

Wired world of sport

B(if)tek play live at Viva this Friday. Pre-order B(if)tek's new album 2020 at HMV this week and receive a free double pass to the show

It may come as a surprise to the average Aussie, but Americans don't know who Sir Cliff Richard is. Maybe they're better off that way, but nevertheless it's the gorgeous gals from subversive electronic act B(if)tek we have to thank for spreading Cliff Consciousness across the Pacific Ocean.

And what better way to do it than by getting seminal yank chanteuse Julee Cruise to help B(if)tek's Nicole Skelty and Kate Crawford cover Cliff's classic Wired For Sound.

"He's so on the money," gushes Kate from her Sydney home. "The lyrics do our heads in every time we listen to it. It's like 'My God, that's so us!'"

And no, the girls don't normally deal with gimmicky ideas like cover versions... even calling Wired For Sound a cover version is a bit misleading as Kate and Nicole are more into subliminal messages than obvious choices.

"Into the subconscious, that's where we'd like to be. That's the idea behind Wired For



B(if)tek: 20/20 vision.

Sound, it's a take on people thinking it's so safe and so white bread and goody good-good," explains Kate. "We're trying to bring out how subversive the song actually is and how it's all about the fetishisation of music and speakers and vinyl and listening to the radio. It's about that subconscious urge between what's on the surface and what's underneath."

All in all, an accurate description of the B(if)tek ethos: subversive thinking to pervert listeners.

And the icing on the cake was getting Cruise to sing it. Fresh from her success with Hybrid, Julee was a natural choice. "She's somebody that we've always loved and admired, ever since *Twin Peaks*," enthuses Kate. "We thought 'Who would be the perfect person to do *Wired For Sound*?' to bring out the innocence and the sick, scary side of that song. We thought Julee, she's got the perfect innocence and experience in her voice."

Which brings us to the part where we give kudos to Nic and Kate for inflicting Cliff on the US. "Americans were kind of like 'Cliff who?'," drawls Kate sardonically.

"So we had to tell Julee the story about Cliff, that he was known for being clean living, that he was this Christian guy, that he's actually Sir Cliff Richard, and we're telling this story and she's in hysterics, she thought it was so funny."

But there's more to the B(if)tek story than cutesie pie cover versions and canoodling with celebs. Kate and Nicole are two of the most dedicated and prolific artists in the Australian electronic scene. Collectively, they've been working together as B(if)tek since 1995 when they met via Clan Analogue and the outdoor doof scene. Individually, they write as Artificial (Nicole) and Clone (Kate).

"We were both squirreled away in Canberra writing strange music in our garages on all these analogue machines. We met up and it was like 'Oh my God! You do exactly what I do! We had the same sense of humour.'"

And you'd have to be a bit thick not to notice that they're girls. Not that there's anything unusual about that, but Australia has a real lack of female producers and DJs. Without wanting to wave the feminist flag too strongly, it's groups like B(if)tek that will encourage more chicks to get involved musically in the scene.

"Whatever the scene is, the best part of it, as far as we're concerned, is getting involved, hearing what's happening and writing your own stuff," agrees Kate.

"It's disconcerting that there aren't as many girls doing this, and part of our project is just to let girls know that you've gotta get out there and give it a go. Don't worry about the fact that it does look like a boys club, and don't let people beat you down. You've gotta get out there and make your own sounds, 'cause there should be more of us. You've got to battle stereotypes all the time."

Emma Jane

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