

ELECTRONIC MUSIC • MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

interfaceTM

reprogramming digital cultureSM

VERSION 15
JULY/AUGUST 1999

IN THIS ISSUE:

Win a Steve Roach
CD package or
software from
Steinberg!

REVIEWED:

CUBASE DANCE PACK
SHERMAN FILTERBANK

PLUS:

BUILD YOUR OWN SYNTH
1999 WINTER NAMM REPORT

Keeping Score:
*the musicians who
move the movies*

Music for the Masses:
*the MP3 format shakes up
the music industry*

autotechre
SONIC ARCHITECTS

\$3 US • \$4 Canada/Mexico • \$5 overseas



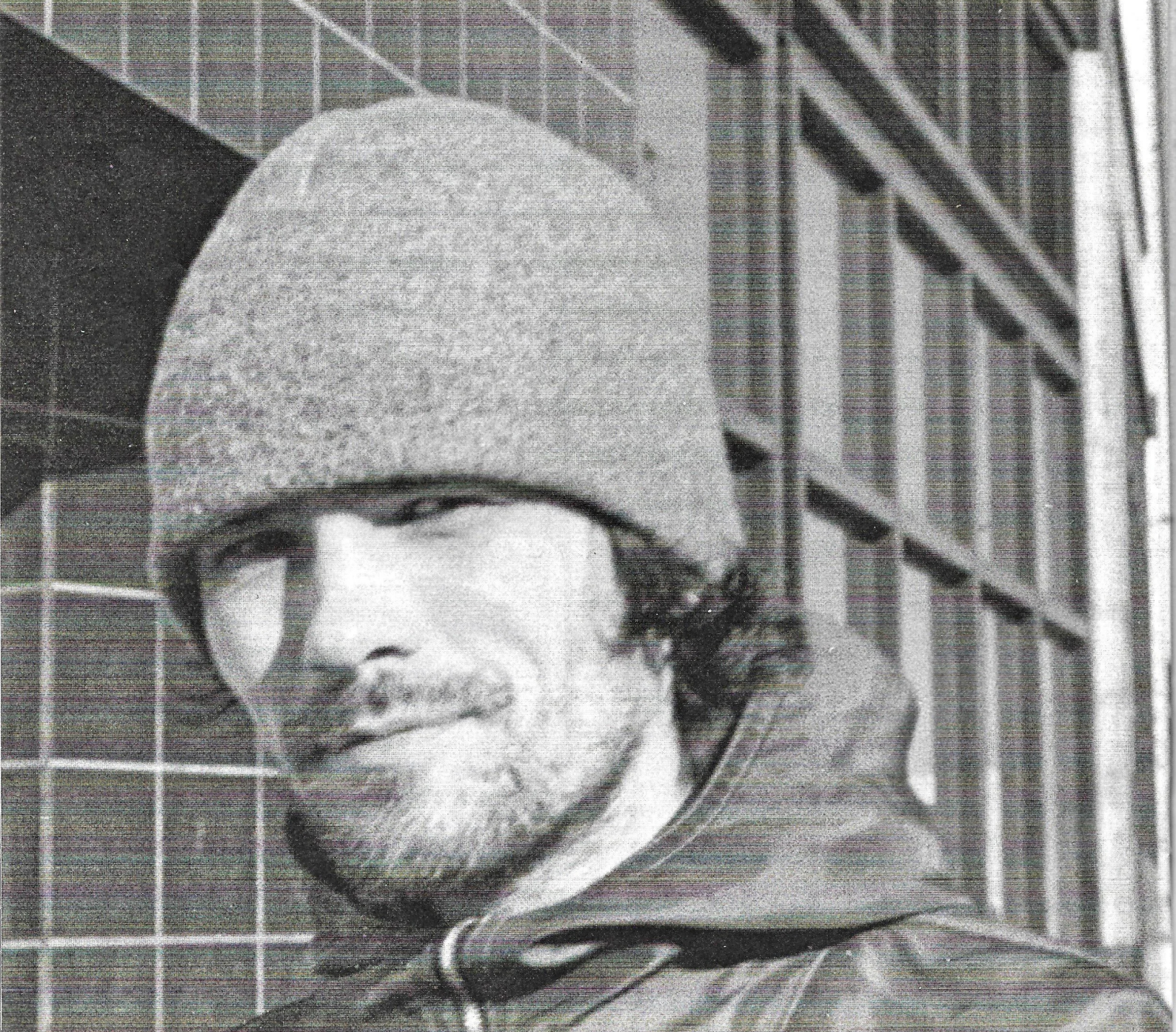
PLUS: BLACK TAPE FOR A BLUE GIRL • CHRIS AND COSEY •
ESPLENDOR GEOMETRICO • LOVE AND ROCKETS • NOISEX

DISC: JULY/AUGUST 01, 1999
PRINTED IN CANADA

Autechre

DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE...

by Sharon Maher





"We're not musicians really," claims Autechre's SEAN BOOTH. "I don't know what we are. We're failed engineers." An odd statement coming from someone who, with his partner ROB BROWN, creates, well, music. "I never even tried to be a musician," stresses Booth, who's Northern English accent has an old lyrical quality to it. "I think all I am is someone who likes to play."

Booth and Brown have been playing with noise for the majority of this decade under the monikers **Autechre**, and, to a lesser extent, **Gescom**. They create an aural entree so intricate and otherworldly, it can hardly be considered just music. Rather, an experience. It seems the two had always been fascinated with sound. In the mid-80s, a mutual interest in graffiti,

BMX biking, and hip-hop brought the two together, paying homage to the sounds of acts like Mantronix and Afrika Bambaata. Then around 1988, when the tide was shifting towards the newly christened Detroit house scene, they began to check out bands like proto-industrial luminaries Meat Beat Manifesto, Coil, and Renegade Soundwave. Fusing an interest in these disparate music currents and a healthy fascination with sound manipulation (Booth, in particular, had logged time as a child splicing TV recordings on an old reel-to-reel his grandfather had given him), they set out to develop this fascination. When they started, at fifteen and seventeen respectively, they had a Casio sampler and a Roland 606 between them.



"The day I figure...
out (why I make music),
I'll probably stop
wanting to do it
anymore."

Sean Booth, **Autechre**



A show at a local pirate radio station led to the tentative airings of their first experiments. Positive response from listeners provided enough motivation for them to send their material out. This culminated in releasing a single called "Cavity Job." Problems with the record company, however, led them to sever ties. Luckily their relationship with their second record label would be so encouraging that it would sustain them into present day. The duo sent a demo tape off to Warp Records and, within the year, debuted on the first *Artificial Intelligence* compilation—a landmark release that, along with its successors, would define the term *intelligent dance music*. Four albums and fifteen singles later, the duo has released their most recent effort, an album titled, modestly enough, *LP5*. So how did Booth and Brown get from being teenage hip-hop denizens to purveyors of a headspace-oriented, highly experimental electronic sound?

"I have absolutely no idea," says Booth, with a slight hint of amusement. "It's a bit of a sideways progression, if it really is a progression. It's probably not. Trial and error, I suppose."

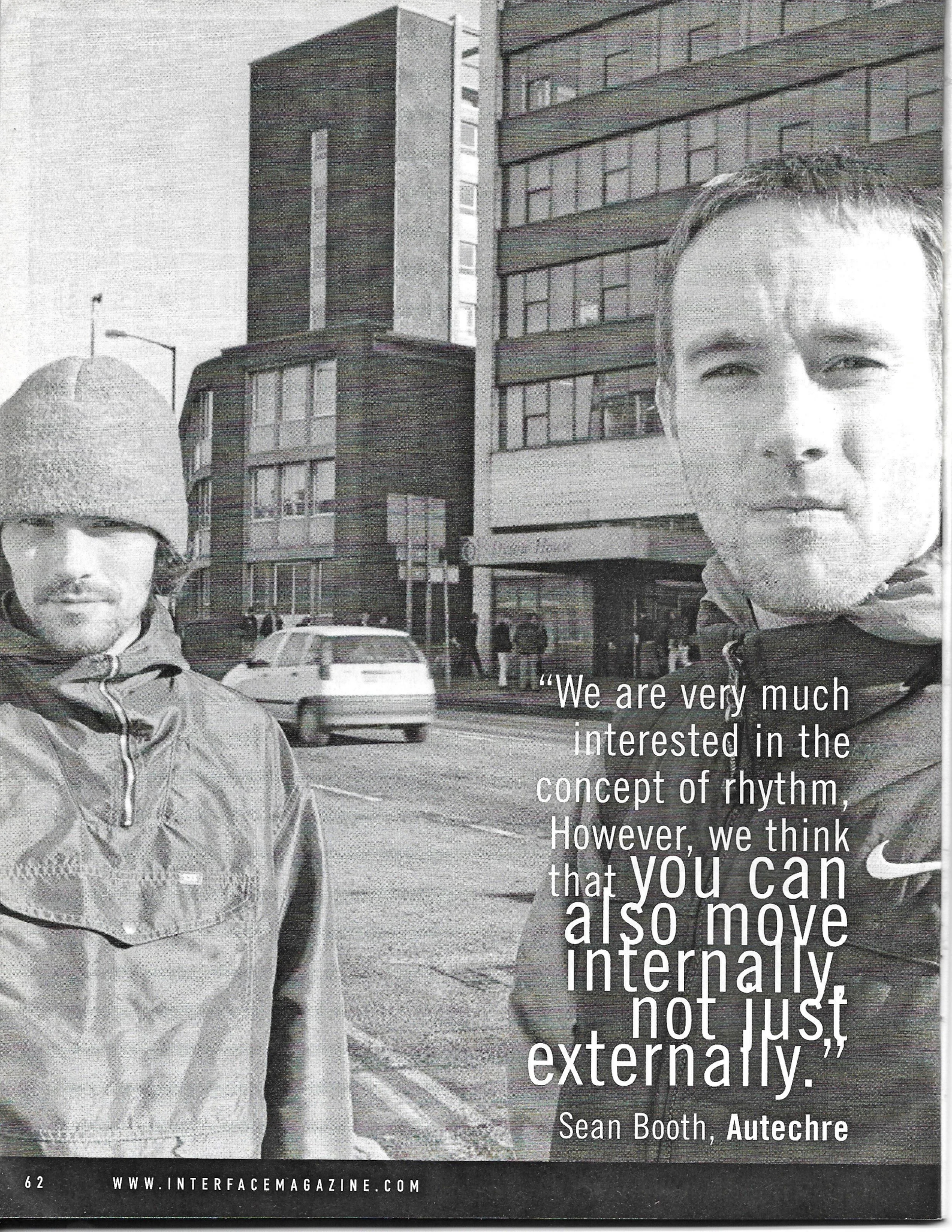
Talking about Autechre is a bit like dancing about architecture (to paraphrase an old saying). When it comes to describing music that is so utterly alien, words can only be an abstraction. You could define it, describe it, or cut it open and view its inner workings, but nothing will explain Autechre better than the music itself. Which is how it should be.

"I wish I could explain it," Booth says, sighing. "I really wish it were that simple that I could get on the phone and say 'this is the reason this looks like this and this is the reason that's called this and the reason we're called this is this and the reason we do this is this.' We should have written a manifesto before we started so we could have answers to all these questions," Booth says, reflecting on the point that the music, as always, is the answer to any questions regarding its origins and the minds who create it. "I think if I'm ever in another band that's what we'll do," Booth adds sardonically, "before we release any records we'll release all the answers to the questions." A fine patina of irony goes not unarticulated in his voice.

Interviewing Autechre, even Booth, who is the more loquacious of the two, is a difficult task. The music is an element of exploration in their lives, and all good exploration must be through uncharted territories. Booth remains intentionally ignorant to the reasons behind what drives him to the sampler. "The day I figure it out I'll probably stop wanting to do it any more." He explains, "You only really realize things in retrospect. There's certain tracks I could say to myself 'yeah, I know why I needed to do that on that day,' but I never realize it then. It's always loads later I think 'alright, I must've needed to get that out of my system.'"

Like what?

"Well, like if there's a melody on a track that's doing something to me three years later than I'll know why I needed to do it," he responds cryptically. "Or maybe its understanding certain things about the music we were doing when we were fifteen or sixteen. At the time we were completely naïve about music. So there wouldn't have been anything in there that would have any intention



"We are very much interested in the concept of rhythm, However, we think that you can also move internally, not just externally."

Sean Booth, Autechre

behind it because [at that point] we couldn't have understood what the intention could possibly have been. Years later, once we got a better understanding of what we were doing we thought 'that's what we were trying to do,' because we'd been doing it years before and not been aware of the reasons why."

Autechre's work could be seen as not a creation, perhaps, but rather an exploration. Simply put, Booth and Brown like noise. They like to push samples to their limits (Brown once referred to their treatment of sound as "cruelty"), challenging themselves to take their work further each time they sit down in front of their equipment. Despite overt rough handling, the results vary significantly in atmosphere. Autechre releases run the gamut from beautiful and haunting pieces to heavy, dirgelike tracks. They employ a highly craftsmanlike style, creating sounds through a mixture of equipment manipulation and jamming. Each song could be likened to a well-constructed house or building, which they furnish with textures and nuances chosen with a zenlike precision. "What we're doing," explains Booth simply, "is making space for us to exist in." And, to a lesser extent, for the listener as well.

Despite the seemingly experimental nature of their work (and Booth stresses that they are more interested in originality than extreme experimentation), the influence of the more standard, club-oriented fare that moved Booth and Brown as teenagers can occasionally be detected. Out of a wash of turbulent sounds, the ghost of a funky beat will occasionally rear its head, and not without design. This tension between the conventional and the experimental is what keeps Autechre's material so gripping. "We've grown up with club music, but we never listened to it in a club setting," explains Booth. "We mainly listened to that music at home, or on our walkman. That may be the single most important reason why we never make music that's geared to the dance experience." It does, however, explain Autechre's twisted and distorted take on club music.

"We are very much interested in the concept of rhythm," explains Booth. "However, we think that you can also move internally, not just externally."

While they may not make music for the club experience, they are still highly sought after in the live arena. Autechre are known for mind-altering live shows without pyrotechnics. Eschewing complex visual presentations, the band prefers to play at audience level with as little lighting as possible. Booth and Brown began one particular show offstage and continued for half the set until an irritated promotor demanded they lug their equipment onstage and continue the show in the traditional manner within view of the audience. This quirkish behavior communicates a clear message, however: they believe that the music, not the technicians, should be the main focus of the evening. "We try to keep people away from looking at us," says Booth, "so that they get into the music."

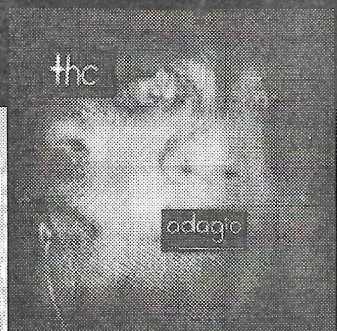
This is Booth and Brown's ethic. The music, and not the musician, is the most vital denominator in Autechre's equation. If you want to even call Booth a musician. He certainly doesn't.

"I didn't even attempt to become a musician," says Booth. "I went to college for a little bit doing professional audio but I gave up pretty quickly because it was not enough time in the studio and I just wanted to be making tracks. So I got a job. I took the worst job I could possibly get and then just worked and tried to buy gear and tried to make tracks. I never considered myself a musician. I've never

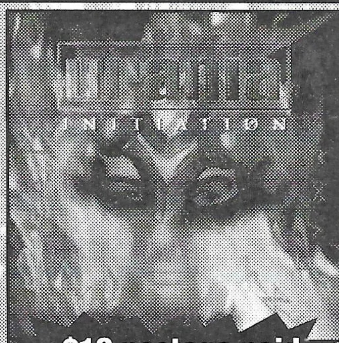
THC Adagio

out June '99

Melancholy trip-hop/d'n'b from L.A.'s premier live dance act: **THC**. Sultry female vox & majestic strings put THC in a class by itself. Out June '99.



out now:



\$12 postage paid

Emo vox over powerful electronics - another brilliant release from LA's

BABYLAND

On Tour Summer '99

check www.brainsurgerymusic.com for dates. We distribute Babyland's entire catalog (Dealers inquire for wholesale prices)

urania

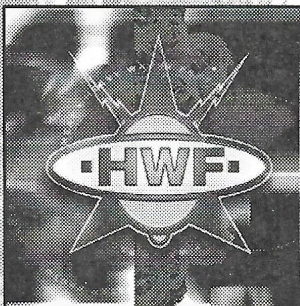
"Hagegeorge is the Jack Dangers of the electro-industrial underground and this release shows why." - *Interface*

"Hagegeorge is an electronic spectacle with the ease in which he slides from Euro-dance to mindfuck as an unnoticeable industrial assassin" - *Outburn*



\$12 postage paid

coming soon:



HEAVY WATER FACTORY Fluid & Meat

Re-issue of their long out-of-print debut — remastered with new art & 5 bonus tracks!

Check out our website for updates & enter to win a Netzwerk Records box set or a Misfits box set!

We carry hard to find and out of print vinyl, cds & cassettes from: Consolidated, TKK, Laibach, Rammstein, Bjork, Swans, FLA, Meat Beat & more, as well as a fine selection of current & back issues of: Outburn, Interface, Carpe Noctem, Damn, Effigy, Digital Artifakt, Voltage and more.

Check our website or send \$1 for a catalog to:

Brain Surgery Music

71 W. 23rd St. Suite 903 NY, NY 10010

www.brainsurgerymusic.com

Make checks payable to: David Stokamer.



really understood anything about music. It's never been a case of me trying to work with the equipment to realize my musical ideas because the equipment actually reveals the music to me as I use it in its terms of its possibilities or its flexibilities. Its always been like that for me and Rob as well because we've learned everything together."

From this comes the complex yet strikingly minimalist palette that is Autechre, interwoven with Eno-esque ambient, mutant hip-hop beats, post-industrial soundscapes, and hollow, moving synth-work. An Autechre track can gather the listener up within its space or take a listener on a journey, following a path marked by the spaces between beats. This is what Booth and Brown do best: create an entire realm. With each release, Autechre adds to the vastness of that realm, providing a limitless library of textures and sounds.

"I've been really getting into trees, recently," Booth confesses. "Just the idea of branches. A lot of what we're doing at the moment seems to work like that. Its not a direct line from one part to another, just a series of branches which have junctions and branches, and further branches. We're not on a linear path. We're observing different paths of the structure that seems to exist. There seems to be a need for representation of certain structures in our lives and we end up doing that. And I think we're curious. I think the thing we're most curious about is how on earth it got in there in the first place." It seems that Autechre do not write music that follows any given direction but rather a continuous cycle of what inspired them in the beginning.

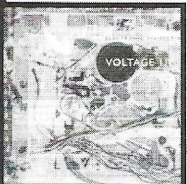
"I don't really know what we're doing next," says Booth. "If we were traveling in a linear fashion or if we were progressing in some traditional way, then it would be pretty easy just looking in our past knowing what we'd do in the future. But I think we're quite lucky not to be tied to any direct line." He reflects on this briefly, then adds, "you make your own future." —Sharon Maher

possessive blindfold recordings

INITIATING A NEW COLD WAR



BLINK TWICE:
the demon
haunted world
3rd release by the master
of American dark ambient.
Robert Salchak CMI style
ambient blended with
pounding rhythms



VOLTAGE II:
electronic vivisection
a collection of electro/industrial
and minimal electronics
featuring Aghast View.
Suicide Commando, Infact,
SaVak, Binar Code, Sleepwalk
and more. A PBR/CODE release.

Possessive Blindfold releases are \$15 [7" vinyl: \$8,
MCD: \$9] ppd in U.S.add \$5 shipping outside of U.S.

DISTRIBUTION BY:
Metropolis, Diabulus Cantus (Europe)
Mimicry (Canada), Dutch East India,
Ant Zen (Europe), Dark Vinyl (Europe), Malignant

Possessive Blindfold is now distributing Ant Zen,
Dark Vinyl, DSBP, Dion Fortune and more.
Write or call for free catalog.

ALSO AVAILABLE:
SUICIDE COMMANDO:
Construct/Destruct
DAS BUNKER:
Elektronische
Untergrundkultur-eins
STIN SCATZOR:
Industronic
EXOSKELETON:
PBR compilation no.1
HOLOCAUST THEORY:
Proclaimed Visions
Inception of Eradication
N.M.E.: High Volume 7"
ZYMOSIZ: Machinedriven 7"

ON THE
FRONT:
EXOSKELETON 2
ZYMOSIZ
H.P.P.
V.I.P. 7"
AH COMA SOTZ 7"

2251 Frederic Street, Burbank, CA 91504 phone [818] 558-1831 fax [818] 238-9533
www.possessive-blindfold.com info@possessive-blindfold.com

WHAT IN THE HELL IS A GESCOM?

Gescom, which stands for GESTALT COMMUNICATIONS, is the mysterious Autechre side-project. "Gescom's not just me and Rob," explains Booth. "Its a whole load of us. There's probably about 30 people that do stuff." The name has been attributed to several releases, primarily vinyl, and primarily on Skam—a label run by a friend of Booth and Brown, and known for carrying such acts as Jega and Boards of Canada. Gescom's most intriguing figure is its anonymity. With earlier releases, both Booth and Brown were less forthright about who was involved with Gescom, and if it were actually them to begin with. While the releases were attributed to them, Brown once even commented, with regards to the *Motor* EP on Germany's esteemed Clear Records. "It might not even be us on that record." As it turns out, the ethic behind Gescom is a continuation of the crew ethic of their teenage tagging days. Instead of crediting themselves and the other individuals responsible for a particular Gescom release, "all we do is put the crew up," Booth explains. "We don't write our names, we just offer the crew." While Gescom displays the same attention to texture and detail that Autechre does, it conveys, at least to Booth and Brown, a very different headspace, one mediated by the involvement with other people. Simply explained once by Brown, Gescom is "us not being Autechre." — Sharon Maher

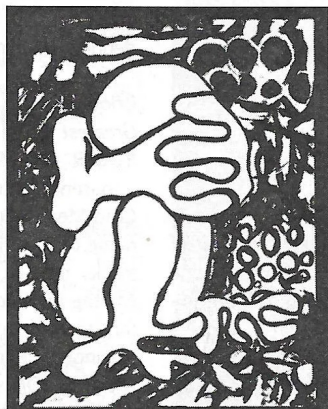
carol masters

the debut: **e.p.**

includes the singles
.do you hear it?.
.again and again.
and non-lp song
.when we kiss.
plus remixes by
LCM
Mindsett
& Atreyu

available @ record stores everywhere,
on-line stores or order directly
\$10. includes 1st class postage
make out check or money order to
.souvenir records.
909a broad st. #319. newark, nj. 07102

pop musik - electrique



www.carolmasters.com

7 64991 91242 0

a souvenir/presswerk.13 audio adventure!