

ELECTRONIC SOUND



THE ELECTRONIC MUSIC MAGAZINE

ISSUE 42

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Mute Records

Further Adventures Into The Future



DANIEL MILLER | DAVID SYLVIAN | KLAUS SCHULZE | FINIFLEX | SINK YA TEETH | VINCE CLARKE

JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH

WELCOME TO ELECTRONIC SOUND 42

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When Mute Records launched in 1978, the idea that a little DIY label would, within a few short years, become home to one of the world's best-selling pop groups (see Depeche Mode) would have got you out laughed out of the Mute "offices" at 16 Decoy Avenue, London, NW11.

But that's exactly what happened, with Mute becoming a kind of embassy for the German electronic music scene in London, releasing records by the likes of DAF, Liaisons Dangereuses, Holger Hiller, Die Krupps and Einstürzende Neubaten, while having phenomenal success with Depeche Mode, and later setting about the important work of re-releasing of the back catalogues of Can, Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire.

As the 1990s got under way, Moby delivered the mega-selling 'Play' album while sub-label NovaMute positioned itself right on the edge of the scene's boundaries, issuing some of the best and most interesting techno of the era. In the 21st century, the label went from strength to strength with a new roster and re-released the Kraftwerk back catalogue. If there is a British label that might claim to be the spiritual home of electronic music, it's Mute. So join us as we celebrate the past, present and future of Mute over 14 pages in this month's Electronic Sound.

We're also particularly thrilled to have interviewed the normally reticent David Sylvian about his work with Can's Holger Czukay. He tells us all about the sessions he and Holger held which spawned the amazing 'Plight & Premonition' and 'Flux & Mutability', which are being reissued this month in a lovely boxset.

Also within these pages you'll find a chat with Finiflex, whose new album is a corker and has been a permanent fixture on the ES stereogram, the legendary Klaus Schulze tells us all about his working practice and his new album, and the newcomers on everyone's lips, post-punk electro duo Sink Ya Teeth, take pub chat to a whole new level.

All this and, as usual, so much more.

**Electronically yours,
Push & Mark**

THE THE

Becketts Students Union, Leeds
27 May 2018

WORDS: NEIL MASON

PICTURE: KEVIN FOAKES

A trio of hush-hush warm-up dates, two at Nottingham's Rescue Rooms and one in Leeds, saw Matt Johnson's The The on a stage for the first time since the David Bowie-curated Meltdown in 2002

These shows, in preparation for the official comeback tour which rolls out over the summer and into autumn, are a chance to catch the band in whites-of-the-eyes venues and what's more, via polite posters dotted around the room, it was made plain that said spectacle was to be enjoyed "with ones own eyes and ears as we all did once". In other words, no filming or photography. You know what? Barely a phone screen flickers for the entire two-hour set.

"I wanted to strip-down the songs and reduce the sonic palette," explains Matt about what we are about to receive, revealing there would be no synths, samplers or sequencers on stage. "I'm a very different person to the one who wrote these songs. I've tried to not disturb their soul, but rather distil them to their essence."

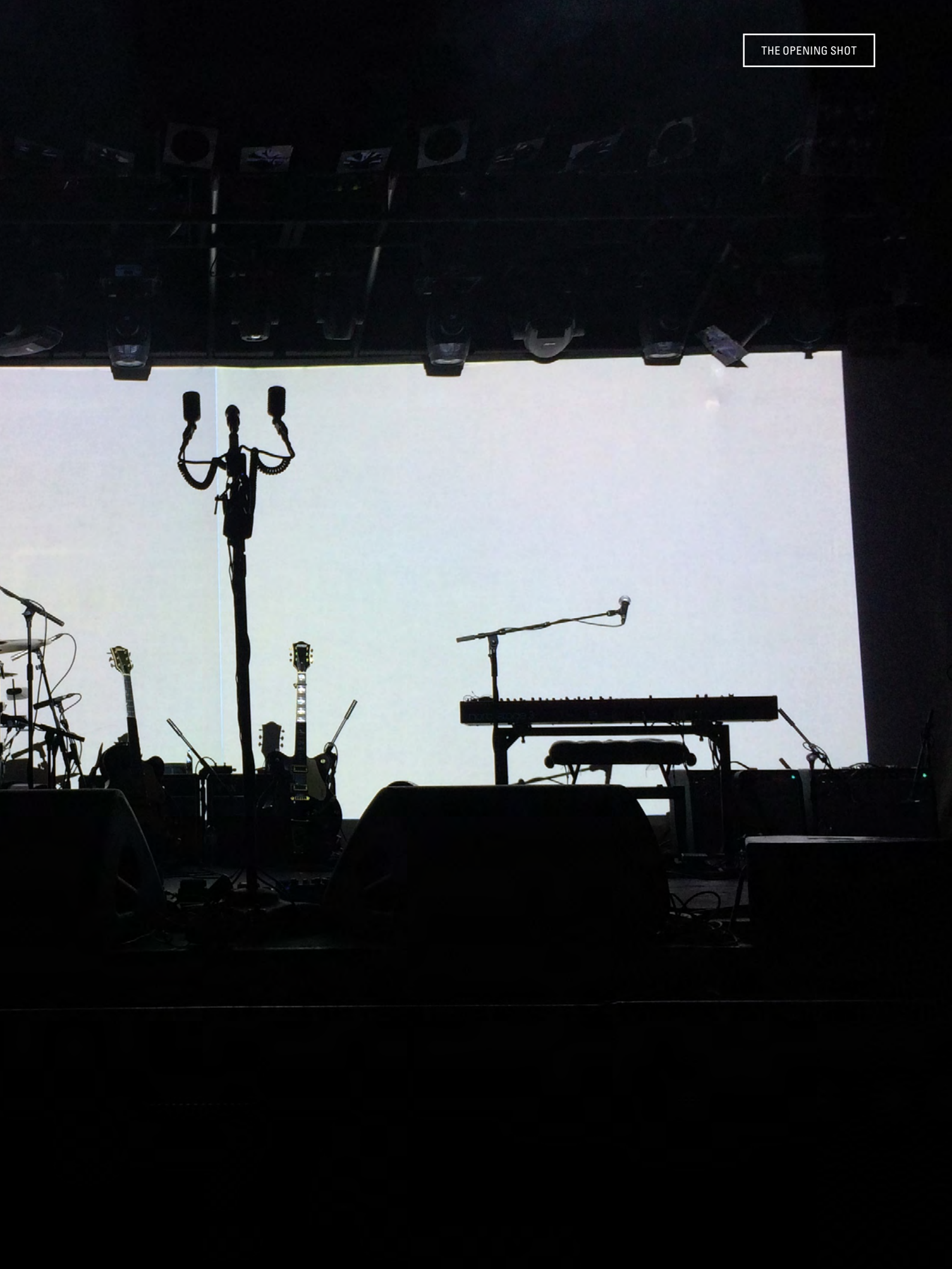
And so, with the audience packed in like sardines, a five-piece The The arrive onstage at 8.30pm (a very civilised 7.45pm, sharp, in Nottingham!) and make their way through a roller coaster 24-song set that spans 1981's 'Burning Blue Soul' to 2000's 'NakedSelf'.

The band, old pals/collaborators from each phase of The The, come on like a kick-ass roadhouse blues band (compliment!) and while there really isn't a synth in sight (there is an electric piano, natch, and a well-used melodica), the songs lose little of their sparkle. Interestingly, there's none of the angst and anger that fuelled much of the early work, with Matt Johnson on charmingly good form, a man clearly comfortable in his own skin these days.

Yes, yes, all well and good, but does he play the hits? Oh he does. From 'Soul Mining' there's a roof-raising triple bill of 'I've Been Waitin' For Tomorrow (All Of My Life)', 'This Is The Day' and 'Uncertain Smile' (JC Collard on keyboards almost levels the place with *that* piano solo). It's hard to imagine the rest of 'Soul Mining' hasn't been rehearsed and that 'Giant' won't make an appearance at some point during the forthcoming tour, nor would you think he'll settle for just 'Sweet Bird Of Truth', 'Heartland' and the title track from 'Infected'.

It is, in short, one of those nights. You know, one of *those* nights. Welcome back.





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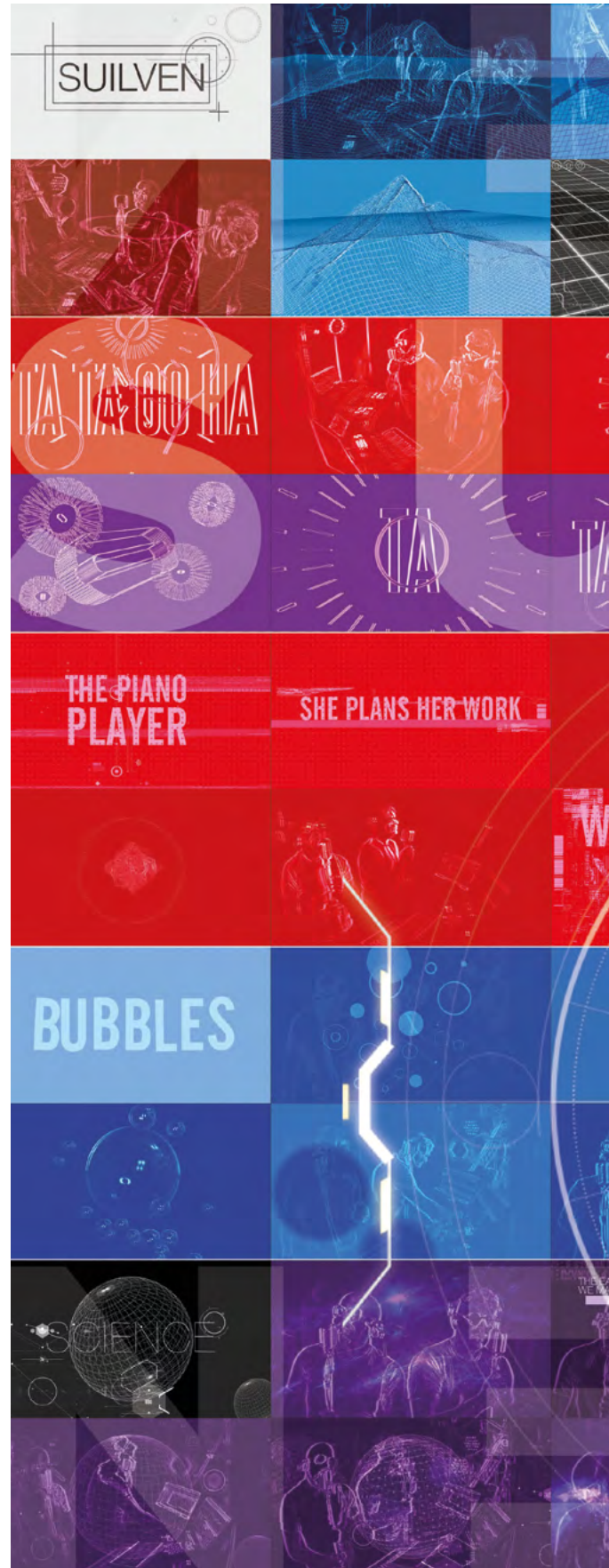
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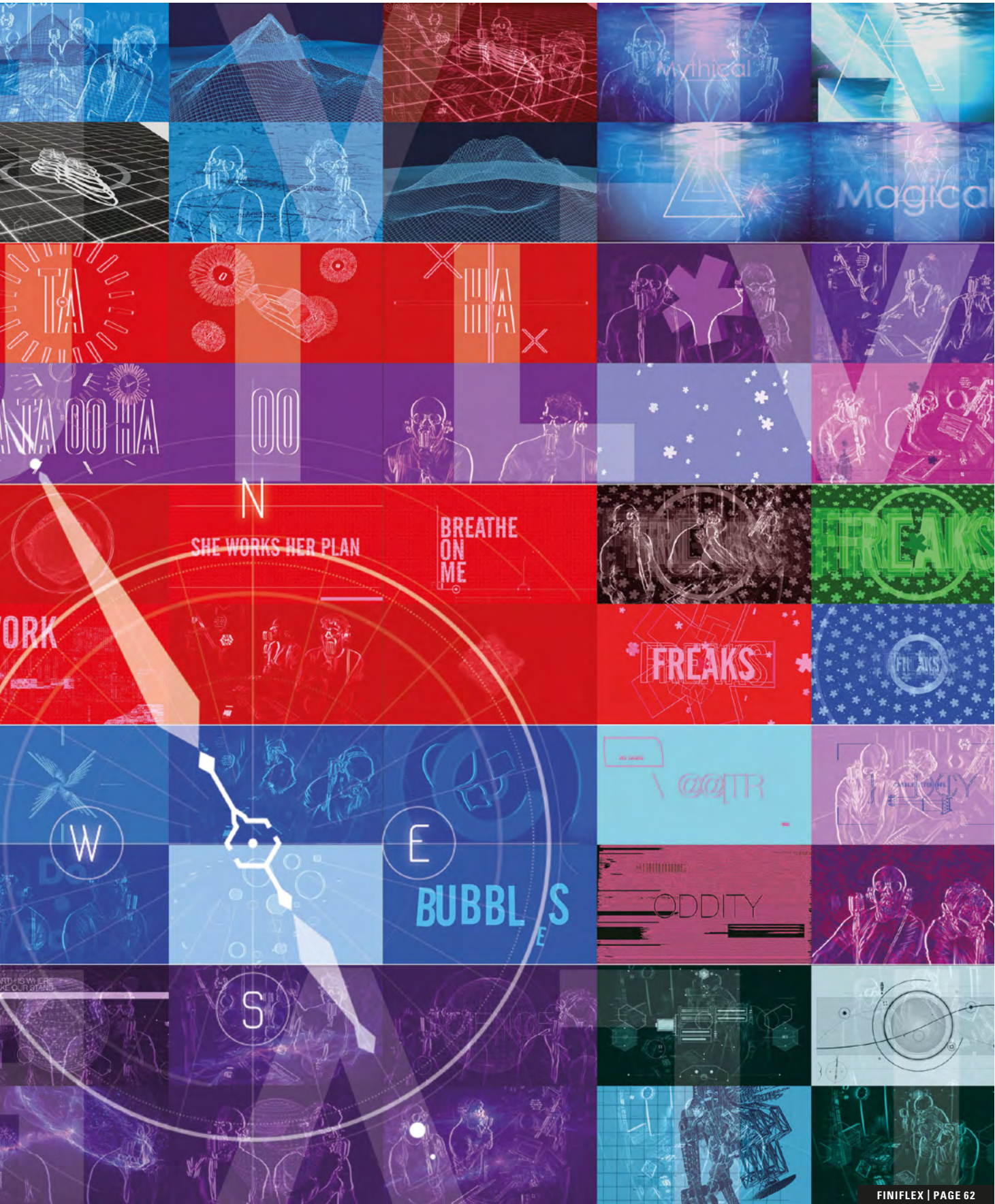
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READER OFFER

EXCLUSIVE READER-ONLY LIMITED EDITIONS

THIS MONTH: THE NORMAL'S 'TVOD'/'WARM LEATHERETTE' REISSUED ON CLEAR VINYL SEVEN-INCH

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IN LIGHT OF THIS MONTH'S SEVEN-INCH REPRESSING OF THE NORMAL'S 'TVOD' AND 'WARM LEATHERETTE' SINGLE, COMPLETE WITH A REPLICA OF ITS ORIGINAL 1978 SLEEVE, MUTE BOSS DANIEL MILLER TALKS US THROUGH ITS GENESIS THE FIRST TIME ROUND

'TVOD'/'Warm Leatherette' was the record that launched the hugely successful Mute label and it remains one of the most significant electronic music releases of all time.

"I remember 1978 as a very exciting year," says Daniel Miller. "Punk was evolving, the DIY movement was underway, and you could pick up a synthesiser without spending too much money. When those three things connected in my head, I felt this was a moment I had to grab. I had to buy a synth and start making music. I hated the electronic proggy stuff as much as the punks did, so I wanted this record to be a statement about how electronic music was not elitist, it was accessible and was actually the ultimate punk music."

Is it right that you made 'TVOD' and 'Warm Leatherette' with a synth and a four-track recorder and that was it?

"Pretty much. I had a Korg 700S, which was the cheapest synth I could get, but I didn't have a drum machine or a sampler. No 808, no 909, no nothing. I didn't have a mixing desk, I just had a tiny mixer. I didn't have any effects so I decided to hire a delay unit, but I could only afford to have it for one day, which meant I had to record both tracks in a single day. In the end, I didn't really use the delay, which I've always thought was quite funny. I didn't even have a TV set, which I wanted to use to get some snippets of TV dialogue for 'TVOD', so I borrowed a friend's set."

What are the snippets of dialogue on there?

"I've no idea. They were recorded totally randomly. I had to do it several times to get it right, so the dialogue is whatever happened to be on the TV when I finally got it right."

Did the final tracks sound the way you wanted?

"I wanted them to be very rhythmic, which they are. I kind of knew what I was doing, in the sense that I knew how to get what I wanted, but there were obvious limitations to the equipment. I mean, the Korg doesn't have a sequencer, although it does have a repeat function, so you just press a note and it will repeat it. Everything on 'Warm Leatherette' was hand-played as was everything apart from the main sequence on 'TVOD'. I had no recording experience at all, but I didn't really need any because I wasn't using compressors. It was straight onto tape, so all I had to do was make sure the levels were right and hope for the best."

Did you know how to get vinyl pressed and into the shops?

"I got all the information I needed from Small Wonder, which was an independent record shop in east London that also had its own label. I just rang them up and asked them lots of questions, you know, 'Where do you get records pressed?', 'Where do you get sleeves printed?', and then I went to the places they told me about. They were really friendly, really helpful, and they explained everything to me. So I didn't have to go to a studio or a record company. I had to go to mastering, but that was the only kind of traditional industry interface I had. Once I'd got some test pressings, I went to the Rough Trade shop to try to sell a few copies to them and they offered to distribute it for me, which amazed me. I honestly didn't think anybody would like it."

What was the idea behind the walking man logo?

"I can't remember exactly. A friend of mine called Simone Grant did the artwork. Simone and I were both really into Letraset and I think we just went through some sheets and found it."

But you've kept the same logo for Mute throughout all these years, haven't you?

"It's gone though the hoops a bit, a tweak here, a tweak there, but nothing much. So, yes, it is essentially still the same logo."

Why did you call the label Mute Records?

"I just liked the word 'mute'. When I was working as a film editor, I used to see it all the time in the cutting rooms. A film without sound is called mute film. So I saw the word everywhere and I just really liked it. I had a lot of different names actually, but that's what I settled on."

Did you consider other names for The Normal?

"I did! At one point, I thought about having the words the other way around, so the artist was Mute and the label was called Normal."

What do you think about the single now?

"Well, I don't sit down and listen to it, but I hear it by chance sometimes and, yeah, I'm proud of it. I'm pleased with the way it was made, which was a very liberating way of working at the time. You would never make a record in that way now, even if you were just starting out. I hate my voice, but apart from that I think the tracks sound OK. I think they sound good."

GRANNY TAKES A TRIP

FORM AN ORDERLY QUEUE FOR MOOG GRANDMOTHER

When Moog released the Mother-32 in 2016 we weren't expecting its matriarch to march onto the scene in the near future with its unusual colour choices (the well-earned right of any grandmother) and 1970s attitude. But here it is. It's a semi-modular synth, and it resembles late-era EMS product, the Polysynthi. Much like the EMS VCS 3, the Grandmother has a reverb spring on board, a very welcome resurrection. There's an arpeggiator and sequencer, and simple controls with a limited amount of patching available too, making the Grandmother a kind of ultra-cool entry level modular noise maker in the Radiophonic tradition. They're a bit scarce at the moment, but hopefully production will ramp up soon. moogmusic.com





PHOTO: ALEX LAKE

INTRODUCING...

COBALT CHAPEL

EPIC ELECTRONIC PSYCHEDELIA

WHO THEY?

They are Jarrod Gosling, one half of Sheffield's brilliant purveyors of electronic music explorations I Monster, and vocalist Cecilia Fage, who also lends her pipes to Matt Berry & The Maypoles.

WHY COBALT CHAPEL?

Imagine Stereolab with the BPMs cranked up and Rick Wright on keyboards, and you have some idea of what to expect from Cobalt Chapel's new 'Mountain' EP, particularly the title track. As it heats up, it leaps off into fiery sacred chant territory and crash edits itself into 6/4 waltz, and then it starts to turn inside out just before your head explodes. 'Bohemia' employs a waltz quickstep with lush layers of Fage's voice floating over the top, creating a kind of easy listening acid trip, tricked out with ear-baffling production manoeuvres.

TELL US MORE...

Cobalt Chapel's expansive sound is achieved with Fage's seductive voice, inventive drums played with muscular purpose and a veritable phalanx of processed analogue organ tech—Hammond, Farfisa, Vox, Philicorda, Elka, Ace Tone, Wem – all the battered vinyl covered gems you could once get for cheap in junk shops but now fetch many hundreds on eBay. They set off folk memories of early Pink Floyd cuts like 'Cirrus Minor' and if you know what I'm talking about, you'll really dig Cobalt Chapel. Check out the organ frenzy mid-point in the epic 11-minute 'Canticle' for much freak-out stylings, before it positively bursts into a glorious distorto mush and yet more celestial choral action from Fage. The band are working on their second album. We await with baited breath.

MARK ROLAND

'Mountain' is out now on Klove/Republic Of Music



INTRODUCING...

ZOË BLADE

SLIPMATS, SOLDERING AND STEPPER ACID

WHO SHE?

A maverick on a mission. Zoë Blade has been making electronic music since she was 16, starting out by morphing samples of household objects into rhythmic soundscapes. It was around this time that she got a D for her music GCSE. Two decades on, her experimental impulses are as strong as ever, as is her independent streak. She's based in Stoke-on-Trent and most of her work is crafted on what she calls "a gloriously feral analogue modular synthesiser".

WHY ZOË BLADE?

Zoë has clocked up around 20 digital releases since 2010, including several albums. She's just put out two terrific EPs, 'Slipmat Slipstream' and the second in her 'Solderside Sessions' series. At its core, 'Slipmat Slipstream' is a driving electropop tune, but two of the mixes feature samples of kitchen knives and a power drill. Old habits and all that. She issues her music under Creative Commons licences and her website has tons of tracks available to download for free, although she asks that you bung her a couple of quid on Patreon if you like them. You will like them, by the way.

TELL US MORE

Zoë is a programmer as well as a musician. She's written the firmware for Stepper Acid, a Eurorack 16-step sequencer designed and built by her partner Nina Richards. Trent Reznor and Underworld are just two of the artists who have been raving about Stepper Acid in recent months. Zoë is also a published fiction writer and a long-time YouTuber. She's eminently quotable too. "I'm not the best at making music," she says. "But I am the best at making my music."

PUSH

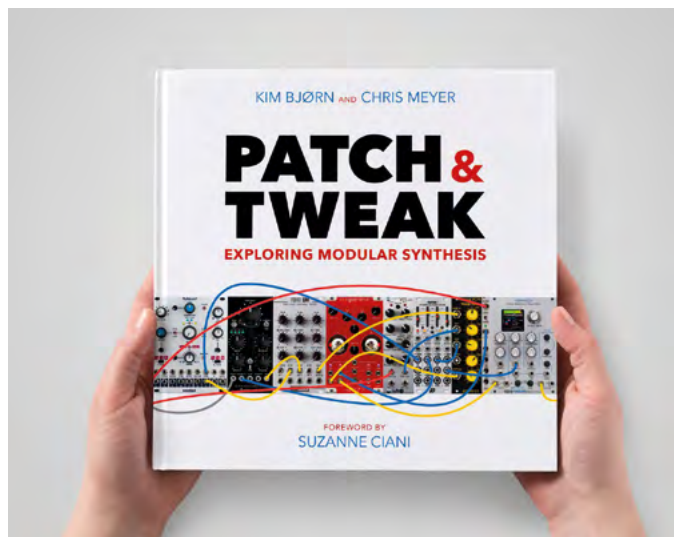
The 'Slipmat Slipstream' and 'Solderside Sessions 02' EPs are out now on Transistor Sounds

WANT

OPEN THE PATCHBAY DOORS

NEW TOME SET TO BECOME GO-TO MODULAR HANDBOOK

Following on from 'Push Turn Move', a fascinating look at interface design in electronic music, this new tome from Kim Bjørn and Chris Meyer does what it says on the tin. 'Patch & Tweak – Exploring Modular Synthesis' has a foreword by Suzanne Ciani and aims to help new and experienced synthesists to become masters of their systems by "exploring, explaining, and demystifying a range of topics relevant to anyone interested in modular synths or just synthesis itself". The book contains a history of synthesis, as well as sections on concepts, purpose and creative possibilities of modules, all with colourful diagrams to boot. There's also interviews with modular pros, including Tom Holkenborg aka Junkie XL and the excellent Robin Rimbaud/Scanner. Looks like essential reading, pre-order now for €60.40. pushturnmove.com



READ

SCISSORS, GLUE, STICKY TAPE, HIGHLIGHTER PEN...

MUST BE A NEW ISSUE OF SNARE RUSH ZINE!

We're always pleased to see Snare Rush zine when it lands on our desk. This, Issue Four, sees Editor Andrew admit that he's starting to get the hang of things now. As usual, it's great. There's a map (there's always a map) and this issue it's the geography of 'Techno Topographia'. There's a ton of reading on its 28 pages, including interviews with Daphnellc and Isn'tses as well as a spot the difference illustration. All cracking stuff. Next issue is due October-ish. We'd really like to see more zines of any flavour in the office, if you produce one, do send it our way. snarerush.co.uk

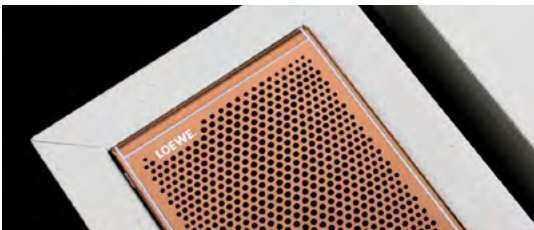
SNARE RUSH

WANT

BASS, HOW LOEWE CAN YOU GO?

GERMAN TV SET PIONEERS SERVE UP PORTABLE SPEAKER

Renowned German tech brand Loewe who, in the late 1920s, worked with John Logie Baird to produce the world's first television set, are dipping their toes in the wireless Bluetooth speaker market with the Klang M1. It's a minimal but powerful bit of kit, with two high-/mid-range speakers and two mid/bass passive membranes housed inside a stainless steel case, which has been sandblasted and then "vaporised" (nope, not a clue) as part of its colour application process. Rigorous. The speaker itself is a self-described as a "miniature masterpiece", and while it all sounds impressive, we won't know how true that declaration is until we can get our hands on one when it's released later this month. loewe.tv



LISTEN/READ

THE ONLY WAY IS ESSEX

ULTRAMARINE STAR IN STYLISH AUDIO/PRINT PROJECT

We do like a well thought out seven-inch single, and when they're as lovingly produced as this two-sider from Ultramarine, we thought we should share. The project is a one-shot audio/print project from Random Spectacular, the publishing imprint of Norwich/Edinburgh-based design collective and print gallery, St Jude's. It features not only two new pieces of music inspired by the Blackwater Estuary in Essex, where Ultramarine's studio is based, but a rather delicious printed booklet featuring photography, artwork and poetry inspired by the bleakly beautiful watery inlet. It's a very limited run so chop chop if you want to get your hands on a copy. Oh, you should also expect a new Ultramarine album in the autumn via the ever-excellent Les Disques du Crépuscule. You'll read about it here first, as always. randomspectacular.co.uk







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WANT

I CAN ONLY RECEIVE

SHOVE THIS IN CAR CASSETTE HOLES

If your motor isn't *quite* from the 21st century, and yet all your music listening devices are, fret not. The snappily titled Portable Vintage Car Cassette SD MP3 Tape Player Adapter (we're going to call it the Cassette Adapter from here on in) can be used as a standard MP3 player, but can also be popped into your car's cassette player for tunes on the move. Its uses don't stop there though, as the SD card slot means it can also work as a card reader when connected to a PC. No brew making mode as yet and it can't vac up for you, but at \$28.99 you really can't go wrong, right? desiredgadgets.com

**NEWS**

MOOG DUDE

MOOG ANNOUNCE INNOVATION GONG

As half of Beaver & Krause, Bernie Krause was responsible for bringing the inventions of Robert Moog to a wider public. He demoed the Moog Modular system at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, and in 1968 showed George Harrison how to use the one he'd ordered. Harrison turned the session into his solo album 'Electronic Sound', much to Krause's displeasure. These days he's a respected soundscape ecologist, whose fine work involves recording and archiving natural soundscapes. In recognition of all this, Krause received the Moog Innovation Award at this year's Moogfest, joining the likes of previous recipients Suzanne Ciani and Brian Eno in the synthy hall of fame. moogfest.com

LISTEN

SAVE OUR SOUNDS

NO.20 THE KRAHMER-NEWBROOK JAZZ ARCHIVE



The British Library's Save Our Sounds project aims to save the UK's recorded sounds from extinction. Curator Of Popular Music, Andy Linehan, tells us how the archive acquired a vast collection of jazz recordings dating back to the 1940s... unearthed, no less, in a Norfolk garage

The Kraher-Newbrook collection comprises of recordings made by jazz enthusiasts Carlo Kraher and Peter Newbrook from the late 1940s to the mid-1970s. The collection comprises of more than 5,000 items on a variety of formats, including over 2,000 delicate lacquer discs, all of which were being stored in a lock-up garage in Norwich before being rescued by the Sound Archive in 2004.

Kraher was a partially-sighted British jazz drummer and record producer born in 1914 and Newbrook, six years his junior, was a cinematographer, producer and writer with a keen interest in playing and listening to jazz.

Newbrook worked for Warner Bros film studios while gigging as a vibraphone player and met and befriended Kraher on the London jazz circuit. Newbrook's film work took him to the USA in 1943 (where he continued to perform, meeting and playing with all manner of musicians) and on his return to London the following year he renewed his friendship with Kraher.

The pair both purchased disc cutters to enable them to record jazz radio broadcasts, which they did voraciously, with Kraher particularly documenting jazz and blues programmes broadcast by BBC, both from the radio and TV, for many years. Kraher was also a keen collector of imported American releases and radio transcriptions on disc, and held listening sessions for friends and musicians to introduce them to new sounds and styles coming in from the USA.

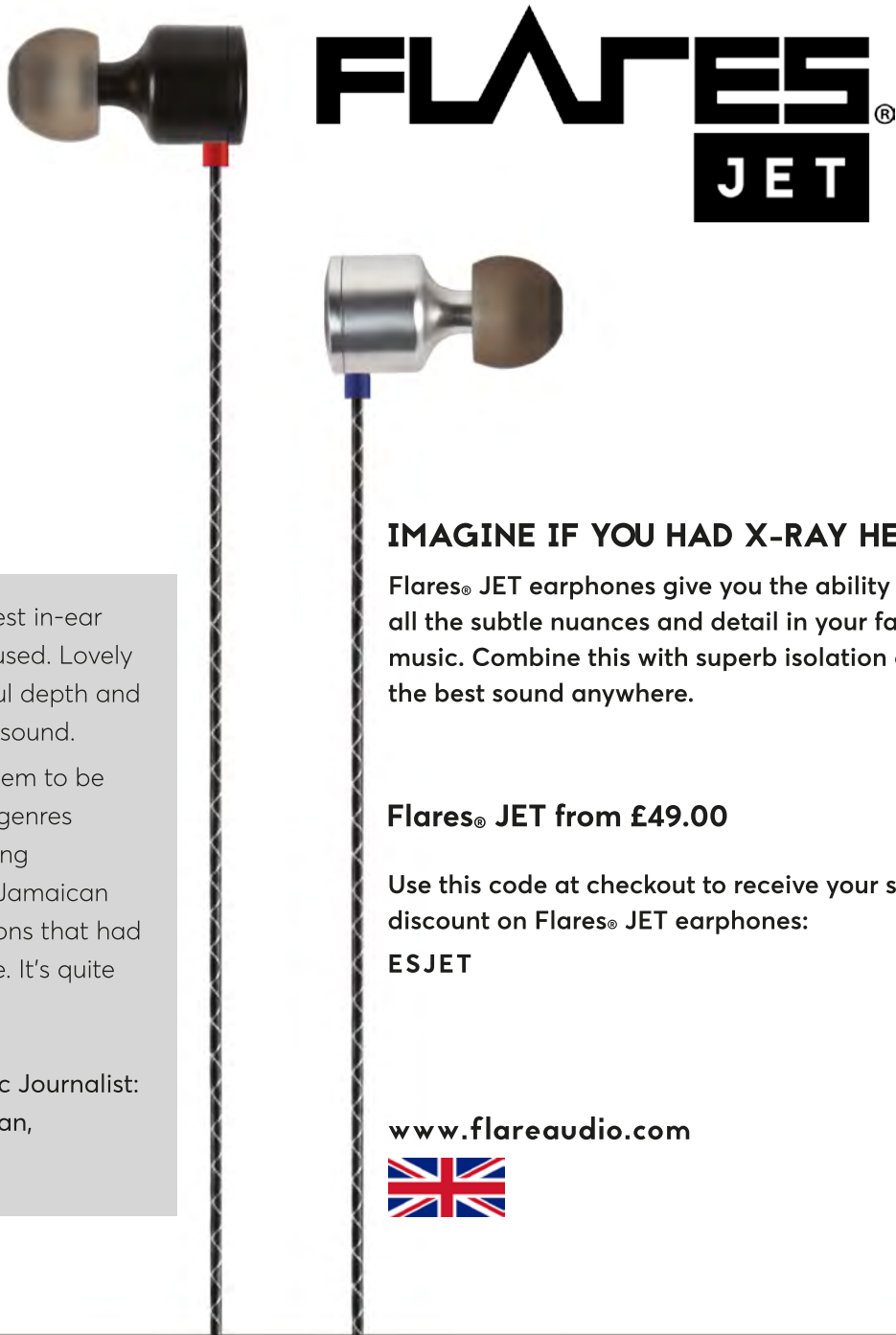
In 1947, inspired by dozens of newly-established American independent record companies, Kraher and Newbrook started their own record label, which they called Esquire with the motto "The Best In Jazz". Kraher's basement mansion flat in Bloomsbury had been soundproofed to allow it to double as his rehearsal space and this became Esquire's main studio.

The label recorded many well-known British bands such as Ronnie Scott and Kenny Graham in the 40s and 50s in addition to licencing American recordings for UK release by artists such Modern Jazz Quartet, Miles Davis and the Prestige Record label.

Eventually Newbrook's film work, increasingly involving overseas location work such as on 'The Bridge On The River Kwai' led to him bowing out of involvement with Esquire. Kraher continued with the label, but its gradual decline in the 60s led to its closure. The company's catalogue passed to Kraher's wife Greta on his death in 1976 and on her death to Newbrook who later sold it on.

The Kraher-Newbrook collection is a fascinating documentation of the first British jazz record label, but the inclusion of hundreds of jazz broadcasts recorded by the pair, many of which were previously considered lost, provides a valuable insight into the history of jazz in the UK.

For more about Save Our Sounds, visit bl.uk/save-our-sounds



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Pete Paphides, Music Journalist:
Mojo, Q, The Guardian,
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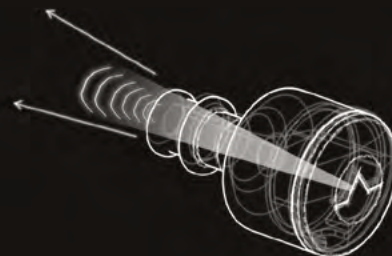
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PLAY

UNO, DUE, TRE, QUATTRO

MINI SYNTH NEEDS BIG POCKETS NOT DEEP ONES

The Uno Synth is a cute little box synth from Italian company IK Multimedia in association with Soundmachines that features the kind of control panel readers of a certain vintage will recognise from the Sinclair ZX81 computer. The cost-saving design, hard on the fingers but easy on the pocket, contains an all-analogue mono synth featuring two VCOs, a continuously variable wave shaper, an arpeggiator and a 16-step sequencer all for a very modest €199, which is pretty attractive for this kind of sonic muscle. The Uno is battery-powered, tiny (25cm by 15cm) and weighs just 400 grams. Pre-orders are open now for shipping in July. ikmultimedia.com



WANT

(MINIMAL) WAVING NOT DROWNING

NYC IMPRINT MAKES MOVE INTO BEACHWEAR

What says "I like austere electronic music from the late cold war era" more than lying elegantly on a beach towel next to the swimming pool on holiday? Why, lying elegantly on a Minimal Wave beach towel next to the swimming pool on holiday, of course! In a charmingly bonkers and seasonal move into beach-related merchandise, the Brooklyn label owned by electronic music archaeologist par excellence Veronica Vasicka has a limited edition (just 50 units) of said beach towels available now. Just think how it will match your general demeanour of Mitteleuropa decadence. Irresistible. minimalwave.com



WANT

PLAY MISTY WITH ME

CODE YOURSELF, HIGH-END, PRO-GRADE BOT

It wouldn't be an issue of ES without some sort of robot. Spawning from robotics experts Sphero, Misty II is a professional grade 'bot built as a development platform, meaning you can code her functions yourself even if you've never coded before. Misty comes with mapping and navigation, facial recognition, remote viewing using a 4K camera and a "personality engine" which "imbues Misty with uniqueness". She also knows when she's running low on juice, and will go and auto-charge when required. Another step closer to autonomous robotic companions then, but it comes at the premium price of £3,200. mistrybotics.com



"Bringing the '90s back to the '60s"



The new **Expert Sleepers General CV**:
A powerful General MIDI synthesizer, under voltage control.

expert-sleepers.co.uk



INTRODUCING...

YUKI AME

DEEP-THINKING BRISTOLIAN 'TRONICA

WHO THEY?

Well, of that we can't exactly be sure. Yuki Ame is an alias, he's male, he released his first track a couple of years ago, and that's pretty much all we know. Oh, he hails from Bristol, so we might detect the influence of another frustratingly unknowable figure, Banksy. Or, you know, maybe it is Banksy...

WHY YUKI AME?

Yuki Ame's background is in hip hop and sampling, and that influence is evident, stylistically anyway, on his debut EP 'Anamnesis'. The music he makes carries a tension between darkness and light, pitching serene ambient sounds together with grubbier, more pensive gestures. Key track 'Love Me' has a sparse, electro-derived beat around which wordless vocals swirl, ebb and flow, like the stateliness of Orbital's 'Halcyon' with more street smarts. 'Mykonos' is pure warmth, featuring an evolving arpeggio and a 'Spastik'-esque percussion loop that on their own would sound nervous and uncomfortable, but which are instead neatly enveloped by beatific arrangements.

TELL US MORE...

Whoever Yuki Ame really is, he is undoubtedly one of music's deep thinkers: his shrouded image is all driven by a philosophical study of the concept of identity within music, rather than trying to avoid the taxman. He makes a good and valid point about the need to know something about the individual behind the music, but one that just makes you want him to rip off his mask, Scooby Doo-style, and tell us who he really is.

MAT SMITH

'Anamnesis' is out now on Panel

PLAY

ACID REIGN

NEED A NEW WEAPON OF CHOICE? COURSE YOU DO

It's been around a while, but if you've been enjoying Underworld lately, chances are you will have heard a Stepper Acid, their favourite new toy, in action. Rick Smith was raving about it last month in issue 41. "It's a fantastic little box!" he shouted, while demonstrating its contribution to a new track at high volume. The Stepper Acid is a 16-step Eurorack sequencer designed specifically for live performance. It's the work of Nina Richards and Zoë Blade who trade as boutique British outfit Transistor Sounds Labs. The stylish module is easy to use, with plenty of powerful on-the-fly editing functionality, which is why it's found such a fervent fan in Rick Smith. More than one Stepper Acid can be synced together to control multiple sound-making units, and each can save up to 40 patterns. Song mode allows pattern chaining to start building those modular jams well into the night. We especially like the little button keyboard and the detach function which allows all kinds of messing around with a sequence before launching it, while playing a different one. Modular madness ahoy! transistorsoundslabs.com



VISIT

ALAS (WORD)SMITH & JONES

MUSIC JOURNALISM LEGEND IN PUBLIC CHAT SHOCKER

Allan Jones toiled at legendary weekly music paper Melody Maker, man and boy, from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, first as staff reporter, later as Editor. He was there when Bowie and Lou Reed had a fist fight in a London restaurant. He was duffed up by Geezer Butler of Black Sabbath. When Ozzy Osbourne escaped his hotel room in Texas wearing his wife's clothes and was arrested for pissing on the Alamo, Allan Jones was there. In 1977 he told Sting he should go back to teaching. You can catch the full versions of these wonderful stories of bygone era in his book 'Can't Stand Up For Falling Down', and if you're in London in July you can see the man himself in conversation at Waterstones, courtesy of the Walthamstow Rock 'n' Roll Book Club. There may be drinking.

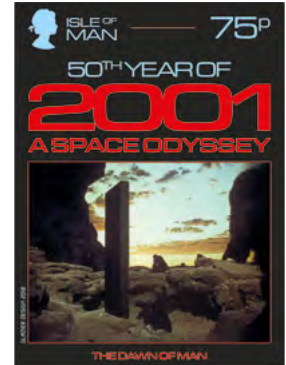
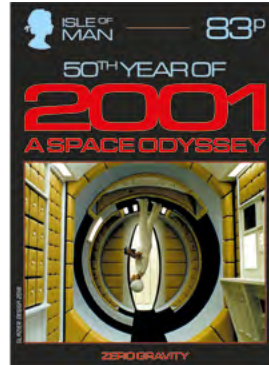
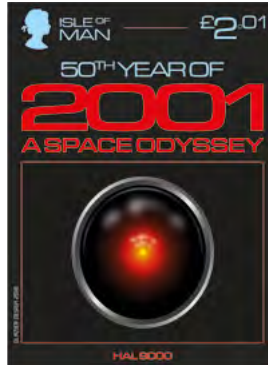
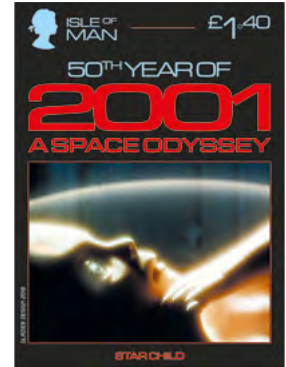
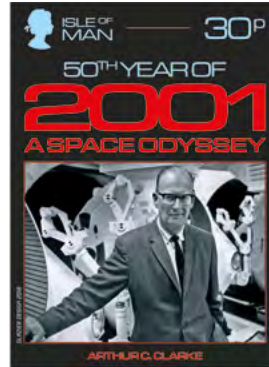
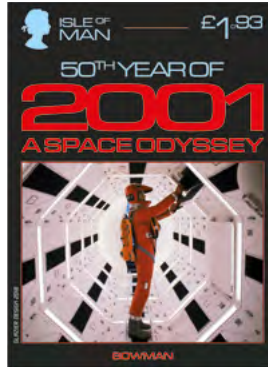
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WANT

GOING POSTAL

KUBRICK STAMPS MARK '2001' TURNING 50

The Isle of Man Post Office is set to launch (excuse the pun) a series of eight postage stamps celebrating the 50th anniversary of Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece, '2001: A Space Odyssey'. The stamps depict Kubrick himself, author Arthur C Clarke, from whose short story the film was adapted, as well as images from the film itself including the "Monolith" and, of course, the cantankerous AI, HAL 9000. Fans will be pleased to hear each of the stamps also contain hidden messages. A stamp *and* a puzzle, eh? They really are spoiling us. Apparently, according to Kubrick's long-standing producing partner and brother-in-law, Jan Harlan, the great man loved all types of stationery. "He would find this highly amusing, but also very flattering," he said of the stamps which are available now for pre-order with the official first day of issue slated for 14 June. iompost.com



ORB

COOKING VINYL


NEW ALBUM OUT JUNE 22ND
NO SOUNDS ARE OUT OF BOUNDS

"AMBIENT GODS"
MIXMAG

"THIS LATEST OUTING RE-ESTABLISHES THEM AS SCULPTORS OF AURAL ODYSSEYS"
Q

"HARKS BACK TO THEIR FIRST ALBUM'S SPRAWLING GENESIS"
ELECTRONIC SOUND

"A CANDIDATE FOR ELECTRONIC ALBUM OF THE YEAR"
RECORD COLLECTOR

Listen on
 Apple Music

WANT

YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

WALL MOUNT YOUR VINYL

We've got a bit of a thing about storing vinyl at the moment, and as a result we're always keeping an eye out for elegant solutions. While we couldn't keep our *entire* collection like this, we do like the idea of having a whole bunch of it in these almost invisible frames. We've seen this sort of thing before, but these frames, created by Art Of Records in California, look a cut above. The frame-free, fully protective cases are, it says here, easy to open so your record is accessible at all times. They feature a reversible spindle adaptor so you can display the records or record covers, and, unlike a lot of these things, they come with quick release tabs that make it easy to access your tuneage at any time. They're \$49 a-piece and are expected to start shipping this autumn. We really want one. Or two.

artofrecords.com



WANT

RISE AND SHINE

ALARM CLOCK GETS 21ST CENTURY REBOOT

Now this does seem to have it all. HyperCube is an award-winning sleep aid, wake-up light and alarm clock that can wirelessly charge up to three Qi-enabled devices. You can use the HyperCube app to customise your own light and alarm, or just select one from a number of presets. It's modular as well, meaning you can configure it either as a cube, mapped onto its speaker base or completely flat. They'll retail for \$200, due in October, but if you get yourself to indiegogo now you can nab one for a mere \$99. indiegogo.com



Solderside Sessions 02
Zoë Blade

Out 08/06/2018

iTunes / Spotify / Amazon / Google Play / Bandcamp



INTRODUCING...

DARKEST

MYSTERY-SHROUDED GOTH SYNTHSCAPES

WHO THEY

Darkest is a one-man synth act who takes his cues from 80s and 90s horror and fantasy film, creating epic synth soundscapes that some may like to describe as "dungeon synth". Biog-wise? He's rather shady. What we do know is that he's UK-based if that's any help.

WHY DARKEST?

The two singles released so far, 'Ave Generosa' and 'Oceans', are dripping with dark gothic ambience, the former including the haunting vocals of synthwave artist Nina. Darkest clearly takes his inspiration from the likes of John Carpenter, Vangelis, Tangerine Dream and Goblin, while other cultural reference touchstones include the likes of Alex Proyas' 'The Crow', Ron Howard's 'Willow' and the 'Castlevania' video game series.

TELL ME MORE?

Darkest says that his signature sound took a while to conceive, as he wanted to avoid falling into one particular genre. "I didn't just want to sound like dark synth, epic trailer music or orchestral film scores," he explains. "The idea was to mix all the ingredients and let all these influences inspire me subconsciously." This unique blend of influences is hitting all the right notes for us and, with a full-length on the way, we're very much looking forward to seeing what musical epics Darkest conjures from his, ahem, dark depths.

FINLAY MILLIGAN

'Ave Generosa' and 'Oceans' are both out now via Bandcamp



TIME MACHINE

IN 1985, **MILES DAVIS** WAS OFFERED FREE REIGN BY HIS NEW RECORD LABEL. THOSE SESSIONS REMAIN UNRELEASED EXPECT FOR ONE TRACK, ELECTRO SYNTH FUNKER 'RUBBERBAND'. IT'S ONE OF THOSE WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN MOMENTS...

WORDS: **MAT SMITH**

"The synthesiser has changed everything whether purist musicians like it or not," wrote Miles Davis in his autobiography. "It's here to stay and you can either be in it or out of it. I choose to be in it because the world has always been about change. People who don't change will find themselves like folk musicians, playing in museums and local as a motherfucker."

In 1985, Davis signed to Warner Bros. After 30 years at Columbia, he was itching to take his music in another new direction. He was handed a deal from label VP Tommy LiPuma that supposedly allowed him freedom to work with who ever he wanted.

He wasn't little time as in his head was a funky, irrepressible synth-heavy tune that would become 'Rubberband'. His chosen producer was Randy Hall, who had co-written his 1981 hit 'The Man With The Horn'. At the time, Hall was based at Ray Parker Jr's Ameraycan Studios in north Hollywood with a young guitarist and producer called Zane Giles. From the outset it was clear Davis wanted to do something different. "He specifically said, 'I don't want to do no jazz – I'm sick of that,'" recalls Giles.

Prince was a huge influence on Davis and, during the sessions, he could often be found talking through a slew of ideas with Paisley Park HQ on the phone. There was also the small matter of 'Rockit', the phenomenally successful single by Miles' old keyboard player Herbie Hancock. Hall and Giles set about recording a track that would offer a blistering riposte to 'Rockit'.

"He wanted one of those instrumentals that had handclaps on it, with people in the background going, 'Let's party with Miles!'," says Hall. "He wanted to put it on, and everybody would dance. A party record. That's basically what 'Rubberband' is."

Giles threw as much electronic kit as he could at 'Rubberband' to realise that vision.

"I used a Linn Sequencer, two Akai MD280s, a MiniMoog and a DMX drum machine," he recalls. "Randy and I came up with the groove, and played it over the phone to Miles which was embarrassing. I'd rubbed my foot on the carpet and created a shock that caused the sequencer to lock up. He's like, 'What's goin' on?'. And I'm like 'Sorry, give me two hours so I can reprogram this thing'."

With the basic groove laid down, and with the addition of guitars by Hall, Giles and renowned jazz guitarist, Mike Stern, it then fell to Davis to deliver an especially lyrical trumpet line. On the track, his playing is effortlessly simple, funky and uncluttered. You also hear some wild synth stabs, all played by Davis on a PPG Wave.

"He really liked the sound of that keyboard," says Hall. "The parts he played were supposed to be horns. He was hearing the music as if it was one of those New Orleans bands from way back. He didn't sit up and figure this stuff out – he just played it on the fly. In between he'd whisper, 'Rubberband, rubberband, rubberband', like the chants

that those marching bands used. I knew he was a genius, but you got to remember that he also had the horn in one hand while he was doing that stuff. He played it all the way through, no practice, no nothing."

"I remember one time he laid his arms on the keys and we all stopped playing, because we thought we'd messed up," adds Giles. "He was like, 'What did you stop for?'. He literally just wanted to play all the black keys at once, so he put both arms on the keyboard."

Miles Davis had a reputation for being a tough taskmaster in the studio, but Hall and Giles didn't experience that when they were recording 'Rubberband'.

"It was hilarious," laughs Giles. "He'd pull up in his Ferrari while we were setting up, and say, 'How much is this necklace I'm wearing?'. I was like, 'Well, it looks like you got it from Kmart'..."

As incongruous as this might sound for a player with an irascible streak, the pair put it down to how much fun he was having, so much so that he was peppering his live sets with Ameraycan tracks that hadn't even been properly recorded.

"He was on fire in those sessions," says Hall. "Sometimes we would go to the studio and Miles would be there before us. That was a good thing – that let me know he was really into it. He would call me at night and say tell me what he liked about what we'd recorded, what he didn't like, what he wanted to change."

Aside from 'Rubberband', which has re-emerged on vinyl for Record Store Day this year, the other recordings from those sessions have languished, unreleased, in the Warner Bros archives. What emerged as his first Warners album was the atmospheric, synth-dominated but only occasionally funky 'Tutu'. The blame for that lay squarely with Tommy LiPuma who had brought him to the label in the first place.

"When Tommy signed Miles, he had a dream about what he wanted to do with him as an artist," shrugs Hall. "He wanted to cut a Tommy LiPuma-influenced Miles Davis record, which was 'Tutu'. That's all there is to it."

Despite the disappointment, Giles remains sanguine about the experience.

"It was like working with Yoda, man," he muses. "He'd tell me, 'Zane, there's no such thing as wrong music'. You got a guy who you can read about for the next hundred years that loved the first song I ever worked on with him. For me that's a compliment in itself."

Miles Davis' vinyl-only 'Rubberband EP' is out now on Warner Music/Rhino

THE SCHOOL OF

ELECTRONIC MUSIC

THIS MONTH'S TRAWL THROUGH OUR RESIDENT ARCHIVIST'S COLLECTION OF MANY OBSCURE TREASURES TURNS UP A HANDFUL OF RECORDS THAT CLAIM "PSYCHO ACOUSTIC" PROPERTIES

WORDS: JACK DANGERS

What are records with "psycho-acoustic" properties? Good question. I've dug out four albums that claim to be recorded with special techniques which make for unique listening experiences. Probably the most well-known record in this haul is 'Dreams Less Sweet' by Psychic TV. It was released in 1983 and was recorded using the Zuccarelli Holophonic recording device. The sleeve notes say that the device was nicknamed "Ringo", and that "no microphones at all were used in the recording of this LP". You could send an SAE to a residential address in north London for more information on the Zuccarelli Holophonic system, and how best to set up the "optimal listening conditions" for it.

Zuccarelli is an Argentinian inventor who came up with Holophonics when he was a student at the Polytechnic of Milan in 1980. According the Holophonics website, Holophonics is "a proprietary sound processing technique used to capture the full spectrum of essential information travelling from the ear to the brain in the recording environment". There's not a lot of detail about how it's done, but there are demos you can listen to on YouTube. When I first heard this album, I could swear that I heard things behind me, sounds happening in three dimensions. At one point there's a dog growling sound, it's really creepy.

Another album in this category is one we've talked about before, The Anti-Group's 'Digitaria'. The system they used is called ambisonics. It's similar to the Holophonic system, and enabled sound to appear in four dimensions (three physical dimensions, time being the fourth), but using normal stereo playback. It used the Soundfield microphone, which was based on the idea of "sampling on the surface of a sphere". Apparently it was developed in the 1970s by The National Research Development Corporation, which was set up after the war to licence government-developed technology to private companies. They also came up with the hovercraft and carbon fibre.

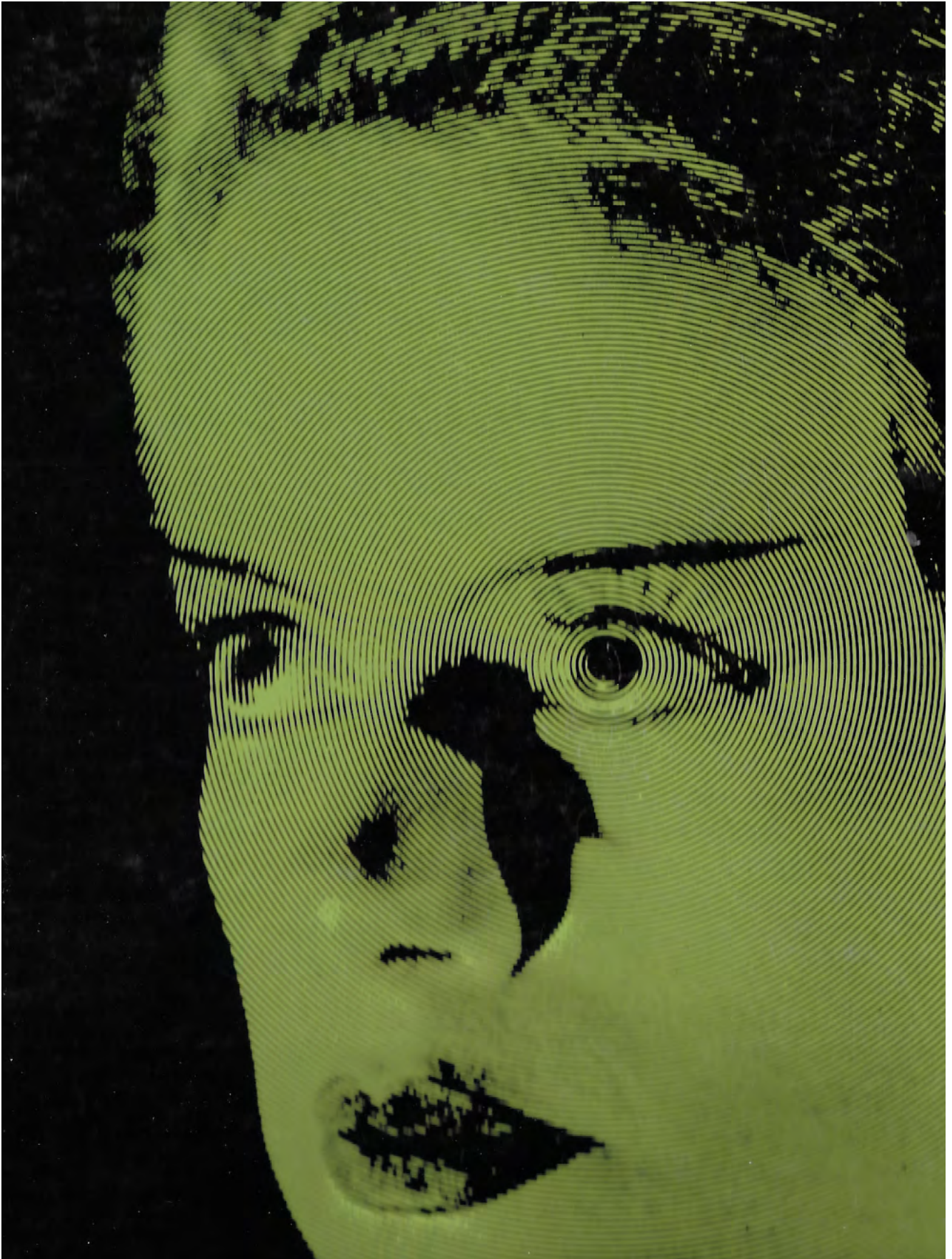
'Journey To The Land Of Forgotten Dreams' is a really good album from 1974 by someone called Lorq Damon. There's not much

information out there about him. The album itself is a private pressing, with a green photocopied page of handwritten sleeve notes. It was made in Milwaukee, which is where I picked up a copy. The notes explain that the whole album is about astral projection and gives suggestions on how you should prepare yourself and the room for listening. It says the room should be dark, or dimly lit, and not with white light. You should then surround yourself with speakers, and the best time of day to listen is between 10pm and 2am.

The claim is that the music takes you through alpha dream states until you feel the sensation of "falling up". The last track on the album is called 'Journey Backwards' which plays the first track backwards. It says it helps bring the listener back to the conscious world. There's a final message that invites listeners to feedback with their comments and suggestions "for further testing and the development of future records". There were no future records.

Finally, there's this great album called 'Music To Freak Your Friends And Break Your Lease' by Heins Hoffman-Richter. Its alternative title is 'Symphony For Tape Delay, IBM Instruction Manual, & Ohm Septet'. It's on Stanyan Records, which was the label run by the American singer/songwriter, composer, musician and poet Rod McKuen, and this album is actually him under a pseudonym.

He performed his poetry with the beat poets in the 1950s, and later worked with Jacques Brel. This weird album is really good electronic music, divided into four "movements". It was recorded in 'Stanyan Quad Sound', and the extensive sleeve notes make up a backstory about Heins Hoffman-Richter. "Soon the face of Heins Hoffman-Richter became familiar as he haunted the most advanced electronic labs in Germany, Austria, England, Japan, Turkey and Tasmania," they claim. It also says that he premiered the work at an "off-Soho nightclub", but that the audience fled in to the "London fog" leaving the piece being performed to "a few junkies". Hoffman-Richter died of "an ear lobe tumour" before his genius was recognised. McKuen himself died in 2015.





UNDER THE INFLUENCE

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE ORB, **ALEX PATERSON** OFFERS UP A FEW OF THE INFLUENCES THAT HAVE SHAPED HIS LIFE

INTERVIEW: **BEN WILLMOTT**

CHELSEA FC

"I have to say with my hand on my heart, thanks to my father, even though I lost him when I was three, for taking me to Stamford Bridge from the age of one. To say it's in my blood is an understatement. It used to be tribal, but now in the Abramovich era everyone thinks I'm a glory hunter, which is kind of annoying. Football's been my life, and I'm really happy my son's got into football. He's playing for a local team down in Kingston. I think I probably got into reggae because Chelsea always played 'Liquidator' [by Harry J All Stars] when the team came out."

COLIN WILSON & PHILIP K DICK

"A lot of the influence for '...Ultraworld', 'Orbus Terrarum', 'UF0rb' and 'Cydonia' came from reading books, mainly by Colin Wilson or Phillip K Dick. There's a lifetime of reading in the books of Philip K Dick. If you're trying to understand them, forget it! The bloke was on ketamine before ketamine was invented when he was writing those books. 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep' is one of the best books I've ever read.

"Wilson's work is not so much science fiction as very, very ancient history. His first book was about the occult, but he goes into Ripper stories, Genghis Khan... 'A Criminal History of Mankind' is mindblowing. It takes you into the world of the psychotic human. Not that I ever wanted to be a mass murderer, I just want to see what's going in there."

WEST NORWOOD

"When I moved from Battersea I looked back and thought, 'Why the fuck did I live there?!'. Battersea was mental. You've got the massive train station up the road, all these cars going up and down Battersea Park Road constantly, there's a helicopter pad so it's like Vietnam happening outside the window... and to top it all off you're on the flightpath to Heathrow. West Norwood is much more peaceful."

THE BOOK & RECORD BAR

"This little record shop on West Norwood High Street has been an inspiration in so many different ways, from friends flying in and saying, 'I've got some records for you', to doing our weekly internet radio shows. Then you've got the Cakelab event that happens there once a month – we get people to make cakes, we play music, oh and there's a bar there too."

THE JAZZ CELLAR

"My boarding school [in Oxfordshire] was a horrible place, but there were two hours after prep in the evening where we could do down to this cellar, The Jazz Cellar, which we'd done up, painted hand prints and footprints on the wall. We'd take turns playing records, things like Alice Cooper. There was an opening into the cellar, which they'd

used to put coal through at one time, and we'd line the bottom with mattresses and you could jump through the window and land on them, it was pretty cool. The school has actually asked us to come back and play at an event in the summer that they've called The Chill On The Hill, but they want to start at 11am in the morning!"

YOUTH

"I've known him since he was 11. I could tell you so many stories about him at school and I don't think he'd mind me telling you. There was one time we were all riding around on push bikes and he fell off on his face and scraped his chin very badly along the road and had to go to hospital. I remember us being chased by skinheads and him not being able to climb over a wall because he was wearing bondage trousers."

KILLING JOKE

"I consider Killing Joke to be my brothers. I was there when [Killing Joke's guitarist] Geordie turned up at our flat because Youth had answered an advert in the music press to be their a bass player. I learnt so much from them, quite a lot was what not to do... like don't disappear when you're about to make it big. Like don't turn up at the Melody Maker offices and cut your arm open and pour a load of maggots onto the front desk. I've always tried to be friendly to the press, as they can help you achieve what you want. Killing Joke didn't see it that way! You know, it's The Orb's 30th anniversary and apparently it's Killing Joke's 40th, although that's not quite how I remember it, we should do a gig together. I'm not bothered about who goes on first and who goes on last."

WEED

"I can talk about this now that my mum's not with us anymore, she died last November, but weed has been an influence. It just makes everything a little more intense. I'd have liked to have had a spliff with my mum, but her generation just didn't get it at all."

ESCAPISM

"The Orb is like a holiday in the future. For me it was a way of escaping south London. I think people did get that from the first album, it was like a trip to all these unknown places. We wanted to create ambience that was nostalgic yet futuristic – 'Spanish Castles In Space' is an example, it stinks of jazz but at the same time it's like a 'Star Trek' film."

'No Sounds Are Out of Bounds' is released by Cooking Vinyl on 22 June, Orbfest is at London's Roundhouse on 23 June. Tune in to Alex's show on wNBC.LONDON on Thursday afternoons

BANGING ON

ALL ABOARD FOR ANOTHER WILD WORDY RIDE WITH OUR, WHAT DO CALL IT? OH YES, COLUMNIST. THERE ARE SICK BAGS UNDER YOUR SEATS SHOULD THEY BE REQUIRED

WORDS: **FAT ROLAND**

ILLUSTRATION: **JOEL BENJAMIN**

You're on a lifeboat in the middle of the ocean. Squally wind, choppy waves, an occasional squid riding a manatee like a jet-ski. On the lifeboat with you is (1) Depeche Mode, (2) the Inspiral Carpets, (3) Moby, (4) Erasure and (5) Yazoo. There are three Vince Clarkes, but let's not worry about that right now.

The lifeboat party is going great guns. The mop-haired Inspiral one is lapping up the seaweed punch, while Alison out of Yazoo is playing pin-the-tail on a haddock. But there's a catch: the lifeboat is only built to hold four music acts. Unless you jettison an act, the boat will capsize. You'll be underwater with plankton munching your undie elastic. Unless it's no-pants Tuesday, in which case the plankton are in for a real treat. Let's not get caught up on the plankton; there isn't time. Who do you chuck overboard? Which music act should become juke box jetsam? More importantly, who is worth saving?

Let's take each act in turn. You could dump Depeche Mode. The pretty-boy popsters just could not get enough, and they fell into a swamp of drug-drizzled electro-gothism. If I had a mother, which I don't because I was manufactured from bits of old typewriters, she'd warn me against them. "That Gahan lad will nibble your pants," says mother, who often confuses pop stars with plankton.

Or how about ditching the Inspiral Carpets? Like all old carpets, this Madchester band is well-trodden, whiffs of the past and often gets piddled on by cats. Their greatest contribution to popular culture was the '8:15 From Manchester' theme tune, a TV programme so dull, it was named after a search result on TheTrainline.com.

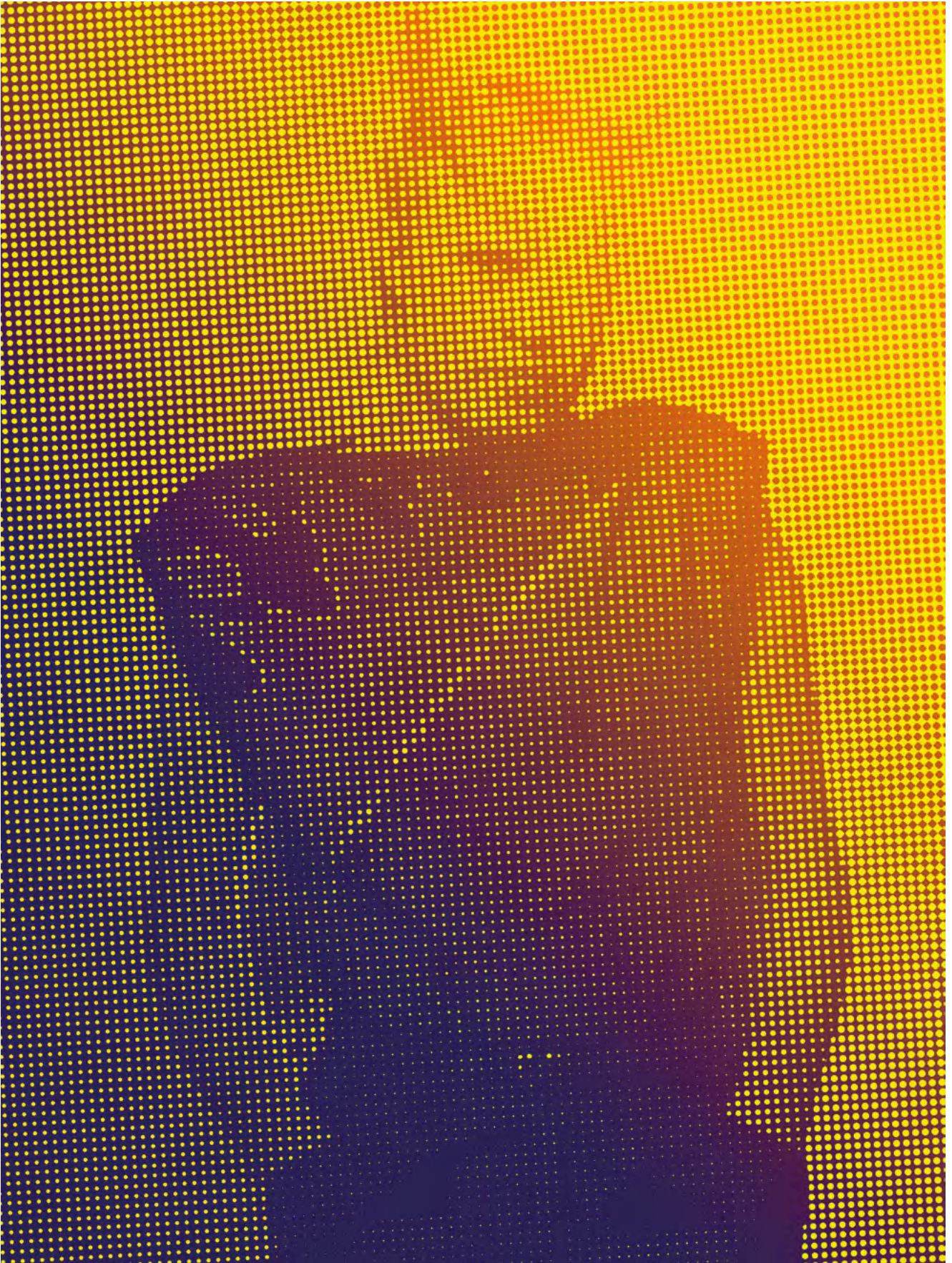
You might want to shunt Moby into the mighty swell. The problem with Moby is fire: he thinks it's an animal. When passing a dumpster blaze, Moby will stroke the flames and say, "Who's a good boy then". He feeds dog biscuits to candles. Moby thinks we shouldn't eat fire for ethical reasons, and won't be happy until all known humanity is set upon by a Zippo.

Maybe Erasure deserves a dunk in the damp. No other duo is as environmentally disastrous, with the exception of Robson & Jerome who famously leaked methane. Erasure painted a desert blue just to match their song lyrics. Andy Bell's stage Speedos reflect so much light, they cause more global warming than a tract of farting bovines. Or perhaps the act to throw overboard should be Yazoo because, er, they're named after a chocolate drink or something. I dunno.

Water is gushing into the lifeboat faster than the drivel spewing from Kanye West's mouth. Quick! Which one will you ditch? (1) Is being an electro-goth a crime? (2) Maybe carpets are a good thing. (3) Is baby fire a mammal? (4) Perhaps all deserts should be painted blue. (5) Something-something about chocolate drinks, whatever.

Actually, all these musicians are brilliant. They moulded the landscape you long since drifted away from. How dare you even judge their merits based on some idiot columnist's lies. There is only one way to lighten the lifeboat load. As you strip to your saggy Y-fronts, you wave goodbye to your pop star shipmates. You belly-flop into the water: a million plankton trill with desire. As you disappear into the deep blue depths, three Vince Clarkes watch from the edge of the lifeboat, a grateful tear tumbling down their cheeks. "Thank you," they mouth as Clint Boon cracks open a lobster martini.





LANDMARKS

A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS' MIKE SCORE LOOKS BACK AT THE MAKING OF THEIR BREAKOUT 1982 HIT AND MTV SMASH, 'I RAN (SO FAR AWAY)'

INTERVIEW: JOOLS STONE

"'I Ran' started off as a bit of a jam. We had the music already, but we hadn't really formulated it to go in any particular direction. We were looking to get a single out, so we went to Zoo Records, which was about 100 yards from where we rehearsed. They had Echo & The Bunnymen and The Teardrop Explodes of course, so they were known for being the get-ahead, small, aggressive little record company which everyone in Liverpool wanted to be on.

"While we were meeting with them I noticed a picture on their office wall of a couple of people running away from a flying saucer. That just stuck in my head, so at our next rehearsal I just started to play around with a few lyrics about that picture. I think the image was originally slated to become Teardrop Explodes' album cover. Around the same time, we'd been to [seminal Liverpool club] Eric's and saw this band Fischer-Z play. They had a song called 'Wristcutter's Lullaby' which had the line 'I ran, till my legs buckled under me'. It was the best thing they did on the night. I guess that helped cement the idea. It just went perfectly with the whole UFO concept.

"As the appointed singer and lyricist I kind of was the driving force behind the song's arrangement, mainly because it had to go with what I was capable of singing at the time. I wasn't a proper singer. I was just doing vocals, you know. We were still looking for a singer then, and somehow it was decided I'd take on that role.

"Before the band I was a hairdresser and I used to have these punk guys coming into the salon saying, 'Can you make my hair red? I've got a gig coming up'. Gradually I got friendly with some of them, I went to check out their bands and after a while I thought, 'Hey, well, I could do that'. That was the beauty of punk, you could just have a go, thrash around. None of us were professional musicians, we were just messing about and having a good time. Luckily synths came out and with those you were allowed to just make a noise.

"We always used to try a bunch of different things in the studio. We'd just chug along in there until we hit on something that stuck. My brother Ali was a real powerhouse kick and snare drummer and his drumroll really propelled the track along. I remember I wanted to use an electronic drumkit, some sort of sonic pad. I set it up and said, 'Hit this because it makes all these weird wind noises and stuff'. Well Ali hit it once and it just blew into a million pieces, so that was the end of that!

"But once that drumroll was established, it just seemed to write itself. Guitarist Paul Reynolds was a bit of a genius at taking someone's idea, expanding on it and just taking it down a completely different avenue. His guitar break seemed to really hit the mark, especially with the American audience. It started pretty synth and then this lead guitar comes in and that's exactly what they like. And of course we loved it too, because we had the synth droning underneath and the drums pounding on top so we didn't need much more.

"We recorded it in Battery Studios in west London, with Mike Howlett producing. He understood what we were about. We weren't a rock band, we weren't really part of the Eric's scene; we were more colourful than that, a bit Ziggy Stardust-ish. We were influenced by what we could play – which was not a great deal! Because of Mike's time in Gong, he knew the value of being a little bit 'out there', but he also understood the basics of what makes a good, catchy pop song. He was quite free in letting us go, while also keeping us on track to make everything fit together. I remember singing a hell of a lot. I was pretty limited vocally, but Mike was good at encouraging me and getting lots of takes so we had enough to get a decent vocal down.

"The video sealed the deal of course. We'd finished the album, and Jive, our label by then, were looking for an outlet beyond the UK. They told us about this new thing in America called MTV. They were looking for new bands, but you needed to have some sort of video to get on it. We were like, 'What's a video?'.

"We were given some cash to go out and buy some clothes. When we came back they had this whole set up with mirrors, and the camera in the middle spinning around. It took about two or three hours to film. We saw it the same night and the next day it was sent off to New York and played on MTV. I think they only had 12 videos then, which they played in rotation, and luckily 'I Ran' became the most requested. There were a few dance clubs in New York that played videos too so suddenly we went from bubbling under to topping these dance and college charts. It gave us a real kick up the butt. Everyone was hearing the song, from Chicago to LA and Kansas City. It took us from being a 'maybe' band' to a 'here they go' band.

"We'd only been going nine or 10 months, we'd probably only played 12 gigs when we got signed, but suddenly we had a four-album deal. Looking back it's funny just how quickly it caught on. It just seemed like all our ducks were lined up for us, without us having to do very much.

"Over the years I've had mixed feelings about the song. It's great that it got people listening to us and that it's endured of course, but on the other hand it tends to get in the way of everything else. I think we made better songs, but that was the moment in our history that really put us on the map. I wish I could write another one with the same staying power today!"

'Ascension', A Flock Of Seagulls greatest hits reworked with the Prague Philharmonic, is released by August Day on 29 June



SYNTHESISER DAVE'S

WORKSHOP

RESIDENT FIXER OF UNDER THE WEATHER ELECTRONICS

IN FOR REPAIR: STUDIOLAGIC MIDI PEDALBOARD MP117

WHEN YOU'VE GOT PEDAL KEYBOARDS, INSTRUMENTS THAT ARE PLAYED BY STAMPING ON 'EM, YOU'RE GOING TO GET INEVITABLE PROBLEMS, RIGHT?

Not exactly a synth, but the next best thing, and they're rather interesting. From church organists onwards, ever since there have been keyboards people seem to have wanted to do something with their feet at the same time.

I first became aware of pedal keyboards when Vincent Crane used the one on his Hammond organ in Atomic Rooster as an alternative to arguing with his bass players.

Skipping the whole console organ end of things though, stand-alone bass organs and synths have been few and far between until recently. In fact, there's probably been more produced in the past 10 years than in the previous 40. Maybe the earliest example I've come across is the infamous Mr Bassman, which we covered some time ago, and beyond that the lovely Multivox MX-450 and the classic Moog Taurus are the only ones anyone can think of offhand.

A few more examples have emerged recently (the Dreadbox Murmux being an excellent example), but the trend has definitely drifted towards MIDI controllers rather than standalone instruments because they're more versatile; as well as playing basslines you can use them to trigger samples and drones too.

This particular one is by Studiologic, although looking inside it's actually identical to several unbranded Chinese offerings. It comes in 13- and 17-note versions and has a range of buttons for changing patches and banks, transposing and MIDI channel selection. Changes are achieved by holding down the appropriate button with one foot while treading on one or more carefully selected keys. Obviously, for some of the more obscure settings, having an extra leg is advantageous, failing that, a walking stick with a boot on the end will do. It's also velocity-sensitive, which is quite nice until you find out how it's done...

The problem with this one is the usual non-functioning-notes-due-to-grot scenario. When you start to burrow into it to get to the contacts, you start to realise how much plastic there is involved in the mechanism, and just how much of it need unscrewing!

Personally, I think something designed to be stomped on should be a bit more substantial, but there you go. This fragility extends to the actual contacts. Each one consists of a squidgy rubber pad with two areas of conductive rubber on them, each of which shorts across two areas of bare copper on the circuit board. The time difference between the two sets of contacts closing determines the velocity.

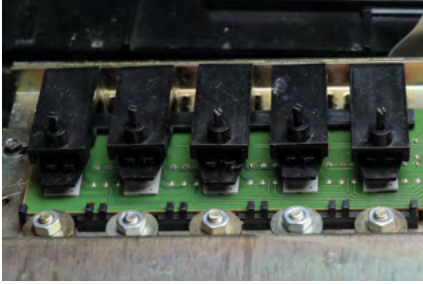
Obviously the slightest amount of dust getting stuck in the middle will stop it working, so both the rubber and the circuit board need a good clean. Only a couple of keys have stopped working completely, but it gets pretty mucky in there, what with it being on the floor and not exactly dustproof, so it's worth cleaning them all while you're there.

And then there's all the fun of putting it back together again. You need to be very careful putting the screws back into the various bits of plastic. The first time you put a screw in it cuts its own thread and holds pretty well, but when you replace them you have to be careful not to damage that thread, otherwise it can fail. There are screw adjustments on top of each note to ensure that the travel is even on every key, and those might need a bit of altering.

So all in all, not a bad thing, but I wouldn't get over-excited playing it in case bits fall off. Maybe stick to smooth jazz and avoid '1812 Overture' covers.

For more, visit facebook.com/synthesiserdave

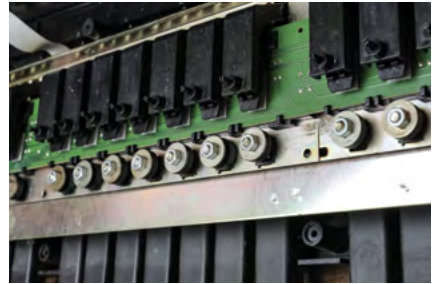




CAN YOU SPOT THE WHITE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE CIRCUIT BOARD AND THE BLACK MECHANISMS?



THIS IS THE WHOLE OF THE ELECTRONICS! MIDI IS PRETTY SMALL THESE DAYS...



THE BLACK PLASTIC ACTUATORS, SHOWING THE ADJUSTMENT SCREWS ON TOP




MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO VS. TERRY RILEY
IN C

MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO VS.
TERRY RILEY
IN C (VERSION #1) (RILEY 1963)
THIS SIDE
IN C (VERSION #2) (RILEY 1963)
THIS SIDE
IN C (VERSION #3) (RILEY 1963)
THIS SIDE
IN C (VERSION #4) (RILEY 1963)
THIS SIDE

© SOUND 2014

MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO VS. TERRY RILEY 'IN C'



JACK DANGERS OF MEAT BEAT
MANIFESTO IN A UNIQUE REMIX OF
TERRY RILEY'S LEGENDARY MINIMALIST
MASTERPIECE 'IN C', PERFORMED BY
THE GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

COMPOSED IN 1964, FIRST RECORDED FOR RELEASE
IN 1968, THIS 2009 PERFORMANCE WAS REMIXED
WITHIN EARSHOT OF THE SAME SAN FRANCISCO
BAY FOGHORNS WHICH INSPIRED RILEY IN THE
EARLY SIXTIES

LIMITED EDITION ALBUM OF JUST 499 COPIES ON
NEON YELLOW VINYL AND TACTILE SOFT TOUCH
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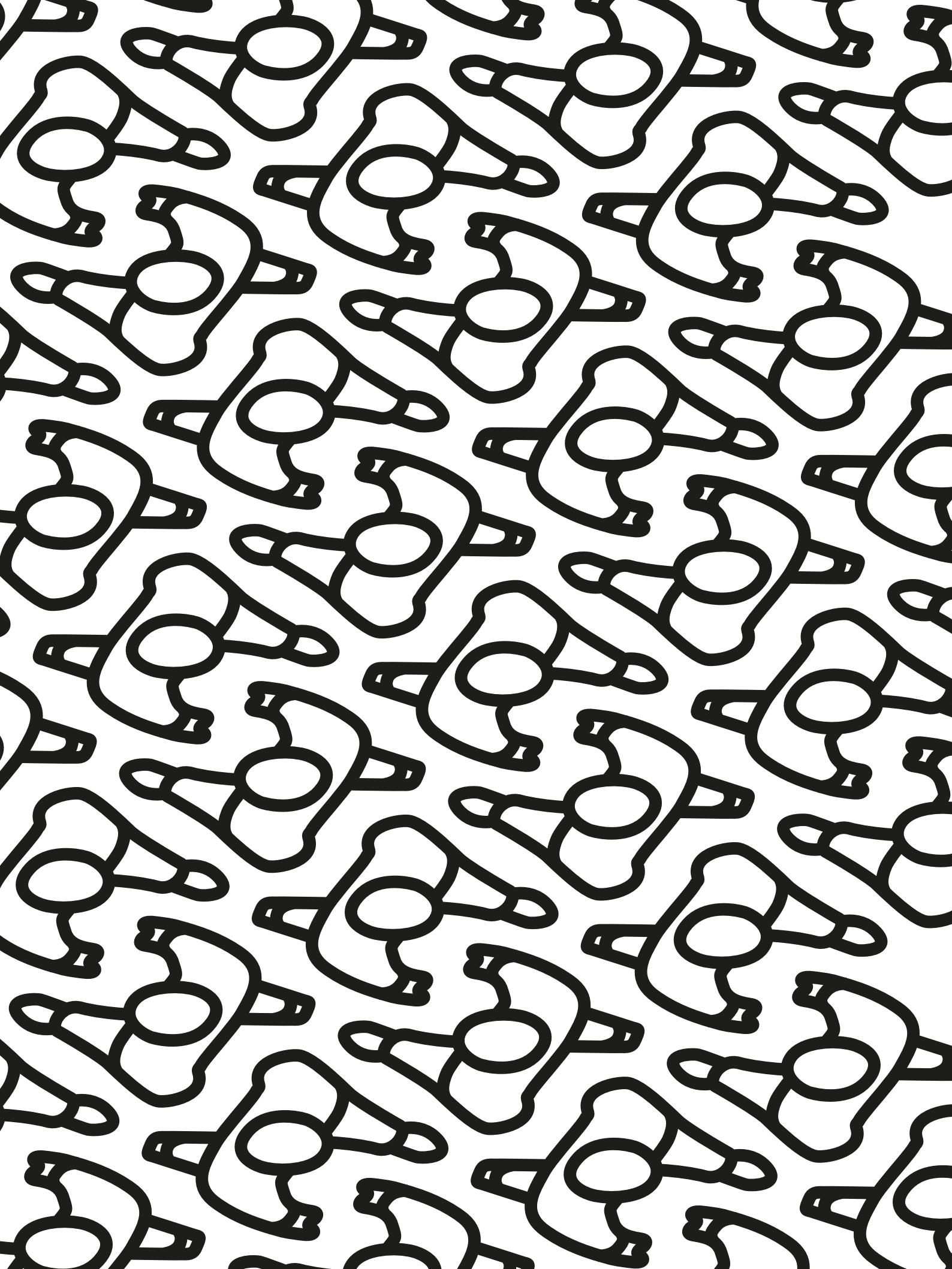
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Mute Records

A Thoroughly Modern Record Label

THE NORMAL AND FAD GADGET. DEPECHE MODE, YAZOO AND ERASURE. DAF, LAIBACH AND NITZER EBB. WIRE, THROBING GRISTLE AND RENEGADE SOUNDWAVE. PLASTIKMAN, GOLDFRAPP AND MOBY. CAN, NEW ORDER AND A CERTAIN RATIO. ALL OF WHICH ARE JUST A FEW OF THE REASONS WHY WE LOVE MUTE RECORDS AND ITS LETRASET WALKING MAN LOGO...



The Forward Thinker

AS A RECORDING ARTIST, FIRST AS THE NORMAL AND THEN AS THE SILICON TEENS, HIS CAREER WAS OVER IN A FLASH. BUT AS THE HEAD HONCHO OF MUTE RECORDS, **DANIEL MILLER** HAS STAYED THE COURSE AND THEN SOME, BUILDING ONE OF THE GREATEST LABELS IN THE WORLD. AND WITH MUTE GEARING UP FOR THE 2020s AND BEYOND, HIS VISION REMAINS AS STRONG AND CLEAR AS IT EVER WAS. HE STILL HAS TIME FOR A BIT OF DJING TOO. NO REQUESTS PLEASE

WORDS: **PUSH**

I don't see myself as a businessman. Not really. I know I have to be one sometimes, but I don't think I'm very good at it. I've just been lucky enough to surround myself with people who have been excellent at what they do. You know, good accountants, good lawyers, people like that. I've always been much more at home on the creative side of things than the business side."

Have you ever felt any conflict between being creative and running a business?

"No. Never. Other people have, though. There was one particular finance director we had, a great guy, terrific at his job, he was with us for many years, and I know he often felt there was a lot of conflict in what I was doing. I drove him nuts. Totally nuts. He was always saying to me, 'Why are you spending money on this?'. I couldn't answer him half the time."

Daniel Miller gives a little chuckle. Then a little shrug. Then another little chuckle.

He's certainly not a conventional businessman, I'll give him that. But as the boss of Mute Records, Daniel Miller is in charge of one of the most important independent labels in the world. What started as a vehicle for a single recorded by Daniel under the name The Normal in 1978, has given us some of the very best electronic music of the last four decades. Depeche Mode, Yazoo and Erasure. Fad Gadget, DAF and Laibach. Nitzer Ebb, Wire and Renegade Soundwave. Plastikman, Goldfrapp and Moby. Can, Throbbing Gristle and New Order. And that's just a fraction of the Mute back catalogue. But I don't need to go on, do I? Of course I don't.

I'm not here to talk about Mute's past glories, though. We might touch on one or two of them along the way, but I'm mainly here to get a measure on Daniel Miller himself, a man who is every bit the forward thinker, every inch the futurist, that he was in the early days of his record label.

We're having lunch in a bustling Japanese-Korean restaurant just down the road from the Mute office in west London. It's more of a canteen-type place than a posh eaterie – there's a menu pinned to a board outside which has pictures of some of the dishes – but Daniel is a regular here and the staff know him well. We've ordered some drinks – green tea for Daniel – and I've started with a couple of innocuous questions, but Mr Mute doesn't seem in the mood for answering them.

Which isn't to say he's not warm and friendly and chatty, he's all of those and much more, it's just that, for the first 15 minutes or so, he's the one doing most of the quizzing. He seems genuinely interested in my responses too. I don't think I've had this from an interviewee before, not to this extent anyway, and it's quite heartwarming. As well as "futurist", I also have him down as "charmer" now.

Normal service is only resumed when I steer the conversation round to the current Mute roster. Daniel is very excited about the label's 2018 release schedule. And with good reason.

"The Chris Carter album we put out a couple of months ago, the 'Chemistry Lessons' album, that's such a good record," he says. "We've obviously had a very long relationship with Chris going back to when we first got the Throbbing Gristle catalogue – 1981 or 1982 maybe – and it's great to still be working together. So on the one hand we've got people like Chris and New Order and A Certain Ratio, people who are, I hesitate to describe them as older, but they've been around for a while, and then we've got lots of new artists too. It's a really interesting mixture at the moment."

As well as not wanting to identify anybody as "old" or "older", do you also have to be careful about who you describe as "new"?

"Yes, I do," he laughs. "I still think of Liars as a new band and we've been working with them for 20 years. I love Liars. I love what they do and always have done. I still think of Goldfrapp as a new band as well."



A couple of rather more recent additions to the Mute roster that Daniel mentions as he sips his tea are Chris Liebing and ShadowParty. The latter are something of a supergroup, bringing together Tom Chapman and Phil Cunningham from New Order with Josh Hager and Jeff Friedl from Devo. They're gearing up to release their debut album next month. Chris Liebing is a stalwart of the German techno scene, working as a DJ, a producer and a podcaster, as well as running his own CLR imprint for many years.

"There's a Chris Liebing album coming up later in the year, but it's more of an electronic record than a techno record," says Daniel. "Around half of it is instrumental, but the other tracks feature guest vocalists. He's got some great people on there – Gary Numan is on there, Polly Scattergood, Cold Cave – but they're not singing, they're doing spoken word stuff. It's a fascinating album and it has some really unexpected elements to it. I think a lot of people are going to like it.

"I've known Chris for a long time and we're quite close, so I'm pleased to have him on Mute. He's very open-minded, so you can have an honest discussion with him without him getting defensive. Some artists are like that, so you can just come straight out with something. Polly Scattergood is like that, I can always be totally open and straightforward with her, whereas others you have to spend two months building up to a conversation. It's not that I want to tell people what to do, and I don't actually like it when artists do what they're told, but I do have opinions and I do like to express them. It's then up to the artist to take what they want from that."

Like most of us, Daniel Miller first got into music as he hit his teens. The British rhythm & blues scene was at its peak and he notes a particular fondness for The Rolling Stones, whose version of The Crickets' 'Not Fade Away' reached the UK Top Three around the time of Daniel's 13th birthday. He fancied himself as a guitar player, as did many of the lads at his school in Golders Green, north-west London.

"I was in a lot of bands when I was a kid. Terrible music. Well, not terrible music, but extremely badly played."

One of his best mates stood apart from the rest, though, a young shaver by the name of Paul Kossoff, who went on to become a founder member of hard rockers Free. Paul Kossoff tragically died in 1976, when he was just 25 years old, but he's still widely recognised as one of the greatest guitarists of all time.

"Paul was in the same class as me at school," says Daniel. "I lived round the corner from him and his parents had a garage where we all used to go to practice. He tried to teach me a few things, but I was just hopeless. He started playing electric guitar when he was very young and he was a brilliant classical guitarist as well. I remember him doing a fantastic classical recital at school when we were about 12. He was incredible, even at that age. But we had some other great musicians at the school too. Another of my classmates was Nic Potter, who was in Van Der Graaf Generator."

It wasn't until the late 1970s, several years after he'd left school, that Daniel started thinking about making music again. He was several steps into a career in the film and television industry by this point and was working

as an assistant film editor at ATV, although he had dipped his toes into the music business a little earlier in the decade.

"I was a DJ at a holiday resort in the mountains in Switzerland for a couple of seasons," he reveals. "I wasn't a fan of a lot of the records I played, which was mostly the chart hits of the day, so everything from ABBA to Status Quo, plus lots of oldies and some horrible German schalger. Deep Purple were always a big favourite with that crowd and I also played funk stuff like James Brown and The Fatback Band and BT Express, so it was all over the place in terms of music genres. I remember playing Kraftwerk's 'Autobahn', but that's as near as it got to electronic music. I really enjoyed the actual experience of DJing, though. I had just two rules for myself – I didn't play a record twice in one night and I didn't do requests.

"It wasn't long after I came back to the UK after my second spell in Switzerland that punk happened. That was a big inspiration for me, it was very exciting, but probably more in terms of the DIY attitude than the sound. There was also the advent of relatively cheap synthesisers around that same time and I quickly realised that synths were the way forward for me, so I focused on getting as much film work as possible in order to earn enough money to buy a synth and a tape recorder. I worked as hard as I could, working overtime, working freelance, doing anything and everything. I didn't like a lot of it, but I knew it was the only way for me to make the money I needed. A year and a half later, I was ready to take the plunge."

The plunge" was, of course, The Normal's 'TVOD' and 'Warm Leatherette' single in October 1978. It was the first release on Mute and remains one of the greatest electronic records of all time, but it soon became clear that Daniel Miller was more focused on his fledgling label than his own recording career. 'TVOD' was followed by half a dozen improvised pieces recorded with Robert Rental in March 1979 and issued as the single-sided 'Live At West Runton Pavilion' on Rough Trade, but that was it for The Normal.

Daniel subsequently hatched his Silicon Teens project, putting out three singles and the 'Music For Parties' album, before hooking up with Wire men Bruce Gilbert and Graham Lewis for the short-lived Duet Emmo, whose 'So It Seems' album came out in 1983. Since then, however, he has restricted his output to production and remix work, which seems astonishing for a man who spends as much time as he can in the recording studio and has an enviable collection of old synths, including his beloved EMS Synthi 100, as well as a growing stack of modular gear.

"I'm not really a musician, you know," he declares. "I'm not an artist in the way most people would understand it. I mean, in terms of my own personal style, I haven't really developed much since 1978. And I'm proud of it!"

But you are still making music?

"Just for myself, not to get anything out there, although I have been tempted to work on things to build into my DJ set."

Daniel is passionate about DJing and has been for the last six or seven years. We're talking serious club DJing here, not spinning hits like he was in the 1970s. He mostly plays techno and is a regular at Berghain, the legendary Berlin nightspot.

"I love the challenge of putting together a DJ set, finding things that work together and I think are interesting musically," he says. "When it works, it's amazing. When you get a connection with the crowd, it's a great feeling. I also like the people around techno, they're generally very decent people. Certainly at my level, it doesn't seem to be at all competitive. I like staying out late too, so that's another bonus."

Is it fair to say most of the people that you're playing to have no idea who you are?

"They don't, but I'm happy about that. I get the occasional Depeche Mode fan coming along, which is brilliant, as long as they don't expect me to play the Depeche back catalogue. But for the most part, people don't know me. Some of them are surprised when they see me play, you know, someone of my age, but I get a lot of positive comments. Actually, with techno, a bit like dub or jazz, I think the older you get, the more that people appreciate you."

Spending long nights in hot clubs has been a major factor in Daniel's recent decision to reactivate NovaMute, Mute's dance music offshoot imprint, and also to launch another business initiative, Noviton, a DJ booking agency and event planning company.

"We did some brilliant stuff on NovaMute back in the day, things like Plastikman and Speedy J, but the label fizzled out in the early 2000s," says Daniel. "Since I've been DJing, it's made me realise how much I missed it, so I'm pleased we've got it going again. Chris Liebing has been very supportive and has helped me out. Richie Hawtin and Matrixxman have been very supportive too. Everybody I spoke to said, 'Yeah, great, do it'. We've had three releases so far, and we've got our next three lined up ready to go. We've got a new EP from Charlotte De Witte coming up next, then an artist from Brazil called Anna, and then another record from Nicolas Bougaëff."

"I'm getting lots of demos for NovaMute now that the word is out, but I'm the only one doing A&R for the label and listening isn't always easy. I mean, I love music, but I have to be in the right mood to be able to listen to something and make a critical judgement about it. That's the same for everything that I A&R, whether it's a demo from an unknown artist or a work in progress by an established name on Mute. I'm known for being a bit slow to respond, but it's essential to be sure about what you think and what you say. It's a big responsibility to the artist and to the label."

W e're tucking into our food now. Come to think of it, "tucking in" isn't exactly an accurate description. Daniel has ordered a tiny watery salad and an equally tiny portion of seaweed, which he somehow manages to make last for around half an hour. "Don't mind me, I'm on this weird diet at the moment," he tells me. I've gone for a selection of sushi but, as always with me, I'm fighting a losing battle with the chopsticks and end up flinging fish and rice in every direction apart from my mouth. Daniel, bless him, pretends not to notice.





Ahead of this interview, I've asked several other journalists what they know about Daniel Miller's personal life. I've largely drawn a blank, just a few loose details about his pre-Mute days, so I'm not sure how willing he's going to be to answer my next set of questions. I start off by asking about his parents.

"They came to Britain just before the Second World War as refugees from Vienna," he says. "They managed to get out in time. They met here in London, they didn't know each other in Vienna. My father was an actor and he set up a cabaret theatre called the Lanterndl, doing political and satirical cabaret for Austrian and German emigres. My mum was a young actress and she got a job there. As well as the theatre productions, they both did propaganda work for the BBC German Service during the war. My dad used to do a comic impersonation of Hitler, which the BBC broadcast to Germany on April Fool's Day. It was hilarious stuff, crazy stuff, but just about realistic enough to be believable.

"My dad's real name was Rudolph Muller, but he used the stage name Martin Miller. He started using it back in the day in Vienna, a long while before he came to Britain. After the war, he did a lot of theatre and film work, but he looked a bit like Einstein and he was often typecast because of that. He always seemed to be playing the part of a psychiatrist or a professor. But he did well in the end. He was in the original cast of 'The Mousetrap', the long-running West End murder mystery play. He was in the first 1,000 performances of it. He also did a lot of films and TV stuff. So he did OK. My dad and my mum both did OK."

Martin Miller's film credits included 'The Third Man', 'Peeping Tom' and 'The Pink Panther', while his extensive TV work included appearances in 'The Avengers', 'The Prisoner' and the very first season of 'Doctor Who'. His career was cut short by his untimely death in 1969, when Daniel was 18.

"It was a strange time," says Daniel. "He was quite a bit older than my mum and it was very sudden. I would have loved to have got to know him better. I know about his career, because that's well documented, but most of what I know about him comes from my mum. I mean, you don't really engage that much with your parents when you're a teenager, do you?"

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

"No, I'm an only child. Which is odd because I come from a big family. My father had something like 10 brothers and sisters. Some of them died in the war, in the concentration camps. My father's eldest brother died in the First World War actually. My grandfather was married twice and effectively had two families, so there was a whole generation of siblings much older than my father. Of the ones who survived the war and the camps, some of them had no children, some of them only had one child. But I still have family who I'm in touch with and I'm close to, so that's good."

Do you have children yourself?

"No. No kids. Well, when I say I've no kids, I've got that lot up at Mute."

So some of them act like kids, do they?

"Some of the artists do. No, that's not fair. They are like kids, but in a different way. Children are very creative. Some of them feel like they're kids because they have very child-like qualities in terms of the way they create, which I think is fantastic. And do they act like spoilt children sometimes? Yes, of course they do. It's all part of the job."

The conversation moves on. We talk about Mute's publishing arm, Mute Song, whose signings include Underworld, Jóhann Jóhannsson and Max Richter. There are some surprises on the roster too, most notably Peter Green, one of Daniel's 1960s blues heroes. We talk about his trip to North Korea with Laibach a couple of years ago and his new-ish hobby of street photography and his long friendship with Nick Cave. Daniel says he wanted to release the first Birthday Party album on Mute, but he was still running the label on his own back then and he didn't feel he could do right by them, so Cave and his buddies went off to 4AD.

Before I know it, our time is running out. Daniel checks the clock on his phone a couple of times in as many minutes, but there are a few quick questions I want to get in before we end.

What do you think about the state of the music industry at the moment?

"Well, from our point of view as an independent label putting out pretty much non-commercial modern music, things are pretty good. Streaming has an impact, a constant impact, but it doesn't affect us as much as it affects the much more mainstream pop labels. Physical sales are not doing too badly and the vinyl boom has obviously been a help. Running a record company has always been a bit of a struggle, but that's OK. The important thing is that we can break even and put out the records we want to put out."

Do you think the industry has found a new business model that works yet?

"It's getting there. I mean, for a long while the labels were saying, 'How do we stop this?', not 'How do we embrace this?'. That's changed. Sync licensing is a big deal for us on both the record company side and the publishing side. Years ago, you'd get the occasional advert, but we do very well with TV shows now, especially with some of the darker shows on Netflix and Amazon. A lot of our music seems to fit well with those kind of things."

Looking back over the years you've been running Mute, what was your biggest slice of luck?

"Seeing Depeche Mode supporting Fad Gadget at The Bridge House in Canning Town," replies Daniel. "Frank Tovey and the guys went off to get some dinner and I stayed at the venue. I would normally have gone with them, but for some reason I didn't that night. So I saw Depeche Mode play and that, of course, changed everything for Mute. I suppose I had to have an understanding of what I saw and heard, but there was no skill in being there, in being in the right place at the right time."

You still have links with Depeche Mode, don't you?

"I do. They're obviously on Sony now, but I help out a bit with A&R every once in a while. I'm still very friendly with them."

And what would you say was your biggest regret?

"I don't regret any of the business decisions I've made, but I do have one A&R regret. We released a few film soundtracks on Mute in the early 1990s, but they all sold poorly and I kept thinking, 'What are we doing this for?'. Just at that time, I was approached by Michael Nyman who offered me 'The Piano'. He was really pushing me to do it, but I turned him down. I said, 'Mike, I've had enough

of doing film soundtracks'. I have to say that's a regret because it's an amazing piece of music and it's also one of the most successful soundtrack albums of all time."

Daniel has an important meeting with BMG this afternoon and he's worried he's going to be late. He makes a quick call to the Mute office and asks for someone to pick him up outside the restaurant and take him to the meeting. He then settles the bill and we wander outside, blinking as we come out into the late spring sunshine.

We stand on the pavement for a while, chatting mainly about football. He's a Chelsea fan and he's not very happy with how last season panned out. After a couple of minutes, he makes another phone call.

"Where are you? No, I'm outside the restaurant. No, it's further down. Other side of the street. Hang on, I can see you now."

Daniel pops his phone back into his pocket as a silver car draws up in front of us. "This is me," he says, nodding and smiling and shaking my hand, before walking round to the passenger side. He's a tall man and it takes him a few moments to clamber in and make himself comfortable in the seat. As he does so, I notice that the vehicle is quite old, quite rattly and very small. I think it might be a Ford Ka. I don't know what sort of car I was expecting to turn up to take the boss of Mute Records to an important meeting, but it wasn't anything like this one.

And with a cheery wave and some metallic clanking noises, the little silver car carrying a somewhat squashed Daniel Miller – forward thinker, futurist, charmer, not really a musician, not really a businessman, but definitely a colossal figure of both the electronic music scene and the recording industry in general – zips down the road and out of sight, leaving me to pick stray pieces of fish and clumps of sticky rice off my shirt. Flipping chopsticks.

Daniel Miller will be DJing at the Tech Open Air in Berlin on 21 June and at Stella Polaris in Fredericksberg (Denmark) on 4 August, Wild Fest in Puglia (Italy) on 11 August, Barutana in Belgrade (Serbia, NovaMute Night) on 24 August and Sankeys Ibiza on 28 August

WEIRD ELECTRONIC OUTLIERS.
CHART-ROCKING POPSTERS.
TORMENTED POETS OF THE SOUL.
MUTE RECORDS CONTINUES TO
BE HOME TO ALL MANNER OF
MARVELLOUS MUSICAL MISFITS.
LONG LIVE MUTE!

WORDS: **MAT SMITH**

Mute's Class of 2018



CHRIS CARTER

A founding member of Throbbing Gristle, one half of Chris & Cosey and one third of Carter Tutti Void, Chris Carter saw his first solo album in 17 years released by Mute in March. Titled 'Chris Carter's Chemistry Lessons Volume 1', the 25-track album found Carter working with his modular gear and former TG bandmate Sleazy's hard drive to create a haunting and beautiful collection of electronic mood pieces at the Norfolk home he shares with Cosey Fanni Tutti.



A CERTAIN RATIO

Steve Coogan, playing Factory Records svengali Tony Wilson in '24 Hour Party People', described A Certain Ratio as "having all the energy of Joy Division but better clothes". Formed by Martin Moscrop and Jez Kerr in Manchester in the late 70s and named after a Brian Eno lyric, ACR became central figures in the chaos that was Factory. Effortlessly straddling the disparate worlds of punk, funk and jazz, their music has always had swagger, poise and effortless cool. Mute began a comprehensive back catalogue reissue programme with the band last year, and a compilation featuring two new ACR tracks is planned for later in 2018.



BEN FROST

Australian ex-pat and Reykjavik resident Ben Frost is one of a number of artists mining the rich seams of ideas offered by a more expansive understanding of neo-classical music. Taking in influences from metal and industrial, his music is routinely savage and engaging, whether on his own albums or in his commissioned work for contemporary dance, theatre, TV and movies. Frost joined Mute in 2014 for his 'Aurora' album and released a nightmarish new EP, 'The Centre Cannot Hold', through the label in 2017. Last year he also provided his trademark atmospheric nous to the Netflix series 'Dark' and the independent movie 'Super Dark Times'.

DANIEL BLUMBERG

Visionary Cajun Dance Party founder and former Yuck member Daniel Blumberg's solo debut, 'Minus', forces a new understanding of the word "epic" as well as showcasing how easily its creator has found the transition from indie darling to occupying music's frontier territories. Blumberg has a freewheeling approach to music, switching effortlessly from faltering Neil Young introspection to dissonant rock, with key track 'Madder' being a profound moment among profound moments. A live album, recorded at Dalston's Café Oto in February, was also released this year.

CABARET VOLTAIRE

Daniel Miller found himself on the same bill as Cabaret Voltaire when The Normal and Robert Rental performed a live show at a Throbbing Gristle gig in 1980, at a time when the Rough Trade, Industrial and Mute labels were leading the way in noisy post-punk music. Mute first started working with The Cabs in 1990, reissuing the band's early albums and spin-off projects through the Grey Area sub-label, and today oversee more or less the whole of the band's catalogue. Now the solo project of founding member Richard H Kirk, the reissue programme continues later in 2018 alongside live dates.



ERASURE

The longest-serving band on Mute's roster, the much-loved duo of Andy Bell and Vince Clarke have been in operation since 1985 and delivered the label's only UK Number One single with an EP of ABBA covers in 1992. Erasure released their critically acclaimed, self-produced 'World Be Gone' in 2017, a politicised ode to a world wrecked by intolerance and inequality, and the duo's least obviously pop record since 1995's much derided ambient set, 'Erasure'. A classical version of the album recorded with Belgium's Echo Collective, 'World Beyond', appeared earlier this year and a live LP follows later in 2018.



CHRIS LIEBING

Esteemed German techno DJ and CLR label owner Chris Liebing found his way to Mute through bumping into Daniel Miller at various club events. He also professes to being a huge fan of Miller's label, citing DAF, Nitzer Ebb, and Laibach as major influences. Liebing released his first Mute single, the dark, sultry 'Novembergrey' in April, prefacing his debut album in September, a record which will see him working with a number of guest vocalists and take his distinctive music in a number of new directions. Electronic Sound have seen the guestlist and, put it this way, you won't be disappointed.

GOLDFRAPP

The duo of Alison Goldfrapp and Will Gregory (Moog enthusiast, multi-instrumentalist and one-time member of Tears For Fears' live band) released their first album 'Felt Mountain' through Mute in 2000, right in the epicentre of a chill-out renaissance. They then went on to confound pretty much everyone by never once repeating themselves, becoming in turn, electroglam popstars, folksy Olde English balladeers or subtle purveyors of grandiose torch songs over the course of seven idiosyncratic albums for the label. Their 2017 'Silver Eye' album will be given a deluxe reissue later this year.

SHADOWPARTY

This new Mute signing is a veritable college radio supergroup consisting of Phil Cunningham and Tom Chapman from the current New Order line-up and Josh Hager and Jeff Friedl from Devo. Featuring contributions from Denise Johnson (Primal Scream, A Certain Ratio) and Nick McCabe from The Verve, and with its heart somewhere between Salford, Lancs and Akron, 'OH', their debut album sounds exactly like what you might expect from members of two groups schooled in the art of memorable, era-defining anthemic electronic music. Synths, strings and sangfroid at its best, ShadowParty's self-titled album is released in July.

JOSH T PEARSON

Texan troubadour Josh T Pearson came to prominence with Lift To Experience, releasing his first solo album for Mute, 'Last Of The Country Gentlemen', in 2011. Armed with a confessional tone, a guitar and an overwhelming capacity for writing highly vivid lyrics, Pearson's songs are effortlessly devastating. His highly-anticipated new album 'The Straight Hits' was released earlier this year along with a reissue of Lift To Experience's solitary album from 2001, 'The Texas-Jerusalem Crossroads'.





LIARS

Liars released their first music through Blast First, Paul Smith's diverse Mute sub-label, in 2001. Jettisoning most of the original members after their debut album 'They Threw Us All In A Trench And Stuck A Monument On Top', the nucleus of Liars became frontman Angus Andrew and Aaron Hemphill, shifting the focus of their music from elongated punk-funk to a more acutely electronic style over the course of their next six albums. Hemphill left before the recording of their 2017 album 'TFCF'. The soundtrack to the film '1/1', the last project Andrew and Hemphill worked on, will be released in July.



LOOPER

Formed by former Belle & Sebastian bassist and novelist Stuart David in 1998, initially for a one-off show in Glasgow, Looper went on to release two albums on Sub Pop before delivering the noir 'The Snare' on Mute in 2002. The project was then largely mothballed while David focussed on writing a series of novels featuring his pseudonym Peacock Johnson, a character that first surfaced in the backstory for 'The Snare'. Looper returned with a career-surveying boxset and new album 'Offgrid:Online' in 2015. They released an understated acoustic album, 'Loud & Small', through Mute earlier this year.



LOST UNDER HEAVEN

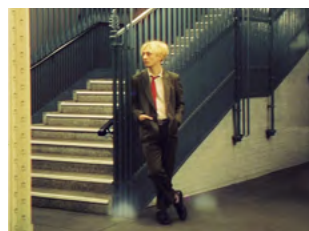
The curious duo of ex-WU LYF frontman Ellery James Roberts and his girlfriend Ebony Hoorn released their first album 'Spiritual Songs For Lovers To Sing' through Mute in 2016. Combining Roberts' anguished, post-Springsteen vocal with Hoorn's punkier tones, LUH's music is immediately anthemic yet subtly complex, a towering, electronically-augmented stadium-friendly sound in the making. Two new LUH tracks, 'Breath Of Light' and 'Bunny's Blues', appeared in 2018, suggesting the duo's sound has pivoted toward either a white-hot glamness or a restrained levity, and possibly both. Their second album is expected to follow later in the year.

MARK STEWART & THE MAFFIA

The Pop Group frontman arrived at Mute with the 1985 album 'As The Veneer Of Democracy Starts To Fade', his second collaboration with Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound collective. The uncompromising Stewart released three further albums with Sherwood and crew through Mute, finally leaving the label after 1996's eerily prescient 'Control Data', released during the paranoid Big Brother/CCTV era. Always outspoken and never one to be pigeonholed, Stewart remains a noisy, politicised voice to this day. Mute will reissue Stewart solo material later this year.

SWANS

"Swans are majestic, beautiful looking creatures – with really ugly temperaments," explained founder Michael Gira in a 2015 interview. A central part of New York's short-lived no wave scene alongside contemporaries like Sonic Youth, Gira's band masterfully deploys noise and quietude interchangeably as required. Swans released their 'To Be Kind' album through Mute in 2015, and the label has since embarked on a major back catalogue reissue programme with Gira's own Young God label. New album 'The Glowing Man' was released in 2017, after which Gira disbanded the current Swans line-up in favour of a revolving cast of players. Further reissues are planned later this year.



NONPAREILS

The solo project of former Liars member Aaron Hemphill, who left the band before they commenced recording their last album. His debut LP 'Scented Pictures' was released through Mute in April and showcases a sound that is at once umbilically linked to Liars' idiosyncratic take on rock music and just as keen to explore the outer edges of sound, all held together by his detached deadpan vocal. Scratchy electronics, glitches, samples and borrowed sounds form the fabric of Hemphill's musical vision, with his own vocal sitting among that sonic stew like just another processed instrument.

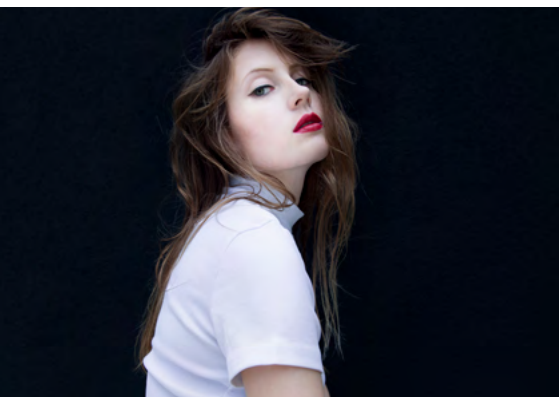
THROBBING GRISTLE

Famously described as “wreckers of civilisation”, Throbbing Gristle created a noisy electronic insolence that appealed to those disappointed by punk’s shortcomings. The quartet of Chris Carter, Cosey Fanni Tutti, Genesis P-Orridge and the late Peter “Sleazy” Christopherson began working with Mute in 1986 before going on to reissue their entire back catalogue through the label. After briefly reforming, the band permanently split following an incendiary show at London’s Village Underground in 2010, a month after which Sleazy died. Reissues Of ‘Heathen Earth’, ‘Mission Of Dead Souls’ and ‘Journey Through A Body’ will appear in July.



ANNA

Brazilian producer Anna Miranda released her first NovaMute EP, the three-track ‘Razor’ 12-inch at the end of May. Scarcely believing her luck, she describes getting the opportunity to work with Daniel Miller’s rebooted label as an honour. São Paulo-born and Barcelona-based, she quite literally grew up in the world of dance music, spending her teenage years in her father’s club DJ booth, honing a rhythmic sensibility that has prevailed in her music. For ‘Razor’ she employed a 1985 Roland MKS-80 Super Jupiter to develop the tracks, a synth beloved by Blancmange, OMD and Erasure’s Vince Clarke.



CHARLOTTE DE WITTE

Belgium’s Charlotte De Witte is a DJ garnering a reputation for being able to rock some of dance music’s biggest stages with a grace, poise and energy that translates perfectly into her own music. Having released tracks on labels like Turbo, Suara, Amazone and Mary Go Wild Black, De Witte joined NovaMute at the tail end of 2017 with the minimal yet funky ‘Brussels’ 12-inch. Her second EP for the label, ‘The Healer’, follows at the end of June and comprises a trip into an atmospheric, icy otherness that complements De Witte’s trademark dark sound.

NICOLAS BOUGAÏEFF

Nicolas Bougaïeff is a Canadian DJ and producer now ensconced in the techno heartland Berlin. Classically schooled and with a sideline in compositional lecturing, he’s not your typical techno producer, but neither is his music typical techno. Bougaïeff’s ‘Cognitive Resonance’ 12-inch reactivated the NovaMute imprint in November 2017 and was followed by the ‘Principles Of Newspeak’ album for Denkfabric. Not one to let his creative ideas sit idle, he’s released three further albums since then, culminating in ‘24 Miniatures’ earlier this year. NovaMute have hinted that more music by the producer will be released later this year.

TERENCE FIXMER

French producer and Planete Rouge Records founder Terence Fixmer’s brand of techno is directly descended from the hard-edged electronic body music genre pioneered by bands like Mute’s own Nitzer Ebb and the likes of DAF before them. Fixmer recorded two albums with Nitzer Ebb’s Douglas McCarthy in the 2000s before releasing Fixmer/McCarthy’s ‘Selected Works’ compilation in 2016, with the project existing alongside solo albums on labels like DJ Hell’s International Deejay Gigolo and Chris Liebing’s CLR. His debut single for NovaMute, the sci-fi inflected ‘Dance Of The Comets’, was released in November 2017.

For more about all these artists and more, visit mute.com



Vince Talks Mute

THE FIRST TIME THAT **VINCE CLARKE** MET DANIEL MILLER, THE MUTE BOSS TOLD HIM HE DIDN'T LIKE DEPECHE MODE'S DEMO TAPE. THANKFULLY, THE BASILDON BOYS GOT A SECOND CHANCE TO IMPRESS, AS THE DEPECHE/YAZOO/ERASURE KEYBOARDIST RECALLS IN THIS FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF HIS LONG AND FRUITFUL CREATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH MUTE

INTERVIEW: **MAT SMITH**

"I remember Dave Gahan and I went up to London with our Depeche Mode demo cassette. We went to various record companies that day – this was when you could go into an A&R department and they would play your demo there and then in the office. One of our ports of call was Rough Trade, which back then was a shop with an office on top. We played our track to Geoff Travis and he said, 'It's not really our cup of tea, but this guy might be interested'. And that was Daniel Miller, who'd just walked in at that very moment. He said he didn't like it and left again. That was the first time we met Daniel.

"The second time we met him, we were playing at The Bridge House pub in east London where we'd play once a week for half an hour. On one of the nights we were supporting Fad Gadget. We'd done the show, and we were in the dressing room, and Daniel came backstage. Stevo, who ran Some Bizzare Records, was also there and he goes, 'I can get you a support slot with Ultravox,' and Daniel says, 'I can offer you a single deal with Mute – are you interested?'. We had to really think about it because the idea of playing with Ultravox was huge. But we decided that we would go with Daniel and that's how it all kicked off for us with Mute.

"We weren't really close to Daniel at first. It took years to get to know him because he's a very shy person. In the beginning, he wasn't just our producer, he was also our driver because he was the only person we knew who had a car, I think it was a Peugeot estate. He also did our sound at gigs and he'd try to get our money from the promoter if there was a problem.

"Mute was almost a one-man band then. He had this lady working for him called Hilde Svengard, because when Mute actually started making some money, he decided that he'd need to get someone to do the accounts. So he employed Hilde and immediately gave her a Sainsbury's plastic bag full of receipts. Those were the Mute accounts.

"As well as producing us, he was also producing Fad Gadget. While he was relatively new in the music business, he knew his electronic music stuff. He was a big Cabaret Voltaire fan, and he knew the noisier, more industrial side of electronic music. He'd been a DJ when he was 19 or 20 and that's where it all came from. He DJed in one of those really expensive ski resorts in Switzerland just so he could make enough money to ski the next day.

"With Depeche he certainly gave us a lot of direction. The songs were written, pretty much, but he helped us with sounds because we were completely clueless. We'd never seen a sequencer, and we'd never been into a professional recording studio before. It was all new, and he was our guide. Eric Radcliffe was also a huge influence on us, and on Daniel as well. Between them they worked out different techniques like how to sync things. I wasn't standing there in the studio going, 'What about my sound? It's really good'. We were just really receptive to what he had to say.

"I think Daniel was fine when I left Depeche and set up Yazoo with Alison Moyet. It wasn't a big deal to him. With the two Yazoo records he'd visit us at Blackwing Studios, giving us advice or making suggestions. We had Eric Radcliffe as our engineer, who was brilliant technically, then there was Daniel, and then there was Alison and I, who knew nothing. When we recorded 'Don't Go', there was a bit in the middle of every verse, like a bridge, that Daniel suggested we add. I didn't resent him for that, because he was more experienced and more skilled than I was.

"Andy Bell and I spent a lot of time making the first Erasure album 'Wonderland', and when it didn't do very well, I know Daniel was concerned. I was concerned up to a point myself as well, because I went out and got myself a side job working with Geoff Wayne Music making jingles for adverts. I thought I'd cover my arse, you know. But Mute were really good about it, Daniel still let us make the second Erasure album. Mute were already splashing out for the recording time, because it wasn't like we had our own home studios or anything, like I have today. So to give them full credit, they did back us up, and Daniel obviously had some faith. He stood by everyone who was signed to Mute. I think it's because he's sincere. He's a guy who wouldn't think of letting you down, not because it would upset the band, but because it wouldn't be the right thing to do. The artists on Mute, especially in the early days, they were his children.

"Daniel was still A&R-ing us, even when we worked with other producers. When he sold Mute to EMI we still only dealt with Daniel, we didn't deal with EMI at all. To us, they were just the people who distributed the records. I mean, if someone from EMI had come into the studio and told us to change something on one of our songs, like Daniel had done on 'Don't Go', I would have ignored them.

"I set up my own label, Very Records, in 2015. I like to think that Daniel and I both want to do the right thing by the artist. In other words, you don't just go, 'Oh that's not selling anything so I'm going to ditch that guy'. And if someone brings you some songs that perhaps aren't how you imagined they would be, you advise them and you suggest they might change this, or change that, and you make it into a better record. That's a natural human thing to do when you care about the artist. It's like ditching friends – you just don't do it.

"What I really liked about Daniel, and what I still like about working with him now, is that he does come up with things you just wouldn't think of. I mean, we presented him with the most recent Erasure record, 'World Be Gone', and I could see he wasn't happy, that he wasn't that sure about it. Then he came up with a few suggestions, and we changed it, and it sounded better and that was that. It's his label, and it's his passion. It's still his baby.

'Hello Science', the new album by Reed & Caroline, is released by Vince Clarke's Very Records on 6 July



WHEN CAN MET JAPAN

IN 1986, HOLGER CZUKAY AND DAVID SYLVIAN MET UP AT HOLGER'S CONVERTED CINEMA HOME/STUDIO IN WEILERSWIST, NEAR COLOGNE. TOTALLY BY ACCIDENT THEY CONJURED UP AURAL MAGIC. IN A RARE INTERVIEW, **DAVID SYLVIAN** DISCUSSES THE FRUIT OF THE SESSIONS, WHICH ARE COLLECTED IN A NEW BOXSET TO BE RELEASED LATER THIS MONTH

INTERVIEW: **NEIL MASON**

Do you recall when you first became aware of Holger Czukay?

"It was around the time of the original release of 'Movies', so around 1979."

How influential were Can and krautrock on you?

"They weren't and it wasn't. A lot depends on how fortunate you are to be exposed to a particular album at a specific point in your evolution as an avid listener. I was fortunate enough to hear The Velvets and Nico when I was 13 years old. If someone had introduced me to Lou Reed via his first solo album, it's possible all potential emotional, empathetic, and artistic respect would likely have been lost to me for a period of time.

"So it was with Can in particular and krautrock in general. I was introduced to Can by their relatively late works prior to hearing the earlier albums that continue to make a potent impression, that still generate excitement and pleasure. Regardless, outside of my personal connection with the members of Can, a brief love of Kraftwerk, embracing the odd moment of crystalline beauty from the likes of someone such as Hans-Joachim Roedelius, the German music scene wasn't of particular personal significance to me."

Do you remember when you first met Holger?

"Yes, it was 1983. I'd invited him to Berlin to work on the early stages of the recording of 'Brilliant Trees'. I was blown away by 'Movies' and wanted to bring something of his sensibility to play on 'Brilliant Trees'. Everyone gathered there had specific roles to play, except Holger. I wanted a wild card; something, someone unpredictable whose input I'd

not be able to anticipate. He was clearly an iconoclast when it came to recording techniques. I had to get a handle on how the man functioned in the recording environment. We first met on his arrival at the studio. He was calm, cheerful, excited, and unpredictable. It was also the first meeting between [Jon] Hassell and Holger since their time as students of Stockhausen too."

He's listed on the record as being responsible for "french horn, voice, guitar, dictaphone"...

"Holger was a far superior musician than people give him credit for. Yes, he dabbled with instruments in unconventional ways, instruments he clearly didn't have any background training in, but, for example, he could also play beautifully ornate pieces on guitar."

And the role of the dictaphone?

"He brought with him two large, antiquated IBM machines that he'd discovered dumped outside an office building in Köln. He recognised their potential and, back at the studio, started to explore the possibilities they presented. As he said, 'I've so much more flexibility with these machines than any sampler on the market' and, in general, this was the case.

"He'd improvise with samples, running the playback head of the dictaphone over a broad expanse of tape which he'd prepared with all manner of samples and sounds, many taken from his own studio environment, incorporating the use of the varispeed function which, as far as I'm aware, was the only other speed that the dictaphones had. It proved to be enough, in terms of flexibility, to produce sounds from which one frequently couldn't determine the original source.

"On my material you can hear this approach employed on tracks such as 'Weathered Wall' and the coda to 'Brilliant Trees'. On these songs, time was spent placing and occasionally repeating these unique elements to create motifs or meld together raw material into something that made sense within the context of the composition, but it was the beauty of the raw material that made this possible. After all, Holger himself would edit and rework his own material for extremely long periods."

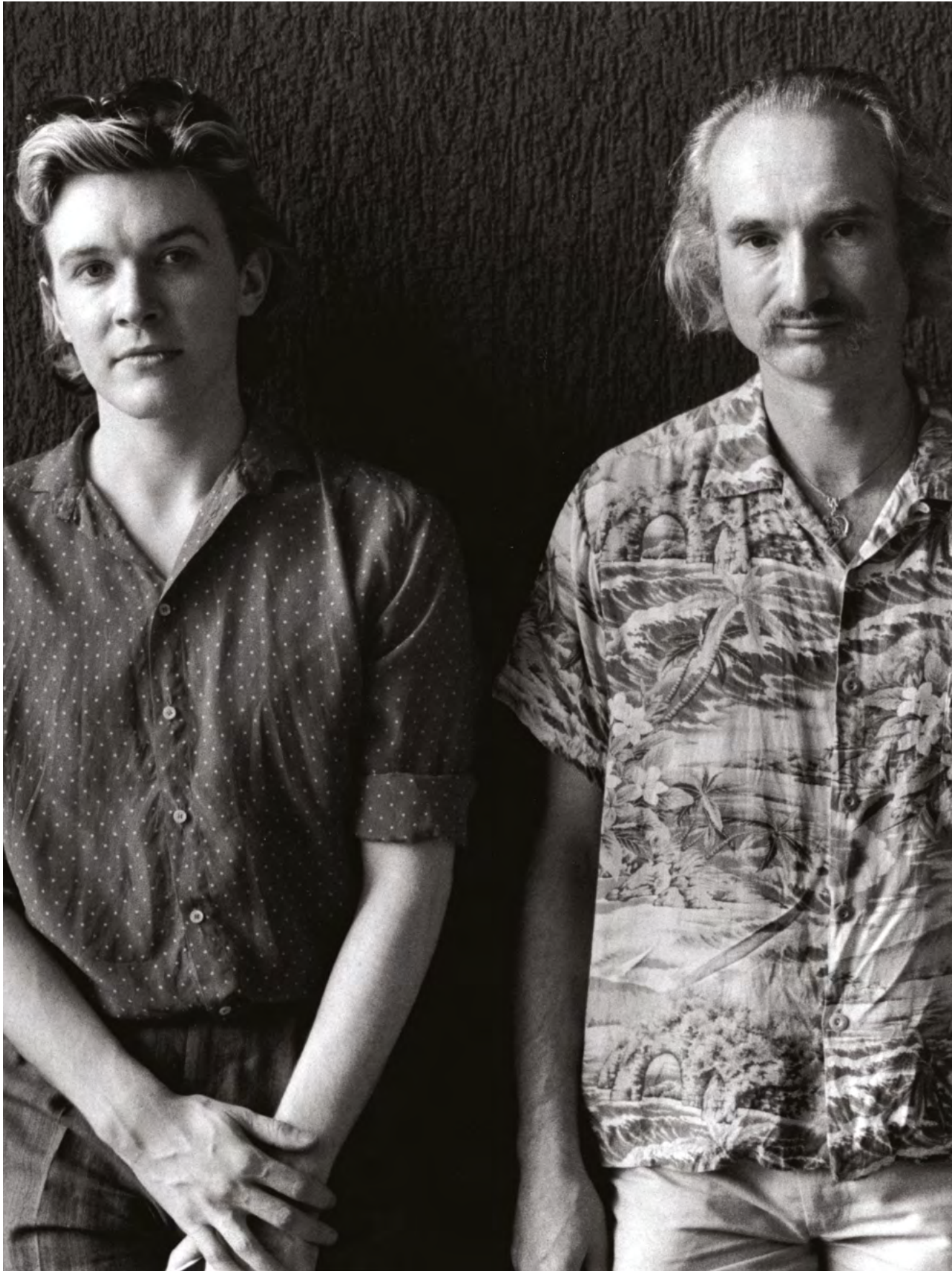
Did you cross paths with any other members of Can?

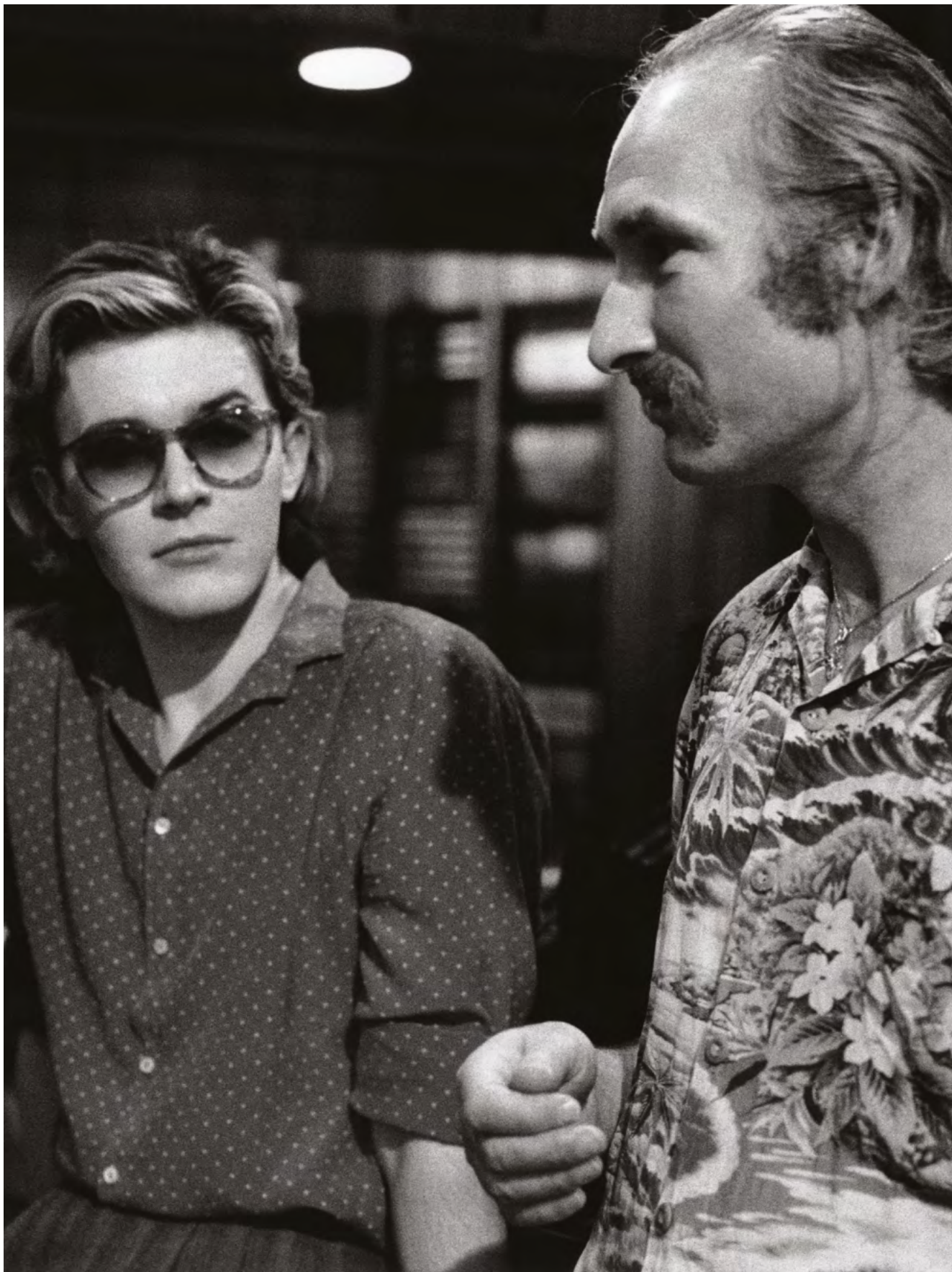
"I met Jaki [Liebezeit] many times as he frequently popped in and out of Can studios. He and Holger spent a good deal of time there and in various cafes around Köln. I also met and worked with Michael [Karoli] there. I was introduced to Irmin [Schmidt] via his wife who was managing Holger and the Spoon label at the time. We had dinner together in London once or twice."

A silly question perhaps, but how has "ambient" music influenced you?

"Ambient as a genre seems to mean different things to different people. As far as I can discern, while [Eno's] 'Music For Airports' is the classic of the genre, the first 'ambient' album I'd have heard would've been his 'Discreet Music', which I'd likely still listen to if I continued to believe, as I once did, that ambient was a genre that repaid repeat listening.

"These two recordings did once have a prominent place in my life, but to what degree they were influential I can't say. 'Another Green World' was, in a sense, far more groundbreaking as it alluded





to a number of genres or sub-genres to come, including that of 'ambient'. 'No Pussyfooting' was one of the few albums I could afford to purchase when I was a teenager, so that had quite an impact on me. I'd also put a word in for Obscure Records as a label, which included Budd's classic 'The Pavilion Of Dreams' – do we classify this as ambient? I personally do not, as it introduced a lot of young people to composers they might not have otherwise come across at an impressionable age."

How would you define "ambient"?

"A home has been created for ambient music on such labels as 12k. The works are incredibly beautifully designed. I think that's possibly the key term to use in this context. It's music designed with a non-specific, but narrow function or utility in mind. It serves that utility – and I don't mean to downplay its beauty nor its creativity by describing it thus – beautifully, particularly Taylor Deupree's collection on the 12k label. This is possibly how we begin to narrow down which works might successfully be described as 'ambient' and which seem to skirt the boundary and its parameters."

And with your own work? How does the term sit?

"I tend to avoid producing long-form pieces as they're supremely demanding to produce and generally overlooked. 'When Loud Weather Buffeted Naoshima' continues where 'Plight & Premonition' left off, or rather, it's one of many possible routes that could be taken, using it as a kind of ground zero. Ditto 'When We Return You Won't Recognize Us'. These aren't 'ambient' works anymore than I believe 'Plight & Premonition' to be. 'Flux' can't convincingly be labelled an 'ambient' piece. Of the four pieces that constitute this collection, the only composition I imagine falling into this category is 'Mutability'."

Following Holger's work on 'Brilliant Trees', you reconvened in 1986 to record a vocal for 'Music In The Air' for his 'Rome Remains Rome' album. You didn't actually record that vocal, did you?

"I didn't record the vocal as we got completely immersed in the work that'd unintentionally surfaced during my 48-hour stay in Köln. I left for the airport directly from the studio. We'd forgotten about the original intention for my visit. Something rather wonderful had materialised in its place."

The resulting 'Plight & Premonition' and 'Flux & Mutability' are described as "hidden gems". Why have they remained hidden?

"I believe the rights to the recordings were returned to us some time in the 1990s. In the 2000s, Holger and I spoke of releasing a boxed set of the material adding numerous remixes to the original recordings. I'm in possession of at least three radically alternate remixes of 'Plight' which Holger had undertaken over the intervening years.

"In fact, I'd go as far as to say that Holger never let go of this material. It played an important and ongoing role in his life and in subsequent work of his own. Sadly, legal issues stood in the way of pursuing the release and the notion of the boxset faded from memory."

Can you describe your first impressions of Holger's place in Weilerswist?

"Can's recording home was a beautifully lit, open space. The entrance to the building was dark, the box office still in place. Beyond that, a dark hallway led to a veil of curtains which, when pulled back, revealed the mixing console and beyond, the ramshackle, but oddly beautiful, reconditioned cinema.

"The walls were lined, floor to ceiling with mattresses, some of which were covered with a decorous variety of silk sheeting and quilts. There was no separation between studio and control room; there was just a large open space in which to work. The words 'studio' and 'control room' sound entirely inappropriate as no such conventions existed.

"Holger, laughing at the absurdity of his earlier set up, frequently told the story of how the first console he'd purchased simply had two settings, 'loud' and 'soft'. Along the left and right sides of the room, a variety of instruments were lined up. Towards the back was a grand piano and behind that, at the very back of the room, Jaki's set up.

The place clearly had an impact on 'Plight & Premonition' and 'Flux & Mutability'?

"They wouldn't have been created in any other location. Despite its size, this intimate space, with its very particular mood, distinct atmosphere, its spirit of unrestrained freedom, no fees, no clock ticking, was unlike any studio I'd worked in up until that time."

The track titles are very evocative...

"Titles are generally of importance to me and can provide a variety of functions such as a possible hint at the essence of

the work or additional element that helps define it. Or to possibly turn your head by its apparent lack of connection with the audio, provoking an imaginative leap of sorts, a personal filling in of the gaps. Again, these aren't, to my mind, ambient works, so I'm speaking of titles in general. Frankly, ambient works could, and frequently do, have either very functional titles or something rather opaque – unyielding. I think the latter might be my preference."

Of Holger's arsenal of instruments, was there anything you didn't recognise as being an instrument?

"One should really put analogue tape at the top of the list, at least during the period before digital became the main format of preference. His editing – splicing stereo and multi-track tape – was second nature to him. We've mentioned the dictaphone and then there was the shortwave radio."

I like the idea that Holger was surreptitiously recording you playing. When did you realise what was going on?

"When he asked me to stop playing and move onto a third instrument. I'd started on the pump organ and moved to the piano. Just as I was finding a motif with which to work came the request to stop and move on. Holger was interested in the process of searching not of finding and refining."

The first session was an all-nighter, wasn't it?

"Yes, the bulk of the material was recorded over two consecutive nights. One can think of it as related to improvisation."

How did the finished pieces come together?

"'Premonition' is heard more or less as it was completed that first night. 'Plight' went through a different process with extensive editing and additions made by Holger in my absence, prior to mixing."

You talk about making "a form of music that seemed to have been created while we were absent, by instruments abandoned to the earth and the woods, sounded by the coarse winter elements"...

"Simply put, the presence of the musician's ego is largely absented."

You say these pieces are one of the few works you can actively return to and objectively enjoy as a listener?

"Yes, this is the case. Why? It's possibly due to the absence mentioned in the previous answer."

I always thought all the tracks came from the same sessions, but 'Flux & Mutability' was recorded at a different time, following your solo tour of 1988?

"It would've been futile to try and recreate the same set of circumstances that produced 'Plight & Premonition'. Even the mood in the studio was markedly different from before. A new mixing console had been installed, an amenable, knowledgeable engineer, René Tinner, was occasionally present. Even the lighting had changed, or so it seemed to me. Everything about the space; its mood and atmosphere was somehow brighter. Ultimately, there were more musicians involved; Jaki, Michael, Marcus, and the work evolved in a more, let's say traditional manner to the prior sessions. The focus shifted towards composition as opposed to pure improvisation or experimentation."

As a listener, 'Flux & Mutability' sounds more musical, but sits beautifully alongside 'Plight & Premonition' as presented in the new set. How do you see it?

"They feel like two very different entities to me. The internal workings of the pieces; the means by which they were created, constructed; the degrees of conscious and unconscious searching, finding, failing, floundering; the level of pure intuition at work as opposed to the consciousness of the composer, differs from one project to the next."

Did you expect these sessions to have the life they've had?

"As I hope I've indicated, during the process of its creation we both felt very excited by the material that became 'Plight & Premonition'. We knew we'd conjured up something of some potency, a most unique ambience or, preferably, pieces that contained an uninhibited, expansive, power of evocation."

Why do you think they still stand up today?

"Possibly because they're not tied to any particular decade due to the largely unrecognisable fingerprint of technology utilised in the recording? Because the spirit conjured in the material is very much alive? There's numerous answers to your question. Any and all might be valid."

You revisited 'Plight & Premonition' in 2002, providing a new mix, which features in the new set. What prompted that?

"Prior to parting company with Virgin, I'd been asked to put together a couple of retrospective albums. The corresponding

analogue multi-track masters I requested to work on had to be 'baked' so as to transfer them safely to digital files. It's quite possible the entire catalogue would've otherwise have fallen into ruin.

"Virgin were infamous for the lack of care concerning their property in their vaults. For example, they erased a number of the multi-tracks containing material from 'Tin Drum'. I used this opportunity to request more multi-track copies than I originally intended using. This is why I requested 'Plight & Premonition', but once I had the files in my possession I was tempted to see how I might 'improve' on the originals in terms of audio quality and what changes I'd be inclined to make."

Which begs the question, why no new mix for 'Flux & Mutability'?

"I did remix a five-minute section of 'Mutability' for the same project. 'Flux' would be more of an undertaking, but potentially a worthwhile one. We'll see what happens once Holger's library has been catalogued. Maybe there'll be justification for further examination of the pieces."

Is there anything else up your sleeve featuring you and Holger?

"Other than more extensive remixes of this material we created, there is no other work together."

It's interesting that musicians revisit old works. Is making music like painting, where knowing when something is finished is instinctual?

"I was just having an exchange with Anton [Corbijn] regarding this issue. He was re-printing works for a couple of retrospectives. As we get older we're constantly being asked to look back, which isn't something we're inclined to do, while at the same time we're heartened to know that the older material holds enough significance that interest remains undiminished."

You art directed the new artwork for this set, how was that?

"I enjoy art direction and being hands-on during the designing of the packaging. I'm all for creating new packaging for older works. If they're going back into circulation I'd like to give them the best send off I'm able. I see no reason to remain unreasonably faithful to original artwork, especially if I personally have trouble embracing it."

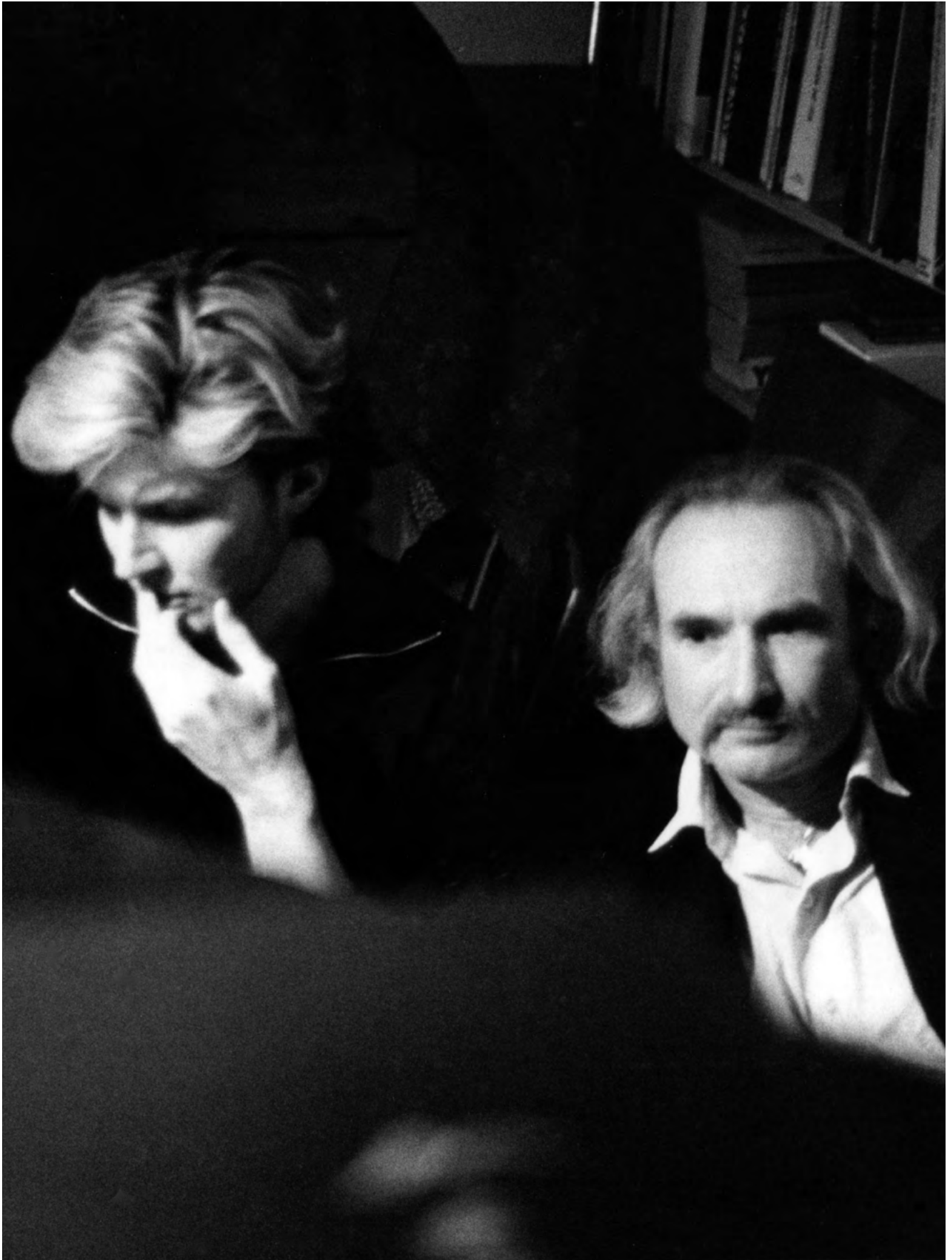
Did you and Holger stay in touch?

"We stayed in touch for many years. He passed through Minneapolis while I was living there; he opened for me one night, as part of a festival in the Netherlands as I recall, on my 'Blemish' tour. Towards the end of Holger's life he fell silent. I tried to draw him out, I wished to visit him, but when he responded he sounded overwhelmed and entirely worn out by circumstances. I lost him as a dear friend prior to his passing."

Looking back at the good times, these sessions are pretty high on your list?

"Yes of course, but I have many memories of my time with Holger. Hours spent together in our respective homes or local cafes, long walks through Köln or with my young family in a wintery Minneapolis. Listening to his many stories and his philosophy as it pertained to capturing and manipulating sound. And laughter; much laughter."

'Plight & Premonition'/'Flux & Mutability' is released by Gronland on 22 June



BITE THE BULLET



SPARSE ELECTRONIC POST-PUNK FUNK DUO **SINK YA TEETH** GET STUCK INTO THEIR DEBUT ALBUM, TOURING WITH ACR AND WHY THEY'RE FINISHED WITH MORRISSEY

WORDS: **MARK ROLAND**

PICTURES: **DAVE GUTTRIDGE**



Spend a couple hours in the pub with Sink Ya Teeth, the post-punk minimalist electro duo of singer Maria Uzor and bass player Gemma Cullingford, and you'll witness them enthusiastically work their way through several pints of ale while they share stories punctuated with regular outbursts of double entendre-inspired laughter. You will also be told several times after a particularly fruity anecdote, "Fucking hell, don't put that down... I can't say that!"

Example: They were being given a gong at a local newspaper's arts awards recently. They had already become uncontrollable during the videotaped interviews they'd had to endure before the ceremony (they'd had "a couple of pints") and couldn't actually complete the interview. And when they encountered local TV presenter Helen McDermott on stage during the ceremony, it got worse.

"She asked what Sink Ya Teeth meant," recounts Gemma, "and Maria said, 'Come on Helen, you're old enough! You've been around the block'."

"Oh God, did I? I probably did," says Maria.

"You did! Then you said, 'Oh sorry! I love you!'."

"I don't remember her taking offence though."

"That's because she'd necked two bottles of Prosecco..."

They still won, though. Hashtag winning.

Sink Ya Teeth also strategise on the hoof, questioning their own decisions about future plans and making new ones, admitting that they weren't entirely sure what the previous strategy was in the first place. Do they have a manager?

"No," says Gemma. "Is it obvious?"

A bit.

"We work too fast for a manager," says Maria. "Do you want another drink?"

No thanks, I haven't really started this one yet...

"Righto," she says and disappears to the bar.

We're here because Sink Ya Teeth's debut album, recorded at their home studio, has just landed. It comes hard on the heels of a couple of well-received limited edition seven-inch singles (the sparse, catchy 'If You See Me' and the Moroder/Donna Summer pulsing of 'Glass'), which got them noticed enough to secure some high-profile support slots with the likes of !!! and Manchester legends, A Certain Ratio. ACR in particular have taken Sink Ya Teeth under their wing. How did that cosy relationship come about?

"I met this woman in the loo at a gig we were playing with !!! in Manchester," says Gemma. She loved Sink Ya Teeth, her husband loved them too, so she sent him over to the merch stall to say hello. Turns out said husband was ACR trumpet and guitar wrangler, Martin Moscrop.

The pair had the presence of mind to badger him for any support slots he could throw their way. He did just that, and by all accounts they've been going down a treat at the shows.

"The crowds seem to really like us," says Gemma, happily. "We've had people dancing even though we've been going on early."

ACR personify the peculiar nexus of Manchester and the New York City of the late 1970s and early 80s, and that's perhaps also the best time and place to locate Sink Ya Teeth, despite them being from Norwich, England, in 2018.

Back then, Factory Records and A Certain Ratio, together with the nascent New Order, encountered a music scene in NYC where sparse drum machine dance beats were powering a splintered club music scene that was still in a celebrant disco mood, but charged by the frenetic energy and artfulness of post-punk, while starting to thrill to the sound of hip hop and electro.

Factory were particularly impressed by an act called ESG, four sisters and their pals from the Bronx who played a primitive, hypnotic

live electro using drums, percussion, bass and vocals. They were a mesmerising offering, a bridge between New York's no wave art rock and black dance music, who also happened to embrace punk's DIY lo-fi aesthetic. Factory immediately shipped them to Manchester where Joy Division sound sculptor Martin Hannett produced their legendary 1981 debut EP. ESG are the band most often mentioned in the same breath as Sink Ya Teeth. All that said, this musical legacy is Gemma's bag, but not so much Maria's.

"That post-punk scene was in Gemma's mind, but it wasn't on my mind at all," says Maria. "I do like what I've heard of post-punk, but I really like early Chicago house, and the more black side of early 1980s music. I love Prince, Zapp, early hip hop like Erik B & Rakim..."

This is all falling into place. Sink Ya Teeth's mojo almost unconsciously mines the same rich vein that fuelled New York and then Manchester's launch into a decade of invention and innovation throughout the 1980s; a happy collision of the traditions of black dance music and the tension of white art rock. But there's a catch.

"I really love The Smiths," says Maria.

Ah! The Smiths. The 1980s jangly indie outfit fronted by Morrissey, that well-known enthusiast for right wing fucknuts Nigel Farage and, more recently, UKIP splinter group, For Britain. Well this is awkward...

"I know!" she moans. "I got into them when I was 14. You know how it is when you discover music at that age. It means everything to you and it stays with you forever."

Did you start wondering about him when you heard his solo albums?

"I remember listening to 'Viva Hate' when I was teenager," she says, "and there's that track 'Bengali In Platforms' and I was thinking, 'That... doesn't... seem... right...', but I wasn't sure if it was meant ironically, so I didn't push it any further, because I didn't actually know."

You gave it a pass because you loved the music so much?

"I thought, 'It surely can't be that blatant'. But in hindsight it was that fucking blatant," she sighs.

"It feels like fraud after all these years," adds Gemma. "You feel like you've wasted all that energy you've put into them. The songs are really good, but, yeah, I'm finished with him. I might as well resign myself to it – he's a cunt."

There's a lot of it about.

"People are fearful aren't they?" says Maria. "The whole thing of divide and conquer."

She mentions the Adam Curtis film, 'HyperNormalisation'.

"What is it?" asks Gemma.

"It's a documentary about how the world got to where it is today; it predicts the rise of Trump, it starts in the 70s, when New York was bankrupt and how it influenced the path we find ourselves on now."

"I'm not very political... I like to... I don't know much," says Gemma, slightly defeated.

"I'm political by my very fucking existence," says Maria. "I have no choice but to be political. I didn't choose being political, I can't step away from an argument."

"The way I was brought up," ponders Gemma, "I didn't watch much telly, so there's a lot I don't know, and it's overwhelming. Whatever I learn now, I don't have much context for. Oh God, now I'm doing therapy... I used to be in my bedroom dancing to music, my parents didn't talk about politics."

"When I was 10, I was in my bedroom dancing to music with a hairbrush or a tennis racket," says Maria. "It's what you do at that age. That would be my escapism, but then I would wake up and go into the world and get some political shit happen to me."

The experience of racism, you mean?

"Yeah, I did experience a lot of racism growing up. And I would feel really shit about myself, so you can't help but be involved. I did

go through a period of low self-esteem, because... who wouldn't? If you've experienced stuff alike that, you start to question yourself, 'Am I really shit? Am I worthless?'. Then you rebuild your sense of who you are and then when you're on stage you can channel that pain you remember from the past, but also that kind of 'Fuck you' element that you have..."

You certainly get the feeling you don't want to get on the wrong side of Sink Ya Teeth. It's in the way Maria delivers the lyrics. She doesn't hold back. She is by turns confrontational ("Why do you have to be so damn complicated?!" she yells in 'Complicated', going on to berate the object of her ire for not bothering to write "one damn email"), icily contemptuous, especially as she murmurs the opening line of the album: "He has got a fault with me/A thorn as far as I can see" ('Freak 4 The Kick'), and moodily disconsolate in the comedown of 'If You See Me'. The whole album has a pall of ennui hanging over its grooves, a sense of the emptiness brought on when hedonism is assailed by uninvited self-awareness.

"I like a bit of darkness," affirms Maria with a grin. "Not too much, just enough to bitter up the sweetness."

"I like the contradiction between the dancey feel-good music and the words," says Gemma.

"Beauty doesn't exist without a little bit of its opposite," nods Maria. "Like 'Substitutes' off the album, it's about having a good time, but constantly looking over at your friend and thinking they're going to stab you in the back tomorrow."

Dark indeed. The words are all Maria's. Gemma says she can't write lyrics.

"I think there's something oppressed," says Gemma. "I need therapy, I can't get anything out."

"You need to relax, Gemma," implores Maria. "I feel very comfortable in this band, we fart in front of each other. Well, I fart in front of Gemma... I've never heard her fart actually. The first time I farted at band practice, fucking hell, she went red!"

"No!" says Gemma, mildly affronted.

"You did! You were totally blushing and went totally quiet!"

"I'm going red now."

It's true, she is. And she's hiding behind her pint glass.

"You have to fart," says Maria, "or your head's going to explode. It'll swell up..."

"I could do with a bigger head."

"So then it would be same size as mine."

"I've got a really small head."

"When we do photo shoots, Gemma goes in the front and I go behind so our heads look similar sizes. Seriously!"

They're nearly crying with laughter now. Is there drama in your life now, Maria? Is that where the lyrics come from?

"I do like drama!" chuckles Maria. "Not like, 'Roll up your sleeves and punch their teeth out' kind of drama."

Are you sure?

"I've never hit anyone in my life! I don't know what it's like to hit anyone, and I want to go through my entire life without having to."

"Oh!" says Gemma, interested.

"Have you?!"

"Well, no, but, I'm thinking how far could I push it? Hmm!"

"The band is still quite young..."

"Do you fancy another pint?" asks Gemma, rapidly changing the subject.

Oh, go on then...

'Sink Ya Teeth' is released by Hey Buffalo on 22 June



MARIA, GEMMA

KLAUS SCHULZE

DESPITE PLAYING IN ICONIC OUTFITS TANGERINE DREAM AND ASH RA TEMPEL, IT'S HIS SOLO WORK AND THE SOLITUDE OF CREATING IT THAT FIRES THE ELECTRONIC MUSIC PIONEER **KLAUS SCHULZE**. A TRUE ORIGINAL, HIS NEW ALBUM IS AS VITAL TODAY AS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN YESTERDAY... OR TOMORROW

WORDS: **DAVID STUBBS**

"I never have any plans or concepts before I start a new album," says Klaus Schulze, communicating via email from his home and studio in Germany's Lower Saxony region. "My music is fully improvised, just expressing my personal feelings, so it is really unpredictable and wouldn't follow any plans even if I had any! I just play and hit that record button. Music should not try to 'educate' people or provoke an intellectual look on things. It's about feelings, everything is up to the listener."

This nebulous (non)philosophy has provided the framework for the immense stream of Schulze's work since he appeared as a drummer on Tangerine Dream's debut album, 1970's 'Electronic Meditation', along with Edgar Froese and Conrad Schnitzler.

The freedom and expansion Schulze has achieved is a result of mentally unshackling himself from rigid notions of sound creation. He even finds critical praise slightly irksome, inasmuch as it generally involves some verbal tag he refuses to recognise. Now 70, Schulze recently faced his own mortality with a bout of illness last summer, though he is currently recuperating.

"I am in fact quite well now and very happy about the opportunity to continue with my music again after all these years," he says.

Oscillating between richly-coloured ambient swirl and impressive mega-structures made up of rigid sequencer girders, his new album, 'Silhouettes', is an impressive feat of musical strength and, despite feeling a touch disconnected from the modern world of electronica he helped inaugurate, it posits a notional, healthy future for the genre that is destined to outlive its creators.

Titles like 'Der Lange Blick Zurück' ('The Long View Back') indicate the scale on which Schulze works and the light years he appears to have traversed. The use of the word "simplex" in 'Quae Simplex' gives another clue to approaching Schulze; that for all of his range, his music could be taken to be the examination of a single concept, a single planetary organism contemplated from infinite angles.

"The result may appear to be unspectacular at first sight," offers Schulze, "but as with a microscope or a cosmic telescope, the evident should not really be what matters. Because there are levels in music

that you can almost touch, that walk through the room – but first you have to allow the noise in your head to calm down so the music behind it becomes audible. Which may turn out to be very simple or very complex, depending on how far you're prepared to venture."

Schulze's vision was always singular. While his krautrock contemporaries preferred to work communally, his impulse was to fly solo. He joined Ash Ra Tempel, working with Manuel Göttsching on their extraordinary proto-ambient self-titled 1971 debut album, which took flight from the tethers of blues-based rock into clouds hitherto unknown. He was also briefly a member of the unlikely supergroup Go, founded in 1977 by Stomu Yamashta, in which he played alongside Traffic's Steve Winwood and jazz fusion guitarist Al Di Meola.

The results of that collaboration were mixed, although its better moments belong to Schulze. While he admits that he "loves a good musical co-operation and always will" he found the collaborative process a creative impediment rather than a boost.

"The reason to ultimately leave those classic band constellations was my vision; the way I wanted the music to go," he says. "I really enjoyed my time with Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Tempel, but I needed space to act out my ideas without compromises."

A breakthrough came for Schulze when Popul Vuh's Florian Fricke decided to sell his synthesiser. Fricke was a man of independent means, who unlike his more impoverished experimental contemporaries had been able to buy the prohibitively expensive Moog 3P. However, he'd decided he preferred the purity of the piano and so it was, that the Moog ended up with a grateful Schulze.

"Ah, my first modular system," he recalls. "When it came out, it was totally out of reach for me and I wanted it sooo bad. Then two unexpected factors came together – my first royalty advance from the Brain/Metronome label and the fact Florian was willing to sell his system to me. Combine those factors and you can imagine how excited I was to take the money and drive straight to Florian."

Prior to this, Schulze had released his 1972 debut album, 'Irrlicht' without a synthesiser in sight. He achieved electronic sounds through primitive, musique concrète-style methods – processing drones



through an electric organ, a backwards manipulated recording of a classical symphony orchestra and using filters and modifying devices to alter the sound. The effects are rather more timeless than some of his later works with more advanced technology – twisting, metallic sheet waves of grainy, luminous sound in a state of high suspension, pulsing and ebbing like a giant, hovering celestial organism.

As with Tangerine Dream's earliest work, there is a forbidding, remote seductiveness about 'Irrlicht'. It depicts a sound cosmos, in which the plans, aspirations, narratives and fears of humanity are a temporal irrelevance. Its sheer scale and sonic spectacle, and that of its follow-up 'Cyborg' (released in 1973 and this time enhanced by the EMS Synthi A), attracted the kind of audience that enabled Schulze to raise the funds to upgrade his equipment. But what were the advantages of working with a synthesiser and not the earlier ways?

"Quite simple," he says. "Sound! I could change everything, anytime, anywhere. I could create the sounds I wanted and alter them in ways that had never been possible before. To me, the sonics mattered more than the notes or chords, so the synthesisers freed me from those boundaries. The possibilities were endless – just amazing."

From the mid-70s, Schulze became an apologist for the synthesiser. Only with instruments like the Moog, felt Schulze, could you paint truly vivid pictures and un-moor the imagination. In this respect, it is fair to describe him as one of that select band to which the word "pioneer", much overused in electronic music, can be applied.

"My motivation was not to be a pioneer, I just wanted to experiment and create my very own kind of music," says Schulze. "I wanted to discover sounds and follow that fascinating path of breaking new ground. It was an adventure and while you're on it you don't think of yourself as a pioneer – you're far too busy creating."

Perhaps as a result of his prolific output (discographers have lost count of his releases, which runs into the hundreds), his association with the prog-era saw Schulze's reputation suffer a little towards the end of the century. Yet he could feel vindicated by the eventual ubiquity of the music and instruments that he saw many studio engineers struggle to get their heads around. It was

at this point that his lifetime's achievements could be properly appreciated. It's strange to think that there was a time when electronic music was held to be manufactured and inauthentic, but these were arguments that Schulze faced at every turn back in the 1970s.

"I think that discussion is quite outdated," he says. "A violin was manufactured once too, and it did not grow on trees. That is how that topic was dealt with for good for me."

It's ironic also to think that Schulze's vast oeuvre of technological works have been largely created in a 10-square metre space at his home deep in the forest of Lüneburg Heath, a location cited by Brian Eno on Harmonia 76's, 'Tracks And Traces'.

"The silence and isolation here, or let's say my cocooning, helps me to focus on music and to be more creative," he explains. "Don't forget, before that I had many long years of the 'big city life'."

Indeed. Schulze started in Berlin, at the famous experimental Zodiak Free Arts Lab, in the late 1960s. His music was often seen as belonging to the Berlin School and it would later be foundational in the city's techno scene – and yet Schulze is not really "of" Berlin, a place that was simply a point of the most spectacular departure.

That said, he is, in a Kraftwerkian sense, in a Stockhausian sense, "West German in origin", though he would disavow any association with either of them. I once asked him if his music had any relationship to the political upheavals in 1968, in West Germany in particular. He replied with an emphatic, "No" and that is certainly true in the overt sense, at least.

However, what Schulze shares with West German peers as diverse as Tangerine Dream, Can and Faust, is a post-war dream of freedom – the abiding amnesia and repression of a country still not spiritually recovered from the war, a freedom to roam in uncharted mental space, a freedom achieved by the newest available musical methods and technology. It was no coincidence that they arose at the same time. The futures they constructed are the futures we inhabit, or have yet to inhabit.

'Silhouettes' is out now on Oblivion/SPV

THE RE-FLEX



BY ANYONE'S STANDARDS, 22 YEARS IS A WHILE. AS THEIR NEW ALBUM 'SUILVEN' APPEARS OVER THE HORIZON, JOHN VICK AND DAVIE MILLER EXPLAIN WHY IT'S TAKEN THE BEST PART OF TWO DECADES TO MORPH FROM FINITRIBE TO **FINIFLEX**

WORDS: **BEN WILLMOTT**

“S he said she was up for it anyway...” John Vick, one half of Finiflex, is talking about the moment when the duo very nearly found themselves with a rather well-known new addition to their ranks. His fellow musical partner, Davie Miller had arrived for a late night session at the Finiflex studios in Leith, Edinburgh, where John was finishing up a voice-over session with the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon.

For whatever reason, it sadly wasn't to be. Anyway, co-ordinating their schedules would have been a nightmare in itself, we would suggest. Even getting John and Davie in the same room at the same time has been quite a stretch. Their new album 'Suilven' was created in snatched moments either at the crack of dawn or late at night. A labour of love perhaps, but an extremely accomplished one at that. One that spans a plethora of electronic styles, old and new, from 'Ta Ta Oo Ha', the playful, Kraftwerk-esque single that preceded it, to heavier, more acid house clobber.

Of course, there are also many echoes of the project which John and Davie were first involved in; the legendary, but still underrated outfit Finitribe. For the uninitiated, Finitribe (also sometimes referred to as Fini Tribe) played a pivotal role in the changing post-punk landscape in the mid-80s that led to the acid house revolution at the end of the decade.

They were formed in Edinburgh in 1984, and as well as John and Davie, the original six-piece line up included Chris Connelly, who would later become the mastermind behind inventive and iconic industrial bands, Revolting Cocks and Ministry.

From their roots as a post-punk guitar outfit, Finitribe started up the Finiflex label in 1984, releasing the 'Curling And Stretching' EP before radically reinventing themselves and ditching the conventional drums/bass/guitar set up in favour of electronic hardware and samplers.

After dropping the first showcase for their new sound, the 'Let The Tribe Grow' EP, they embarked on a career that would see them straddle the divide between industrial and rave. 'De Testimony' from the EP became an anthem for the original Balearic/acid house generation, leading to a deal with revolutionary Chicago house label Wax Trax! They toured extensively, got involved in a legal spat with a leading burger chain over their 'Animal Farm' EP (see Issue 37) and cemented their anti-consumerist stance with 1989's 'Grossing 10K' album.

Embracing remix culture, they worked with Graham Massey from 808 State, Justin Robertson and many others, possibly most notably handing Andrew Weatherall their '101' single in 1991, which soon became one of his most celebrated reworkings of all time.

Leaving their long-time home at One Little Indian in 1992 after the album, 'An Unexpected Groovy Treat', they hooked up with Pete Tong's FFRR imprint, using their advance to develop the Finiflex studio into state of the art facilities. So when John eventually left the band in 1996, it was to concentrate on the Finiflex complex. Which is where we rejoin the story some 22 years later.

John has indeed turned Finiflex into one of the city's leading studios. In terms of music production, the roll call of dancefloor royalty who've used their services includes DJ Rolando, Andrew Weatherall, Sparks, Billy McKenzie and Soft Cell's Dave Ball. But that's only part of the story – they also specialise in high-end sound recordings for television, radio, sound design and advertising.

“The Leith Agency, who are one of the top advertising agencies in Edinburgh, are based nearby,” says John, “and there are a lot of other agencies and companies here in the city too. They've ended up realising that I'm here if they need something doing.”

He laughs when he recalls some of the jobs he's been called on to perform, with a job for Irn Bru coming top of the list.

"We had to create the sound of a police horse singing, 'You're not singing any more' at disgruntled fans walking past," he remembers.

Other high-profile Scottish clients include the Royal Bank Of Scotland, Irvine Welsh and the Scottish National Party, which is when Nicola Sturgeon nearly joined the Finiflex line up.

"We were producing a party political broadcast for the SNP and afterwards, Davie arrived while Nicola was listening to some of the music we've done. We were talking about her fronting the band and she was well up for that!"

Sturgeon should count herself very lucky for getting a sneak preview of the developing Finiflex material, because as John relates, it's been a pretty underground business.

"It's been very underground," he says, "hardly anyone has really known about what we've been up to. It's been a case of doing a session at 6am and then Davie heading off and me putting my suit on to get to work in the studio. A lot of hard graft has gone into it."

The studio's surroundings in Leith have certainly played their part in keeping them grounded.

"Is it like 'Trainspotting'?" John ponders our somewhat stereotypical question. "Not really... but we have got a massive tower block opposite us, and people jump off it from time to time, and doors get kicked in by the police on a fairly regular basis. It's actually cordoned off at the moment. But the people who live here are fantastic. We've been here so long now and the people are really friendly."

Given that the last time the duo had released an album they'd both worked on was 23 years ago, they must have noticed a few changes to the musical climate.

"The internet has happened," says John, before admitting that he'd just spent much of the day reviewing the 2,000 subscriptions to the Finiflex email service. Finiflex is still very much a cottage industry, he explains, pointing out that the ability to keep in touch so directly with their fanbase has been revolutionary for operating in a DIY manner.

"The other main difference," says Davie, "is not having a producer and no record label."

In other words, for possibly the first time since the very earliest days of their career, they've been free to make the music they want to make without interference. Davie recalls a past meeting with a well-known indie label who would offer him a deal if he could make a track identical to one the band had previously released.

"I had to tell them I'd really struggle to make something exactly the same as something I'd already done," he confesses, "in the end I just had to say no and walk away."

The vast improvements in the quality of software and plug-ins has made a self-produced album a much less lo-fi undertaking too, but even more significant is the fact that, in musical terms, there's another seismic shift which has been reflected in the offering across the double album 'Suilven'. Unlike during the late-80s and 90s, when electronic music was moving fast, evolving into very specific and very different genres and sub-genres, the present landscape is relatively fad-free.

The trademark Finitribe sound of pumping bassline energy and strident vocals now needs no remixing to be completely current and accepted as part of the electronic music canon, as evidenced by the arrival of the second single from the LP, 'Bonus Freaks', and its subsequent gatecrashing of the UK's vinyl Top 40.

Where once the divide in industrial and techno music seemed marked, now it's all but irrelevant. As a result, 'Suilven' sounds like music that's been freed up and let loose without the need to fit into the restrictive stylistic boundaries of fashion. From 'The Piano Player', which has overtones of gnarly dubstep (but also a synthpop song structure that harks back to Depeche Mode), to the electronic purity of 'TX20', with its Orbital-esque acid spirals and Kraftwerk-like vocoder voices, it spans the whole spectrum of moods, tempos and musical disciplines.

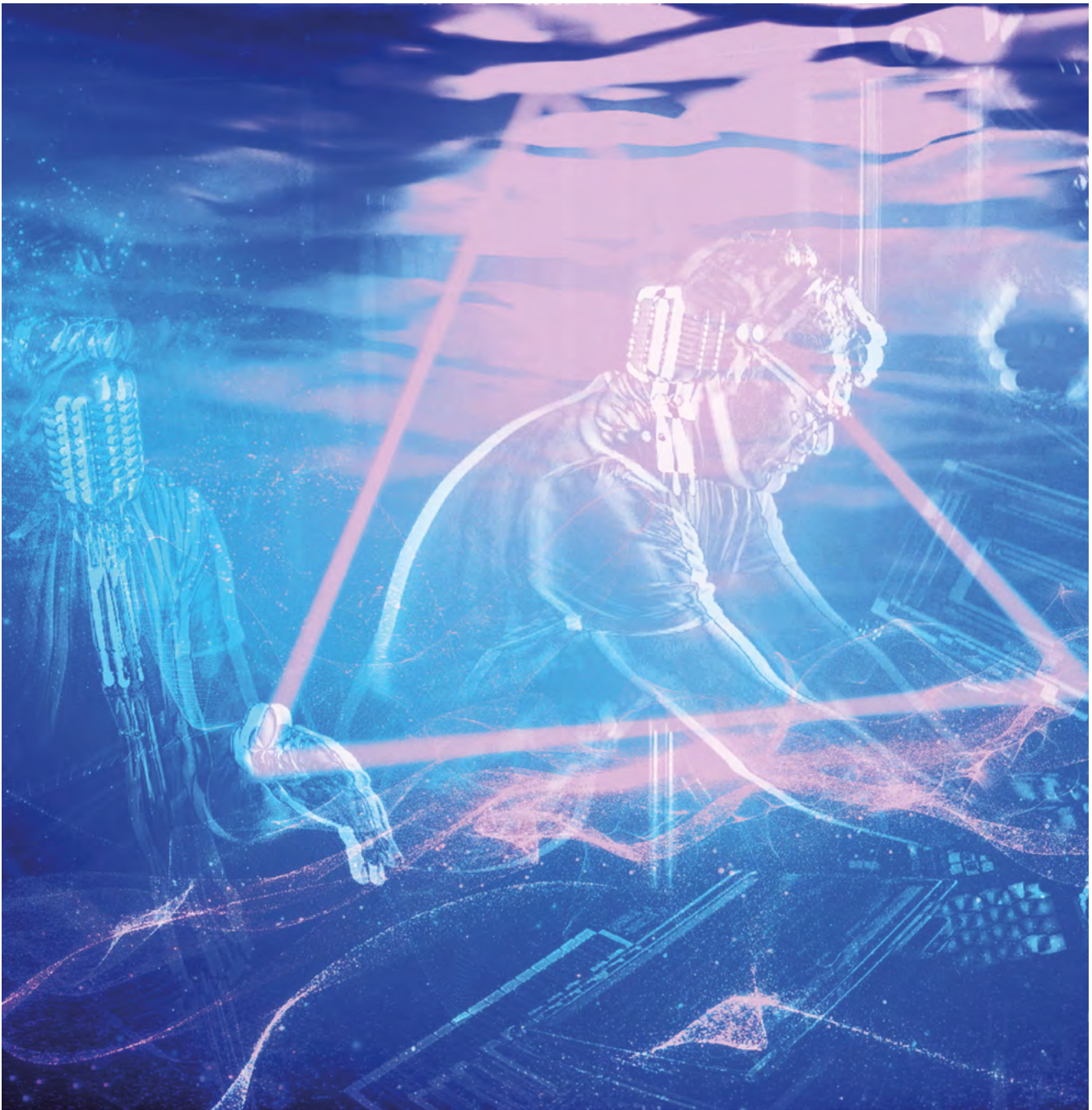
So how did the musical reunion between John and Davie happen? The reissue of a handful of classic Finitribe releases, including both 'De Testimony' and Weatherall's celebrated rejig of '101' emerged in 2014 and, off the back of being back in the nation's consciousness, a request for the band to play live came pretty much out of the blue. They were asked whether they'd be up for supporting a spoken word performance by Richard Jobson, of Scottish punk veterans The Skids, at the centrepiece of the Edinburgh Fringe, The Pleasance.

"It was ironic," says Davie, "because we'd first played there in 1989."

Davie remembers that although they were keen to do the show, there was no way they were going to dust off a few DATs and run through a greatest hits catalogue. New material was going to have to be constructed.

"Right from the start, we've been very determined that this wasn't going to be a retro thing," asserts Davie.

Since that show at the end of 2016, they've been road-testing material from 'Suilven' at live dates in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, the Nonstop Easter Weekender in Skye and Kosmopolis in Barcelona. The Orb were keen to offer them a support slot and there have been more weird coincidences and "returning to full circle" moments too, with gigs supporting 808 State (whose key member Graham Massey







was another to mix the classic '101') and even a date with genius eccentric synth duo, Sparks, who the old Finitribe had both toured with and released records by, via their label.

They're keeping a relatively open mind about the process of being recording artists once again, happy to do DJ-based album playbacks as well as full-on live events, depending on what budget arises and which opportunity is thrown their way.

"We're going to put the album out and see if anyone invites us to come and play," says Davie, in typically modest tones. The final piece of the puzzle to be slotted in is the visual aspect, both for live performances and to accompany the album tracks themselves.

"We're creating a video for every track on the album," says John. "Someone we know has created lots of 'ammunition' for us using CGI, perfect for tracks like 'TX20', which is all about a robot coming to life."

In another coincidence, and once again thanks to the advances in cottage industry video technology, the man drafted in to create the final pieces is none other than Andy McGregor, who was a member of the original six-piece Finitribe line up of the mid-80s.

What should be one of the most stunning parts of this project is a wireframe electronic representation of the mountain that gave the album its title, Suilven. Situated in a remote part of Sutherland, way up in the northernmost part of Scotland's highlands, Suilven is a uniquely shaped mountain, almost lunar in appearance.

"It's very beautiful," Davie concludes, "you really should look it up if you haven't seen it."

Those most acquainted with the duo's previous work will have already, no doubt, spotted the link. The last Finitribe album that Davie and John were both involved in was written and pre-produced in 1994 in a small crofting settlement called Sheigra near Kinlochbervie, and the album ended up with the title 'Sheigra'.

True to their roots for sure, and perhaps sharing more than a little of the majesty and mystery of the Scottish rugged highlands, their choice of title for the new album makes a lot of sense. A mountainous name for another mountainous achievement, we probably don't even need to add.

'Suilven' is out now on Finiflex

CLAUDIA BRÜCKEN & JEROME FROESE

SHE WAS INTEGRAL TO THE CHART-BUSTING OUTFIT PROPAGANDA, HE WAS A MAINSTAY IN LATE-PERIOD TANGERINE DREAM. IMAGINE IF THEY MADE AN ALBUM TOGETHER...

WORDS: MAT SMITH

"I t started in late 2014," says Jerome Froese about 'Beginn', his collaboration with Claudia Brücken. "I was keen to do a production with vocals for quite a long time and Claudia was introduced to me by a friend. I sent her some demos, instrumental stuff and some musical notes, but I didn't think that she liked them."

"You're completely wrong," laughs Brücken in response. "Don't take it so personally, Jerome. I just take ages to write songs and to fit myself into a project. It doesn't come naturally to me."

While 'Beginn' is the first time the pair have worked together, you wouldn't know it. They have a very relaxed chemistry, one that is often hard to identify while working in cities apart from each other – in this case with Brücken in London and Froese working from his studio in Berlin. Both are well used to a group dynamic, Brücken having fronted Propaganda, Act (with Thomas Leer) and Onetwo (with OMD's Paul Humphreys), and Froese being a member of Tangerine Dream, the band founded by his late father, Edgar. They each wanted to instill their collaboration with a "group feel", even though they were often working independently, eventually coming together in person to realise the songs and develop further new ideas, then having lengthy conversations over Skype when apart to keep their connection going.

Both parties were mindful that this collaboration should be something distinct from work they'd done before. For Froese, who had spent over 20 years solely in the field of instrumental electronic music, it was the chance to finally work with a singer. For Brücken, it was the opportunity to collaborate with someone who was genuinely interested in a partnership, not viewing her as a singer for hire or whose approach was overbearing.

"We were on the same page," says Brücken. "Most of the time I've worked with really big egos, and ego gets in the way. It's all about politics, whereas Jerome and I didn't have any of that."



After sharing some initial ideas, they convened at Froese's Berlin studio.

"During the recording process, when we made the first demos in Berlin, we found out more and more about the direction where the album should go," he says. "When Claudia left for London, I went on a composing spree and wrote song after song after song."

At this Brücken nods and smiles, though she admits to being somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer volume of new ideas heading her way, none of which were intuitively in a space where she had operated before.

"Jerome is an extremely prolific writer," says Brücken. "He wasn't just giving me one idea. With lots of people that I've worked with, it's a huge amount of intense labour over just one idea, but that was very different with Jerome. It's your training and it's your background. It's really lovely."



"I learned to work fast during my days with Tangerine Dream," explains Froese after making an embarrassed expression. "I remember once my father came into the studio in the morning and said we needed a bonus track for the album for the US market, but it needed to be finished that night. I was used to that. It was my job. But working with Claudia on this I realised that writing lyrics is a much more difficult process. It takes more time for everything to fit into place or make sense or feel good."

The result is an album that is delicately balanced, with both artists working as equals and neither crowding out the other. Froese's electronics and shimmering guitar textures are sensitively placed around Brücken's vocal; each track is as diverse as the next, yet all convey a generally pensive tone.

"We had a lot of issues in 2015," confesses Froese, acknowledging the untimely passing of his father as a major influence on his music for the album. "It wasn't our intention to make a dark album, or a melancholic album, but there are a lot of very personal things in this record."

Brücken is more optimistic.

"It felt like I was in a playground," she says. "We were just throwing things back and forth. There was no censoring or negativity, it was very playful and very free, with no expectations and no restrictions on ourselves."

"When I think of writing a song, it's like a painting, and so this album is like having 12 paintings. You make a little exhibition of ideas, and then you visualise those through each song. That gives you variety and different sides, different levels. 'Wounded' is extremely dark, really rather brutal, whereas 'Flight (Of) Fancy' is light. This album is all about light and dark and then lots of shades in between."

In between the opposite poles of levity and bleakness that characterise 'Beginn' is a moment of near-whimsy in the shape of 'Whispers (Of) Immortality'. The piece stands out for being a slice of electronic music theatre, with Brücken delivering a fantastical story imbued with a mysterious otherness, all in a half-whisper. It's like an especially lucid passage from 'Alice In Wonderland' or a Harry Potter novel, but which was inspired entirely by a scene from an Italian film that left Brücken ruminating on the notion of living in the moment, almost like a child.

"I don't want it to be just a one-off," muses Brücken when I ask if the German title of the album hints at the start of an enduring partnership.

"I feel the same way," adds Froese. "It was so much fun and joyful working together. When two people have the same ideas or are on the same wavelength while working together, you can be much more creative. When it works, it's something you won't stop. It will go on as long as it will be fruitful, so I'm very sure that we will do more together."

'Beginn' is out now on Cherry Red

LIKE IT OR...

BRIT-FOLK DARLING LAURA MARLING, AND TUNNG'S MIKE LINDSAY WOULD APPEAR, ON THE STRENGTH OF THIS INTERVIEW AT LEAST, TO BE ODD MUSICAL BEDFELLOWS. AND YET THEIR ALBUM AS **LUMP** IS A FIERY SPARK OF A RECORD. WE ASK THE QUESTIONS, SEE THOSE STORMCLOUDS BROOD...

WORDS: **BETHAN COLE**

This is the curious tale of LUMP. A diffident, introverted yet much-garlanded singer-songwriter who doesn't really like talking about her work. And a cheerful affable electronic producer who's as friendly and obliging as his collaborator is unyielding. Whatever their relative merits, the unlikely story is they've joined forces as LUMP and made a truly wonderful record that is, by turns, melodic, eclectic, textural and adventurous and difficult to classify, as all the best music should be.

The tale starts in 2016, when Laura Marling and Mike Lindsay, an in-demand producer and co-founder of acid folk outfit Tunng, had a chance meeting and decided to head into the studio together.

Lindsay had a few musical arrangements tied together with flute drones that were waiting to be transformed into songs; Marling provided the vocals and the songwriting, while her six-year-old goddaughter came up with the name.

"I love that it comes from that innocence," enthuses Mike, "and to her, LUMP is this furry thing!"

Furry or smooth, 'LUMP' is a delightful and mutable and lulling collaborative album comprising seven songs, of which 'Curse Of The Contemporary' is the compelling lead track. The song's title and its plaintive lyrics about being bored in LA, and chanted chorus musing on sun worshippers who "can't believe what they've become", speak of themes about the emptiness of modern life. "The commodification of curated public personas and the lengths we go to escape our own meaninglessness," so say the press materials.

Interesting stuff.

I'm on a conference call with Marling and Lindsay who are camped out in a London studio. Is Marling using art to try and change people, or at least wake them up from their mesmerised, phone-addicted scrolling and ennui? In short, is 'Curse Of The Contemporary' a call to arms for people to engage with each other properly?

"Yes," she says, "I do think there should be a bit of a call to arms for that, but I don't think I would like to be the caller to arms. I don't think the album is any kind of profound statement about the emptiness of contemporary life; we just are living in unusual and fast-paced times, especially for culture."

We talk about the timing of the making of the album, which coincided with the EU referendum in the UK at the start and the election of Trump in the US towards the end. What emotions, if any, did all this elicit in them?

"The album might in some ways reflect the mindset of that time," says Marling, "but in other ways it wasn't anything to do with that. I don't know whether my thoughts about Brexit are really relevant."

Next question! While LUMP is a new project, Marling has, during the last few years, been preoccupied with feminism and women's narratives. Not only was her last album, 2017's, 'Semper Femina' acclaimed for its strong insight into women's perception of women, but her podcast project 'Reversal Of The Muse' saw her curating narratives from powerful, iconic women in the music industry, such as Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris. I wonder if, in light of #metoo and #timesup, she's had further thoughts on the current status quo of gender politics?

"I'm reluctant to talk about Laura Marling things," she states with finality. "LUMP is a different project."

Right you are. Back on message. Perhaps she's happier talking about her time in LA, where she decamped recently for a year or two, becoming a yoga teacher and a tarot card reader for a while. Did it bore her as the lyric in 'Curse Of The Contemporary' suggests? Did she feel disaffected there? I also wonder if she found Laurel Canyon, once the stomping ground of so many folk rock and country rock troubadours in the late-60s and early-70s, to be a kind of spiritual home for her?

"The song 'Curse Of The Contemporary,'" she states, "it's a fictional character; it's not autobiographical."

I try another tack... LUMP is a much more eclectic, electronic album, I ask if it changed the way she sang or used her voice as an instrument?

"Yes, it was a very different thing I was being asked to do by Mike's music," she says. "He'd created this beautiful musical backdrop and he needed a singer and so I came in and did whatever the music needed."

Did it challenge her vocally?

"It took me to places I'd never been before," she admits, clearly feeling no urge to describe this further.





I turn my attention to Lindsay, who is, after the polite yet rather curt froideur of Marling, by far the more loquacious member of the duo. He is more than happy to describe and expound on the process of making the music, how his aim was to produce interesting and diverse textures and soundbeds which Marling then fleshed out into songs and wrote lyrics for.

He talks about how Marling brought different personas to each tune and developed the melodies into intriguing characters. It makes me wonder if he pushed her to be more creative, experimental and avant-garde with her vocals. For example, on the track, 'May I Be The Light', Marling intones the intro all deadpan and robotic, almost like a drone or teutonic alt-heroine, Nico.

"I think it all came from Laura," he says, before addressing her directly. "Do you remember sitting in the kitchen with a guitar trying to fathom it out? Once we'd had a little play around, the voices came out naturally."

Apparently, absurdism and surrealism were influences on the lyrical content so I'm curious as to whether these were reflected in Lindsay's very textural musical arrangements too. 'Hand Hold Hero' begins almost hallucinogenically with Marling's ululating vocal, then segues into pulsating electronica with a slightly country and western feel.

"We were using this Moog synth from the late-60s," continues Lindsay. "It reminded us of Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder so I think we were channelling that."

It emerges that during the last decade, Lindsay has spent four years living and making music in Iceland. Imagine the Icelandic music scene and you bring to mind mavericks like Björk, Sigur Rós and Ólafur Arnalds, who've done things their own uncompromising way and become huge global stars. It also has a bit of an unusual vibe and is famed for its hard-drinking hedonism...

"I had an amazing time there," he enthuses. "The prehistoric landscape and the volcanoes do overwhelm you a bit, but it's such a small community of fantastic musicians with wonderful taste and, especially in Reykjavik, they all drink in the same pubs! So I met all my heroes. In the first week I sat down with one of Múm, met people from Sigur Rós... you see Björk walking out of a swimming pool that you're just walking into. They all play in each other's bands and help each other out. It's all about wanting to make music for the sake of music; it's not about ego or fame there at all."

But enough of Lindsay's forthcoming approach, let's get back to Marling and try to parse some meaning from her sometimes gnomic lyricism, shall we? Witness 'Late To The Flight', which may be about death, with its lyric, "Take your seat next to the woman in white", sounding to me like voyaging into the afterlife or preparing for the final journey somehow.

"With the lyrics, I like to let people make their own interpretations of what they're about," she says. "The writing of the lyrics was all very quick and a stream of consciousness, so there's not an intended message. It's really interesting to see what people draw out of the lyrics; what meaning people attribute to them."

In the past, Marling has written a song about the wonderful, proto-feminist surrealist author and painter Leonora Carrington who famously rebelled against her wealthy family, had a relationship with fellow surrealist artist Max Ernst, was subsequently locked up in a mental institution and finally ended up having a long and fruitful creative existence in Mexico as an expat.

"The thing that I got from surrealism?" she ponders. "I mean, I'm not a particularly proficient art historian, but the thing I enjoy about it is the relation to psychoanalysis and the unconscious. Leonora Carrington talked about how her paintings were 'excavating part of the unconscious', which I enjoy. Her and poets like [Rainer Maria] Rilke are speaking a language that's quite primordial, I think."

After a little research on LUMP's lyrical influences, I see the name of Edward Lear – an inspired choice – and I immediately draw to mind Jenny Uglow's recent Faber biography, 'Mr Lear' and hope for a chat about his coruscating witticisms and tortured, unrequited, epilepsy-blighted life. What's her favourite Lear poem, I wonder?

"I only know 'The Owl And The Pussycat'," she says, bluntly. "I think when things like that get into a press release, it's more that I don't want to talk about the same things in interviews over and over."

So what about Ivor Cutler? The highly eccentric Scots poet and humourist who is also mentioned as an influence.

"I have a live album of his," she says.

I venture a question about her Quaker education and any kind of potential spirituality and belief system which may have originated from that.

"If you don't mind I'd rather not talk about that."

One more try. I ask her if she minds talking about her background. She is the daughter of a Baronet and comes from a long line of aristocrats.

"I don't want to speak about that."

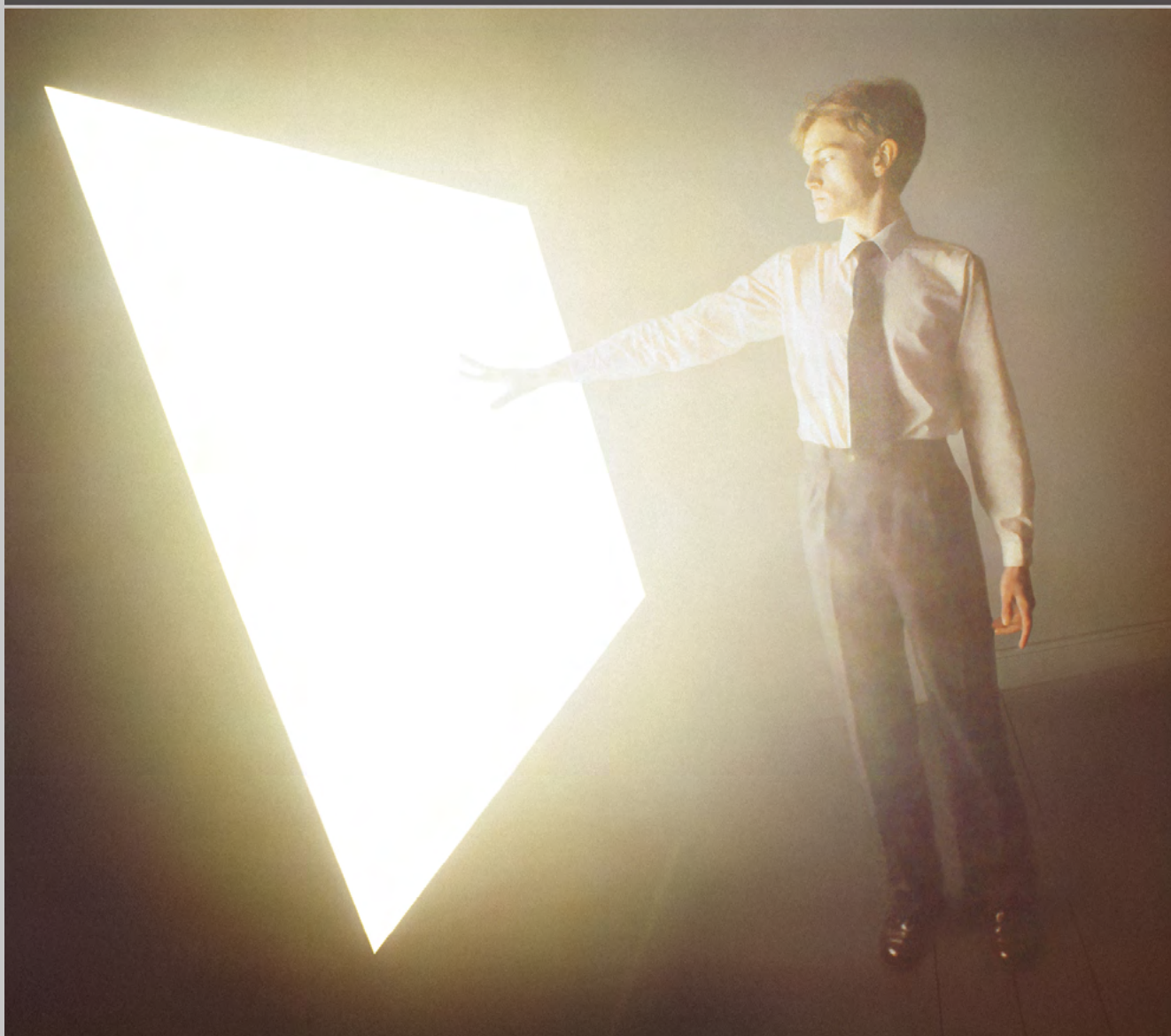
Or anything it would seem. So LUMP then, very much a yin and yang, two halves of a whole. One half who proves a pretty reluctant interviewee, and the other half all good natured and enthusiastic. One half who is as helpful and jolly as the other is dour. But don't let that put you off the album. The beguiling melodies and songs will truly hang around, enhancing your consciousness and dancing through your mind. It's really very good. Curiouser and curiouser, indeed.

'LUMP' is out now on Dead Oceans

IN THE DRIVING SEAT

METAMATIC

JOHN FOXX



JOHN FOXX

Metamatic

Metamatic

John Foxx is a Zelig-like character who pops up all over the place in the history of British electronic music. He's often associated with the earliest, pre-Midge years of Ultravox, but from being cited by Gary Numan as not only a formative influence but also a hero, to lending a hand in the creation of videos by LFO and other early Warp artists, he was there. He's worked alongside everyone from Brian Eno and Steve Lillywhite (who both worked on Ultravox's eponymous first album) to avant-garde king Harold Budd and more recently the synth fetishist and sound sculptor Bengie.

After three years with Ultravox and the band's deal with Island in tatters, Foxx jumped ship to Virgin in 1979 and the first fruit of this new relationship was the 10-track album 'Metamatic' which emerged just over a fortnight into 1980. If you're looking for a watershed moment that would pave the way for the decade ahead and the music that would dominate it, then this is surely it.

With everything that's come after it, of course, it's impossible to replicate the shock an album like this caused on its arrival. Despite leapfrogging its way into the Top 20, it was a surprising listen, miles away from the guitar-powered revolution of the Pistols, The Clash and The Damned just three years before it. At the same time, 'Metamatic' is equally distant from the carefully cultured mystique of Kraftwerk and other European electronica like Tangerine Dream.

Even in its newly remastered incarnation, 'Metamatic' is a gloriously rough and ready affair. From the opening, flanging drum machines and apocalyptic descending notes of 'Plaza' onwards, it's stripped down and devastatingly simple, owing much to punk rock attitude. A less showy and more reserved English cousin to the single-minded abandon and brutally unembellished arrangements of Suicide, perhaps.

'He's A Liquid' continues the funereal eeriness, a single synthetic echoing click in place of the traditional snare drum, accompanied by a snaking bassline and almost religious sounding chords. Foxx's vocals on 'Underpass' are a revelation, treated to the point of being twisted up and punctuated by exultant shouting, while on 'Metal Beat' he approaches a un-self-conscious rap over harsh harpsichord tones, electronic sirens and another highly effective but picked clean skeleton of a beat.

'No-One Driving' and 'New Kind of Man' are slightly more familiar, dancefloor-friendly outings, the former with its throbbing Moroder sequencer and the latter with its bassline nicked, either knowingly or unknowingly, from ancient rock 'n' roll anthem 'Peter Gunn'.

'Blurred Girl' is another showcase for Foxx's soaring vocal exercises, given maximum space by its minimal arrangement, with his more robotic performance on '030' following on, the links to Numan's deadpan style probably the most pronounced here. 'Tidal Wave' has the prodding electronics of proto-techno, bringing Juan Atkins' Cybotron project, some half a decade later, to mind. Then the album concludes with 'Touch And Go', with its evocative talk of letters from Tokyo and motorway sparks, set to arcade game pings and pongs, but at the same time boasting one of its most memorable tunes.

Coming here as a triple CD deluxe reissue, the original album has been expanded to a 49-track selection that takes in not only the remastered version of the original 10 tracks, but a another two CDs of alternate and instrumental mixes, B-sides and, probably the most of interest to Foxx aficionados, a wealth of unreleased songs recorded during the same period.

It's quite the musical banquet, but the most fascinating moments are the unreleased tracks, some fully formed, some mere sketches. 'A Frozen Moment', for instance, with its backwards tapes and crackling high frequencies, or the alternate take on 'Mr No' with its birdsong-mocking electronic effects suggest that Foxx was ably armed to push the envelope even further than he actually did on 'Metamatic'. As does 'Over Tokyo, with the kind of hoover bass that sounds like it had been made by a techstep drum 'n' bass head a couple of decades later. Others, like the straightforward harmonic beauty of 'A Man Alone' or 'Terminal Zone', are maybe less revolutionary, but no less beautiful.

Which rather sums up the two different ways you can approach this mammoth package. As a historical document, a signpost to so much that was to follow, it's totally successful but also as a library of weird and exotic experiments to dip in and out of and simply enjoy, it works equally well.

BEN WILLMOTT



BLOOD WINE OR HONEY

Fear & Celebration
Do Right! Music

You can almost feel the heat rising from Hong Kong hypno-tropicalia outfit Blood Wine Or Honey's debut album. Each track is underpinned by elaborate carnival percussion – either accompanied, like the title track, by riotous singalongs or, in the case of 'Orwellian Woman', by saxophones and other equally celebratory brass elements. There's a distinctly experimental edge to it all too, which is particularly effective on 'Anxious Party People', with the juxtaposition of sine wave bass rumbling alongside the rattle of traditional beats. **BW**

JOE MEEK

The Emotional, Cosmic & Occult
World Of Joe Meek
Mississippi

Originally released in 2014, 'The Emotional, Cosmic & Occult World Of Joe Meek' is getting a well-deserved repress by the somewhat elusive Mississippi label. It's difficult to fully describe the importance of Meek the producer – most attempts tend to concentrate on his strange and fraught personal life – but tracks including 'Little Baby' by The Blue Rondos and 'The Blight' by The Blue Men go some way to illustrating his pure and original ingenuity. **ST**

DIAMONT DANCER

Shapes
Canoa Snake

Spanish duo Diamont Dancer are Pau Roca of indie rockers La Habitación Roja, and techno producer Nacho Marco, who's released records through Mute. Their debut 'Shapes' is a departure, assembling bittersweet traces of ambient, electroacoustic and drone music. 'Circle' ticks with a Steve Reich marimba rhythm, before adding a fuzzy synth lead and lush layers of six-string; 'Pentagon' has gloriously gloomy goth guitar and an enveloping mist of electronics. It's absorbing stuff, not to be missed. **BM**

FRANCO BATTIATO

Clic
Superior Viaduct

Sicilian Franco Battiato's fourth album owes a significant stylistic debt to Karlheinz Stockhausen. Moments of 'Sgt Pepper'-y tape art like 'Nel Cantiere Di Un'Infanzia' and the shortwave-imbued 'Ethika Fon Ethica' bump up against the sinewy VCS 3 synth, tentative saxophone and piano of tracks like 'I Cencelli Della Memoria' or 'Propriedad Prohibida'. Buried treasure of the golden variety, 1974's 'Clic' represents visionary frontier music rich with flourishes from the disciplines of jazz, classical, opera and experimentalism. **MS**



AGNES OBEL

AGNES OBEL

Late Night Tales: Agnes Obel
Late Night Tales

Danish composer Agnes Obel's eclectic 'Late Night Tales' mix takes in easy listening tweeness, understated jazz, delicate orchestrations, Canadian guitar pop and much more. Offering a characteristically impenetrable Lee Hazelwood track as well as the Latin-inflected electronics of Lena Platonos' 'Bloody Shadows From Distance' it's the curator's own music that glues these disparate gestures together. Obel's new track 'Bee Dance' is wonderfully evocative thanks to its droning apian crescendo. **MS**

ANDREW TUTTLE

Andrew Tuttle
Someone Good

While the third, self-titled, LP from Australian underground composer Andrew Tuttle has decidedly folk influences in its guitar and banjo work, it is ultimately an electro-acoustic ambient record – mainly because its jangle is mostly impressionistic and vague. You can imagine this being a rather enjoyable listen outside on a summer's day. But while the airiness on tracks like 'Transmission Interruption' is highly pleasant, there are moments where the guitar and synths seem as if they're competing for your attention. **LB**

PEJZAŻ

Ostatni Dzień Lata
The Very Polish Cut Outs

Poland's Bartosz Kruczyński is a sampling magician. Under pseudonyms The Phantom, Earth Trax and now Pejzaż, he's assembled a detailed and emotional sound, using fragments of east European vinyl relics to piece together beats that DJ Shadow in his prime would be proud of. 'Uważaj Jak Tańczysz' is a Balearic sun-downer over sparse disco percussion, and 'Ucieczka' is a gorgeous ambient loop of female vocals and acoustic guitar dunked in a sea of reverb. A wonderful discovery. **BM**

SEAHAWKS

Eternal Beams
Ocean Moon

Seahawks – comprising Lo Recordings founder Jon Tye and the Cardiff-based visual artist, Pete Fowler – make a kind of new-age ambient electronica, as if designed for the relaxation of cowboys or pirates. 'Sweet Rain' could be the elevator music in Michael Crichton's 'Westworld', a tinge of swashbuckle all wrapped inside downbeat wooze. 'Radiance Gateway' sounds like the showdown between a gunslinger and a dolphin, time stretched and strung out until neither party feels like going for the draw. **ST**



THE MYSTERY OF THE BULGARIAN VOICES FEAT LISA GERRARD

THE MYSTERY OF THE BULGARIAN VOICES FEAT LISA GERRARD

BooCheeMish
Prophecy Productions

Some 30-odd years since 4AD reissued Swiss musicologist Marcel Cellier's compilation – which so hypnotised the likes of Cocteau Twin Liz Frazer – the polyphonic, open-throated female Balkan choir returns. They're complemented this time by the entrancing vocals of Dead Can Dance's Lisa Gerrard, herself inspired by the original release. 'Zableyalo Agne' will captivate as well as anything from the original 1986 masterwork, though the sporadic inclusion of Sofian beatboxer SkillR, feels misjudged. **CG**

LO FIVE

Propagate
Emotion Wave

'Propagate' serves up a collection of experimentally-inclined remixes and one-off works from Merseyside's digital/analogue lone wolf Neil Grant, made before and after his remarkable debut LP, 'When It's Time To Let Go', from last year. Ghost Box-esque wooze, primitive electronics and rose-hued spectres of UK rave combine superbly throughout in trademark style. And in a genius stroke, Grant nods to fellow scouse trailblazer Pete Burns, adding a narcotic blur to his 1984 Hi-NRG Top 10 smash 'You Spin Me Round'. **Sound. CG**

STEVE REICH

Drumming
Superior Viaduct

Reich's landmark 'Drumming', recorded here at New York's Town Hall in December 1971, posited that minimalist music needn't be free of complexity or volume. Spread across four movements, the piece commences with an intense storm of African-inspired polyrhythms, before shifting to melodic percussion layers and atmospheric resonance. These middle sections present moments of hypnotic calm, carrying a latent energy that coalesces finally into a dense web of drums once again. **MS**

BLACK BOX RECORDER

Life Is Unfair
One Little Indian

Definitive boxset from Britpop trio Sarah Nixey, (Jesus & Mary Chain's) John Moore and ES fave Luke Haines. Including all three LPs (1998's 'England Made Me', 2000's 'The Facts Of Life' and 2003's 'Passionioia') alongside unreleased tracks, sessions, remixes and a live DVD. We always liked Nixey's deadpan delivery and the more off-kilter song structures. The matter-of-fact sentiment of 'Child Psychology' ("Life is unfair/ Get over it or kill yourself") still shocks us a little, while the popstastic 'The Facts Of Life' should've had All Saints' lawyer straight on the phone. **NM**



DARLYN VLYS | PHOTO: VINCENT VANDRIES



MGUN



ÂME



BUSCEMI

DARLYN VLYS

The Prince Of Rain
Sincopat

Drawing from the likes of Vangelis, Giorgio Moroder and Daft Punk, Darlyn Vlys (the solo project of Montpellier's Sylvain Soulier) cruises down a musical highway of influences in his debut 'The Prince Of Rain'. Combining sounds of both the analogue and digital variety (including a Dave Smith OB-6 and a Gibson Les Paul), tracks like 'They Are Coming' could have been lifted straight from 'Blade Runner', epic synth sweeps and sci-fi atmospherics. Vlys has done his homework, and we look forward to where he goes next. **FM**

MGUN

Axiom
Don't Be Afraid

Detroit's MGUN (aka producer Manuel Gonzales) arrives with a second album on London label Don't Be Afraid, and it's immediately apparent that 'Axiom' is more tightly organised than its predecessor, without sacrificing any wallop. The grubby mixdown on most of the tracks wraps them up in opiate fuzz ('Vap') or nostalgic rush ('Sift'), painting monochrome soundscapes which somehow pulsate with colour. 'Cancel', is a particularly evil slice of supercharged electro, which combines soft pads and gnarled bass. Just the kick up the backside 2018 needs. **JB**

ÂME

Dream House
Innervisions

Given their ubiquity as a live act and producers/remixers, it's amazing that 'Dream House' is actually the German duo's debut album. Three years in the making, it gets off to the best of starts, roping in Matthew Herbert on the opener, the gorgeous choral harmony-drenched single 'The Line'. Elsewhere they offer bubbly Euro electronics, Yello's influence is particularly apparent on 'Queen Of Toys', but they also veer off into some very nice sidelines such as the Philip Glass-like 'Futuro Antico' and the soundtrack atmospherics of 'Deadlocked'. **BW**

BUSCEMI

Luna Misteriosa
Les Disques Du Crepuscule

Intelligently conceived, vividly realised and contagiously global in outlook, the eighth album from Belgian DJ/producer Buscemi (aka Dirk Swartenbroekx) breathes new life into house music templates. The guest singers included here range from smokey-voiced Italian Luigi Catalano, Brazil's Silvia Ramirez, Bristol's Leo Wood plus Lady Kath and Peter Lesage from Buscemi's home country. The accordion-led 'Tango Tempura' comes as the perfect cool down finale after such an spicy gamut of exotic flavours, often enhanced by Latin rhythms. **KN**



MELODY'S ECHO CHAMBER

Bon Voyage
Domino

Melody's Echo Chamber (alias of French musician Melody Prochet) makes a long-awaited return with her second album, 'Bon Voyage'. By building out of (instead of solely relying on) dreamy, psychedelic synth melodies, progressive tracks such as 'Cross My Heart' signal a maturity within the French native's work. As well as Melody's gorgeous vocals, the album also features Pond's Nicholas Allbrook in the spoken word breakdown of 'Quand Les Larmes D'Un Ange Font Danser La Neige'. It's a pleasure to see Melody back in the game. **NO'L**

HEAD TECHNICIAN

Profane Architecture
Ecstatic

A quieter, unassuming release from Martin Jenkins as he allows his Head Technician side project to run riot, as one would riot in a pillow factory armed only with a spatula and some bubble wrap. This nostalgically glorious mini-album is beautifully warm, with shades of Biosphere, Arovane and Salt Tank-esque cushioned beats. 'Formwork' is all of this and more, as is the dark melody of 'Demolition'. It's less intense than his Pye Corner Audio project, but it more than shows why Jenkins is a true master of his art. **IA**

CRAYOLA LECTERN

Happy Endings
Onomatopoeia

Like curios found in Portobello Road junk shops that were recycled by the first wave of psychedelic musical magpies, British maverick Crayola Lectern is also retreading a bygone era. Opener 'Rescue Mission' is modern psychedelia, fabulous and full of unpredictable leaps and mind-bending melodic progression. The ragtime intro of 'Barbara's Persecution Complex' unfolds into its own mournful melancholy, and ends satisfyingly with 'Finale', which is redolent of the nightmarish laudanum visions of 'The Return Of The Giant Hogweed' by early (and fun) Genesis. **MR**

ANN ANNIE

Atmospheres Vol 2
Modularfield

Based on this record, there appears to be no doubt that Denver-based Ann Annie's jazz background has afforded her a keen ear for understated complexity. These dreamlike, keyboard-led compositions levitate effortlessly and have deep organic warmth – the first filigreed bars of disarmingly beatific opener 'Drifting' cast an open-hearted spell. The beatless sound palette is vast, ranging from the minimalist open-water calm of 'Oceans Away' to the hypnotic, gently electronicised cyclic vitality of 'Upstream'. Recommended. **CG**



TINY MAGNETIC PETS

TINY MAGNETIC PETS

Pink/White: Tiny Magnetic Pets
Live
Vitamin C

Dublin's Tiny Magnetic Pets sit atop the 80s synthpop reboot pile, thanks in part to last year's jaunt around some of the UK's larger venues supporting OMD. They recall the dreamy golden era of Jupiter 8s on 'Top Of The Pops' with a set of statuesque mid-tempo electronic ballads like 'Here Comes The Noise (Pink)'. Paula Gilmer's breathy and grown-up vocals places the eye on the romantic horizon, turning up the heat with 'Here Comes The Noise (White)' and the epic 'Semaphore' towards the end of proceedings. **MR**

GUI BORATTO

Pentagram
Kompakt

Mixing club-geared techno with melodic synthpop is a delicate balance. Brazil's Gui Boratto has managed it, and his records for Cologne's always interesting Kompakt label have seen him fold in influences from artists such as New Order. 'Pentagram' is his fifth album, and nods to Tears For Fears on 'The Walker', while the epic electro of 'Overload' features the vocals of his wife Luciana Villanova. But while 'Pentagram' is slick, it lacks the addictive hooks of Boratto's previous work. **BM**

LES HALLES

Zephyr
Not Not Fun

'Zephyr', the new record from the ambient project of Lyon musician Baptiste Martin, could easily be part of Brian Eno's back catalogue –maybe named something like 'Music For Amazon Rainforests', particularly on opening track 'First Horizon'. Rather than the common temporal manipulation of reversing or speeding things up, Martin has created a strangely lateral sonic landscape where the sound appears to move sideways; it washes right through you and synth textures slowly rise, before falling serenely together in his own minimalist style. **ST**

GRIMM GRIMM

Cliffhanger
Some Other Planet

Tokyo-born, London-based singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer Koichi Yamanoha first unfolded his shoegazing mutants as Grimm Grimm with 2014's 'Kazega Fuitara Sayonara' EP followed by debut album, 'Hazy Eyes Maybe', the following year. Yamanoha's follow-up sees him find new wings by embracing acoustic baroque-folk, Clara Rockmore-sampling theremin weirdness, translucent Lynchian Roadhouse ecstasy hymns and Martin Rev-style retro pop on 'Take Me Down To Coney Island' – it's all imbued with a rare, heady originality. **KN**



ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER | PHOTO: ATIBA JEFFERSON

ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER

Age Of
Warp

Daniel Lopatin has been on a bit of a roll over the past year. Most notably, in 2017 he soundtracked 'Good Time', a film that was selected to compete for the prestigious Palme d'Or, with his score bagging him the Soundtrack Award at the Cannes Film Festival. At the end of last year, he announced 'Myriad', a live "concertscape" which, at time of writing, is about to premiere in New York.

And now there's 'Age Of', OPN's (by our money) eighth studio album to date. The result of being holed up in a strange house on a hill in a suburb in Massachusetts, 'Age Of' doesn't always hit the heights we know Lopatin is capable of. The vocals here feel somewhat unnecessary in places ('Black Snow'), covering up some of the more interesting instrumental work. But there are some stonking tunes, such as the panicky echoing chaos of 'Warning' and the choppy abstract strings of the title track. Not quite up there with his best, but certainly not an album to ignore. **FM**

ECHO LADIES

Pink Noise
Sonic Cathedral

This debut long player from Malmö three-piece Echo Ladies follows their much-lauded self-titled EP released early this year, which sold out in double-quick time in the wake of a welter of giddily-received radio play.

Tracks like 'Almost Happy' get right to the crux of their broad appeal, where the intense, synth-led energy of early Joy Division melds cleverly and naturally with bass chord progressions a la The Cure's 'A Forest' in a savvy err towards new wave rather than gothic. It's all crackingly up-tempo stuff, but nuanced too in the way it carries its infectious melodic energy along with a youthful, angsty, happy-sad uncertainty.

As the album progresses, the Swedes' real first loves fully exert themselves, and on the racing, exhilarating 'Bedroom', shoegaze indie-fuzz touchstones like Slowdive and Ride reign supreme.

Further proof if needed, that when the Scandinavians decide to do something, they generally do it better than anyone else. **CG**

INFINITE MUSIC

A Tribute To La Monte Young
Fire

Put this magenta disc on the turntable, turn up the volume, close your eyes, and breathe in. Can you smell it? The musty warmth of a dozen bodies, a fragrant waft of patchouli perhaps, the oppressive fug of a three-day drone participation/performance in a New York basement in 1966?

That's what Sonic Boom, aka Peter Kember, together with Zombie Zombie's Etienne Jaumet and tanpura player and Indian Dhrupad singer Celine Wadier have whipped up here. Recorded live last year in Lisbon, it's an imaginative leap into La Monte Young's Dream House, an excerpt, 50-odd years after the minimalist drone meister first blew the minds of attendees like Irmin Schmidt, who immediately rushed back to Cologne and set about forming Can.

The three pieces here ('Infinite Music', 'Magenta' and 'Surge Music') represent a "mystical journey into La Monte Young's psyche". The only complaint here is that it's too short. **MR**



CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY

True Love
Sylver Tongue

GUITAR HERO TURNED SYNTH OBSESSIVE DELIVERS SCI-FI THEMED ALBUM. HURRAH

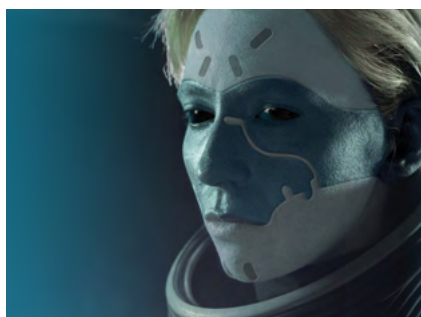
Since Bowie left us it feels like we're all floating untethered, flailing around in space not knowing which way is up any more. If you watch the impressive sci-fi video for Charlotte Hatherley's 'A Sign', the standout track (of quite a few outstanding moments, as it goes) from 'True Love', her new album of electronic wonders, it's clear she's been spinning in Bowie's orbit. She's the woman who's about to fall to Earth, an alien life form on an alien planet, wandering around at the alien seaside, where a black sphere floats in mid-air under twin suns and massive nearby moon. This, you have to assume, is the sign she is wanting to see. It's not a Black Star, but still, symbolism a-go-go!

That sci-fi *mise en scène* is one that pervades the entire album, a collection of finely honed songs which walk a tightrope between pastiche of 1980s electronic pop with all its twinkles, pads and frantic bass sequences and enthralling contemporary electronic pop. 'Accident Of Love', for example, shreds classic-era Madonna stylings ('Dress You Up' springs to mind) into new tattered shapes, while the massed synths and syncopated bass of 'Night Vision' are all DeLorean-shaped glassy shards of (white, they were always white) Fender Strat and 1980s future fonts. The album's title track pulses like 'A Real Hero' by College & Electric Youth (as in That Song From The Film 'Drive'), a bass thudding away, large reverbed white noise snares, woozy moaning oscillators floating by lazily.

The bonus four-track EP of covers is revealing. Her swirling take on the Bee Gees' 'How Deep Is Your Love' uncovers its influence on 'A Sign' and her Bowie love is further evidenced with the version of 'Absolute Beginners', while 'Repo Man' and 'Rejoice In The Sun' by Joan Baez, from the film 'Silent Running', tick the underground sci-fi cinema boxes.

This is an album easy to fall in love with, from the yearning 'A Sign' to the gorgeous 'You Said Goodbye', its electronic teardrops and emotional nakedness could soundtrack any broken love affair, or indeed our tearful farewell to our beloved Starman himself.

MARK ROLAND



BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

OUR NEW FAVOURITE SYNTH CONVERT, CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY FACES THE RAT-A-TAT OF QUICK QUESTIONS

What's the stupidest question you've ever been asked?

"Which member of Ash would you sleep with if you had a gun held to your head?..."

See, they should have asked about sci-fi. You're big into sci-fi, right?

"Uh-huh. My dad was a huge Philip K Dick fan, so as a teenager I got into sci-fi literature and developed a love of 70s and 80s sci-fi cinema."

Is there a question you always wanted to be asked but never were?

"What are your favourite soundtracks from the 70s/80s?"

We'll bear it in mind. Musically, you've found the synthy goodness...

"I was inspired by touring with Bat For Lashes and seeing Natasha Khan making electronics work with magical stringed instruments, bells and harmoniums. My aim was to capture the weird and wonky sounds of 70s John Carpenter and 'Low' era Bowie, where dark and woozy out-of-tune synths slip in and out of time."

You dabbled a while back with Sylver Tongue, what happened to that?

"Ah yes, well, the Sylver Tongue record will probably never be heard! I recorded 12 songs then I was asked to score Gavin Rothery's dystopian sci-fi short 'The Last Man', and when I finally revisited the record I decided to start again."

You just trashed the lot?

"I was fired up by the soundtrack experience and thought I could do better. I re-shaped some unused soundtrack material into two instrumental tracks, 'Lonely Waltz' and 'True Love', and enlisted Michael Lovett from NZCA Lines to co-write four new songs. I also collaborated with Max Tundra and [Scritti Politti's] Green Gartside. The only songs that survived were 'Hook You Up' and 'Forgive'. By the time it was finished I decided to release it under my own name."

The 'The Last Man' score saw you revisiting soundtracks for inspiration... wait for it... what are your favourite soundtracks from the 70s/80s?

"Finally! I really love the early experiments with synths like Eduard Artemyev's soundtrack for Tarkovsky's 'Solaris'. 'Blade Runner' is peak 80s soundtrack, it doesn't get much better in terms of melodic beauty. Electronics aside, Jerry Goldsmith's 'Alien' score and Bernard Herrmann's 'Taxi Driver' are both personal favourites."

So the new album's a "cinematic, sci-fi-inspired break-up record", right?

"Between writing the music and the lyrics to 'Hook You Up', I broke up with someone, which led to an emotional state that I mined exhaustively. I'd already been playing around with 80s sci-fi imagery for Sylver Tongue, primarily 'Mad Max' fake fur and leather, but as the songs became more personal, the album aesthetic became less outlandish. I wanted it to be about a lonely, heartbroken alien in exile, which matched my mental state!"

We love your recent 'Night Vision' EP. Is it hard choosing songs to cover?

"It wasn't hard at all. I knew I wanted to cover 'Absolute Beginners' and 'Rejoice In The Sun'. I was searching for songs in sci-fi films and found 'Repo Man', which is a killer Iggy Pop song. And my boyfriend suggested 'How Deep Is Your Love', which I'd never have thought of doing, but that turned into my favourite one of all."



BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING ELECTRONIC GOLD

TANNING SALON

Dream Castle
PrismCorp (2011)

Tumbling into YouTube holes can be a risky business. One minute you're learning about dark matter or the Italian Futurists, the next you're watching a pseudo Professor Denzil Dexter explain how the moon is, in fact, hollow and made out of toilet roll tubes. Things escalate quickly as one video links almost unfathomably to the next. And that's how, sometime in 2012, I stumbled across 'Dream Castle' by Tanning Salon.

From the first moments of that strange, ambient electronica I was intrigued. It's unclear, initially, whether the sound is synthetic or natural, malevolent or benign. This only compounds its mystery, as the video itself is simply a static image of the sleeve – but this too is somehow odd and alluring. A pixelated castle, which recalls the graphics from some old Atari game or other, sits beneath a massive window in the sky, through which peeks what appears to be Mount Fuji. It's the medieval West connecting through space and time with the universal East.

But it's the music that really compels: there's analogue wobble and bend, like that of an old cassette left too close to a magnet, which lends the melody an enigmatic edge. It appears like a moment of indecision within the sound itself, as though decisions about which direction to take are being made in real-time, wavering between the spooky and the nostalgic, before selecting at the very last second. It's like some sonic 'Choose Your Own Adventure' book, except without words, which allows the listener to weave their own uncanny narratives into the melodic shifts and sinister textures. With titles like 'Dunadd Hill', 'Larsen Harbour' and 'Camelot Wanderers' this only adds to the sense of the fantastical.

What really grabbed me was just how difficult it is to describe. While there's something of the Brian Eno or Grouper about it, it's far too strident and brimming with purpose to be labelled as straight ambient. Similarly, it's too opaque and, at times, downright sinister to be bound up with the vaporwave movement that was having a fleeting moment in the sun when this record was made.

Tanning Salon is the alter ego of Vektroid, aka Portland producer Ramona Xavier who is best known for her work in the vapourwave genre. 'Dream Castle' was originally released digitally only in 2011 and has since been reissued several times on various limited runs on cassette to (only slightly) wider pressings of vinyl. Having become suitably obsessed with that YouTube video, I began to dig around for a physical copy and discovered that I was actually more likely to acquire the figurative defecations of a rocking horse. More mystery! But there have been recent – but equally limited – reissues, most notably on the Old English Spelling Bee label. However, a quick look at Discogs is enough to quell any notion of picking up a bargain – copies are scarce and get speedily snaffled for upwards of £50. So if anyone would like to send me a copy, it'd be very much appreciated. Until then, I'll keep stumbling into my YouTube holes.

SPENSER TOMSON



HAROLD BUDD
Budd Box
All Saints

AVANT-GARDE MAESTRO COMES UP TRUMPS WITH IRRESISTIBLE BOXSET OF VITAL WORKS

Though California's Harold Budd has insisted in the past that he is not an ambient musician, it would be difficult to disassociate him from a genre he's had such an influence upon. A pianist who specialised in avant-garde sound and minimal composition in his earliest 1960s works, his first proper album, 1976's 'The Pavilion Of Dreams', was produced by ambient avatar Brian Eno, and found Budd adding the jazz influences he'd absorbed while performing with artists such as Albert Ayler. As ambient music becomes increasingly popular and new fans delve into its history, the sleek 'Budd Box', comprising seven of his most essential albums and a lengthy book of interviews and analysis, is a timely overview of his work.

The earliest work here, 1981's 'The Serpent (In Quicksilver)', is a kind of tribute to California's wide-open spaces (Budd grew up in the Mojave Desert). While 'Afar' is all pedal steel guitar and mellow sunshine, the Prophet 5 synth tones and piano of 'Wanderer' suggest a sense of desolation and irrevocable emptiness. 'Abandoned Cities', from 1984, contains the unsettling electronic drone of 'Dark Star', and as the album title hints, would make a suitable soundtrack for a deserted town ravaged by some Ballardian menace. The title track has a sense of sadness communicated by only a few piano notes, drifting in a miasma of synth tone.

What strikes you is how different all these albums are. Recorded in 1991, 'By The Dawn's Early Light' contains several evocative poems spoken by Budd himself over subtle synth waves and, on 'Boy About 10', the accompaniment of majestic viola from Mabel Wong. From 1996, 'Luxa' is composed of limpid piano pieces, and is perhaps the closest to true ambience out of this set, while 1992's 'Music For 3 Pianos' with Ruben Garcia and Daniel Lentz is pitched somewhat between classical and jazz, and 'The White Arcades', from 1987, is a mystical excursion that is the most worthy of the new age tag that Budd has also rejected.

Beyond categorisation, 'Budd Box' reveals his staggering originality, a musical box of discovery which will reward exploration.

BEN MURPHY



WARMDUSCHER | PHOTO: JACK PARKER

WARMDUSCHER

Whale City
The Leaf Label

Comprising members of Fat White Family, Insecure Men and Paranoid London, you'd expect London-based Warmduscher to have a certain level of scuzz. And you would be right; everything is covered with a layer of paranoid grime and sweat, much like what you'd find about your person having woken suddenly from a drunken stupor in an unfamiliar bus station.

Their sound lies somewhere between the well-drilled chaos of The Fall and the shambolic precision of Mclusky – the physical reaction they induce feels like the queasiness of borrowing your parents' car without them knowing, and the pure adrenaline-fuelled biliousness of crashing it into a mediocre sculpture at an out of town business park.

On 'Whale City', the bass rolls back and forth, frothing up an accusatorial snarl with vocals that screech and squawk. But 'Big Wilma' wins with its two minutes of high-paced, rock 'n' roll dirtiness. The whole thing is an absolute blast. **ST**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

In The Blink Of An Eye –
A Celebration Of Disco Gecko
Disco Gecko

Home of Banco De Gaia since 1998, Toby Marks' Disco Gecko imprint celebrates its 20th birthday with the current nine-strong roster remixing each other.

While the label intended to release artists other than just Banco from the off, Toby didn't get round to it until 2014. Still, better late than never when you have the likes of neo-classical composer Andrew Heath, the rich pop pipes of Sophie Barker and the cinematic Animat on your books.

Here it's the mellower moments that grab the attention. The opening Radium88 reworking of Heath's 'A Stillness Of Place' is good enough to eat, the shimmering, slow-built modulations of Banco's 10-minute rerub of Simon Power's 'How Proud We Are' is a treat, while the minimal Dragonfly Trio mix of Dr Trippy's 'Darjeeling Daydream' is sublime.

Forget lazy stereotypes and what you think you know about Banco De Gaia and (Mega)dog-on-a-string trance hippies, Disco Gecko is a thoroughly 21st century imprint and one very much worth your ear time. **NM**

BOARDS OF CANADA

Hi Scores
Skam

In the time since the original release of 'Hi Scores' in 1996, Boards Of Canada have become the poster boys (albeit the sunshine-bleached poster for a 1980s public information campaign) of creepy, post-trip hop electronica. Apart from their dark and sometimes wobbly analogue aesthetic, much of their appeal has been shaped from the veil of mystery that Scottish brothers Michael Sandison and Marcus Eoin have drawn around them – so much so that they didn't even reveal their sibling connection until years into their creative collaboration.

'Hi Scores' is a six-track EP that serves as a super introduction to their (much darker) back catalogue; from the subtle eeriness of 'Turquoise Hexagon Sun' to the minor, downbeat masterpiece that is 'Everything You Do Is A Balloon', each song is kind of unfathomable in its appeal, but also impossible to resist – like a shortcut home through a wood that you were sure wasn't there the previous evening. **ST**



XANDER HARRIS

XANDER HARRIS

Villains Of Romance
Burning Witches

Rising from the swamps of Louisiana, Xander Harris (the alias of musician and composer Justin Sweatt and not the 'Buffy' character, need we remind you again) suffered a bit of a setback while creating his new LP 'Villains Of Romance'. While out cycling in New Orleans he was struck by a car, leaving him out of commission for several weeks. Recovering from shoulder damage and concussion changed the direction of the album somewhat.

So 'Villains Or Romance' is "leaner than first envisioned", the nine tracks here clocking in at just under 50 minutes. But with not a single filler track in sight, it's quality, not quantity that matters. From the sinister burbling haze of opener 'Bleeding Meridians', to the calmer, almost melancholic jaunt of 'Individual Outs' to the thumping, synth-heavy gut-punch of 'Where's Your Villain', Harris weaves a meticulous path of darkly inflected synthwave that at no point outstays its welcome. **FM**

PIETER NOOTEN

Stem
Rocket Girl

Can it really be true that the indefatigable Vinita Joshi's Rocket Girl label turns 21 this year? Apparently so, and here to celebrate is a new album by one of the label's stalwarts.

With a CV stretching back to the Clan Of Xymox's 1980s 4AD albums, Dutch composer Pieter Nooten has been recording for Rocket Girl since 2010. This, his fourth album for the label, was bankrolled by a Pledge crowdfunding campaign. While 'Stem' was written and mostly recorded in Nooten's minimalist home studio, the money raised via Pledge paid for a mixing session at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios with producer Stephen W Tayler, and also allowed Nooten to augment his neo-classical Macbook romanticism with live strings, giving 'Stem' an added epic sweep.

These contrasting studio environments almost become descriptors of the album, like on 'Thème Minimaliste I' with spare piano patterns swelling into great, immersive waves of sound. Very much a soundtrack deserving of a film. **MB**

HILARY WOODS

Colt
Sacred Bones

One-time teenage bassist of Dublin indie outfit JJ72, Hilary Woods now finds herself in the right company among likes of Jenny Hval and Zola Jesus on the exulted Sacred Bones label. Woods became a single mother at 23 and took the inevitable time out to recalibrate. This intricately introspective debut finds her in ready frame to tackle some weighty subject matter amid muted, minimalist electronic musical textures.

Layered keyboards, strings, field recorded atmospherics and light-touch, bone-dry percussion take something from the world of ambient abstraction, but then coalesce around Woods' careful words, as on the affecting 'Jesus Said'. She evokes the delicately poised sound of Julia Holter at several points, and employs her ethereal, multi-tracked vocal echoes to classy effect on 'Take Him In'. She also takes on the guise of Julee Cruise on standout 'Black Rainbow', carrying us into a much darker, subtly narcotic dreamworld. **CG**



APOSTILLE

APOSTILLE

Choose Life
Upset The Rhythm

Glasgow's Michael Kasparis is an interesting chap. A stalwart of two hardcore punk outfits, big tomato at the eclectic Night School label and still he has time for a modest solo career as an electronic artist.

Thing is, of all his projects, Apostille has served up a genuine show-stopper of an album in 'Choose Life'. Gone is the Cabs-ish bleaktronica of 2016's 'Virile Strain Transmission' and in comes the feel good uplift of the all-new Apostille.

While the record began as "a chronicle of a bad time", Kasparis soon found that things "began to feel more playful, finding revelatory threads I hadn't intended". And boy, is it playful. Opening track 'Fly With The Dolphin' is a warm synthy riot, while lead track, 'Feel Bad' is a proper pop earworm and the video is laugh out loud brilliant to boot.

'Choose Life' seems to have done exactly that. Get yourself an earful now. **NM**

THE ADVISORY CIRCLE

Ways Of Seeing
Ghost Box

Ghost Box's prolific production, mastering and recording mainstay Jon Brooks, who records under numerous guises, returns here under his principle moniker, to once again honour to the library music pioneers of the 70s and 80s.

Brooks' paradoxically familiar-yet-neutral score-like instrumentals always manage to balance a just-out-of-reach nostalgia with flourishes of contemporary, tech-savvy guile. And typical of his cerebral, self-effacing work, 'Ways Of Seeing' forms incrementally. Beginning in slavish homage to the library genre (see 'Skyways'), its melodic strength and complexity builds subtly right up to the halfway mark, where the album really hits its beguiling stride.

'Airborne Seeds' brings to the fore the easy, gold-hued nostalgia and bittersweet idealism that continues to mark Brooks' distinctiveness, though the album's best moments come courtesy of Friendly Fires' Ed Macfarlane and Edd Gibson. The former's contribution to 'No Way Back' is breathtaking, adding a yacht-luxe cool to an album that could've otherwise lacked breadth. **CG**

EDGARD VARÈSE

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF EDGARD
VARÈSE, VOL 1
ÉI

Varèse, the giant of 20th century electronic music, coined the term "organised sound". He was getting at the idea that "noise" can be music and centuries of classical musical tradition had closed audience's minds to the possibility of sound.

Across three CDs, we hear Varèse's progress towards pieces like 1954's 'Déserts' for orchestra and tape machine. It was so alarming to the audience at its premiere that the hall erupted into riots, the recording of the event on the disc. It's amazing to hear the Paris audience gradually lose their shit as they're assailed by taped noise, described by one critic as "concussive".

Varèse is best remembered for 'Poème Électronique', a tape music piece which played dozens of times a day through hundreds of speakers in the Le Corbusier-designed Philips Pavilion for the duration of the 1958 World Fair in Brussels. It's all here on this mightily worthwhile reissue. **MR**



THOUSAND FOOT WHALE CLAW

THOUSAND FOOT WHALE CLAW

Black Hole Party
Holodeck

Founded in San Marcos, Texas and consisting of members of SURVIVE, Troller, Single Lash and Future Museums, supergroup Thousand Foot Whale Claw look to 70s prog and krautrock for their second LP. 'Black Hole Party' is cosmic sonic palette of soaring sci-fi textures and atmospheric soundscapes. The title track is worth the admission price alone, thumping bleeps matched with spiralling arpeggios. It's an expansive listen, one that will linger with you for quite a while. **FM**

JIMI TENOR

Order Of Nothingness
Philophon

A 16th solo outing for Helsinki's answer to Beck and here we find the fine fellow in a cosmic jazz mood. Working with "rhythm geniuses" Ekwo Alabi Savage and Max Weissenfeldt at Berlin's Philophon studios, the set is purloined from jams, with Tenor flitting from all manner of instruments to keep the grooves going. He describes the whole shebang as "mind travel music". We wouldn't argue. The eight minute plus mind-expanding funkathon of 'My Mind Will Travel' would give Sun Ra a run for his money. **NM**

PROC FISKAL

Insula
Hyperdub

'Restart', the opener of the new record from Edinburgh-based producer Proc Fiskal, aka Joe Powers, doesn't really give you a great sense of where things are headed overall. Its woozy samples sound as if they've been taken from a local British radio station that's had its broadcast hijacked and remixed. Despite being influenced by grime, 'Insula' isn't a grime record. While it dives into ambience and field recordings on 'Achlitibuie', it's most of all defined by the infectious dance grooves throughout. **LB**

SPLASHGIRL

Sixth Sense
Hubro

First Hubro signing Splashgirl make one magnificently confrontational noise on their sixth album as multi-keyboardist Andreas Stensland Løwe's prog-jazz themes rear over the feral scattershot dogfights and skeletal grooves of bassist Jo Berger Myhre and drummer Andreas Lonno Knudsrød. Masterfully captured by Randall Dunn in Iceland and Oslo, it's a relentless roller coaster from scrotum-blasting start to dolorous finish. Highlights include 'Monsoon' sounding like Magma teleported to a frozen Scandinavian snow forest. **KN**



X-ALTERA

X-ALTERA

X-Altera
Ghostly International

Michigan-based producer Tadd Mullinix takes us back to the freeform experimentation of early jungle on his self-titled debut as X-Altera, with knowing nods to the classic sounds of early 4hero and Goldie's Rufige Kru project. The production is smoother and more sophisticated than those 90s efforts, but there's still plenty of soulfulness in the likes of 'Check Out The Bass' and 'Compound Extraprotus'. The best bits are where he goes off piste, like the Kraftwerk-meets-Ragga Twins of 'Pasco Richey Tiger'. **BW**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Audio Albion
A Year In The Country

This delightful rolling project, commissioning musicians to make field recordings around Britain's "edgelands", has been trundling along for several releases now. Starting with the banjo of Bare Bones' 'Marshland Improvisations', replete with birdsong and other ambient noise, 'Audio Albion' continues on a gentle path of discovery. It traverses the electronic droplets of Field Lines Cartographer's 'Coldbarrow', the wash of Howlround's 'Cold Kissing' and numerous other well fashioned reactions to England's strange and forgotten corners. **MR**

GIRLS NAMES

Stains On Silence
Tough Love

The fifth album from Belfast nouveau post-punks Girls Names, 'Stains On Silence' is heavier, darker and weirder than their previous releases. The synths swirl and surge throughout, the basslines – big, rolling, unstoppable beasts – dominate on many of the tracks, most dramatically on '25' and 'The Impaled Mystique', and frontman Cathal Cully comes close to a croon on a couple of occasions. Which is all to the good. If you liked Modern English, And Also The Trees and Lowlife back in the day, this one is definitely for you. **P**

LAURA JEAN

Devotion
Chapter Music

Melbourne songwriter and Jenny Hval collaborator Laura Jean is known for her more folk-based sound but on 'Devotion', her fifth LP to date, she explores the world of dreamy synthpop. 'Devotion' is about teenage obsession, vivid memory and "how a lonely coastal childhood filters into a contemporary adult life built hundreds of miles away". Jean's vocals are reminiscent of The xx's Romy Madley Croft at times, meshing nicely with the lush electronics of the title track and lead single 'Touchstone'. We like the new sounding Laura Jean quite a lot. **FM**



ANNE DUDLEY

ANNE DUDLEY

Plays The Art Of Noise
Island/U/M/A/A

For all of the eccentricity of the Art Of Noise's oeuvre, stripping it back to a minimalist basic has shown the strength in the form. Anne Dudley has brilliantly taken the main lines of the AON structure and simplified the impact by using a piano and one, maybe two, components from the original recordings.

A tiny synth/sample here, a scratch of drum machine there, but piano everywhere, played with the expressive force that one expects from Dudley. Her ability to turn an electronic score into piano structures of such weight and beauty is simply stunning. The attempts at such beat heavy tracks as 'Legs' and 'Close (To The Edit)' give an intoxicatingly fresh edge to songs which makes the listener believe this is how they were conceived originally, not in the studio but in the mind.

A peerless body of work. **IA**

THE SPACE LADY

The Space Lady's Greatest Hits
Mississippi

The world of "outsider music" can be a difficult place to navigate (the very term itself is loaded with assumptions relating to authenticity, acceptability and, ultimately, social position). Like Moondog or Daniel Johnston, artists labelled as such are often viewed by the mainstream as eccentric or difficult, their artwork naïve and challenging. And the work of The Space Lady – also known as the American Susan Schneider – certainly meets some of these criteria.

She began by playing a combination of covers and original pieces to anyone who would stop and listen on the street and has in recent years achieved a much higher profile. 'Synthesize Me' sounds like Suicide hosting an episode of 'Sesame Street', while her cover of 'Ballroom Blitz' is an echo-laden, Casio beauty.

This record was originally released in 2013 by Glasgow's Night School label and is a must for anyone wanting to explore her very strange world further. **ST**

J PETER SCHWALM

How We Fall
RareNoiseRecords

From a production perspective, there's plenty of information to digest on 'How We Fall', especially on its first half. Despite being a long-time collaborator with Brian Eno, the music of German composer J Peter Schwalm has the opposite effect on you as the listener. 'How We Fall' inspires a rather clinical awe, like a structurally impressive building that doesn't feel all that inviting – leaving you feel like you'd rather observe it from the outside.

There's some ease from this in the final track 'Singlis', which gives you some slightly warmer, more subdued ambient textures at times, though while ultimately tying in with the album's overarching melancholy. As an ambient "on in the background at home" record, it's not an easy listen, but the less detailed pieces here like 'Stormbruch' would translate well into an apprehensive or unnerving scene in a thriller. **LB**



VIVE LA VOID
Vive La Void
Sacred Bones

MOON DUO SOLO SIDE PROJECT SERVES UP KRAUTROCK-NODDING SONIC PALETTE

"Wherever we go, whoever we interact with, whatever we touch, we leave and absorb these invisible traces, this residue of memory that lingers," explains Vive La Void's Sanae Yamada. "I wanted the sonic textures of this record to explore that state of being there and not there, of something being with you but not tangible."

Yamada is no stranger to the ethereal. She's more commonly found playing keyboard in psychedelic krautrockers Moon Duo, a group she co-founded with guitarist Ripley Johnson and inspired by the esoteric literature of Aleister Crowley and Manly P Hall. But here, with more of an emphasis on synthesizers and electronics, Yamada is going it alone as Vive La Void.

This self-titled debut album was recorded over a period of two years, during the downtime while Moon Duo were touring and recording themselves. And while she draws on some of the same reference points, 'Vive La Void' is undeniably Yamada in its distinct blend of electronic textures.

So we open with 'Matter', fading in with a fuzzing drone, like an incoming transmission from a distant solar system layered with crisp synth whines. 'Red Rider' is hazy psychedelic textures melded with Yamada's soft vocals. By 'Smoke', a stuttering, echoing tune full of yawning synthesizers and breathy voice, the distinct line between Moon Duo and Vive La Void is clear. For starters, Yamada's vocals seem to hover over each song like a spectral siren.

'Vive La Void' was born out of experiments in layering different types of sound which, Yamada explains, "are meant to blend together in such a way that on one listen you might hear one thing, and on another listen you might hear something else". 'Devil' may be the best example of this, eight minutes of bleeps, drones and textures that seem to metamorphose with every listen.

In stark contrast with the rest of the album, we close with 'Atlantis', a track that's bookended with Lynchian whooshing, but for the most part is a slow, delicate key melody that seems to exist in a void unto itself. A departure for certain, but one that still fits neatly with the rest of the record.

Trace-leaving may exist in a more ethereal plane than more physical interaction, but the trace that 'Vive La Void' leaves is anything but physical. Yamada wields her electronics with confidence and consideration, creating a finely tuned debut.

FINLAY MILLIGAN

LABEL PROFILE

THE INDIE IMPRINTS CATCHING OUR EARS



LABEL: EMOTION WAVE
LOCATION: Liverpool
EST: 2015

POTTED HISTORY: "I never set out to start a label," explains Emotion Wave ringleader Neil Grant. "I just wanted somewhere to play. I wasn't part of any scene and the only gigs I could get were alongside bands in pubs or traditional gig venues, which was always the wrong environment, wrong audience. I was moaning about it to a mate, who was moaning that there were too many open mic nights for singer-songwriters, which gave me the idea to do something similar, but for experimental electronic artists."

And so the Emotion Wave night was born. The idea was a good one and it soon became a regular night. The label came about after Neil put out a couple of compilations to raise funds for local charities, while highlighting the range of talent in the north west.

"Then we'd put on an all-dayer and have those artists play for us," says Neil. "Those nights and compilations did really well and everyone kept telling me I should start a label, so that's where I am now."

MISSION STATEMENT: "There's nothing official written in blood," says Neil, "but if we did have a mission statement it would be to continue to work together with local artists who have become part of the Emotion Wave family of weirdos and see where we can take things."

KEY ARTISTS & RELEASES: Recording as Lo Five, Neil's debut album 'When It's Time To Let Go' appeared on the excellent Patterned Air last year and there's his remix collection, 'Propagate', which is out now on Lo Five. Next up is singer/songwriter Bye Louis and the dark ambient pop of Foxen Cyn.

"It's a family affair," says Neil of the label, "My art school mate Matt Lewis oversees the creative direction, Andrew Bates is an exceptional photographer and captures everything we do, long-time co-conspirator Sean Fearon offers his home studio to fellow artists, while Mike Stanton plays the artists on his Jupiter Room internet radio show."

FUTURE PLANS: "I don't like thinking about the future too much," says Neil. "I'm happy to let this thing either grow organically or wither and die as necessary. I'd like to do more live stuff, that's where the magic happens for me. We've just secured a small pot of money to put on an event over the August Bank Holiday weekend. I'm hoping this will be the seed of an annual thing where we can play interesting music to interesting people in interesting locations."

"The latest idea is a zine. There are some mad ideas floating around, features on astral projection, CIA experiments, weird science, folklore... I think it's going to be a weird mix of Fortean Times writing and music chat – a great toilet read! We should be putting our first one out soon..."

'Propagate' is reviewed on page 78. For more, see facebook.com/LOFIVE

FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS



HIM OFF BLANCMANGE AND NOW NEAR FUTURE, **NEIL ARTHUR**, REVEALS THE FIRST AND LAST RECORDS HE BOUGHT AND THE ONE HE TURNS TO IN AN EMERGENCY

FIRST **THE ROLLING STONES**

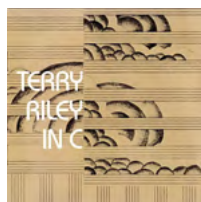
(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction
Decca, 1965



"I got a 2s/6d record token for my 7th birthday so my sister took me downtown (Darwen, Lancashire) to Nightingales record shop on the main road. We got the owner to slap it on his Dansette while we stood in this booth, which appeared to be finished in a soft acoustic pin board and listened to the song. After the listen, I wondered if I was allowed to say, "I didn't want it now, could I try another!"

LAST **TERRY RILEY**

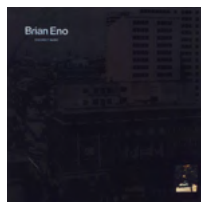
In C
CBS, 1968



[Former Blancmange cohort] Stephen Luscombe introduced me to the music of Terry Riley. He and I would sometimes listen to this on various speeds and sometimes Gavin Bryars 'Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet' or Fred Frith while having a beer etc. I'd never owned the LP so thought it was about time I got a grip and did the right thing.

ALWAYS **BRIAN ENO**

Discreet Music
Obscure, 1975



I was going to put 'Neu! '75' or Eno's 'Another Green World', which I do play a lot. Thinking harder, and this is a tough one for me, I realised it's more often Brian Eno's 'Discreet Music.' Both sides continue to surprise me, yet I'm always at ease with it, like a strange audio security wotsit. Side one can drift in and out, like part of the, duh, natural ambience, as is the intention, while washing up, reading manuals, emptying bins. It takes the edge off stuff. Side two, the way every so often the parts come together and relieve the whole, is beautiful.



NEAR FUTURE
Ideal Home
Blanc Check

BLANCMANGE MAN MAKES SWIFT RETURN WITH YET ANOTHER HOMEGROWN TRIUMPH

Neil Arthur has developed something of prolific streak in the last few years. Notwithstanding the slew of new Blancmange releases, he has also somehow found the time to establish two new groups – Fader with Bengie, and now Near Future with Mr Gazelle Twin, Jez Bernholz.

It's easy to think of Blancmange as just another group from the 80s with a penchant for catchy singles, but their roots, like many of their contemporaries, lay in artsier quarters, which was something that was suppressed as the decade progressed and pop success beckoned. Blancmange never quite let go of their art school roots, and for every 'Living On The Ceiling' there was a 'Murder'.

Near Future exists solely in that artistic quadrant, and revels in it. The familiar hallmarks of electronic music are all there, but nothing progresses quite as you might expect, and it's all the better for it. Arrangements are sparse, only occasionally coalescing into something identifiable, but mostly operating squarely in an abstracted state. Opener 'Ideal Home', at first flush one of the most accessible track here, continually teases, confuses and surprises, with stealthy synth lines, ominous mechanistic rhythms and sharp counter-melodies punctured by unpredictable, noisy interventions.

The same is true of Arthur's lyrics throughout the album; just as you think you've figured out what he's singing/talking about, the topic shifts obliquely. The words are always evocative, always melliflously detailed, but unfathomable, intensely personal or obtusely de-personalised. Catharsis only comes on the album's towering closing statement 'Bulk Erase', wherein Arthur seems to be boxing up his more fraught memories and approaching a point of acceptance.

The incessant pulse and evocative repeated melody of 'Gap In The Curtain' is perhaps the most logical piece here, seeming to detail the collapse of a relationship in the most resigned fashion; as Arthur intones the phrase 'And what was there' over and over, a connection is formed to the curtains seen on the sleeve of Blancmange's 'The Day Before You Came' and its window onto a before and after snapshot of a relationship.

MAT SMITH



LEON VYNEHALL | PHOTO: PHIL SHARP

LEON VYNEHALL

Nothing Is Still
Ninja Tune

The music of British producer Leon Vynehall is tailor-made for the album format. As brilliant as standalone tracks like 'House Of Dupree' and 'Beau Sovereign' are, you've always had the sense that the producer could explore more on an LP. Luckily for us, Ninja Tune agree and Vynehall has delivered 'Nothing Is Still', which soundtracks the story of his grandparents' emigration from England to New York.

Propelled by the poignant pull of nostalgia (see the retro hum of 'Julia (Footnote IV)'), but also seeks to move beyond the tired realm of retromania. Given the constant travel involved in his role as a DJ, there aren't many better suited to exploring fresh ideas about geographical dislocation. 'Trouble – Parts I, II, & III (Chapter V)' is a majestic piece which, as suggested by the title, is broken down into various stages – it begins with tense and frantic piano work, moves into drone-state vocals and finishes with gurgling synths and shifty drums. An album of the year candidate no doubt. **JB**

DEADLY AVENGER

I Am Godzilla, You Are Japan
Burning Witches

Leicester's big beat proponent, Damon Baxter, aka Deadly Avenger, made his name in the late 90s/early 00s with remixes galore for the indie cognoscenti. A Travis/Manics/Charlatans release wasn't complete without a Baxter battering. His trademark filthy beats meets heart-bursting strings moved up a notch in 2002 with his Bill Conti tribute, 'We Took Pelham'. Conjuring an imaginary film soundtrack, it ensured the ads and TV shows came a-calling.

These days his life is split between Hollywood and, erm, Leicester working on trailers and soundtracks. Here, we once again find him on fine imaginary soundtrack duty with a full-length for the always on the money Burning Witches label. The scene is set by the menacing machine gun rat-at-tat-tat chords of opener 'Destroyer Of Planets', while the closing triple bill of the frankly huge, rip-roaring 'Invincible Preying Mantis' followed by storming thud-thud-thud of 'Mutante' and night-time Vangelis-isms of closer 'The Death Of Ishiro' will leave you reaching for repeat. It's what big beat was made for. **NM**

DEEP LEARNING

Soft Confidence
Salmon Universe

Former PVT member, the Australian-born London-based composer Richard Pike, regards the music on 'Soft Confidence' as spiritual in nature, and it's hard to dispute that assertion. The eight tracks here occupy a weightless, dream-like atmosphere, stirring up profound emotions despite their relative simplicity, all the while staying the right side of yawnsome New Age, holistic therapy treatment room musings.

Originally conceived as the soundtrack to an installation at the Tokyo National Museum focussed on architectural transformation, Pike's intention here was to strip his music right back to basic impulses and discrete gestures. In doing so tracks like 'Firefly' express far more, using a minimal framework of bamboo flute-like tones and a slowly evolving foundation layer of ambient noise. Opening track 'Earth' is a small contemplative wonder, its ringing looped melody, icicle-sharp synth notes and fuzzy background static carrying a faltering, wilfully imperfect quality. **MS**



VIRGINIA WING | PHOTO: THOM ADAMS

VIRGINIA WING

Ecstatic Arrow
Fire

Virginia Wing provide a resolutely optimistic outlook on life with their latest release, 'Ecstatic Arrow'. Although tracks such as 'Eight Hours Don't Make A Day', feature carefree, jaunty moments, the album is underpinned by the serious topic of misogyny. Nevertheless, the Manchester-based group manage to remain upbeat and positive, perfectly weaving sounds from afar, with sounds of the familiar.

The opening track 'Be Released' is a calmingly cathartic piece that contrasts abrasive synths with bright, worldly melodies played out on delicate strings. Elsewhere on the album, 'Glorious Idea' has hints of a stripped back, uptempo dance track, featuring minimal, layered melodies, and a four-to-the-floor beat.

With this album, Virginia Wing appear to have struck the perfect balance between light-hearted pop, and meaningful composition. By refusing to give into pessimism, the group have created something that's serious, yet playful, and a real joy to listen to. **NO'L**

KL(AÜS)

Kl(aüs)
Castles In Space

Fans of the Berlin School are going to enjoy the company of Sydney-based duo, Kl(aüs). No prizes for guessing which shrine Tasmanian school pals Stewart Lawler and Jonathan Elliott worship at (clue: it's Tangerine Dream).

Talking the talk, they claim it's not so much the machine, be it laptop or vintage synth, but how you play it that matters. Here they walk the walk with even the sequencer taking a backseat in favour of some live improv that, they say, allows for a more "organic development".

And it shows. The glass-sharp tinkles and deep bass rumbles of opener 'Three Sheets' leads the charge, the thrumming locked down swirl of 'It Hurts To Shoot Gloves From Your Stick, But It's Necessary' (now *that* is a song title) bears repeated listens, while The 13-minute 'Feral Teapot' is the sound of sunshine itself.

Full of good humour and sparkling tunes, it's a proper treat of a record. If you hurry, there's a limited edition green vinyl version waiting to be snagged. Delicious. **NM**

KAMAAL WILLIAMS

The Return
Black Focus

South London keyboard whizz Henry Wu disbanded his celebrated jazz fusion project Yussef Kamaal last year. In its place he formed a trio with drummer Joshua "MckNasty" McKenzie and bassist Pete Martin, with Wu adopting the Kamaal Williams moniker despite his given name already sounding cool enough.

The new trio's debut album is loaded with such extreme funkiness that if Craig Charles played it in full on 6 Music it would probably cause a public disturbance, what with the three players delivering a massive sound despite the slimmed-down formation.

Whether on the lysergic grandeur and Money Mark keys of 'High Roller', the distorted vibes and Rhodes groove of 'Salaam', or on the wild white-hot guitar of 'LDN Shuffle', this is assured, brash and ridiculously addictive. The wonky synth charm of the tender 'Aisha' provides a much-needed respite to the elastic basslines and begging-to-be-sampled drums offered elsewhere on this astonishing album. **MS**



JON HASSELL
Listening To Pictures
(Pentimento
Volume One)
Ndeya

NEW LABEL AND A FIRST ALBUM IN NEARLY A DECADE FOR REVERED EXPERIMENTALIST

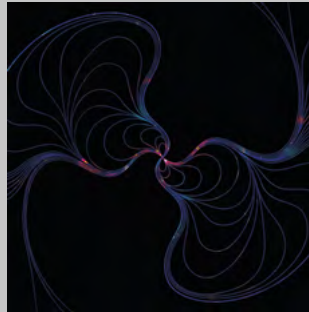
Shortly after arriving in New York in 1978, Brian Eno came across Jon Hassell's 'Vernal Equinox' album from the previous year. It was, Eno said, "a music I felt I'd been waiting for". The two became friends and collaborators. It's just one of the many creative relationships Hassell has formed over 50 years (and counting) at the vanguard of avant-garde and electronic music.

The trumpet re-imaginer, composer and musical conceptualist had, pre-Eno, studied under Stockhausen in Cologne with future members of Can, and participated in La Monte Young's Theatre Of Eternal Music. Oh, and he played on the original recording of Terry Riley's 'In C'. Then there's the enduring fascination with what came to be called "world music", which saw Hassell applying lessons learned from the Indian singer Pran Nath to his trumpet technique. Post-Eno, fellow travellers have included Talking Heads, Björk, Ry Cooder and David Sylvian among others. And alongside all this there have been the solo albums.

'Listening To Pictures', the octogenarian's first outing for nine years, is a cause for some celebration. The album's sub-title '(Pentimento Volume One)' references the artistic process defined as "the reappearance in a painting of earlier images, forms, or strokes that have been changed and used as elements in a final composition". This becomes both a metaphor for the recording process and a description of the finished recording. Daubs of sound and fine brush detail layer up to create an aural multiple-exposure, as if several compositions are bleeding into each other in any one track. Treated jazz trumpet phrasing, electronic loops, skittering percussion, electric piano textures and bursts of spidery synth noise come and go in what, at 38 minutes, is an exemplar of brevity and invention. The shortest piece, 'Her First Rain', is a minute and 38 seconds of particularly affecting electronic bass and electric piano ruminations, fading out into a scattering of percussive hits and glitches.

'Listening To Pictures' is released on Hassell's new label, Ndeya (pronounced "in-day-ya"), conceived as a home for new work, as well as selected archival releases. And presumably, hopefully. '(Pentimento Volume Two)'.

MARK BREND



THE ORB
No Sounds Are Out
Of Bounds
Cooking Vinyl

PATERSON CRACKS OUT PARTY POPPERS TO MARK THREE DECADES OF HIS TRIPPY COMBO

Can it really be 30 years since Alex Paterson made those first small steps in a studio that soon became giant leaps for electronic music? In describing The Orb's original unfettered ethos, the title of the latest long-playing excursion could be flown like a sci-fi B-movie poster above the gateway to the new ecosystem he started inventing with 1991's 'Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld'.

Like 1994's 'Pommes Fritz' putting the chart-topping success of 'UFOrb' in its place, the new long-player breaks with the successful techno templates of the last two Kompakt outings to appear on a British label and hark back to that first album's sprawling genesis with "more musicians and more voices". And it's the vocals that are essential here, rising to the occasion are Hollie Cook and Brother Culture on Battersea-homaging skank 'Rush Hill Road', Rianna on her spoken shortie 'Drift', along with Mary Pearce, Emma Gillespie and Andy Cain from the early WAU releases. Roney FM effectively drapes 'Pillow Fight @ Shag Mountain' and others with plummy Beeb newscasting tones.

Demonstrating his innate loyalty to old muckers, Youth plunks double bass on the slo-mo hip hop noir of anti-war 'Wolfbane' and bassist Guy Pratt reprises his 'Spanish Castles In Space' role from the first album on several tracks here. Jah Wobble, who so memorably underpinned 'Blue Room', returns to rumble beneath 'Easy On The Onions' among others. If 'Isle Of Horns' flies the minimal techno flag, 'Other Blue Worlds' deep house and 'Doughnuts Forever' embraces Alex's beloved exotica, one distinctively unifying element throughout is Roger Eno's fragrantly-sensitive piano which, combined with muted trumpet on Alex's desolately-evocative 'Blade Runner' score re-imagining 'Ununited States', ignites a rare strain of modern classical beauty, further mined in the wailing chorales of major epic 'Soul Planet'.

Above all, everyone's obviously having a blast on outings like the wonderfully-titled 'Wish I Had A Pretty Dog'. The world may be turning into a black hole but, 30 years on, The Orb's never-predictable space voyage has swelled way beyond just providing an escape pod.

KRIS NEEDS

**REVIEWS BY
JAMES BALL,
LOTTIE BRAZIER,
MARK BREND,
CARL GRIFFIN,
NEIL MASON,
FINLAY MILLIGAN,
BEN MURPHY,
KRIS NEEDS,
PUSH,
NICK O'LEARY,
MARK ROLAND,
MAT SMITH,
SPENSER TOMSON,
BEN WILLMOTT**

NEEDS MUST

OUR ESTEEMED COLUMNIST HAS BEEN UNUSUALLY QUIET OF LATE. AND THEN, LIKE MAGIC, UP HE POPS UP WITH NEWS OF HIS EXPLOITS... IT'S QUITE A TALE AS YOU'D EXPECT

WORDS: KRIS NEEDS

In recent weeks, a top secret project has seen me re-living the seven magnificent years I spent with The Clash between 1976 and 1981. They rose like a meteorite from the punk movement then transcended it to pinball through relentless cathartic mayhem and self-created disaster to create a legend like no other band in history. Over those years, initially in my role as Zigzag editor, I went on the tours, witnessed classic tracks being recorded and explored the new musical strains they discovered, assimilated then remade in their own unique vision.

Facing this month's column with The Clash still electrocuting my soul, it makes perfect sense to highlight their much-overlooked relevance to the Electronic Sound universe. It might have started with the dub reggae excursions that accompanied singles like 1979's 'Armageddon Time', 1980's 'Bankrobber' or littered the controversially-experimental 'Sandinista!' triple album but, by 1980, The Clash were also blazing newer electronic trails, incubating tropes soon to be hijacked by synthpop, exploring the potential of 12-inch singles, crossing over to the then-underground hip hop ethos and paving the way for electronic dance music in the mid 80s.

As his post-Clash outfit Big Audio Dynamite affirmed, much of this pioneering came from their singer-guitarist Mick Jones, paradoxically one of the last century's most sensitively passionate rock 'n' rollers who found himself relishing the eye of a new hurricane when The Clash started visiting New York in 1979.

Mick was the Clash member I got particularly close to and every time I went to his flat he had some hot new 12-inch biscuit to play





at brain-shattering volume. One evening in December 1982, he said “Happy Christmas” and pressed a cassette into my hand that he’d recorded off the radio in New York; a treasure trove of the KISS FM and WBLs mastermixes which were then hot currency in London. These electronic mini-masterpieces cleared the mental landing-path for the approaching remix culture by extending grooves and adding samples, whether Run DMC (among the first drum machine-users in hip hop), New Order or, of course, The Clash.

‘The Magnificent Seven’ had started life when Blockheads Mickey Gallagher and bassist Norman Watt-Roy arrived at New York’s Electric Lady studios in April 1980 and laid down a groove Mick said needed to be funky because Joe was planning a rap. ‘The Magnificent Seven’ would turn out to be one of The Clash’s epoch-making tracks, marking their first stab at assimilating the new hip hop busting out in New York.

“I was so gone with the hip hop thing that the others used to call me Wack Attack!” Mick told me in an interview for my 2004 book ‘Joe Strummer And The Legend Of The Clash. “I’d walk around with a beatbox and my hat on backwards. They used to take the mickey out of me. I was always like that about whatever came along; I’d sort of get excited for a while.”

Mick’s dub of ‘The Magnificent Seven’ was a grooving workout called ‘The Magnificent Dance’ that swept NYC radio (I witnessed Larry Levan slaughter the Paradise Garage with it in 1983).

Although The Clash would later be acknowledged as the first white rock band to explore rap, none of the New York DJs playing the record had any idea who was responsible at the time. Talking about it over 20 years later, Mick was typically modest about his band’s place in pushing the sonic goal-posts at this pivotal time.

“It was quite inspiring, because there was this whole new thing. They did things like putting bits of movies on top. There was this mix on WBLs called ‘The Dirty Harry Mix’ that used that bit that goes, ‘Do you feel lucky today, punk?’ It also had characters from Bugs Bunny; ‘De wabbit kicked the bucket’. That was kind of a pointer, yeah.

“For us it was amazing because they’d picked up on this record, particularly the instrumental, and didn’t know who we were. Everyone was playing that record and it turned out to be us! It was really funny because we were punk rockers! And we’d come all this way. You couldn’t have written or contrived it. I guess we did the first proper 12-inch dance mixes too, but it wasn’t planned that way. It just happened. It was just lucky really.”

There was also 1980’s ‘The Call Up’, taken from ‘Sandinista!’, its 12-inch boasted Mick’s out there dub ‘The Cool Out’, and the following year’s ‘This Is Radio Clash’ with the astonishing alchemical mash-up of ‘Outside Broadcast’ stretching the track into a ghostly groove-voyage garnished with Gary Barnacle’s eerie sax, mutated funk riffs and Joe’s slowed-down rap. Later that decade, all this would be considered a normal promotional tool but, at that time, expanded mixes on 12-inch singles were usually only encountered on disco, hip hop and reggae outings. By the end of the 80s, remix culture would be rife with big names earning more than the artist to reassemble a single for the dancefloor.

Despite all this, Mick never consciously thought The Clash were making music that would later be hailed as groundbreaking.

“We never thought that, at any time,” he says. “We were just knocking out some numbers. We just wanted to do our thing. We didn’t necessarily want to be part of this big, happening thing that was so cool. We just did what we wanted to do.

“I guess it’s because we had that kind of attitude. We were so open to other things, and we attracted it as well. We were open to meet other artists in other fields. The Clash’s involvement in the start of that whole thing was by luck really. We were in the right place at the right time. If you travel with a group like that you’re bound to find out about all the things that are happening much quicker. It’s like a fast track to what’s culturally happening in whatever place you go to. We were fortuitous in the fact that we attracted all the different, creative people to what we did. They came and checked us out.

“What had started as a punk group turned multi-national. We took on different concepts and tried to make it part of what we were doing, but still retaining our own thing. We did it our own way, not by slavishly following fashions. It helped some people find a way in to these things. You wouldn’t have known that when hip hop was in its genesis that it’d become one of the major forces of music later on.”

Did The Clash invent acid house and remix culture? They undoubtedly played their part. No other band came close to capturing that excitement during that short but seminal time. And let’s not forget, if it wasn’t for The Clash inviting them, Suicide would never have invaded the UK as early as July 1978. See you next month.



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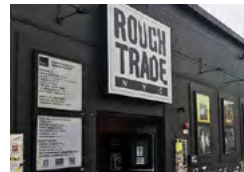
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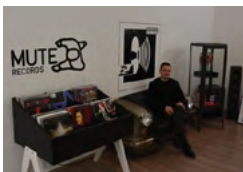
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