



through *Geek Girl*, and online fanzine that set out to challenge the notion that an interest in and understanding of technology is a "boy thing". Despite, or perhaps even because of, its determinedly lo-fi aesthetic, *Sub-Vocal Theme Park* quickly became a favourite among aficionados of dirty, acid-drenched electronica world wide.

Which brings us back to *2020*, an album full of nutritious sustenance for the head, heart, soul and feet, and an album that can veer from the left field pop of their cover of Sir Cliff Richard's 1981 hit, *Wired for Sound*, featuring the unique voice of Julee Cruise, to the ambient weirdness of the closing track, *The Sound of the B(if)tek Studios*.

"*Wired for Sound* trips you into the ultimate retro-futurist irony - pop as subversion," says Kate gleefully, while Nicole adds that "The Sound of the B(if)tek Studios is precisely that, the hiss and crackle that our beloved, creaking old machines make when they are not being played and are simply left on. It's a tribute to our machines and the hardcore fans who have followed us since *Sub-Vocal* and don't give a toss about 'radio friendly'."

In between come a myriad of different shades and variations, tracks that help join the dots between these two extremes. Cuts such as *Sound and Space*, *We Think You're Dishy* and *Luxury* utilise playful vocals from Kate and Nicole to flesh out their vision, mediated (of course) by "machines and vocoders and effects that twist the human voice into something post human,"

according to Kate. "But a human feeling remains, of seduction, bliss, space and the sex appeal of sound."

Other tracks add vocal samples lifted from other media, films and TV shows to illustrate their point. "These work like thought balloons for music that is many layers deep," adds Nicole. "This is music to think to, to dance to, to sit to and to smile to."

Then there are the purely instrumental cuts, tunes which embody and build on the minimalist tradition of European, particularly German, techno. It is a sound described by Nicole as "controlled, understated, spacious, a world in which every sound has to work very hard."

These tracks oscillate in subtle ways, building by incremental degrees and sucking the listener into an environment that can be bright and airy or dark and claustrophobic but is always eclectic, quirky, funky and frequently funny, providing that serious intent and a finely tuned sense of humour are far from mutually exclusive. Just like life in other words.

Kate agrees. "This album was recorded over the last two years, it represents our experiences, our musical obsessions and our exhilarations as well as our darker moments over that period. We can't point to another single band, or album, that has been a driving inspiration to our sound. Fans tell us that our strength as a band is our energy and commitment to developing a unique sound that can't be easily categorised. That is something that is very important to us, and while we play with genres, we don't treat them respectfully. We take them out of their boxes, toy with them, and return them utterly warped. Bad kiddies!"

For fans of the band since the days of *Sub-Vocal Theme Park*, *2020* represents a clear development, brighter and shinier on the one hand, darker and deeper on the other, but still recognisably B(if)tek. For new converts, it's a perfect introduction to Kate and Nicole's warped collision of past, present and future. It's pop music - but not as we know it. Not yet, anyway.

The B(if)tek national tour, which stops at Heaven tonight will be styled as a 1920s cabaret. There will be MCs, lashings of metropolitan style visuals, dancing and cross-dressing. Coming on the cabaret tour are Sydney DJs Johnnie and Gemma: The Club Kookie Sound Sensation System, and Dark Network, our "brother band" from Canberra.

B(if)tek are @ Heaven Nightclub tonight. *2020* available soon on murmur through Sony at all dishy record stores.

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