

# Hybrid Electronica

Robert M. King cut and pastes his way through some current experimental CD releases.



STILLPOINT

Browsing through the racks of the more discerning record stores it is heartening to see a renaissance in the fields of experimentation and collaboration. Musical barriers and genres are becoming less divided, distinctions and labels are becoming blurred, paving the way for a wealth of audio adventures and electronic possibilities. Seemingly disparate musicians converge in the studio and live arena; Improv veterans like AMM's Eddie Prevost engaging with Kinetic sculptor Max Eastley and guitar loop-drone guru Robert Hampson (Main), sax supremo Lol Coxhill fusing with the pacific electronica of Australian Paul Schütze, the list is endless. The results creating new cross cultural currents in music's textural paths. This cross fertilisation is being embraced on an internation-

al scale and has emerged from the (post) Industrial scene and the realm of 're-mix culture'.

For a prime example of this new hybrid you need look no further than the latest CD ep by ethno primitive percussionists O Yuki Conjugate. *Sunchemical* (Staalplaat, STCDO96) is six radically different reworkings of this track from their (highly recommended) 'Equator' album (an eclectic fusion of tongue drums, marimbas, body percussion and other world instruments). Highlights of this ep being the intricate droning soundscapes achieved by the aforementioned Robert Hampson and a dancefloor reworking by Charles Webster, the slow keyboards wash over delicate pulsing drum loops and by the time the bass kicks in you can almost imagine a sea of hands held

high in dance anthem fervour.

Andrew Hulme is a member of OYC and has recently launched a mail order only label (7°) with Paul Schütze. During a recent meeting with Andrew he explained that "We just want to keep total control over something for a change, this is our response to various bad experiences with labels over the years, we'll (Paul and myself) be handling every aspect of the releases on the label". Admirable sentiments that pay off as is evident in their first release, *Fell* (7°, 960115) is a lavishly packaged (foil embossed, hard-back, cloth bound, signed and numbered limited edition of 999) collaboration by Schütze & Hulme. Andrew is a seasoned world traveller and has amassed an impressive digital collection of environmental sounds, ranging from hi-fi markets in Bangkok to roadside Gamelan in Bali. They have taken extracts from these recordings and woven them into a seamless travelogue of electronic exotica. Repeated listening to *Fell* continue to reveal the dedication that has gone into this work, new sounds continue to emerge if you listen beyond the ebb and flow of the electronics and attempt to follow the street noises or even the faint strains of the gamelan. This isn't linear listening by any means, the digital editing involved here has created many paths to follow, and listening to this in the open air adds further depth to this remarkable work.

Speaking of the outside environment, the latest release on the American based Projekt label, Steve Roach & Vidna Obmana—*Well of Souls* (Projekt 60) creates a sense of immense space over its two disc set. Roach is best known for his early 'new age' synth epics and more recently with his embracing of ethnic and handmade percussion works (including using his Cannondale mountain bike) whilst VO's Dirk Serries has emerged from a post industrial background to a current approach of an almost minimalist form of sound painting. Combined they have produced a stunning collection of material that is a vast expanse of lush keyboards, disembodied voices, didjeridu and percussion. Titles like 'The Quiet Companion' and 'In the Presence of Something' hint at what they are trying to achieve here, this music is meditational and contemplative and a welcome change to the daily

noise that pollutes our minds. In fact (as a side issue), recent publications from the World Forum For Acoustic Ecology have pointed to evidence that indicates that day to day noise is having a detrimental effect on our bodies. The packaging for *Well of Souls* mirrors the sounds within, warm ochre colours blend and almost reveal what appears to be tribal paintings from some previously undiscovered race. There is nothing 'solid' to grasp onto here, just as you start to identify a sound it fades and moves of to allow a new texture to emerge. A release that you will return to again and again.



O YUKI CONJUGATE

The global ambient trio that is Tuu have been something of a personal favourite since their first release a couple of years ago, so I was excited to receive *Maps Without Edges* (Beyond, RBAD-CD16) by Stillpoint a collaborative venture from Tuu's Martin Franklin, percussionist Eddie Sayer (from *Lights In a Fat City*) and flautist, performance artist Nick Parkin. Similar in many ways to *Well of Souls* the material contained here is a trance inducing excursion to lost lands. *Maps* is a slow inward improvised spiral of rich textures. A dense blanket of processed gongs envelopes the deep pulsing tones of the water drums, whilst the quiet ebb and flow of the percussion and incidental sounds is occasionally broken by peaks of fractal electronics. A fascinating work.

If all of this sounds a bit too organic for your noise craving ears then hard-wire yourself into the future courtesy of *alt.frequencies* (Worm Interface, WI007) a compilation put together by Rockitt (DJ / musician and owner of record store 'Ambient Soho'). This is the sound of a recombinant digital culture morphing into new cell structures almost as soon as your finger hits play on the CD player. Forget media hype buzzwords, intelligent techno—drum 'n' bass—hardstep, *alt.frequencies* invents new ones and watches them implode. Highlights include the hyper electronic tempos of Freeform, the drill 'n' bass velocity of Tom Jenkinson (aka Squarepusher), the smooth urban sprawl soundscapes of Coma (Astral Engineering) and the crystal shard electronica of Gescom (Autechre). The remaining seven contributions (from WI artists and friends) covers similar ground and planted there are the seeds of new approaches to experimental / electronic music, all wrapped up in an exquisite hand finished textured card sleeve, what more could you want?

PAUL SCHÜTZE



#### Distribution:

7°, P.O. Box 2222, London W1A 1XD  
Beyond - Pinnacle  
Projekt - Cargo  
Staalplaat - Vital  
Worm Interface - Pinnacle / D.O.R. Infinity.

Robert M. King