

Experimental music is the 'underground' where the major innovations and creative developments in music occur. By testing perceived boundaries, breaking rules and creating new forms, experimental musicians force us to question what, in fact, music is.

Written by artists, producers and participants in alternative music making, and including a companion CD, *Experimental Music* explores the development of forms, ideas and scenes from the 1970s to the present. It brings together a wide range of musical experimentation, from post-punk, noise, appropriation, electronic dance and listening music, to free improv, computer process music, experimental radio, instrument building and audiovisual fusions. *Experimental Music* illustrates how these forms have influenced each other to create a fertile and diverse culture, and highlights why it is vital to question, experiment and break the rules.

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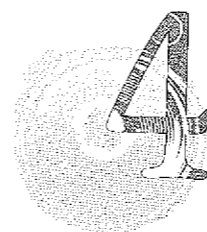
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# EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

edited by  
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## 'COPYRIGHT DOESN'T MEAN SHIT TO ME': SAMPLING AND APPROPRIATION IN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC AND SOUND ART

Shannon O'Neill

The creative reuse of cultural artefacts is known as appropriation. Appropriation has a long history in Western art, from cubism, futurism and dada, through to pop art and a multitude of more recent forms. More broadly, it can be argued that all culture is based on the reuse of existing culture, a phenomenon that is particularly evident in folk art traditions. This chapter looks at Australian experimental music composers and sound artists for whom appropriation has been an important technique.

There are many forms of appropriation, and many motivations for its use: quotation, homage, pastiche, parody, remix, collage, bricolage,

détournement and culture jamming. Some artists use appropriation to make cultural or political statements, whether serious or playful, while for others it is a means of achieving a desired aesthetic investigation or outcome that might not otherwise be possible.

There continues to be a great deal of hostility towards appropriation, from both the commercial and art music worlds, where ideological notions of originality, authenticity and intellectual property still dominate. Work that uses appropriation is often dismissed as theft – not ‘real’ music – and while US copyright law includes a doctrine of fair use that allows some forms of appropriation, Australian law, even after the implementation of the Australia–US Free Trade Agreement in 2005, still has a much more limited concept of fair dealing. Therefore much of the work discussed in this chapter is of questionable legality. This has contributed to its marginalisation and lack of documentation.

Nevertheless, over the past two decades there has been an explosion in the use of appropriation, facilitated by technological developments as well as cultural shifts, so it would be impossible to give an exhaustive account. However, a number of interweaving threads of activity will be examined.

## POST-POST-PUNK

A notable development of the 1980s was the adoption of digital technologies for music production. Sampling had been invented in the mid-1970s as a way of increasing the accuracy of digitally synthesised instrumental sounds. The first polyphonic sampler was manufactured by the Sydney company Fairlight Instruments in 1979. Costing tens of thousands of dollars, the Fairlight CMI (Computer Musical Instrument) was beyond the reach of most artists, other than pop stars and some with institutional affiliations. But by the mid-1980s many Australian artists had begun to use sampling, thanks to more affordable products from companies such as E-MU, Akai and Ensoniq. Cut-ups and tape loops in the post-punk era have been touched on in Chapter 2, but here we will continue to explore some of these artists and their practices.

In 1986, Tom Ellard of the Sydney band Severed Heads demonstrated sampling on the ABC TV program *Edge of the Wedge*. He inserted a microphone into a watermelon, dropped it from the balcony of a terrace house, and created music with the resulting sound.<sup>1</sup> Severed Heads also used samples of music, particularly singing, from different cultures. This was a highly effective and influential technique, but became increasingly problematic. As Ellard explains:

“ It took me quite a while to understand that when you borrow from another culture, you’re not just borrowing a sound, you’re borrowing actual culture. You’re borrowing something which has meaning. But to us it was a sound source ... It’s exactly as if you take English speech and you run it backwards. It loses its meaning and it becomes a sound effect ...

If you take a sound sample from another culture ... you are forced to respond to it and build a structure around it which is much more interesting and evocative than what would come out of your own basic culture [but] as you get older you just realise that you can’t do that ... You get more sensitive over time because you become more cultured ... And as you become careful the element of play goes, and when the element of play goes then the whole thing becomes a very different procedure.<sup>2</sup>

While Ellard no longer samples from non-Western cultures, his recent audiovisual work – now under his own name, after he retired the Severed Heads moniker in 2008 – has made extensive use of Australian television content.

Severed Heads had joined the Sydney label Volition in the mid-1980s. The label became known for its ‘technopop’ sound, and sampling was a common technique among its acts. For example, Scattered Order’s track ‘Grid Up’ from the album *Professional Dead Ball* (CD, VOLTCD 41, 1991) is constructed largely of samples of dialogue from the cartoon *Roger Ramjet* as well as commentary from motor races. Single Gun Theory’s popular album *Like Stars in My Hands* (CD, VOLTCD 37, 1991) combined beats with Eastern vocal samples recorded during

travels by the band's members, including former Severed Heads keyboardist Pete Rivett-Carnac on sampler.

Until its demise in the mid-1990s, Volition continued to increase its focus on dance music, with the inclusion of Itch-E & Scratch-E (Andy Rantzen and Paul Mac) who went on to become one of the most popular Australian dance music acts. Both were already veterans of experimental music, Mac in Smash Mac Mac and Rantzen in Pelican Daughters, with releases on the Sydney cassette label Cosmic Conspiracy Productions. Their first release as Itch-E & Scratch-E, *Irritable* (CD, VOLTCD 47, 1992), included tracks such as 'Bastards', featuring a found sample of someone complaining about their plumbing, exclaiming 'Fuck you, you bastards, I'm going to put this on radio!'

Cosmic Conspiracy Productions (1987–90) was a significant label and was run by Alex Karinsky, who also presented the program *Bend Sinister* on 2MBS-FM and organised events at the Evening Star Hotel, better known at the time as the Evil Star. Picking up on some of the energy (and personnel) from the post-punk era, Karinsky released or re-released many industrial and experimental recordings, including works by Rik Rue, Browning Mummery and Ian Andrews. Andrews' *Zeroville* (cassette, C-015, 1987) is a brilliant collage made from loops of old films and records, constructed on an Emulator sampler. Another Cosmic Conspiracy act, Fresh Rectum (Michael Savage and Anne-Marie Weatherall), made their sample-based music with an Akai X700. Their track 'Don't You Want to Fuck', features a loop of Eric Bogosian in the film *Talk Radio* repeating 'They'd rather watch TV than have sex', punctuated by Linda Blair from *The Exorcist* shouting 'Fuck me!'

## TAPE AND VINYL

Rik Rue established his own Pedestrian Tapes label in 1983, releasing his and other artists' work, and becoming active in the international cassette network. During the 1980s he developed a masterful technique with the cassette Portastudio as both a compositional tool and instrument for live performance. The cassette recorder's pause button

was central to this work. Rue used the pause button as a quick and easy editing method compared with splicing reel-to-reel tape, but he was also pleased with the 'surreptitious recording' options offered by portable recorders. In the notes to his release on the Fringe Benefit label, *Genuine Tape Stories* (cassette, 1982), he says:

“ You control your own cassette recorder. Anything you choose to record is yours to do with as you will ... we are our own actors, we have our own dialogue, we are our own musicians. Utilising television, radio and sounds from the mass media. The consumer turns producer.<sup>3</sup>

After recording albums such as *Sound Escapes* (LP, RRRRecords, 015, 1988) Rue eventually moved on from the Portastudio, using a sampler for a while – as on the 1993 cassette release *Voice Capades* (Pedestrian Tapes), constructed from wordless vocal loops – and eventually embraced minidisc technology. Rue displays extraordinary dexterity in performing with multiple minidisc players simultaneously, making full use of the seamless looping and shuffle play functions, as can be heard on his 1998 release *Sample/Shuffle/Interplay* (CD, Extreme, XCD 044).

Sampling is not limited to the mediated environment, and like several of the artists discussed in this chapter, Rue is also engaged in field recording and soundscape composition. His album *Ocean Flows* (CD, Tall Poppies, TP036, 1993) is constructed entirely from recordings made around the Australian coast. As *Social Interiors*, a collaboration with Shane Fahey and Julian Knowles, Rue has taken collage and soundscape into unique territory by combining them with film and post-rock production techniques, with several recordings released on the Extreme label. He has been a member of several important groups including Mind/Body/Split, Machine for Making Sense and the performance ensemble Gravity Feed. He also presented experimental music programs (*Stops/Gaps/Measures* and *Sonic Hieroglyphics*) on Sydney community radio station 2MBS-FM from the early 1980s until recently.

Formed in 1982, The Loop Orchestra has stuck with 1/4-inch analogue

tape loops. The group's line-up has undergone several changes, but its core remains John Blades and Richard Fielding. Although performing regularly, recordings have been sporadic. The first album, *Suspense* (LP, ER002, 1990), made of loops sourced from suspenseful film soundtracks, was released on the Orchestra's own Endless Recordings. *The Analogue Years* (CD, ER003) followed in 1999, collecting several recordings from the group's past. Since then, they have steadily gained an international following, releasing their third album *Not Overtly Orchestral* (CD, No 5, 2004) on German label Quecksilber, and appearing on several compilations, including volume four of the Sub Rosa label's *An Anthology of Noise and Electronic Music* series (CD, SR250, 2006).

2MBS-FM was also important for The Loop Orchestra, and both Blades and Fielding continue to present programs there. Blades' *Background Noise* tends to feature particular artists and labels, while Fielding's *The Dust Museum* presents vinyl recordings of experimental music. Fielding's interest in vinyl has also been explored through other musical projects, including Vorkapich and Golden Hyena, creating moody atmospheres from turntable locked grooves, as on Golden Hyena's *Fabrications* (CDR, self-release, 2004).

But the pioneers of the locked groove in Australian experimental music were Melbourne's Gum (Andrew Curtis and Philip Samartzis), active 1987–90. Their first album *Vinyl* (LP, self-release, DEX154E, 1987) was a rigorous investigation into the audible artefacts of turntables and vinyl, anticipating the materialist strain of experimental music that has come to prominence in recent years. However they also had a playful side, demonstrated on live recordings such as 'Live at Hard Times, Melbourne, Australia, 1987' included on the Gum compilation *Vinyl Anthology* (2CD, 23five, 005, 2005), which features recognisable pop songs, including The Bee Gees' 'Staying Alive'. They didn't identify with the industrial music culture of the time:

“ Industrial's deliberate abjectness and infatuation with everything grotesque – the careful nurtured and developed 'dark personality', the elitism, the arrogance, the magickal, the monstrous – were amusing

enough in a playful, detached way. But soon these became stoical, tiresome and banal. More importantly, they emerged as a hindrance to our main musical objectives which was to make and enjoy absurd configurations of music without any overt distracting elements or restricting dogma.<sup>4</sup>

Curtis now pursues photography, but Samartzis remains active in sound and music, lecturing at RMIT and focusing now on processed field recordings and spatial audio.

Melbourne-based composer Warren Burt had made tape collages in the 1970s and was an early adopter of sampling, using the Fairlight as early as 1980. In a series of pieces, using different models of samplers, he explored their potential for the manipulation of orchestral sounds. This was partly due to a long-standing interest in the recorded sound of orchestras, lack of access to an actual orchestra, and a desire to make music that was beyond the ability of an orchestra to play. The 1987 piece 'Samples II for Orchestra: Ravel Hommage (that which is neither a deconstruction nor an appropriation, neither bricollage nor post-modern)' makes Burt's intentions clear. Writing in 1988, he stated:

“ [T]hough I was quoting, I didn't feel I was deconstructing Ravel, because I was not pulling any work of his apart in order to make statements about it, and that though I was indeed violating all sorts of copyrights by using samples of recordings in this way, I didn't feel like I was appropriating anything from Ravel ... because, after long study and familiarity with his work, I had come to regard him almost as 'family' ...

Furthermore, mine was a very studied use of quotation – I did not regard myself as the innocent bricoleur, assembling new works out of whatever came to hand ... I wanted to call into question the whole use of the term 'post-modern', which has been so overused in describing our activities. I maintained that all the techniques I was using in the piece, although made more accessible by technology, were already present in the work done by Charles Ives around the turn of the century, and that if he was considered post-modern, then we would have to consider our whole century as part of the post-modern.<sup>5</sup>

Burt has since made numerous other sample-based pieces, with a variety of approaches that demonstrate his restless intellect. For example, in 'Riffs for Ross' (private release, 1988), Burt uses samples of vintage jazz records and constructs his 'dream bop band, where Charlie Parker finally gets to play with Art Van Damme',<sup>6</sup> taking an approach similar to that of influential Canadian composer John Oswald and his 'plunderphonics' in which samples of recognisable music are combined to create new music. 'John Cleese Noise Study' (private release, 2001) is made from 'shredded' samples of the 'Basil the Rat' episode of *Fawlty Towers* and would not be out of place on an underground noise album.

Another artist with a sophisticated grasp of history was John Watermann, who was profoundly influenced by his childhood in Germany during World War II. With a background in film and photography, he arrived in Australia in 1971, eventually settling in Brisbane, where from the mid-1980s he became a prolific producer of a singular form of collage-based music and video. Between 1989 and 1991 he released 18 recordings on his own Nightshift label, under his own name as well as the aliases Spinal Machine, Total Disease, and Radio Mull. Some of these recordings were published on vinyl or CD, but most were cassette runs of less than 20 copies each.

Watermann's work typically featured voices taken from television and radio, fragmented and manipulated until unintelligible, and reconstructed into strange and compelling patterns. When the voices could be understood they tended to suggest disturbing stories about illness, violence and sexuality. For example, the track 'Accessory of Heart' from the 1989 album *The Dead Calm of Bashing Coca Cola* (LP, Nightshift, NR002) begins by rapidly repeating the title phrase before slowing down to reveal that the voice is actually saying 'He was obsessed for a year and a half with raping a virgin schoolgirl'. This combination of sophisticated sonic manipulation, reminiscent of academic electroacoustic composition, and with dark themes and atmospheres, endeared Watermann to the international post-industrial music scene, even as he remained virtually unknown in Australia. He went on to release material on a number of European and US

labels, and record a collaborative album with the Japanese noise artist Merzbow.

In 1996 Watermann created the surreal web zine *Lean Yellow Supporting* as an outlet for his visual art and writing,<sup>7</sup> and in 1998 he released the CD-ROM *Rose is a Rose is a ...* which applied his unique aesthetic to interactive animations and algorithmic sound. There has been renewed interest in Watermann's work since his death in 2002, with a number of posthumous releases and tributes. This most idiosyncratic of artists anticipated and influenced much of the digital art and music of today, with his intensely granular approach to media.

### CUT-UP KIDS

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation for whom the reuse of media was second nature. They had grown up with the ubiquitous recording technologies of VHS video and audio cassettes. Sample-based pop music had already become established through bands such as Art of Noise, and this was also the golden age of hip-hop, where popular acts including De La Soul and Public Enemy were making music almost entirely from samples. Sampling was exciting and seemed to be everywhere, including in the burgeoning techno scene that was attracting many people searching for experimental new sounds.

Even radical sound collage groups, like the American band Negativland, were getting noticed. Negativland's 'U2' single (SST Records, SST CD 272, 1991), a cut-up parody of U2's 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For', received regular airplay on Triple J until the band was sued for copyright infringement. Occurring around the same time as a similar case against John Oswald's *Plunderphonic* album (CD, 1989)<sup>8</sup> and a wider crackdown against unauthorised sampling in music, this marked the start of the intellectual property debates that are still raging to this day. Negativland has been active in these debates, making public statements such as:

(4) 'Copyright doesn't mean shit to me' 83

“ WE BELIEVE that artistic freedom for all is more important to the health of society than [sic] the supplemental and extraneous incomes derived from private copyright tariffs which create a cultural climate of art control and Art Police. No matter how valid the original intent of our copyright laws may have been, they are now clearly being subverted when they are used to censor resented works, to suppress the public need to reuse and reshape information ... [which is] already publicly available to everyone. No one should be allowed to claim private control over the creative process itself.”<sup>9</sup>

Sampling became radicalised, and throughout the 1990s was often used by artists with political or otherwise subversive intentions.<sup>10</sup> The hacker creed that ‘information wants to be free’ became popular among some electronic dance music subcultures. A particularly vibrant ‘free party’ scene developed in the early ‘90s. Event organisers such as Sydney’s Vibe Tribe created ‘Temporary Autonomous Zones’<sup>11</sup> where social norms could be put aside and new ways of being could be explored. Political engagement was apparent in much of the music and video at these events, exemplified by acts such as the pioneering VJs Video Subvertigo, and techno group Non Bossy Posse (including John Jacobs, Ian Andrews and others) which produced dense, critical media collages over hard acid beats, documented on their 1993 album *Saboteurs of the Big Daddy Mindfuck* (cassette, self-release).

The violent shutdown by police of the Vibe Tribe’s Freefrequency party at Sydney Park in 1995 traumatised this community,<sup>12</sup> with several members moving to the NSW north coast to continue as Organarchy. However its influence lives on in Sydney, through activities such as Oms Not Bombs, Reclaim the Streets and more recent free party crews such as System Corrupt.

In the mid-1990s an Australian ‘industrial hardcore’ techno sound emerged, spearheaded by Newcastle’s Bloody Fist label (1994–2004), discussed in Chapter 3. The label released extreme, lo-fi music, made entirely with 8-bit samples and produced with tracker software on old Amiga computers.<sup>13</sup> Bloody Fist exclusively released Newcastle artists (Embolism, Memetic, Syndicate, Hedonist, Xylocaine, Guyver,

Fraughman) and combined an aggressive, no-bullshit attitude with a strong Australian sense of humour. Newlands described the Bloody Fist sound in a 1997 interview:

“ Basically a lot of the material is of a cut’n’paste mentality. The records are put together out of bits and pieces of things we have lying around. So you’ll find a record by an artist on our label is very indicative of what’s in their record collection or what they listen to at home or noises they hear around the place ... Another thing is also that the music kind of reflects the environment ... Which is not a very nice one, it’s a pretty gritty place, it’s of a very industrial nature.”<sup>14</sup>

The label inspired many artists and paved the way for the breakcore sound that developed in the late ‘90s. Newlands also makes sound collages and is in international demand as a DJ, displaying extraordinary skill in turntablism, despite his aversion to the idea of ‘funk’ in music.

Melbourne artist Greg Wadley produced the satirical *Loser* zine (1987–92), comprising newspaper and magazine clippings as well as short stories that hilariously illustrated the banality and futility of modern existence. In the early 1990s Wadley created the band New Waver to continue the project in musical form. Early albums featured cover versions of well-known songs, with bleak new lyrics and cleverly arranged samples from radio and television. By the late ‘90s the emphasis had shifted to a more electronic sound, with less singing and longer samples taken largely from increasingly hopeless responses on talk radio.

## ON AIR

Radio was extremely important to sound collagists in the ‘90s. If they weren’t sampling radio programs, they were making them. Community radio was a haven for all sorts of experimental activity. Melbourne station PBS has hosted the collage program *Rude Future* since 1994, presented by David Thrussel of popular electronic music act Snog, and DJ 2 (Paul Wain) and DJ 3 (Susan King) of Antediluvian Rocking Horse.

Antediluvian Rocking Horse have developed a distinctive approach to collage, combining techno beats with absurdist found sounds, and releasing their work on Negativland's Seeland label and Melbourne's Psy-Harmonics, whose proprietor Ollie Olsen later joined the group. Susan King is also active as an anti-copyright activist, arguing: 'Everything is a remix ... The creative impetus is transient. If one must pause from the creative process to ask permission, or set up a contract to continue, the integrity of the artistic vision has to be compromised.'<sup>15</sup>

Sydney's Radio Skid Row served as an incubator for many artists who would go on to do interesting things. John Garland, from the station's prisoners' request show, moved to 2MBS-FM in 1991 to produce the bizarre *Our World Through Serotonin*, creating a unique, suburban-outsider approach to sound collage. Alternating with the long-standing program *Stalking the Nightmare* produced by Terry Brown (aka Michael Mercury), whose disturbing collages have made his show a legendary fixture on Sydney's airwaves, both programs are still going strong. Also making the move from Skid Row to 2MBS in 1991 was *Wake Up and Listen* (myself and Adrian Bertram). We used the radio studio as an instrument to create improvised collage-based music, often including guest musicians, and performing at events such as What is Music? and Big Day Out, and recording on the labels Clan Analogue and Zónar. We continued to broadcast on 2MBS until 2005.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious of the Skid Row alumni is Lucas Abela. Now known for his bloodied noise performances, his early work involved the manipulation and modification of records and turntables. In a 2006 interview he says [*sic*]:

“ i started doing graveyard shifts at radio skid row ... i began to re-explore some of my vinyl experiments i used to do in my bedroom as a teenager ... cutting them up and reassembling them with other records and then collaging the lot. One special night in a bored fit i decided to bring in a radio so i could mix in other stations ... i surrounded it with announcers mics and mixed it in that way. Eventually while spinning the dial randomly i found 88.9 (radio skid row) and discovered radio station feedback, the radio began to howl.

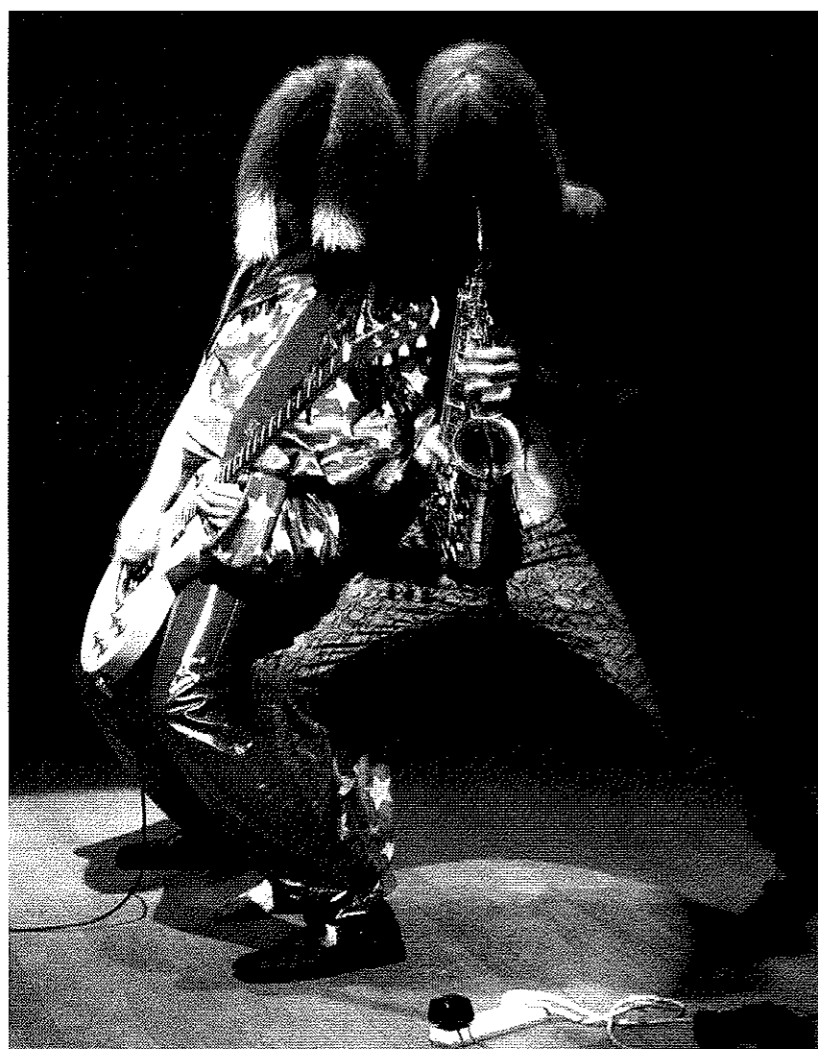
At one point that evening i was making great syncopated rhythms over the top of a village people record by turning the announcers mic on and off in time ... Eventually oren ambarchi and robbie avenaim stumbled upon the show one night ... and booked me to play noise fest II way back in september 94.<sup>17</sup>

Abela went on to develop many performance methodologies, modifying turntables in increasingly dangerous ways. He also formed the label dualpLOVER with Stephen Harris (aka Swerve), becoming arguably Australia's foremost label for outsider music. Much of this music involves appropriation, most significantly Sweden's album *Same Diff* (CD, dualpLOVER, DUTHNKM6E, 2002). Sweden is Nick Jones, and in collaboration with Garry Bradbury on production, he sings cover versions of famous songs, such as 'Macarthur Park', in an uninhibited style, processed through various electronic treatments, to backing tracks which are destroyed recordings of the original songs. Sweden and Bradbury developed this concept further with the band Winner, which includes Swerve (bass) and Adrian Bertram (aka Lieutenant Colonel Spastic Howitzer, saxophone) performing as glam rock stars gone wrong.

Garry Bradbury has been a key figure in Australian electronic and experimental music since the early 1980s, through his involvement in acts including Hiroshima Chair, Severed Heads and Size. Recording solo as Bradbury, much of his work involves an angular approach to the manipulation of found sounds, for example on the track 'Sinistrogyric Mobius Disc' on the album *Ruffini Corpuscle* (CD, dualpLOVER, SYNTHI100F, 2002) he took the Pink Floyd album *Dark Side of the Moon*, cut it in two, then flipped one half and put it back together, creating a skipping collage.

Hip-hop, also based on vinyl appropriation, had experienced little contact with experimental music in Australia prior to the late 1990s. However thanks to Melbourne's multicultural Curse ov Dialect, smart Adelaide duo New Pollutants and eclectic Sydney label Elefant Traks, an experimental form of Australian hip-hop developed, supported by inclusion in events such as the This Is Not Art festival in Newcastle.





Winner (Nick Jones and Adrian Bertram) at Liquid Architecture, 2006.  
Photo by Shannon O'Neill.

## MASHED UP

In 2001–02 I was co-director of Electrofringe, the electronic arts component of This Is Not Art. This was an interesting period, not only because of the ramifications of the September 11 terrorist attacks (the aftermath of which has been explored in sound by Adrian Bertram, through his League of Infinite Justice project), but also due to the emergence of Napster, and the birth of peer-to-peer file-sharing culture as we now know it. This was the beginning of a musical and cultural phenomenon known as mash-ups.

During this time Electrofringe brought together artists and theorists in appropriation-based music and art, including James Kirby (V/Vm, UK), Vicki Bennett (People Like Us, UK), Steev Hise (detritus.net, USA), Mark Gunderson (Evolution Control Committee, USA), Douglas Kahn (USA), along with many of the local artists mentioned here.

Mark Gunderson, widely credited as the father of musical mash-ups – where the vocal track of one song is synchronised with the instrumental of another in order to create an absurd combination – gave presentations on his Napster Nuggets and Napster Bombs projects. A particularly fruitful outcome was the establishment of a strong relationship between V/Vm and local labels dualpLOVER, System Corrupt, Goulburn Poultry Fanciers Society (GPFS) and Spasticated Records, enabling greater distribution and recording opportunities for their artists and supporting the emergence of a new appropriation-based music scene in Australia.

Sydney's Dsico (Luke Collison) became one of the most lauded mash-up artists on the international scene. His track 'Love Will Freak Us', combining Joy Division's 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' with Missy Elliott's 'Get Your Freak On' is a classic of the genre. Collison formed Spasticated Records to release his work and that of likeminded artists. These included Sydney media artist Wade Marynowsky's AC/3P project – electronic covers of AC/DC done in the persona of the C3PO robot from *Star Wars*; and an early album, released in collaboration with American label Illegal Art, from Girl Talk (Greg Gillis) who is

now one of the most popular international artists making mash-up-based music. But the most notable release on Spasticated was the compilation CD *Ministry of Shit* (SPAS003, 2003) attracting the ire of the global nightclub business Ministry of Sound, whose apparently faeces-smear logo adorned the cover. Collison eventually left mash-ups behind, turning Dsico into a more conventional band project.

The breakcore and noise artists associated with System Corrupt and the Goulburn Poultry Fanciers Society also took a cynical approach to pop culture. As Rank Sinatra, GPFS leader Guy Sterling (aka 7u?) eviscerates '80s hits with a gothic howl, as on the album *Chairman of the Bored* (CD, V/Vm, VVMTCD17, 2004). Prolific producer Nicolas Collerson (aka Maladroit) makes a hybrid of breakcore and mash-ups. On *Injected Plastic Funk* (CD, GPFS, GPFSCD02, 2004) he combines multiple pop songs from the likes of Madonna, Britney Spears and the Beastie Boys with fast, distorted breakbeats.

One of the more distinctive breakcore artists is David Harris (aka Toecutter), a key member of the System Corrupt collective, who describes his music as 'Venga Boys [sic] playing through defective car stereo being driven off cliff into small river'.<sup>18</sup> His music is a high-energy collision of pop music and media. He describes his attitude to working with other people's material: '[J]ust put as much of yourself into it as you can and the more of yourself that goes into it, that's what makes it your own. Copyright doesn't mean shit to me ... it's like trying to hold on to your own flesh as you're decaying in a coffin, you know?'<sup>19</sup>

The Blue Mountains is home to some unusual approaches to breakcore and noise, via the Painfree Foundsound Institute and its artists including Main\$stream and Lucas Darklord. Main\$stream and Darklord's collaborative album *Time for Corporate Rule/Bleaching All Life You Knew* (CD, Painfree Foundsound, CD11/12, 2006) sounds unlike any other releases in the genre, with slurred, drifting, broken voices taken from infomercials and religious broadcasts creating disturbing soundscapes, reminiscent of John Watermann.<sup>20</sup>

Another unique approach to found sound comes from Sydney artist Paul Gough. He was active in the 1980s as Yclept Dinmakers, making

sound collages influenced by the M Squared label and Severed Heads, but with a distinctive use of sped-up voices. In the late 1990s he re-emerged as Pimmon, making beautiful 'post-digital' music that soon found a home on many international record labels. Although not obvious, his music is largely constructed from other music, transformed beyond recognition via granular synthesis, although there are occasional hints of the source. For example 'Frosty Pink' from the album *Snaps \* Crackles \* Pops* (CD, Tigerbeat6, MEOW053, 2003) is based on the Chills' song 'Pink Frost'.

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Finally, Buttress O'Kneel, the pseudonym of an individual believed to be based in Melbourne, offers a fitting close to this brief overview. Describing herself as 'The Enya of NonCore HardDada PostGenre MetaPop', O'Kneel has created a series of collage-based political radio features and intricately edited sample-based compositions that have established her at the forefront of Australian sound. Her recordings have been released on Illegal Art as well as a number of netlabels, and her radio work broadcast on several stations, including ABC Radio National's collage program *The Night Air*. Despite the humour in her work, her intentions are serious, as evidenced on her feature *Dear Fellow Australians: An Independent Inquiry into Australian Values*,<sup>21</sup> released just before the 2007 federal election. For O'Kneel, sampling is central to the struggle:

“ Basically, sampling IS existence. We ARE BIOLOGICAL SAMPLERS ... Creativity of any sort is sampling ... when we interact with the greater world, we make a choice: Do I accept what is there already, or do I use it to make something else? When a song has been designed to be 'catchy,' or 'popular' (as all 'pop' music is), it has been designed to take control of your brain! ... So, do I accept this? Or do I use this and try to free my neurones? I can't help but choose the recontextualising path of freedom. This is a battle of the mind, and it's a battle I'm determined to win.<sup>22</sup>

The good news for the artists in this chapter is that the world seems to be moving in their direction. The concept of the 'mash-up' is now central to digital and online culture, where recombining information has become a mainstream activity.<sup>23</sup> While laws are slow to change, encumbered by the interests of outdated industries, initiatives such as Creative Commons (a system in which various levels of free usage can be specified and other rights reserved, and which has an Australian incarnation) continue to gain momentum. Rock stars such as Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails are now making their music available for free, even including the components of songs to facilitate remixing. All the artists mentioned in this chapter have been pioneers of a radical artform in Australia and internationally, and it remains to be seen how they adapt to these emerging cultural changes.

## NOTES

- 1 *Edge of the Wedge* (1986), television program, ABC, <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=MX0goKMpB4Y>>, accessed 12 June 2008.
- 2 Quoted in Shannon O'Neill (2003) *Falling Hats: Appropriation in Sydney Experimental Electronic Music*, radio program, Alias Frequencies, Sydney [currently offline].
- 3 John Jenkins (1988) *22 Contemporary Australian Composers*, NMA Publications, Melbourne, p. 159.
- 4 Gum (2004) *Vinyl Anthology*, notes, 2CD, 23five, 23five005.
- 5 Warren Burt (1988) 'SAMPLES III for computer processed orchestra sounds – what it is and what it is not', *New Music Articles*, no. 6, <<http://rainerlinz.net/NMA/repr/SamplesIII.html>>, accessed 1 July 2008.
- 6 Warren Burt, *Riffs for Ross*, CD notes, private release.
- 7 *Lean Yellow Supporting*, <<http://johnwatermann.net/yellow/main.html>>, accessed 12 June 2008.
- 8 These events are documented in Craig Baldwin's 1995 film *Sonic Outlaws*. See also <[www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xnotes.html#plunderphonic](http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xnotes.html#plunderphonic)>, accessed 30 June 2008.
- 9 Negativland (n.d.), 'Negativland and the RIAA: Negativland's tenets of free appropriation', Negativland, <[www.negativland.com/riaa/tenets.html](http://www.negativland.com/riaa/tenets.html)>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 10 For example, Sydney sound artist Simon Hunt achieved national recognition in the late 1990s with his satirical music project Pauline Pantsdown, which sampled federal politician Pauline Hanson and was subjected to legal action.
- 11 A term that comes from political writer Hakim Bey (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson). For more on its application to the free party scene, see Chris Gibson (1997) 'Subversive sites: Rave, empowerment and the internet', paper presented at the IASPM Conference, Sydney, 21–23 July, <[www.cia.com.au/peril/youth/chris1.pdf](http://www.cia.com.au/peril/youth/chris1.pdf)>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 12 See Sebastian Chan (1997) 'The cops are jammin' the frequency: Critical moments for the Sydney free party scene', <[www.cia.com.au/peril/youth/frequency.pdf](http://www.cia.com.au/peril/youth/frequency.pdf)>, accessed 13 June 2008.

- 13 Tracker is a type of simple music sequencing software with roots in the computer game culture of the 1980s.
- 14 Datacide (1997) 'Bloody Fist: Interview with Mark Newlands', *Datacide*, no. 3, <<http://datacide.c8.com/text/bf.html>>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 15 Quoted in Helen Razer (2003) 'Copycat commandos', *The Age*, <[www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/09/24/1064083041326.html](http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/09/24/1064083041326.html)>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 16 Many other programs have featured sampling and appropriation, including 2SER's *Music for Big Game Hunting*, 2MBS's *Boots 'n' All* and 2RRR's *Radio Show*.
- 17 Leith Thomas (2006) 'Interview with Lucas Abela', *What We Do is Secret*, vol. 2, no. 2.
- 18 Toecutter (n.d.), <[www.myspace.com/toecuttersyco](http://www.myspace.com/toecuttersyco)>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 19 Quoted in O'Neill (2003), *Falling Hats*.
- 20 There are many other significant Australian breakcore artists, including Brisbane's Puzahki, Melbourne's Cat-Grrl, Xian, and Noistruct, and Sydney's Passenger of Shit, among others.
- 21 Buttress O'Kneel (2007), *Dear Fellow Australians*, <<http://aliasfrequencies.org/af026>>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 22 Quoted in Jon Nelson (2007) 'B'O'K, Some Assembly Required', <[www.some-assembly-required.net/blog/2007/05/bok.html](http://www.some-assembly-required.net/blog/2007/05/bok.html)>, accessed 13 June 2008.
- 23 There are significant activities in remixing and appropriation happening in other areas of the arts that could not be included here. See for example the video collages of Soda\_Jerk such as *Pixel Pirate II: Attack of the Astro Elvis Video Clone* (2006), and Jon Drummond and Nigel Helyer's new media project *Magnus Opus* (2001), <[www.magnus-opus.com](http://www.magnus-opus.com)>.

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