



If you feel strongly in any way about anything featured in this magazine (or if you want to write something for the next issue), please send all comments to Newcastlemusic@gmail.com Special thanks to Laura Turner without whom, there would be no magpies in this magazine at all and to Ray Kirkland and James Conlin for all their work sorting out the annoying and finicky bits.

#2



NMJC

NEWCASTLE MUSIC
CHRONICLES

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Issue 2

by Lina Duarte-Aristizabal

Hello everybody and welcome back to NMC, the music magazine which is brutally honest and doesn't care about swearing!

The response we got when we published the magazine last month was amazing and we couldn't be more grateful. It seems like musicians in the community really wanted a medium in which they could be sincere and we think that we are providing them with being able to do that. On this issue, we touch on the way the scene acts differently towards different genders, bring you a new satirical piece, a couple of band reviews and our wonderful CD full of wonderful local music.

This couldn't have happened again without the support and participation of the community. Remember that if you feel strongly about any of these articles you may submit your own to newcastlemusic@icloud.com or participate in an online debate at our website at <http://newcastlemusicchronicles.wordpress.com>. You can also find us on myspace, twitter and facebook. If you are an illustrator, musician, writer or have simply been affected by any of these issues, please get in touch!

and play bigger and better venues. We have played with the likes of; Eighth Wave, Not Advised, Amy Can Flyy and even The Subways as well as many more notable bands from all over the UK. We plan to do a small UK tour in October and then blast on to the scene with a full one next summer as well as playing bigger and better festivals. We also plan to record our Debut Album in Spain Next August. Look out for merch, gigs and our Debut Single "Floods" in the next few months. "Floods will be released on September 1st" Check it out. :) www.myspace.com/kissyourcommander

Early Maze

A 3-piece band incorporating an eclectic, heady mix of influences, mainly from the psychedelic/shoegaze genres. "Our music cannot be pigeon-holed into one category, but what we listen to somehow manages to manifest itself into a sound that is purely our own," says songwriter Jamie Harwood.

David and Jamie have played together for around five years and recorded an album entitled *We Don't Know Where We Are But We're Not Lost*. They struggled to find the right bass player and then struck 4 string gold with Michelle Gunton, formerly of cult shoegaze band Thaddeus Cat. Michelle is now a driving force in the band and is adding some sparkling vocal tones into the equation.

They are currently recording a follow up full length album which should be ready by Autumn 2010. Watch this space!!

TRACK LIST

1. Early Maze— 'Show Some Speed'
2. The Beautiful Machine—'Loneliness of the Long Distance Commuter'
3. Anecdotes—Love Cynics Anthem
4. Kiss Your Commander—'Dance for the Guilty (Liar Liar)'
5. Greg Genre—'Simple is Strong'
6. Anecdotes—'Asbestos Mouth'
7. Lost Legions—'Island of The Prince'

ON THE CD...

The Beautiful Machine

You can refer to the article earlier to learn a bit more about the Beautiful Machine. You can check them out at: <http://www.myspace.com/thebeautifulmachinemusic>

Anecdotes

Watch this space!

Lost Legions

In their own words: We are the Lost Legions. It is quite difficult to define our style as we aren't too sure! We have eight more songs and plenty more in the pipeline. We have been playing recently at the Dog & Parrot and the Head of Steam.

A few of our gigs: Sep 6th @ plugged inn (Sunderland)

Sept 21st @ The Three Tuns (Gateshead)

Sept 23rd @ The Head of Steam (Newcastle)

Sept 30th @ Ivy House (Sunderland)

Oct 2nd @ The Dog and The Parrot.

The track we have chosen to send is our most energetic. It was written about the Anglo-Saxon King of England Alfred the Great, proving that we are a little diverse in our style! We are a pretty hard-working band who are not up in their own arse at all, which seems to be the norm with unsigned bands at the minute, we can't be like that I'm afraid, we're far too common!

Kiss Your Commander

Six piece female fronted synth rock band from Newcastle, starting out 2 years ago, in an unequipped school practice room we have gone from strength to strength with changing members and styles of music. We feel that we have now reached our perfect line-up and perfect genre. We have been building a strong fan base around the north east and hope to extend it in the coming year to all over the UK. We have played venues such as the O2 Academy, Cluny, Ryton Festival and Chesterfest and we hope to build on this

What role do women play in today's music videos?

The rationale behind this article is to recognise the distinctions regarding the perceived gender roles that are prevalent in all aspects of the music industry, with a focus on music video's role in perpetuating these stereotypes.

The first generalisation I could make is that in pop videos (and by this I mean music that is in the charts, which includes many genres such as hip hop and RnB), male artists are often surrounded by women, and female artists are also often shown alongside other women.

Of course, this depends on the individual artists and the song, but there are many examples of where this is the case. For example, the recent number one from JLS 'The Club is Alive'.

The video is set in a nightclub (as you would expect), which appears to be full of women (if there are any other men besides the band in the club then they are extremely difficult to spot). Much of the video shows each member of the boy band surrounded by several attractive women.

Ok, so this is inevitable to some extent as it goes with the content of the song. However, showing interest in several women at once does not really reflect the songs refrain about 'that girl in the spotlight'.

The women are also dressed in revealing clothing, and one of the opening shots is of a female pole dancer. Again, this is also part of nightclub culture, but raises questions about the differing clothing trends for men and women that are attached to the club scene, in terms of revealing skin, and why many bars and

clubs have hired female dancers, wearing very little and dancing in a very sexual way, but not have men doing the same (Sam Jacks and Players in town spring to mind). For a female artist example, several of Beyoncé's videos show her dancing alongside other women, as opposed to men or a mixed group. Of course, there are many music videos which feature few women, or at least not in a very sexualised way, which still gained massive success and popularity, such as bands like Radiohead, Foo Fighters, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Michael Jackson (who could forget the iconic 'Thriller' video?).

It seems to be increasingly common to see women being objectified as sexual objects in music videos. (In many cases the representation of women may be interpreted as empowering rather than degrading, but problems arise with determining a distinction between the two.) The incidence of this is much higher than the number of videos portraying the reversal of this, where it is the men who are being objectified.

Many music videos seem to be aimed mostly at a straight, male audience. By this I mean the focus being attractive women depicted in a sexualised way. Think of Rihanna's 'Rude Boy' video, and Christina Aguilera's latest video 'Not Myself Tonight'.

An obvious reason for this would be to reflect the singer's target audience – if Rihanna and Christina have a mostly straight male fan base, then of course the videos should be targeted at them. However, if one were to attend one of their

live shows, I doubt this would be the case – from my own/my friends’ experiences, the audiences are teens, gay men, middle-aged women on safe nights out and under tens and their parents. So, why choose to shoot this kind of video, and have that kind of image? In today’s music scene, seeing women portrayed like this doesn’t exactly come as a shock. It takes much more to be seen as ‘controversial’, especially when it comes to sex, than it did 40 years ago. For example, Carly Simon’s 1972 album cover for ‘No Secrets’ caused a bit of a stir at its release, where she appears fully clothed, but braless with her nipples showing through her shirt. Things have moved on from that somewhat. Recently, Erykah Badu was charged with disorderly conduct for the video shoot of ‘Window Seat’, which involved a “walking striptease that ended with the singer nude at the spot where President John F. Kennedy was killed in 1963. Then, Badu acted out receiving a fatal gunshot to the head herself”. Another question that is raised here is: who holds the control over the choices made in music videos concerning female singers’ image? Is it the singer herself; is it a male/female director, male/female management? Has it become such a part of the culture that it is now ‘expected’ of women? Surely today’s videos, like other areas of the media, are having a massive impact upon young girls in particular, and fuelling attitudes on how they think they ought to look and behave. Is it because it is the only way female pop singers can get noticed? I think to some extent this is the case, at least where pop music is concerned. For a band like the Pussycat Dolls,

sexuality is used as a gimmick; the burlesque element, such as sexy outfits and raunchy dance moves, make them stand out from other girl groups. To me, the music comes across as Nicole Scherzinger (the lead singer, who is also a songwriter), with the other girls providing mostly backing dancing, but marketed as a band rather than as Nicole’s solo project due to more of a gap in the market for this, instead of trying to compete with singers such as Beyoncé. Certainly, being attention-grabbing is very important in the fickle mainstream music scene.

I can’t write an article about women in music videos without at least mentioning Lady Gaga, and her predecessor Madonna. Both these women are associated with iconic music videos, utilizing controversial and ‘outrageous’ videos as major marketing tools for fame and success. For instance, Madonna’s ‘Like a Prayer’ video, accused of blasphemy, and Lady Gaga’s epic 9 minute long video for ‘Telephone’ with scenes of nudity, swearing, murder, and homosexuality.

As they say, no press is bad press, and they certainly knew how to get people talking.

As for the impression on audiences, music videos are just a small part of today’s mass-media, which is a definite contributing factor to the increase of several extreme attitudes, such as towards body image (look at the rise in plastic surgery and eating disorders), and mainstream music videos hold at least a small amount of responsibility towards the possible repercussions on their audiences.

“Women are objectified so much by men and resultantly by themselves and other women too,” Could this mean women want to avoid “objectification” by not performing on popular music scenes? Can the male objectifying the female musician ever be prised away from the reification process?

“I’ve learned that people from companies, like PRS or LiveNation, when I contact them, are very willing to meet for coffee and chat about prospective career options while I know boys who have been trying for ages but don’t even get a response via email. I met this girl who played an acoustic night once, and she seemed to know everyone and everyone was keen on listening to her music, which I thought was great since she got a full room – but later, afterwards when everyone was mingling I heard loads of the boys talking that they wanted to score with her, and they were taking the piss out of her songs. Not so cool, it was quite sad.”

“There needs to be a healthy balance, and I find being a little like the boys only helps. It’s strange, but once you show them that you can down a pint and know as dirty jokes as they do it opens doors. Which is hilarious if you ask me.” “Newcastle was great, people were open, helpful, there were occasional problems but it always worked out fine in the end. In London it’s really horrible. People work against one another, try to rip you off, cheat, it’s evil. They are arrogant and unhelpful. In Germany it’s different. People working in music are old and judgemental; the first reaction I got when I pitched an idea to a promoter was just laughter. And then a finger pointed at me as in ‘You must be lost’. But then, after I finished talking, he liked it a lot but said he couldn’t do it. But I’ve recently heard

that he took my idea and is using it as his own... Oh well.”

“I think the music scene in Newcastle is a pretty strange thing. I guess there isn’t a massive interest in new or experimental music or open mindedness among people to explore it, or openness of that scene to encourage people to explore it that much. There were definitely more female musicians in Montreal being more experimental and it wasn’t a big deal or a gimmick at all.” What possible conclusion can we draw from the above impressions? The Mercury Music Prize in 2009 “like 2008 saw female acts heavily featured.” Bubble gum pop like the Gaga’s, the Britney’s and The Sugarbabes rarely seem to stray far from the semi naked promo videos organised by the record labels. Record label decisions are taken by women and men but most of these men and women are not front of camera. A musical system jam packed with women making themselves and being made into sexual objects in order to sell audio recordings and related merchandise is what we have advertised upon us. It is these adverts a lot of young musical women base some of their identity. Why is it local female musicians opt out of performing more naked if that’s a way to sell music? Does this mean local women retain some power over the culture that seeks to control their purse and their image because they perform clothed? Is there a local female demographic missing altogether from the pop music scene? I sense a cavern between the female scene and the international music business. I know how big this gap is because it is the same size space as the men contend with. Only the gap between music and the music business has fewer females performing in it locally.

Gender on the Newcastle upon Tyne pop music scene

By Mark Self

"The bar was fairly quiet, beforehand the men in the audience immediately took an interest in myself more than the male performers, and kept complaining that they wanted to hear me first, as if I was some kind of novelty. And one of the men actually made some comment about me having breasts. Good job he pointed that out, I had no idea..." We know this; the male musician cannot be seen as under represented on the popular live music scene locally. I employ the term popular as a distinction from Folk music or Classical music only. Taking a look across the varied Newcastle scene we see the gender disparity blazing away mainly unattended. An incongruity affording a discord building to an inharmonious situation pervades. "The music scene in Newcastle is definitely male-dominated but I don't think this is specific to Newcastle."

"Music has been dominated by males for centuries; like many things, women have been disallowed to perform music in the past, and been forced to release compositions under a male pseudonym."

This is not to say there are not a lot of women musically active in Newcastle. Over the previous four years I have witnessed women out weighing men; singing in a choir I engineered, playing and singing in folk and art music outfits and randomly in great numbers the audience at a 1930's jazz revival gig in North Shields I filmed. Open mic nights seem to have the balance about equal with, for example, plenty of women suffused at the Open Mic night at The Trent on Tuesday evenings. The perception lives in the female mind too, "I'm really not sure why there are not as many women doing it." I am going

to avoid the use of stats relying instead upon my own minimal experience and a questionnaire sent to varied women performers and one female promoter all of which have experience in Newcastle and other cities. All quotes in this essay are taken from the women that responded to my questionnaire.

One focus of the questionnaire was to enquire why are women under represented on the popular music scene in Newcastle? I cannot know the complexities but know arriving at one conclusion would be folly. This is not a spotlight I can adequately cover in an article of this size either. Instead I have opted to generate debate via questions and responses this article may generate via the blog this magazine is attached to. Do women under represent themselves?

Is it harder for a female band/or solo to get started? Are some possible female band members busy with families or have friends who are mothers building female support networks elsewhere? The previous two questions increase in significance when women soar past their teens into their all-important twenties where most male musicians hone their craft. A female promoter suggests one reason could be women in Newcastle are already catered for "it really isn't that important. I mean, you've got the town and the nightlife." Do women not consider music "important?" Do women not appreciate the environments music is made and performed? Hours of lone-some programming causing havoc across the friend network? Or the cost of gear detracts from the fashion/makeup/automobile/holiday/apartment budget?

NMC Review Feature: Georgia Seddon

By Elliot Clarke

Graduating from Edinburgh, Northeast-based song smith Georgia Seddon can often be found performing gigs and festivals throughout the region. However, with MySpace, Facebook, NME online, Last.fm, Wikipedia, and Google throwing up page after page of blank biography, she is somewhat enigmatic, and the only route to information on Seddon is her distinctive musical output.

The multi-faceted Seddon plays keys, guitar, percussion, and sings – often solo, and sometimes in a duo with her father: one Mike Heron, of the 1960s psychedelic folk pioneers Incredible String Band. Penning such hits as *Painting Box* and *The Hedgehog Song*, ISB were at the forefront of the psychedelic movement, and have even claimed to have been a direct influence on the Beatles' iconic LP *Sgt. Pepper*.

It is not surprising then, that Seddon's music is a little outside the norm. Blending the piano-led sensibilities of Tori Amos with the wailing voice of Kate Bush, she furiously struggles not to be pigeon-holed, and can therefore be squarely placed in the box that says "arty nonsense".

Please don't get me wrong when I say this – there is nothing wrong with taking music to its extremes, and I applaud anybody who pushes the boundaries of pop, folk, or any other musical genre.

From the atmospheric waves of *Snow* to the punctuated rhythms of *Revive*, the pop-folk end of the playlist at myspace.com/georgiaseddon is perfectly enjoyable; the impressive finger work on *Argentinean Piano* show a clear ability and passion for music; and the leftfield arrangement of *Paths* acts as a small window into the mind of a unique and enigmatic musician.

However, to my ears the whole thing smacks of University education - music by numbers. The clumsy collision of ideas is devoid of context; the wailing vocals soon begin to grate; and the laboured musical surprises quickly become predictable.

The spectrum of unconventional genres evident here led the Scotsman to say, in a review of her father's show that "[Seddon displays] an arrestingly artless yet sensuous voice, suggesting a potentially bright future as the nu-folk answer to Martha Wainwright." This reviewer agrees with the first bit.

For me, feigned originality is a tired niche, and here in the Northeast we have people doing a much better job of it. The lack of cohesion in Seddon's songs suggests an artist who is still discovering herself, struggling to find a voice, floundering in a sea of half-formed ideas, confused by a desire to constantly change direction, and sheltered enough to release & perform their own self-indulgent tendencies.



Perhaps this is the effect for which Seddon is aiming. Perhaps this is a clever form of contemporary art that I don't understand. Perhaps I've missed the point.

Sorry Georgia, but I *just don't get it*.

These people however tend to believe in a lot of the bullshit that the music industry perpetuates about ideas of 'originality' and 'genius'. These words I have found to be incredibly detrimental to the potential prolific nature of most songwriters. As often songwriters feel that what they write isn't 'good enough' and to be fair, they're writing within a strict paradigm of binaries ('good' or 'bad') So writing a 'good' song is often just how accurately is adheres to established song formula's. Which makes me wonder why most pop musicians (this includes bands who's set's include 'songs') strive to be 'original'? 'Originality has become a valued mirage amongst muso's, who think the A/B/C chords they use are somehow different from everyone else; but why is this? Is it to fit in? Do people recognise a social value by being distinct from others? Is it the attempted 'bridge of separation' felt by popular performers and local musicians?

Is this the reason why writers experience 'writers block'? Could the claim 'its not good enough' be rephrased as 'it doesn't sound like my hero's?' Distinction definitely exists with each written song, but it can only really be perceived in the performance of the piece, as this is where the subjectivities are externalised through each persons playing, as when a performer plays, they are playing through their own history/ideas/skeletal structure/place in the world, which no one else can re-create. So from that perspective every performer is distinct, but does this affect the content's perceived 'distinction'?

The content, it can be argued, is derived from many sources, such as mass media (Tv/Radio/Internet/live gigs) and is perpetuated through several ideas that give the music a 'reason' for existing. These ideas, in my opinion are 'the music' and the music itself is worthless. If this is not true, then why are image/ideology/social aspects/history so inherit with current musical practices? Why do many adopt fixed ideas of what music is and is not, if the music itself is what 'drives' them?

Maybe the ideological categories mentioned before are 'by-products' of the music, an inevitable part of the music experiencing process? If so, is it worth asking what came first? Was it the 'music' or the ideological stand-points? Well, by identifying something as 'music' your segregating it from other sounds, providing it with a distinction, which is an ideological decision, which means that 'Music' and 'Ideology' are intrinsically bound.

So when writing a song, your making choices based on your musical prejudices. So If you feel stuck, its worth looking into how others have written for the genre your writing in.

How not to Write a Song

By Alex Campbell

Writing a song is a magical experience that requires the songwriters utmost devotion to the practice of 'waiting for inspiration'. Yes, writing a song is a lot like sitting on your arse, but don't be fooled! Song-writing is apparently more than just homogenising some chords/melodies/lyrics within a canonised formula. Its about 'feeling' or something.

Because a songwriters 'feelings' are more important than ours, its important that they convey these 'feelings' correctly; Because, how else would we ruin our weddings, funerals, or nightclubs with deep/thought provoking/non vague lyrics such as:

Near, far, wherever you are

I believe that the heart does go on

Once more you open the door

And you're here in my heart

And my heart will go on and on ¹

Never mind that 'feeling' is largely confined within the cultural context's of which it is situated, and that the song doesn't mention 'where' this persons 'heart' will go on to (better things?) This is a classic, somehow bypassing the subjectiveness of each individual listener's experiences to create a universal understanding of 'love/loss/sadness/happiness *etc.*' Hooray for pluralism! But wait! Would this song have the same 'feeling' if I had not used key words which allow for ambiguity, yet aim for succinctness and music that this is considered the epitome of 'feeling' by a large sum of people? That doesn't matter at all, because this song conveys 'Rich', 'deep' emotions that resonate straight to my soul.

Now, some of you might think I'm being 'sarcastic' and you'd be right. Songwriter's generally romanticise what they do to the point of absurdity. A lot of 'songwriters' I know will take months to write a song 'because' of this idea of the elusive 'feeling' (which might sometimes be called something similar) such as 'groove', or 'A feeling too elusive, that words just cant see to attach themselves to it', 'Something that you just cant describe' amongst other choice phrases.

¹[Dion, Celine, My Heart Will Go On](#)

How to... Listen

By Mark Self

I'm building a dimensional map to chart the listening experience created by the shuffle button. I'm mapping three sizes to begin with - the teensy - the super - the stretched. The teensy equates to an albums worth of shuffle. The super shuffle digs into 100 gig music libraries. Whilst the stretched shuffle, equating to a possible listening experience stretching years, is anything above 500gigs worth of digitally stored music.

If the listening experience discussed in this article were represented by a pie chart, this articles coverage, if removed, would leave behind a small space some may term a mere slither. Sometime after I begin munching through my recently acquired audio the tunes reduce in value varying their degrees of repeatability in the future. Gradually or abruptly new tunes enter my present listening. Used tunes fall from my ears attention in a kind of dissolute quotient I want more control over. As equally some listeners prefer to return to a favourite across their lives (Pink Floyd, Metallica and Bob Marley fans are known to prefer this style of listening). I call this phenomena Elongated Returnage L257. My experience can be different still. I might find myself listening to an album many times for three years and then avoiding the album for five years and surprisingly indulge in the same album in a further years worth of air to drum to zap zap. The previous time periods are arbitrary by the way.

A snap shot is ripped from an original album every time we undergo a shuffle. Left unattended, a super shuffle consisting of 100gigs of music can render listeners unable to determine whom they are actually listening too. Not knowing who we listen too when we're listening compels us to listen in variance to the knowledge based way. Knowledge can transform our listening experience. Why do we need to know the tune we are listening to is titled Expose and the band Porter Ricks? Not knowing removes some of the cultural and commercial information we go on to stack up in our memory. Not knowing affords the opportunity to guess the artist, transforming listening into a game and making the aesthetic process fun and frivolous.

In the past I haven't been too keen on the basic shuffle function, preferring instead to listen to what the makers intended. If an album released as a temporal sequence similar to Kirsty McCall's treatment on U2's Joshua Tree, then that's OK by me, but I doubt it's going to work every time. Asked by Bono how Kirsty managed "a great running order," she said, "I placed what I thought the best tune first, the second best tune second and so on." Nothing wrong with this way of sequencing album songs, but we know every musician doesn't work this way.

Shuffling a libraries worth of albums destabilizes what we may or may not like. How to listen is a personal preference. A stance chosen by many listeners. A position trampled upon by radio, iTunes, but not websites like Magnatune. Contemplating how I listen to other people's music often results in reinterpretable conclusions. As a listener it can take discipline to avoid detail, but I dismiss the minutiae and aim intentionally for near miss assumptions. Listening appears far too complex otherwise because shuffling a library's worth of audio minces the cultural detail, the musician's intent, in turn shifting the cultural and contextual reflections generated by the music. I identify some of the topology brought about by technology's encroachment on the ears and this is precisely where the quality DJ applies their expression.

I am supposing we all can agree that technology and the ears serve music. I suppose you get people who only want to consume music. Personal use of the invisible stuff pivoting on the likes and dislikes are the chief factors people get through, regarding musical decisions adopted before the shuffle function is activated.

When I think about my listening, a world of possibility opens up. Music absorbs me into its space while I absorb music into my body. It is impossible not to be involved in both unless I apply headphones. Music envelops the listener, like at a club, a gig or a room where you are comfortable sofa vertical. Music enters the ears for consumption by the soft stuff up top. In both examples the body as a listening device cannot be discounted. Feeling around I get a sense my experiential memory is diverted by the working grasp I hold over my brain, my memory and my musical experiences. The super shuffle complexes additionally these ways of listening to music.

The stage is pretty big considering the size of the room with more than enough room for a 4-piece band like us to operate. As long as you keep your Freddie Mercury impressions to bare minimum then you're alright. Lead singer of the Purnells Stu Blackburn proved by jumping off the stage that the place is made for bands who want to rock and the whole night was based around that 'dirty' raw rock n roll music I mentioned earlier.

For its good points the place is not perfect and is like an oven when there is a canny crowd in. Our first appearance brought in such a crowd. On stage it was unbelievable, the sweat was literally pouring from brow. The crowd however, made it worthwhile and there is nothing better than a raucous crowd enjoying your music. I felt like I could really let go which made me enjoy it even more.

As a band we love playing there and it makes it even more enjoyable when you build up a rapport with the other bands on the bill. One of the best & most under rated venues in Newcastle.

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The Cedar Room

By Peter Franklin

The first thing you notice after having made the journey from the furthest parking space possible outside the Dog & Parrot is that unless you've been before you probably won't have a clue how to get upstairs. It's only when you go in and ask a barmaid that you find it's a small doorway round the corner. Getting your gear up the narrow and steep staircase is no mean feat considering you are probably carrying an amp & a guitar. Once upstairs & inside the 'Cedar Room' the magic starts to happen. Images of the Doves take over your mind even though there are just usually a few like-minded muso types milling around in front of the stage. The place is in no uncertain terms a dingy little music cave, perfect for dirty rock n roll. The last time we played there, there was some confusion about the drum kit, there wasn't one!

Karl Rouleau from the band the Vaudeville Class however, rectified this by disappearing 'out the back' and returning with a cobbled together kit, which he proceeded to put together in an orderly fashion, and it worked to perfection. Proving that with a little initiative big problems can be solved, lucky really that the Dog & Parrot had a back up plan!

The great thing about the room itself is that although dark and dingy it's incredibly cosy and the sound that is

generated by good bands is incredible. The soundman played his part really well for all three bands in fact starting with the Purnells. It's always comforting when on stage to have your soundman constantly there, which is not always the case. With Too far North however he is on hand throughout the whole of your set adjusting things to suit.

As the first band begins it's a strange place to be. The music is electric and obviously well written. The soundman as promised has the levels to almost perfection but there is no one in the room bar the two bands who will follow. It's a massive shame as the sound is deafeningly original. When playing these gigs you get to be performer and gig goer in the same night, which gives you a much better understanding and appreciation of the place.

Our turn on stage was quite late in the evening and most people in the crowd wanted to be on the last metro so keeping their attention was difficult to keep hold, especially when my guitar de tunes itself half way through the first song. The soundman doesn't panic and gives me a look to say 'sort it out at the end of the song, no problem' which I duly did. The silence in-between being filled by the sound of our lead guitar playing a circus type riff.

Unstructured music in the abyss:

systems of early indoctrination and the washing machine womb.

By Charlie Bramley

Before we can talk about unstructured music, we must define what structured music is. I think the most accurate meaning of structure, in terms of how it is empirically experienced, is a 'coherent form or organisation'. In this way, it is almost identical to that of system, which is an 'interdependent group of items forming a unified whole'. The crucial difference between unstructured music and structured music, is whether or not there is a pre-meditated collection of sounds towards a coherent and unified whole, or whether these sounds were collected together by various momentary impulses, which together were not intended to, and do not constitute, a coherent and unified whole.

Since the documentation of music's history in western civilisation, it has been dominated by structured music, simply because in order to document one's engagement with sound, a system had to be devised in order to enable future performances of that engagement.

However, it is an irreducible fact that people engaged with sounds before they were able to document them, and that this engagement must have been spontaneous improvisation – unstructured music. This history of structured and unstructured music is our 'facticity' (Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*); the historical residue that informs our current thinking regarding music. Documented history leads us to believe that music simply *is* structured and that unstructured music is not music at all actually, but 'noise'. We seem to have an essentialist interpretation of music in which the way things are, and have been, is assumed to be the way things always have to be - an a priori truth. Take, for example what the developing consciousness is faced with as it comes into the world. There are two forms of indoctrination into this structured musical conditioning: an implicit form and an explicit form. The implicit form starts in the womb, which the family tend to surround with sounds of structured music – something that must contrast sharply with the internal sounds of the watery rumble of a washing machine type sound. Then, when the baby comes out of its washing machine womb, it is confronted with a startling amount of sounds, but usually the ones that are silenced are the ones it is familiar with – white noise in particular (including 'noisy' music) and they are replaced by various structured lullabies and musical toys – an assault on the sensory input stages of the developing consciousness. This is sadly just the start, because the explicit form of structural music indoctrination begins more robustly in school, from the national curriculum.

From the UK's Key Stage 1 (5-7 year-olds) programme, it states the following:

Pupils should be taught how to...rehearse and perform with others (for example, starting and finishing together, keeping to a steady pulse)...create musical patterns... internalise and recall sounds with increasing aural memory. Pupils should be taught how the combined musical elements of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and silence can be organised and used expressively within simple structures (for example, beginning, middle, end)...how sounds can be made [and] described using given and invented signs and symbols.'

At Key Stage 2 (7-11), it gets more intense, with pupils being taught to 'sing songs' with 'clear diction [and] control of pitch'; play instruments with 'control and rhythmic accuracy'; practice, rehearse and present performances with an awareness of the audience'. Key stage 3 (11-14) is a further narrowing of the already developed systematic knowledge, by means of 'instrument-specific techniques' and the various structures of specific 'genres, styles and traditions'. Although it may seem obvious that this stuff get taught to kids, it needs to be remembered that this is just one way to engage with sounds, not *the* way. What is systematically removed, or at the very least stunted, is the child's natural tendency to *play*. I place the emphasis on this word intentionally because dominant definitions of play in music tend to be assimilated into dominant definitions of music, that of the systematic structuring of sonic materials. However, the definition of play that I find most appropriate is the one that kids naturally exert, which is 'to move aimlessly about', which one can see as inextricably connected to unstructured improvisatory approaches to sound engagement. The dominant message being sent to kids through their musical indoctrination (and other activities) is that play is not something they should be overly concerned about or engaged in, and that it should be kept under tight order (15 minutes 'play time' on fields, but no 'play time' in musical activity), and gradually phased out throughout their childhood, until finally eradicated by the time of leaving school. It is hard to imagine the possibility for a sonically excited child to come through this system and not want to get 'better' at the system and to climb the structured ladder of musical hierarchy.

But, think of the situation one finds themselves in if they do. I'm lucky/unlucky to know someone in this situation – me. I have no explicit training in structured music. I cannot play in time or in tune. I cannot play in key and I have not learnt any chords. I am not, in most people's eyes and ears, a musician. However, I have been playing with sounds since teenage years. I have been through the same system of indoctrination that I outlined before, but did not do very well (did not learn any systematic memory) and did not opt for music at GCSE or A-Level (for obvious reasons).

Though I did not realise it at the time, what I was doing was engaging with sounds by spontaneous means - I was an improvising musician, without any knowledge of what that was. I can imagine there are a lot of young kids like this, but they don't tend to call themselves musicians, because they have been told all of their lives that to be a musician is to use a system and to climb the ladder, but it needs to be remembered that this system is not inherent, nor essential - it has been socially constructed and can, potentially be deconstructed. Unstructured music offers people this possibility of a radical shift from hierarchy in music and the potential (at least in theory) that anyone and everyone can play music, not after 'specialist' teaching, or from tablature books, but now, right now. Music is the human engagement with sounds, it need not be always coherent, it need not form a unified whole, and it need not be structured.

At first I viewed Prince's remarks as overly extreme, especially as he failed to mention how The Internet has benefited so many musicians who haven't been fortunate enough to find major label backing. His CD only release of 20Ten could also be viewed as an attempt to re-establish an intimacy with his fans via a physical rather than a digital format release.

Quey told me how playing 80's sounding music in 2010 was in some way a similar attempt to reconnect with childhood times in which she felt a stronger emotional union with bands. She told me of how she would record her favourite bands on Top Of The Pops and watch the same video clips over and over again.

In The Beautiful Machine she is accompanied by multi-instrumentalist Guy Mankowski who encapsulates the Newmanesque sound of Quey's youth with punchy analogue synths and fast paced bass lines. Quey's vocals add catchiness and quirkiness to the popular sound, her lyrics often musing over the fast paced nature of 21st century life. In The song 'Loneliness of the long distance commuter' her words bring to mind a train carriage packed with anonymous passengers all busy on laptops and iPods. A whole world of wireless entertainment at their fingertips yet they all feel very much alone.

As we continued chatting, Quey told me of a strange incident in which a workman came to fit a new cooker in her flat. They shared some small talk and he left. The next day Quey went online to find that the man had friend requested her on Facebook. The story that she told me summed up how the internet has made it possible to access endless amounts of information, people and music at the touch of a button but that in some ways it has promoted a greater deal of consumption for consumptions sake. The workman would never have dared send a letter to Quey's address asking for them to become friends. Even if they passed in the street they more than likely only share a passing 'hello' before going off into separate directions. Yet on the internet this random man wanted to add Quey as a means of increasing his friend count, to showcase an illusionary popularity. The Internet has made Huxley's Brave New World possible. It is a hyperreal space in which 'Everyone belongs to everyone else'. When one views the World Wide Web from this perspective it is easy to understand Prince's CD only release.

When I first read The Beautiful Machines description of their music on MySpace I thought I might criticise their decision to make such unashamedly 80's music. My discussion with Quey however, reminded me that bands like The Beautiful Machine play an important role in the present day music community. They remind the listener of times in which the walkman reined. When a change of track didn't result instantaneously via the click of a mouse but instead after a tedious process of fast-forward and rewind.

Have a listen to their songs at: <http://www.myspace.com/thebeauti->

The Beautiful Machine

By Greg Genre

Newcastle based synth-pop duo The Beautiful Machine are described on their MySpace page as: 'A band who make unashamedly accessible, pop music reminiscent of the decade of decadence, when the walkman reigned and there was no such thing as society'.

I met up with singer and lyricist Quey Craddock to discuss this description further, as well as her approach to songwriting. After sipping some coffee our conversation began to focus on the differences in music distribution and reception between the late 80's walkman generation and the present day mp3 generation. This discussion was promoted when I began asking whether The Beautiful Machine composed and performed '80's sounding' music for purely nostalgic reasons or whether Quey felt that the band were somehow critiquing the current popular music scene.

Quey replied that, for her, something had definitely been lost in the transition from walkman to mp3 although at first she couldn't quite place her fingers on what. She began to describe how certain bands would appeal, not only through their musicality but also through the presentation of their Cassette Albums, the album art, and the printed lyric sheets. Quey reminded me of when I was teenager, when I would receive one CD album every Christmas and listen to it over and over again until it became too scratched to play. As my own reception of music shifted from CD to MP3 for me the biggest transition was the shift from the physical to the intangible, the intimate to the distant. Maybe Quey found it difficult to place a finger on what had been lost because it could be argued that it is the sense of touch itself that has been removed from the digital music product.

Prince shared his concerns with these recent changes in music distribution with the release of his latest album 20Ten. He chose to give away a CD version away with The Daily Mirror newspaper and decided to block digital distribution websites from selling his music on the internet. He stated that "The Internet is completely over. I don't see why I should give my new music to iTunes or anyone else. They won't pay me an advance for it and then they get angry when they can't get it." Although Prince's melodramatic comments could be viewed as a mere publicity stunt the above quotation also exemplifies a musician who is attempting to re-establish a sense of control over the output of his material.

An Open Letter to A&R Divisions Throughout The United Kingdom

By Mark
Hammond

(or thirty people based in London)

Dear Sirs:

Given the recent surge of digitally distributed music I am sure you'll appreciate, now more than ever, the overwhelming significance of bandwagoneering. iTunes et al have given Joe Public the kind of autonomy us industry insiders have long recoiled in terror at; the power to choose what music they like. These are distressing times for record companies. Not since The McAllisters left little Kevin at the mercy of Joe Pesci has there been such wanton licence bestowed upon a naïve and moreover, lost flock of seagulls. Have we forgotten why we got into this job? Yes, initially it seemed the only feasible avenue once our own musical projects plummeted like a dart into the ground, but we are here to guide people and tell them what they like. So let's take a look at the bandwagon and see where best to alight.

The best stop to get on the bandwagon is at music's underbelly. Historically, this has proven the best place to steal without fear of reprisal. Here, even the most stoic of musical revisionist has a hard time proving that we ripped anybody off. Look at Goldfrapp and Kylie. The very casual pop fan would never accuse the cherubic and almost regal Kylie of having stolen from anyone. Besides, who the fuck is Alison Goldfrapp? To me, somebody with his finger perpetually conjoined to the pulse, it is clear that the female starlet is very much zeitgeist and is the sensible option to consider first off.

If we were to initially contemplate trends of the last few decades as well as the present musical landscape, one overriding point prevails; people will lap any old shite up. Dress it up in a beehive, give them a clichéd backstory and suddenly the thinly-veiled R&B/Soul-pastiche is given credibility and in some extreme cases, even gravitas. Look at Winehouse. Not only does she look like the bastard child of Herman Munster and Marge Simpson, the girl can barely spell her first name when on stage, much less sing about anything remotely coherent. Fortunately for us, people are eating up this burlesque nonsense so no matter how lacking in talent, we can always dress our next starlet up in tragedy and shit tattoos.

Look at those who've benefited from this cultural milieu; Duffy, Pixie Lott. Christ, even Charlene Spiterri gave it a whirl for a moment until the public recovered their bearings and realised she used to be in Texas and so unanimously switched off in ennui and physical repulsion. All of these 'artists' are the musical equivalent of an espadrille; familiar yes, fashionable even, but sure to be consigned to the scrap heap once everyone is given some abrupt kick in the head to remind them how stupid the whole idea is.

Katy Perry is another huge beneficiary of this curve. Purloining from Betty Paige, she appeals to every opinionated twenty-something female that sincerely believes naval stars are a splendid idea to have burned permanently into your skin. Her debut single, 'I Kissed a Girl' was a stroke of marketing genius, striking a chord with woebegone, attention-seeking females the World over that still think androgyny is chic and that skateboards and bulimia are 'awesome.' Cleverly, the appeal extends to these females' gawky male contemporaries; the kind of males who wear baseball caps, drink cider and use words like 'legend' whilst maintaining a straight face. To these guys, Perry is Heaven-sent; she has centre-fold sensibilities rooted in the now popular 50s slant and she sings about kissing girls. Only George A. Romero and ear-piercings can top that! (as an aside, maybe a pierced, zombie-bitch gimmick is something to look at?)

Moving away from cyclical movements in music we have the next marketable female chanteuse; the unadulterated psychopath. From the school of Mariah, Whitney and Liza Minnelli comes Lady GaGa, undeniably talentless yet universally heralded as the second coming of Madge. Why is this? Well, much like the Colonel's Bucket never quite lives up to the 'succulence' of its imaginative advertisements, blind aggrandisement will always detract from a product's shortcomings. Give the girl a 'crazy' image and suddenly we're lauding her 'genius.' It worked for Michael Jackson. No doubt he could sing and dance, but the coterie of curious ticks and quirks such as the Elephant Man's bones and general paedophilia helped elevate Jackson to unattainably bizarre and ethereal status. Same goes for GaGa. Put her on TV singing about whatever banal shite it is she sings about and watch her slow ascension to the middle. Put a telephone on her head and have her spout arbitrary contrivances and watch her star go into supernova. Best of all, have her contradict the one truism in music; everything is a derivative of a derivative. GaGa has publically stated that nothing inspires her. Well, listen to her music and look at her and in thirty seconds you'll see she's just a pale imitation of every other pretentious diva with a daft haircut that preceded her. BUT, she's already hooked you in with her bullshit, just like The Colonel.

Then you have an amalgam of all the above. Music's very first tormented, diva, psycho-slut. Yes, Christina Aguilera. Always sure to jump on the bandwagon, always with some personal anguish to vanquish and always pushing the envelope in terms of when exactly music videos simply become out and out fetish porn. She is the total package. I do feel it's a great shame that such virtuosity has already been jumped upon by rival execs. She's a true exemplar of what we're looking for.

Next we have the groups. Girl groups are slightly more precarious. Boy bands were the totem of nineties pop music, but disinterest in the female demographic became visible when the lads started growing artistic facial hair and running themselves over with their own cars. This was a great shame for me, personally. I went to school with classrooms full of precocious girls who liked to wear their mummy's high heels and drink skinny lattés. Every other day I was reminded of how girls were so much more mature and well to do than us smelly boys. When this studied maturity unravelled in hyper-active giddiness at the mere sound of Jimmy from 911 on the radio, I laughed hysterically. All of the pretence of acting like an adult was undone; all the purported maturity negated when Michaela in my maths class lovingly wrapped a poster of Abs from 5ive around her text book. I do truly mourn the death of the boyband.

That does leave us with the girls though. The reason I exercise caution with girl groups is that they're so arse-achingly dull. Looking back to The Supremes, their focal point was their dresses. The Shipley Art Gallery recently exhibited these glamorous frocks. I don't imagine Brian Harvey's Eclipse jeans will show up at The Tate any time soon. That speaks more for his arresting charm and unhinged mania though, rather than an indictment of his sartorial choices (as laugh out loud stupid as they were). Thank goodness for Brian that the clothes do not maketh the man (otherwise we'd have to presume he were some sort of interspecies chimera with a penchant for Timberland boots).

Look to the present and who do we have? The Sugababes. A group so dull that each member systematically dissolves like Marty McFly in a photo simply because oxygen deigns them far too boring to help breath, only to be sharply replaced by another mannequin from New Look. This could be a niche to look at though. People will soon tire of the tedium of The Saturdays and will look for their girl groups to attain some attitude. Perhaps we could assemble four pretty faces and have them dress in safety pins and all that is punk-rock de rigueur, sing about spousal abuse and opine the importance of feminism in the music press. We could call them the Spice Grrrls; girl power with a bit of a militant edge. Nobody knows who Bikini Kill are so we could get away with it.

I look forward to your ideas. Original or not.

Regards

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