

time machine

Featuring This Is Your Captain Speaking (and album launch), Übernüdl and Essendon Airport.

Nicole Skeltys interview by Lee Bemrose

Sometimes cruelly cited as the decade that style forgot, the '70 produced some truly ground-breaking music, and *Time Machine* is a night in which three leading electronic acts explore the psychedelic sights and sounds of 'space rock'. Nicole Skeltys, best known as one half of the electronic duo Blif[if]tek pulls up a beanbag to let 3D know what to expect as we embark on this retro rock journey.

Musically you're probably best known for looking forward. Why are you now looking back?

As far as music goes, there is no such thing as progress! The pioneering electronic efforts of artists like Tangerine Dream, Brian Eno, Kraftwerk, Klaus Schultz, Pink Floyd to name a tiny handful might have taken place 30 years ago but their gorgeous and mind-expanding works are timeless. However, as far as I am aware, there aren't many, if any, bands who pay tribute to some of these highly influential artists by doing live interpretations of their works. And it's quite a challenge to do live versions of tracks that are often entirely electronic, machine based and (in the case of Tangerine Dream) often essentially long improvised wig-outs. So both for the love of the music and for the technical challenge, that's where the idea for the 'space rock' set came from.

What is it about this specific period that appeals to you?

The '70s was a time of great musical innovation and especially important as a time when electronic music started to come into its own and have great influence on the aesthetics of pop music. It was also a time when epic long instrumental noodlings like Tangerine Dream's *Phaedra* were in the commercial top 40, when a completely tripped out experimental band like Pink Floyd could release a complex, progressive-psychedelic concept album like *Dark Side of the Moon* and it sold millions. Those times are gone and commercial airwaves are solely concerned with doling out corporatised three minute dollops of formula-based pop/rock/dance slop to the exclusion of everything else. So yes, I know it's dangerous to look back at a 'golden era' particularly when you weren't really there, but there definitely was a zeitgeist in the '70s that manifested some very long, intense sonic journeys which are dear to my heart!

Generally do you think the 70s has had a lasting impact on music today, or have we largely moved on and left it behind?

No, '70s 'space rock' has had a massive



impact in ways too many to list here. One major impact has been upon the so-called post-rock instrumental genre which has gained quite a bit of popularity in the indie and electronic scene over the past few years (I'm thinking of bands like God Speed You Black Emperor and Sigur Ros to name but two international exponents).

Given the fashion of the time, it's an easy aesthetic to parody. Is *Time Machine* a parody, albeit a loving one?

It's really not a parody, because a lot of the artists at the time had a great sense of humour anyway, and certainly loved dressing up with as much pomp and flamboyance as they could muster. One of my earliest memories as a child is of Rick Wakeman on television swirling around his cluster of mini-Moogs and Mellotrons with a big glittery cape. Thanks to this Opera House show, I am about to fulfil a life-long ambition to do the same with my clutch of old synths!

What are some highlights of the show for you?

It will be one long highlight baby! I should say that the clever Studio marketing people have organised for giant beanbags (giant as in can hold eight people!) to be positioned around the Studio space, so that if people feel faint from the cosmic pomposity of it all, they can flop close to the ground and listen with eyes closed in safety and comfort.

Can you give us some lyrics from any of the tracks performed that captures the spirit of the show?

The whole evening is instrumental pieces. There is only one track where we sing towards the end of it, but I won't let on what it is. We are hoping, however, to encourage a good old audience sing-a-long and sparkler-waving frenzy at that point.

Time Machine takes place at The Studio, Sydney Opera House on Saturday March 4. For bookings and further info visit www.sydneypoperahouse.com/thestudio

Three D World, Tuesday 28 February '06

