Artificial

NICOLE CASTS THE FUNKY WORD ON THE ELECTRO LOLLIPIP EXPLOSION...BABY!

Melbournite Nicole Skeltys makes music under the guise of Artificial. She also performs with Kate Crawford as the electronic outfit B(if)tek, which has enjoyed considerable success around Australia, through its own tracks, and also through remixes, one of which was, funnily enough, The Mark Of Cain. Yet Nicole has gone it alone for the Artificial album, *Electro Lollipop Expolision*, which has been put out through local group, Melbourne Underground Konsortium. Its mix of funked up-lounge-techno-acid-squiggly giggly has sent the local buyers into a frenzy. *Electro Lollipop Explosion* has already sold out on its first pressing, obviously the Daft Punk comparisons have given the punters a hook, yet Nicole wouldn't know if she sounded like Daft Punk, she hasn't ever heard them. OTICO spoke to Nicole by phone and asked her a few questions about Electro..., producing, and techno in general. Thankfully she had many creative and positive things to say, and was forthcoming with answers, some of which have been reprinted here so you can share the warm experience of, *a phonecall with Artificial*.

Lone Ranger.

"Biftek is still going. Kate and I met in Canberra through Clan Analogue, which is a national electronic artists collective, and she moved across to Sydney and I moved down here. Biftek is releasing a single through Festival Records in August, and probably an album later on in the year. I decided to launch off into trip-disco-funky-electro-acid territory and started doing that stuff with my machines down here, so that was how Artificial was born."

Wu Tang Clan Analogue.

"The clan was one of the earlier successful electronic collectives. They've been going since the very early 90's, and started off in Sydney and in Canberra and few the efforts of a very small bunch of people that were sick and tired about the marginilisation of electronic music in the Australian music industry and the difficulty of getting anything released particularly, and getting gigs. So a bunch of people got together and decided to make and release music and started releasing some very interesting early vinyl, which would be very hard to get nowadays. That mushroomed, more people joined the collective, branches set up in different places...It started as a bunch of people releasing some vinyl and some weird electronica, to becoming a highly successful collective which has released a large amount of CD's as well, also media, video artists, hackers, web designers, its everybody associated with electronic. Recently we got written up in Wire magazine, which is a very prestigious electronic music magazine."

Can Ya DIY

"If a record label was to offer large sums of money then of course we'd take it, yet my primary motivation is to produce music which is innovative and exciting and is pushing borders a bit and maintains some kind of integrity with it. Also, my goals is to work with like minded people as opposed to just trying to push volume and get the profit margin up, and I'm going to do that regardless of whether Biftek or other projects I'm involved with become commercially successful, that's not my primary aim, and that's why its great to have clan Analogue, because the people there are artists and there major objective is there through creative endeavours. You just achieve more if you work together, if you work collectively compared to competitively you can achieve more than you would yourself."

Money makes the world go round.

"Its relatively risky to release a CD, but we've been lucky with Electro Lollipop in the fact that we've sold out now and were into our second run now. But its partly a testimony that everyone has worked together (M.U.K crew), and we've got a lot more coverage and the financial risk has been shared so it has been easier to enter into areas like marketing. When you do it yourself all that stuff is a big burden for a very small label, so I hope this (MUK) becomes a bit bigger and we're able to release other local artists."

Get back in your pigeonhole.

"Its good to hear you say that (that Artificial is heard to categorise), I guess that is one of my prime objectives, I want my own pigeonhole, my own little roost! I've been listening to everything from Clan Analogue people, and some of my favourite artists at the moment have been the Air Liquide crew, people coming out through Pharma, that whole crew of people, all of about 12 of them, are doing some extremely good funky electro, slightly disco sound, a lot of it just on vinyl, but also a lot of it going back to early blaxploitation movies, and espionage movies sound,..... and yeah disco.....I think there is a lot of vibes and trends you can pick up and you may not be influenced by something but many have to be a part of a crest of something which a number of other people are interested in at the same time. I mean people compare me to groups like that (Daft Punk, Etienne De Grecy, Dimitri from Paris) which is good because it gives people a hook to hang onto if they're not into the obscure shit that I'm into."

You got the flavour(s).

"Its boring to follow a formula, so its mainly just trying to challenge myself with sounds and styles and programming, and it also took as a bit of time to put the album together. I think the last track on the album I wrote a few years ago when I was going through a bit of a lounge period, so its sort of a bit of a temporal space you're hearing there. Its the fact 'that why would you want to do the same sounds over and over again when you can be pushing boundaries and using different elements, which is part of the joy of writing tracks I think."

Back to the future.

"There is some vinyl happening. I actually stitched up a deal with a label in the U.S called Oxygen Music Works and they are finally going to release some tracks from the album, and I'll be getting some pressings sent over soon. Also, I'm doing some other stuff on vinyl locally, its a series that's going to be called Stoner Classics. Volume 1 is basically just Artificial stuff, and as the name suggests its just a stoner, hillbilly, lo-fi housey funky music. Its going to have a cartoon series also. I'm going to release volume 2 soon, with some Sydney people involved who also do that housey funky stoner kind of stuff, which will also include volume 2 of the comic as well. I hope that goes well, its a very small market in Australia (the vinyl market) but hopefully I will be able to sell a few copies in Australia."

Artificials Electro Lollipop Explosion is out now!!!! Stoner Classics 1 & 2 will be released ONLY on vinyl, so if you ain't using the wax, you won't be hearing these tracks.

Ben SHEPHERD