

ARTIFICIAL

Synthetic Reality, Beanbags and Hillbilly Acid

Nicole Skeltys' two projects - Artificial and B(if)tek - recent releases and live shows have had rave reviews both in Melbourne and Australia wide. Toupee finds out what Ms Artificial is creating for 1999 from inside her luxury denim beanbag...

What was your highlight for 1998?

The highlight was probably getting extremely positive feedback from Cem Oral (aka Jammin' Unit, Air Liquide, G104, Pharma records etc) on my album *Electro Lollipop Explosion*, followed by an offer by Khan Oral (aka 4AE, Head, etc) to contribute a track to my *Stoner Classix* vinyl-only collector series. I think what the Oral bros and their chums (particularly Walker and Kerosene) are doing is the best funky electronic shit around internationally at the moment. I was totally chuffed, these people set a very high standard.

What were your favourite 1998 releases?

Locally, everything by MUK (If?, Angel's Trumpet and Seraphic), and Clan Analogue. Internationally, everything through Pharma. I'm looking forward to some local yummy stuff in 1999-2000 *Disco Greats*-a Clan Analogue Compilation to be released in March, and albums by Sobriquet and Dark Network (a fab Sydney Clan Analogue act).



What is coming up for Artificial this year?

I'm due to release another EP with New York based funky-electro babe, Oxygen Music Works, and I am also working to get *Stoner Classix* off the ground. The series is being released through MUK and represents my contribution to the revival of the Electronic Concept Album (-). Each volume features full-colour retro-psychedelic artwork, and will have a new episode of the acid-politics comic 'Pigeon Coup', and most importantly each volume will be clock full of tripped-out-lo-fi-funky hillbilly acid trax. The first volume has been pressed and all trax are by Artificial. The second (due for release early this year) boasts trax by Dark Network, Clone and myself. We're only pressing 200 of each volume, and they are mostly for export but if anyone wants one, they can get one via mail-order.

How about your other guise, B(if)tek?

Number one priority right now is getting a deal sorted out for the next B(if)tek album which we want to release ASAP. We are talking to a few labels at the moment. We have also been approached to do the soundtrack for a full-length Australian feature film. So... a pretty busy year ahead.

Will you be working under any other names, having a myriad of musical personalities?

I've thought about calling myself 'DJ No-Name from Bristol' just so I can get higher paying gigs as an 'international' and not carry any gear around. :-)

If you could choose anyone in the world to collaborate with, musically or visually, who would it be?

I want to work with Kylie. I think a B(if)tek/Kylie combo has a lot of possibilities. She's got the brains, we've got the looks, you know how it is. We are chasing her management at the moment. Will keep you posted on the quest.

What's the best rumour you've heard about yourself so far?

An article about me in Real Time a few months ago alleged I had signed a 'million dollar contract with Mushroom Records.' HA HA HA HA Haaaaaaaaaaaa.

What about your oddest experience to date?

Probably when I met James Murdoch and found out he was a long-standing B(if)tek fan. Festival held a special 'showcase' event in Sydney especially for James and assorted industry and media glitterati. B(if)tek was the only electronic act squeezed in the middle of 5 other rock acts. There was no dancing, just hoo-nobbing, finger food and staring. We felt like small nocturnal creatures captured and taken out of our natural smoky nightclub habitat with our fellow creatures off their nuts and bouncing up and down, and placed on display in a brightly lit zoo cage and told to do that 'mating ritual thing that we do with the machines' for the VIP visitors. Of course, we faked electronic orgasm on stage and everyone was thrilled. After the gig, James Murdoch tells us he has our first album, ran a hip-hop label in NY, worked with Scanner, loves our stuff, loves

electronica. That was a very odd night.

You always have very lush videos made for your trax which you project behind your live sets.

Who makes them?

The boy wunderkind, Stoner Boy, armed only with his rusty old video editing program, dozens of videos from the \$1 shelves and a herbal inhaier. He painstakingly turns little bits of video trash into lo-fi visual treasure troves. His clips for 2 of my tracks have been shown on Rage, Alchemy and Channel V and his stuff has been selected for showing in the Boiler Room at the Big Day Out.

Lastly, let's pretend you were able to build your own Artificial Reality. Where would it be?

Barbara Feldman's sunken lounge-room, in the dead-centre of a crushed velvet bean-bag.

Essential survival items?

Spliffs, wigs... have I missed anything?

Listening Material?

Could be Dark Network. Could be Khan and Kerosene's Head. Could be How to Play Lawn Bowls.

Simulated Companions?

Anyone who would make me a better person just by talking to me while I lie quietly in my beanbag with my eyes closed. I'm open to all reasonable offers.

How would people behave in this perfect reality?

Girl DJs/Acts do not get put on FIRST or very LAST at gigs (as appears to be the case frequently now). You don't have to chase promoters or record companies for the pathetic scraps of money they've agreed to pay you. Everyone claps their hands and says 'Tip-toe... jolly good snow!!!' after every Artificial gig, and then proceeds to help me lug all the gear home, set up my studio again, and then makes me a cup of cocoa and tucks me into bed.

On that note, I watch Nicole sink further into her denim beanbag, discreetly finish my cocoa and scurry home...

To order a copy of Artificial's *Stoner Classix*, e-mail whizbang@world.net

STOP PRESS...B(if)tek has just landed the Australian & New Zealand support for the Beazstie Boys!!!