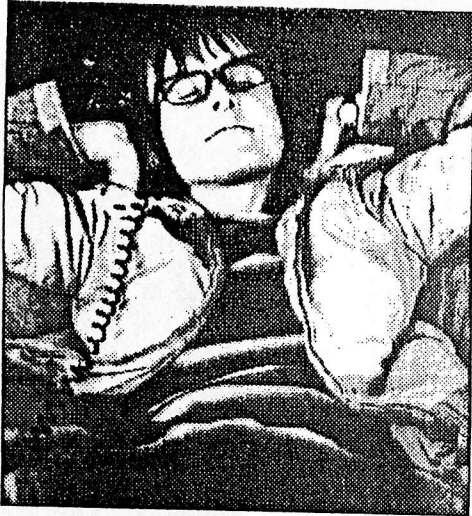


ARTIFICIAL

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Even Better Than The Real Thing



If being a member of successful Australian acid outfit B(if)tek wasn't enough, Nicole Skeltys has moved into the thick of it in Melbourne and kick-started a solo-project called Artificial. Three of this city's labels were so impressed that they bound together under the alias of the Melbourne Underground Consortium (aka MUK) in order to release her debut album, and *Electro-Lollipop-Explosion* emerged. Here we find out more about the album and the artificialities of modern life according to Nicole...

When did you first begin performing, and at what stage (and why) did you embark upon a career engaging with the electronic side of things?

"As early as the age of three, I attended a special school for unbearably pretentious children in Paris. My electronica inclinations were manifested early as I built a 2 VCO synthesiser from Lego and used it to play a Switched-On version of Patti Smith's *Piss Factory* to my admiring classmates. I have been in show biz ever since."

What other producers do you admire and/or see as influences in 1998?

"There is a vast amount of local talent out there. In the real mellow funky acid movement, the glitterati will include Dark Network, Sirkus Of Sorts, Hypnoblob, Telemetry Orchestra, Little Nobody and 5 Star Pizzeria. For deep electro blips, Steve Law and Voiteck have a proven track record. Internationally Air Liquide, Pharma, Kerosene, Mouse On Mars, Khan and Walker, Plaid, Maurizio, and Basic Channel will continue to drop delicious dollops of pleasure into our ears."

What's happening with B(if)tek, and what plans do you have there?

"Kate [Crawford] and I have just recorded a single for Festival which will be out at the end of June. The very cuddly and talented Paul Mac is the producer. It includes a 'radio-friendly' edit of our track *Bedrock* - already released on a couple of compilations, but possibly most familiar to some as the theme song for the JJJ breakfast show for a while - as well as a remix of that track and a new track called *Pipe Dream* which was written by B(if)tek and Paul Mac on a foggy weekend in the Blue Mountains. If the single does well, there is the possibility of an album out through Festival by the end of the year."

When and why did you embark upon your Artificial project?

"I started Artificial a year ago as a result of a vision that appeared to me one day. I saw K-Hand and GAS sharing a bong with Curtis Mayfield and developing a Prince tribute album using four analogue machines and a mono sampler. It was then I realised I had an Artificial message to spread to the world."

How do you define the differences between B(if)tek and Artificial?

"Both Kate and I have different projects outside of B(if)tek. Our hope for B(if)tek is that we can achieve some kind of good compromise between the underground electronica that we really like and the 'acceptable sound of techno' that JJJ in the Frolows era will support. It would be a hell of an achievement for a couple of feminist/geek/electro-innovators to break through into the mainstream of pop culture in some way. But I fear the odds are definitely stacked against us, especially in

Australia where the rock 'n' roll old boys club dominates everything. By comparison Artificial is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, religiously bent on lo-fidelity funky acid."

Why Electro-Lollipop-Explosion?

"Well, isn't that the best 'good-time' title for a CD you have heard since Captain Beeheart's *A Carrot Is As Close As A Rabbit Gets To A Diamond*? And isn't it the cheesiest artwork you've seen since the wallpaper in your parents' bathroom? The CD has been out in the shops for less than two weeks and already people are asking for posters and/or just plain stealing them. It has crossed my mind that the fact that the album shot to number two on the PBS-FM charts within the same week of release is due solely to the fact that one of my artificial 'band members' looks like Burt Reynolds."

To someone who hadn't heard it, how would you describe this album in 20 words or less?

"A fondue of trip-disco-funky-acid-electro-lounge; that's one word. Followed by lo-fidelity album for the 'now' person who wants the sound of yesteryear only a bit more 'tomorrow'."

What's the deal with MUK?

"MUK is a consortium of the best underground electronic labels in Melbourne: If?, Seraphic and Angel's Trumpet, plus emotional support from Clan Analogue. These labels are similar in their tireless efforts to promote local innovative electronic music but very diverse in the music they have released, which ranges from experimental and ambient to drum 'n' bass on into hard Detroit. They are a damned nice bunch of people and I am truly chuffed that they have come together to support my album. This is the first of many MUK projects. The next release will probably be an Artificial vinyl EP towards the of June which is set to be called *Stoner Classix Vol 1*. This is a raw, loose, slow and minimal bit of hillbilly house which intends to put the acid back into acid. Hopefully it'll be the first of an illustrious series."

What inroads have been paved for your stuff overseas?

"The B(if)tek album *Sub-Vocal Theme Park* is available through German label Nephilim in Europe. It has sold very well, and we have got positive feedback on that album from

people as diverse as Juno Reactor and Plaid. So far as Artificial is concerned, Wall Of Sound have expressed interest in *Electro-Lollipop-Explosion* and MUK will be following that up over the next couple of months. Oxygen Music Works in New York will be releasing a couple of Artificial tracks from the album on vinyl in June, so I'll be alongside people like Mantronix, Small Fish With Spine, and Glimmer Of Dope."

What do you enjoy about performing live, as opposed to composing your tracks in the studio?

"Performing live keeps you from losing touch with people and what is being played in clubs. It's good for market-testing material. However, I prefer beaver away in my smoky little machine den because it means I don't have to 'straighten out' my sound in order to make it fit in with dominant DJ culture."

Is electronic music really a 'man's world', or is this just paternal baloney?

"Yes, techno culture is overwhelmingly dominated by boys. Yes, there are just as many pinhead no-talent sexist egomaniacs - DJs and promoters especially - in the dance/club scene as any other part of the music industry. It's distressing to play at big parties and see so many anorexic bra-raver girls in the audience and meanwhile all the DJs and performers are men. It's depressing that a number of artists whose sound I admire turn out to have neanderthalic attitudes towards women as soon as they open their mouths. Artificial and B(if)tek are doing well because of the integrity of the music and the support of people like Clan, Geekgirl, Club Kookie, MUK and Stoner Boy. I have been fortunate to find and get inspiration from a bunch of boys and gals who are fun, ethical, deeply interested in the far reaches of electronica and are 'right on' about the grl thang."

- By Nina Wright

Artificial's *Electro-Lollipop-Explosion* album is now available from MUK and distributed by Shock. She will be performing live at the Esplanade Hotel this Thursday 21st, then will launch the album at Club Filter next Wednesday 27th. Her next appearance will be alongside Blimp at Zoetrope 6 on Friday 5th June at the Punters Club.