

# 34 GRRRLS ON TOP

TEXT BY ANDREZ BERGEN



## artificial intelligence

Nicole Skeltys made a name for herself in the local techno scene a couple of years ago when she and accomplice Kate Crawford released the album 'Sub-Vocal Theme Park' under the alias of Blif)tek. At the time the duo were regular Clan Analogue stalwarts in Sydney and the album was a benchmark in their career. "It got us a lot of exposure and through that a few things came about," agrees Nicole.

"Eventually we licensed the album for its European release through Nephilim in Germany. I guess we were in the right place at the right time, but I should blow my own horn here because it was a pretty good album! Since then we've been hearing how well it's done - apparently one of the guys from Black Dog listed one of the tracks as one his Top 10

favourites, and it was listed in a US DJ's Top 10."

These days residing in Melbourne, Nicole also moonlights under her more recent production incarnation known as Artificial, and it's for this

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production outfit that she's garnering notoriety throughout Australia. Apart from tracks on compilations like 'Zeitgeist 3', 'Sunblock' and Clan Analogue's most recent sampler, she released her debut album 'Electro-Lollipop-Explosion' in May this year. Within two months the first pressing had sold out and rave reviews appeared in almost all

areas of the national music press. Artificial's output has already started to attract its own kudos overseas as well.

"I'll be releasing some vinyl through New York label Oxygen in October," reports Nicole. "They've already released people like Small Fish With Spine, Mantronix, Coldcut and FSOL, so it's quite an honour".

Rather than pursuing a strictly saccharine approach, Artificial's soundscape is a very real and inventive one as Nicole goes on to explain. "I've been concentrating on a couple of different genres - one I call electro-lounge; another is elevator-acid." She openly laughs at the implications. "I've been obsessed with muzak for quite some time; I love it and there are an enormous amount of possibilities that you can do with it - or at least I find there are. I'm also trying to do slightly quirky funky stuff, which I call detective funk, and the inspirations here have been from cop shows and spy movies and things like that."

Welcome to the Artificial soundscape, which over the course of the past couple of months since the album's release has been called anything from trance to phunked-up acid. Nicole herself describes it as "trip-disco-funky-acid-electro-lounge" and once you've listened to 'Electro-Lollipop-Explosion' it's hard to argue with her. The album is a melting pot of all these variations and others besides, and it seems to appeal to a whole lot of different people for a whole lot of different reasons. "Every 'now' person wants the sound of yesteryear, only a bit more 'tomorrow'," says Nicole by way of explanation. "My record is totally five minutes ago. No-one who has had three or more spliffs could deny that."

Artificial's 'tomorrow' sound features wobbling basslines boogying up to woody trumpets and z-grade British comedy sound-bytes; chunky, cheesy slap-bass sleazing with classic gritty 303 acid; funky jazz improvisations speeding after go-go girls down grainy streets and highways. And more to boot.

To follow up the album (which is on CD) Nicole will be moving into the realm of vinyl, something that's truly special to her. First up is a limited edition Artificial record titled 'Stoner Classix Volume 1' which is scheduled for local release very shortly and, she asserts, "it's destined to top the lazy dance charts somewhere in the galaxy." She's also deviated into the art of remixing and recently put through the wringer a track by fellow Melbourne artist Little Nobody. Both 'Electro-Lollipop-Explosion' and 'Stoner Classix Volume 1' have been made possible by new organisation/label MUK - the Melbourne Underground Consortium - which is the unique collaboration of Melbourne's 3 most respected underground labels: Seraphic, IF? and Angel's Trumpet, together with emotional

support from Clan Analogue.

"These are people I respect a great deal, and without their support I wouldn't have been able to indulge myself in all these music sweets," declares Nicole with a resounding laugh. "We have a lot more in store, so hang onto your hats!"