace as the sun comes up, or as the soundtrack to a mind-expanding documentary about life on earth or the unknowable weirdness of outer space.

MARK ROLAND

REVIEWS BY
CARL GRIFFIN,
ANDREW HOLMES,
VELIMIR ILIC,
JO KENDALL,
RUSS LITTEN,
SOPHIE LITTLE,
NEIL MASON,
FINLAY MILLIGAN,
KRIS NEEDS,
PUSH,
FAT ROLAND,
MARK ROLAND,
SAM ROSE,
MAT SMITH,
JOOLS STONE,
DAVID STUBBS,
CRAIG WILLIAMS,
BEN WILLMOTT

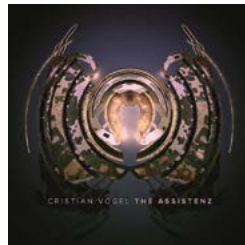
NEEDS MUST

OUR INTREPID AUDIO EXPLORER **KRIS NEEDS** DONS HIS FLYING HAT, LOWERS HIS SOUND GOGGLES AND EMBARKS ON A FLIGHT OF FANCY, HOOVERING UP A BUNCH OF WILD MUSICAL SHIZZ ALONG THE WAY



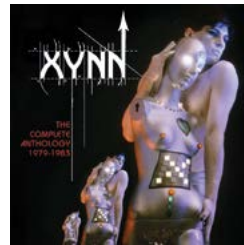
JUNJO PRESENTS:
Wins The World Cup
Greensleeves
CD

From the early 70s, for about a decade, the most audaciously brain-scorching, outer limits-stretching electronic trailblazing was being forged in the lawless studios of Jamaica in the name of dub. The reissue programme currently under way from seminal London label Greensleeves is reviving many classics of the era, such as this mind-melting nugget produced by Henry "Junjo" Lawes in 1982, when themed dub collections were all the rage. Inside the hilariously garish packaging, the beats are monolithic, with bass heavy enough to empty the bowels of the nearest hippo and mixing desk trickery so extreme that vocals are shredded like a tramp's underpants at dawn. There's more of the same era-invoking nuggets on further reissues gems such as 'The Evil Curse Of The Vampires', 'Encounters Pac-Man' and 'Space Invaders'.



CRISTIAN VOGEL
The Assistenz
Shitkatapult
LP/CD/Download

Since his debut on Dave Clarke's Magnetic North label in the early 90s, Chile-born UK-bred Cristian Vogel has ploughed deeper, more evocative furrows than many producers and, with this often astounding follow-up to 2014's 'Polyphonic Beings', deserves to be held up as a fearlessly innovative talent. Tracks such as 'Hold', 'Snowcrunch' and 'Vessels' swarm and swirl with rich layers and textures, underpinned by thudding Godzilla-bowel dub heaves. The astonishing 'Telemorphosis' crackles with gauzy static, achieving Cristian's goal of foraging in strata previously mined by extreme dub or musique concrète foragers. There's the spectral vocal manipulations of 'Barefoot Agnete', before 'The Merman's Dream' pokes its snorkel into the kind of fathomless oceanscape where Drexciya perches on a neighbouring chemical toilet.



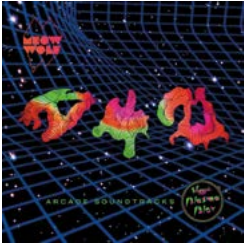
XYNN
Complete Anthology 79-83
Cleopatra
2xCD

German multimedia artist Michael Winter conceived XYNN in the late 70s using music, lights, film and theatrics to enhance his songs. He released three albums (1980's 'Dreams About Reality', 1981's 'Computed Man' and 1983's 'Lost In Space'), which are now roped together in a fabulous double disc set that displays him as a lost talent in the story of unusual electronic pop. There are echoes of Bowie, Roxy, Numan and Gabriel, but his personality shines sufficiently to justify his own lofty place in the pantheon. As Winter says in the notes, "what was once avant-garde is now pop music", and titles such as 'The Lonely Electron', 'Radioactive Raindrops' and 'Isolated Brain' show where his ethos was at. Hopefully the outside world has caught up by now.



DANY RODRIGUEZ
Galaxies Compared
RMR
LP/CD/Download

Having released a string of pube-strafing singles for labels such as Kombination Research, Bush and MB Elektronics, this Belgian producer has started his own RMR label and uncorks his first full album. As the title suggests there's a spacey element to his sound, getting under way with the juddering meteor shower of star-sailing opening salvo 'D'story', twinkling minimal techno of 'Voyager' and UR-recalling title track. 'November' charts an eerier, deeper flight path with icy tones and a chance stumbling into ancient heavenly loincloths floating in space. Even when he's mining Detroit's timeless techno seams, as on the Jeff Mills-cantering 'Labyrinth', Rodriguez flies his own flag as one to watch in a field that needs records like this to stoke its engine and keep exploring fresh galaxies.



MEOW WOLF

House Of Eternal Return:
Soundscapes
MESA
Download

The House of Eternal Return is a permanent interactive, multimedia art installation in Santa Fe, New Mexico, run by the Meow Wolf collective, which can run to 135 artists. There are three sets of music created for the installations, all getting resissued alongside this initial collection, which features mainstays David Last, Mi, Brian Mayhall and Feathericci on a gamut of Paradise Garage electronic boogie, sleazy house and cheeky electro. The second set, 'Arcade Soundtracks: Wiggy's Plasma Plex' was the score for a pop art video game arcade that reached back to the gloriously garish electro-funk of the 80s, while the third offering, 'House of Eternal Return: Soundscapes Vol. 2', continues drawing from the same technicolour well that splashed all over the first volume. Mind-expanding retro-referencing fun rarely sounds so energised.



ABOUTFACE

In The Tepid Shine We
Breathe
Dark Matters
12-inch/Download

This young London-based composer/DJ first appeared with his debut EP on Amirali's Dark Matters label last year, which is now consolidated by this three-track flower-bomb that adds the gossamer vocals of Darker (aka Jenna Whelan) to the title tune's ever-morphing aural ectoplasm. Redshape's remix amps the bass up to rhino scrotum dimensions and homes in on the vocal for a woozily hallucinogenic stretch, until the beat breaks in with a rowdy hi-hat and sturdy acid riff. The snappily entitled 'There Must Be Chaos Within You To Give Birth To A Shining Star' starts with rain recordings and initially suspends beats to stoke its resonating frequencies, until the metallic latrine kick scuttles in midway and accentuates the rich, gliding melodies unfolding above. By now, it's recalling late 90s Orb, which is no bad thing.



STERLING ROSWELL

Atom Brain Monster-Rock
Blang
7-inch/Download

In every column, I try to whack in the kind of mind-frying psychedelic monster electricity was invented for. Former Spacemen 3 drummer Sterling Roswell has been at the forefront of the UK space-rock scene for years, releasing one of its major masterworks with 2014's 'The Call of the Cosmos' album. This single sees him beaming up his alien transmissions from the heart of his psychedelic hoodoo cauldron. Here he whips up a sinister rattling voodoo pulse lashed with extreme resonating guitar twangs, Sky Saxon-like vocals (he once recorded with the legendary late Seeds singer) and, on the toupée-savaging dub, upping the electronic frequencies into a register only ghosts can hear. This is the sound of genuine British psychedelic cosmic studio abuse.



REBIRTH 10

Compiled & mixed by Larry
Heard, aka Mr Fingers
Rebirth
2xCD/Download

Larry Heard is one of the most overlooked giants of electronic music. Although he made his name with a spine-tingling string of groundbreaking house landmarks as Mr Fingers, he long ago started forging ahead into creating keyboard ice sculptures that birthed a new kind of electronic jazz. It's a masterstroke by Rebirth label boss Daniele "Shield" Contrini to ask Larry to compile and mix this celebration of the renowned Italian label's 10 years at the cutting edge of dance music. And Heard rises to the occasion, drawing in selections from names including Bocca Grande, Rennie Foster, Robert Owens, Freaks, Tevo Howard, NUFrequency, James Teej and Agoria, ending with a translucent bonus Mr Fingers track called 'Winterflower'. Coming in a sleeve designed by legendary Kraftwerk artist Emil Schult, this one is really a cut above.



SECRET KNOWLEDGE

Sugar Daddy
Bedrock
Download

Back in the early 90s, I had a band called Secret Knowledge featuring American singer Wonder and a host of collaborators. Andrew Weatherall had just started his Sabres Of Paradise label and, after he put out our Alan Vega-sampling 'Ooh Baby' track, I set about trying to create a monstrous collision between Giorgio Moroder in his Donna Summer prime and Billie Holiday at her desperate best. The track, an 11-minute epic, came to fruition thanks to the crack Sabres team of Jagz Kooner and Gary Burns. Bedrock's John Digweed has always been a champion of the song, so it's nice to see it appearing again on his label with a sparkling new remix by himself and Nick Muir, plus the original and the 'Out Of Our Brains On The 5.15' mix knocked up by David Holmes and Ashley Beedle.

ELECTRONIC SOUND

STUDIO 18, CAPITOL HOUSE, HEIGHAM STREET, NORWICH NR2 4TE



GET IN TOUCH

FOR EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES

INFO@ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK

TO ADVERTISE IN ELECTRONIC SOUND

CONNORB@MEDIA-SHED.CO.UK

01354 818 011

TO SUBSCRIBE TO ELECTRONIC SOUND

ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK/SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIPTIONS@WARNERSGROUP.CO.UK

01778 392 462

ELECTRONICSOUND.CO.UK
[FACEBOOK.COM/ELECTRONICMAGAZINE](https://www.facebook.com/electronicmagazine)
[TWITTER.COM/ELECTRONICMAGUK](https://twitter.com/electronicmaguk)

BE OUR FRIEND

BEVOND.





we create high quality,
well designed and future
proof electronic products
for all people who love
sound and music.
<https://teenage.engineering>

teenage
engineering



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



[Redacted]