



ARTIFICIAL
Electro Lollipop Explosion
(Melbourne Underground
Konsortium/Shock)

★★★

Nicole Skekys understands the soundbite. "Trip-disco-funky-acid-electro-lounge" is how she describes her solo project, *Artificial*. And its fruit, *Electro Lollipop Explosion*, is a "lo-fidelity album for the 'now' person who wants the sound of yesteryear, only a bit more 'tomorrow'." Truly, these are media-friendly tags, the kind of playful descriptions no journo or critic will be able to resist. Skekys not only knows how to get her stuff heard but how to make sure we hear it with the right frame of mind. She doesn't want us to take *Artificial* too seriously. This is a sly, sleek, fun record, an analogue lucky dip. It takes as its starting point disco, early electro and blaxploitation soundtracks (and *Steptoe and Son!*), appropriating bleeps, squeaks, flares, beats and any twisty little noise that Skekys, half of renowned duo B(if)tek, can nail down long enough to sample. Here are thin and creaky keyboard sounds, cheesy basslines and the most primitive of synth twiddles. Skekys attempts, with surprising success, to reformat, rethink and recontextualise them all without sacrificing the qualities of either. Like Beck, she is in it for fun rather than irony. And like Beck, she has crafted the kind of album that moves muscles at both ends, making you smile and dance.

■ JON CASIMIR

clips from some of the albums r