

## **FAT BANKROLL – Sweden – April 2002**

Bakom Bovine Life döljer sig den brittiske filmaren Chris Dooks. Jag har tyvärr inte sett några av hans filmer, men de rör sig tydligen ofta kring musik och han har bland annat gjort dokumentärer om Scanner och om fullständigt okända skivbolag från ingenstans. Tyvärr blev Dooks ganska svårt sjuk häromåret och lade sitt filmande på is, för att istället pyssla med sin favorithobby. Denna hobby är elektronisk musik och det har mynnat ut i det här albumet. Social Electrics innehåller både Chris Dooks egen musik och samarbeten med flera andra artister. På grund av sin sjukdom har Dooks inte kunnat träffa några av de han har samarbetat med utan all kommunikation och utväxling av ljudfiler har skett elektroniskt. Egentligen ett ganska intressant sätt att skapa musik på. Jag är övertygad om att det här hade låtit annorlunda, på både gott och ont, om Dooks och de andra inblandade hade känt varandra på ett personligare plan än via e-post. På sina ställen verkar Dooks själv inte ha en aning om vem han har samarbetat med då skaparna av spåren på skivan ibland står listade som "Bovine Life vs. ?".

Överhuvudtaget så är det en något mystisk skiva. Många av spåren är knappt två minuter långa, vilket är lite skumt när man ändå lagt ner en massa tid på att få till ett samarbete med någon annan. Musiken hinner på flera ställen knappt börja innan den tar slut igen. Man får därför känslan av att skivan till största delen består av en hel hög med intron. Visserligen finns det 20 spår, men det hade nog varit trevligare om längden på dessa hade dubblats samtidigt som mängden hade halverats.

Hur låter det då? Jo, det är någon sorts elektronisk musik som ofta innehåller röster eller röstfragment. Vart gränsen går mellan Dooks egen musik och gästartisternas bidrag är aningen diffus eftersom samma stämning råder genom hela skivan. Vissa spår är rena ljudlandskap och andra innehåller takter av något slag. Stämningen är mörk och kanske även "filmisk" med tanke på Dooks bakgrund som filmare. Flera spår är ganska försiktiga med trevande ljud och andra är betydligt kärvare och kanske rent av lite smått industriella. Tyvärr är inget av de 20 spåren något att direkt hetsa upp sig för. De korta låtarna hinner inte komma någon vart och de längre passerar relativt obemärkt förbi. Samarbetet med svenska Smyglyssna är dock något av en favorit med haltande takt och fina bakgrundsharmonier. Spåret, som förresten heter "Düsseldorf Girl", hade dock mått ännu bättre av en speltid på ytterligare fem minuter.

På skivan finns även en kortfilm av Chris Dooks kallad "no one sees black". Det är naturligtvis en riktigt trevlig detalj. Jag tänker inte komma med några djupare analyser om vad filmen handlar om, men man får intrycket av att något fruktansvärt har inträffat. Hursomhelst så har Dooks utöver filmandet även gjort musiken i filmen och man måste säga att den passar betydligt bättre till rörliga bilder än ensam på skivan.

Christoffer

<http://www.fatbankroll.nu/showreview.php3?id=1002114251>

## **SKUG # 49 – Austria - April 2002**

Kollege Stummer machte sich schon im letzten skug Sorgen um den Gesundheitszustand von Chris Dooks aka Bovine Life. Der war tatsächlich krank - allerdings litt er trotz gegenteiliger Vermutungen wohl nicht an BSE - und konnte daher nicht wie sonst als Dokumentarfilmer arbeiten, fing also aus Langeweile an Musik zu machen. Und da er schon Filme über Scanner und obskure elektronische Kleinstlabels gedreht hatte, lag es für Dooks nahe, Artverwandtes zu produzieren. Entstanden ist das ganze Ding bei ausgedehnten Exkursionen ins Internet, deswegen durften auch einige andere Nerds ihren Senf dazu gegeben, zum Beispiel Köhn oder Matt Elliot aka The Third Eye Foundation.

So ist »Social Electrics« auch eine reizende Studie über Festplatten-Wahnsinn geworden: fröhlich-irrsinniger Minimal-Elektro trifft hier auf Breakbeats von der Hobelbank, gemütlich im leeren Raum treibende Störgeräusche unterhalten sich mit autistisch brabbelnden Computerstimmen, Bleeps und Clicks wuseln ausgelassen herum und giftige Sound-Wölkchen legen sich flauschig über alles drüber. Macht blöd, aber glücklich!

| Patrick Sabbagh |

## **WETWORKS - USA – April 2002**

Bovine Life is the output of award-winning UK filmmaker and digital artist Chris Dooks. After creating many films, Chris decided to try his hand at music, and here we are with Social Electrics. This is an album comprised of sounds put together by Chris Dooks and many other musicians (all of which I've never heard of).

Many unique sounds are used throughout Social Electrics that keep it interesting and fresh. Nothing sounds standard or preset. Glitchy static, frequency tuning, various layers of diverse percussion, strange speech-samples

and sporadic drum n' bass patterns flow in and out and really create something intriguing to the ear. Bovine Life is experimental electronica at its best.

At times sounding like a more experimental version of Autechre, Bovine Life isn't IDM, but it has some characteristics of the genre. Made up of a lot of warm analog sounds and epic soundtrack qualities, Bovine Life comes off as playful one minute and sad the next, keeping a nice variation between tracks. Such variety in sounds and styles is rare these days, but Bovine Life seems to weave them with little effort. And to think, Chris Dooks is just getting started.

Lastly, there's a 6 minute short film included on the CD entitled "No One Sees Black" which is fascinating and quite well done.

Reviewed by GunHed

[http://www.wetworksezine.com/reviews/bovinelife\\_socialelectrics.html](http://www.wetworksezine.com/reviews/bovinelife_socialelectrics.html)

### **MCMAG # 6 – France – February 2002**

Le cerveau de Chris Dooks quand il compose un morceau doit ressembler à un entrelacs de serpents sous tension. Ils tressautent et ondulent sans que l'on puisse prévoir quelle direction ils prendront au prochain éclair bleu. Vous l'aurez compris, les sons riches et précis de cet album électronique animent les vertus stimulantes d'une sécheresse électrique.

Les éructations du synthétiseur dans les mains de Chris Dooks aka Bovine Life ne sauraient dire le contraire. Trompeusement ludique par sa mélodie (Now We Are Traffic), grandiose avec ses samples spectraux aux atours primitifs (Ether Works Part II), entêtant comme un voyage sans fin dans l'Odyssée de l'Espace de Kubrick (Sevumpteen), en tout une vingtaine de titres inclassables... Voici donc le premier Lp de Bovine Life.

Un album dont un jumeau de Aphex Twin sans l'obsession des rythmiques pourrait s'approcher s'il envisageait de prendre de vrais risques... de ceux qui conduisent à une apnée méticuleusement barrée, guidée par l'excitation des neurones et du coup, des autres sens. Le titre *Alku Heartbeat* est tout simplement un bijou du genre: alliant une démarche sonore chirurgicale à des effets sur l'auditeur de nostalgie et de sensibilité très surprenants...

### **REMOTE INDUCTION – UK – February 2002**

Chris Dooks has been working for years as a film maker, his hobby on the side was making music. This leads to his recording under the name of Bovine Life, previewed on one of the Bip-Hop Generation compilations then followed by this album Social Electrics. The disc comes in a fold out digi-pack sleeve and features 20 tracks, many of which are short pieces and several of which are collaborations of some sort. Along with the music there is also a short film on the enhanced disc, a quick time piece with a man wandering around in a suit, increasingly dishevelled and blood covered, mixed with images of children and the man's increasing distress – ambiguously curious as short films tend to be.

Bass tinged purr sets Tired But Wired (BL up, a playful spring adding along with a sighing accompaniment. Building by degrees so that while it remains a steady piece it becomes more complex and a notch more upbeat. Percussion repeats through a sprung filter, loose reverberation mixing with vocal samples relating to O. J. Simpson (BL v Nathaniel "Chief" Forrest). Drift melodies are set up to work through the beats. "Well I don't know" repeats against a rising bass tone, triggering wet percussion in The Smiles Of God (BL v Nathaniel "Chief" Forrest). Setting up a slow drifting drone, like falling asleep. With blips and skips keeping you focussed to the fore with the ongoing dialogue. Now We Are Traffic (BL) starts with little buzz edged bass notes, the sequence peaked by one smoothed note. Tapping beats play, peaked by a filtered clipping. Rotund organ plays up a vibrant melody, lighter notes playing a more wind instrument pitched accompaniment. Catching in a sighing resistance to conclusion.

Skip, skip, skip, the wobbling drone builds, but a sighing vocal beats it to the fore of Ether Works Part 1 (BL v ?). So it layers slightly, working on an "ethereal" mood to match the title. A vocal works up, female song tone syllables and a man saying "loneliness". String strums as strikes with the voices, beats a rattled loop with slight crackling. The moody core of this piece reminds me of Coil; though the beat and crackle tend to suggest something else. Becoming more agitated by degrees with electronic interrupts, while brassy drone builds in the background. A different vocal sample adds a reflection on the piece and finishes. Notes play a fractured static wash, chromatic swirl through Sweepeat's pixel layers. Vocal sigh is clipped, extracting hints of drone potential over the continuing stutter. A jaunty drumming starts, quick pacing, focusing the track to give it drive and a definite vibe. Bass rasps, then a note pi-pings, leading to a certain crackle and pop, an accented male voice providing the title "maeow".

Further dialogue is affected as it loops, and a sawing signal provides a consistent buzz. Strangely Maeow (BL vs Duodecimo) is one part playful, one part ominous - light and dark in the different elements.

A sighing vocal assembles syllables in Ether Works Part 2 (BL v ?), recapturing some of that mood. Percussive strokes are deeper, echoing against string potential and periodic clicking. A clean tone comes up, sighing electronics set up with a slight oscillation that provides notes. Sparser than part 1, but perhaps rawer for that. Similarly Sevumpteen (BL v Kohn) loops a vocal clip which works with a filter into a flow in which the title is repeated. The sounds layer, wisps rush, intensity is provided. Reaching a peak where the voice becomes gentler, yet also computerised. Giving way to a moment of static, switching between hints of that and a sustained tone carrying through deep liquids electronic fashion for a bit - working a reprise of the softer vocal sample section. Overall this piece may be a little too long, but has some nice touches. Plodding beats and tight plinks introduce us to a Dusseldorf Girl (BL v Smyglyssna). Blossoming strings provide a building harmonic drone effect to go with the first elements. Fractured beats work up then slow, muffling just as they were established.

Pulse tones work through sighing bass notes in Slate, Stone, Glass, Wind (BL), slices of percussion vibrating as they cut through the form. Well contained as it manifests a strong combination of detail. The initial tones gain an increased persistence through the flexation of plate layers. Stuttered vocal cuts act out in Atay Atae (BL v Octorock). Crunching sinister beats come up with a deep breathing bass. Focussing a little more in a restrained vibe, darkened, but less oppressive than the establishing moment. Morse code blips through abraded stutter. Muffled voice triggers cylindrical strokes of Trigger Finger (BL v M.C. McCooch dog), tapping percussion keeping the flow as a bass line and repeated samples play their role in this assembly. Wire string provides a certain fragile melody. The voice babble developing further, occasional words maybe comprehended.

Reprise once again for the low bass atmosphere of Ether Works Part 3 (BL v ?). Purring signal forming a melodic line through vocal sighs and hiss tinged skips. Wistful and faltering, as the electronic sense starts to gain ground. Notes plink in an awkward melody to start Alku Heartbeat (Bovine Life eats Alku), refining with pulses and chimes into a stronger form. Layering and working complimentary melodies as it progresses. At one level muffled, on another slow and steady, then periodically clipped pulses or dipping flares. Slow motion chimes take over with a crackling detail contrasting as it is drawn out. Skipping purr gives way to a reverbed, strum of melody that is Weak Latte Symphony (BL). Piano notes and precise tones work in with a warmly, tumbled percussive line. Homeostasis (BL v Kohn) comes up at a manic pace, beats here, squelching signal there, mish mash all slowing into a strained drone and agitated crackle. From there, working some of the first elements with more of the second, Kohn's effect on this piece being evident enough.

Spaced tones and a tightly pulsed percussion work through the drift of Vida Torpe (BL v Yituey). A short subdued piece; given the previous track. Low buzz muffles random clanking noise, Dog Day Cicada seeing Bovine Life with Janek Schaefer work out a washed out intensity. Blipping skips breaking through like a toy box on drugs. Burbling bass bytes coming up, but returning the body to a more reduced sighing level. Vibrating jags skip into Now We Are Light (BL), repetitive with hints of strings around the edges. Working into a solid sound, one which is understated to a degree, but effective enough with that. RVR: PTR

<http://www.remoteinduction.co.uk/audio/bvnlfsc1.htm>

## **THE VIBES – Italy – February 2002**

Registrato in un appartamento di Edinburgo con l'ausilio del pc e di internet, Social Electrics –primo lavoro musicale del regista/artista digitale Chris Dooks-, senza enfasi nè retorica-, si può ritenere uno dei migliori album nella sempre più folta schiera di sperimentatori/programmatori. Uno degli aspetti più sorprendenti di questo album sta nel fatto che si è sperimentato un approccio compositivo ad interfaccia pensata -per così dire-, dando risultati molto più autentici rispetto ad un'interazione per così dire reale. Difatti, molte delle strutture/de/costruzioni sonore sono state architettate esclusivamente on-line, nel senso che tra i collaboratori di Dooks -che soffre da qualche anno di una grave forma di Encefalomielite Mialgica, un'atroce neuropatia che compromette l'apparato locomotore-figurano entità mai incontrate realmente -gli Ether Works, caratterizzati da sperimentazioni vocaliche apprezzabili, realizzate con artisti di cui non si è riusciti a risalire all'identità ne sono la prova-. L'assemblaggio di ciascun pezzo si è svolto attraverso scambi di files mp3. E i risultati sono davvero interessanti. Suggestioni amniotiche e lessemi elettronici che toccano livelli di pura epica subtonale, in excerpts quali The Smiles of God, Sevumpteen, Trigger Frigger e Homeostasis -desquamate terroritmie digitali-. Registrazioni di campo si uniscono ad elementi presi dall'hip hop e dall'elettronica seminale, baluginanti emersioni melodiche, suoni talvolta abrasivi, bleeps, clicks e

rumorismo analogico amalgamate in un sound co~eso. Ignorando regole compositve e rifiutando blandamente ogni forma di concettualizzazione, trascendendo ogni catalogazione e influenza, eliminando ogni elemento stilistico superfluo, Social Electrics -ne siamo certi- offre una disarmante visione poetico/simbolica di un uomo in lotta con un male terribile, il cui amore per la vita e per la creatività vi parlerà. A completamento di questa meravigliosa opera, è incluso un cortometraggio -No One Sees Black- realizzato da Chris qualche tempo prima della malattia. Vito Camarretta.

[http://www.thevibes.net/rec2002/bov\\_life.htm](http://www.thevibes.net/rec2002/bov_life.htm)

### **AMBIENTRANCE – USA – February 2002**

How now! Esoteric electronics are given form by bovine life's Chris Dooks and friends. Crisp synthtones are arranged and effected in curious fashions often dappled with equally-odd beatsystems and other audiobits in social electrics.

Churning organ-like patterns are speckled with glitchy beats as tired but wired opens the eclectic 57-minute set. Less straightforward o.j. simpson ruffles oddly and is embedded with barely audible TVspeak while the smiles of god's spoken samples are clearly heard though spastically fragmented against a quirky rhythmic backdrop.

A female voice croons softly along with writhing glare and is overlaid with a spoken male phrase and spattery cymbals in ether works part 1. Disintegrated pieces of sevumpteen (5:00) include choir-like chorals, female robot voice and inexplicable audio all chopped up and strewn across a bed hisses and gleams and sometimes rather disjointed percussion. Like a movie score for some Egyptian/sci-fi flick, slate stone glass wind churns with panoramic powers and gruff textural beats.

The unintelligibly blathering fem-robot voice of trigger finger is just plain annoying, though the drone and drum sections are cool. The blistering sonic insanity of homeostasis would freak 97% of the population completely out. vida torpe (1:02) steers into to gentler dementia with smooth tones infused with buzzy activities.

Just so aggressively hyperquirky it's hard to hang onto... bovine life's 20 tracks (and one QuickTime movie - quite surreal but interestingly done) of social electrics feature some amazingly innovative (and certainly never-before-heard) sound deformation but it'll take an ear of steel to withstand their cumulative craziness... for the heartiest listeners. C+.

This review posted 02.10.02 - by David J Opdyke

<http://www.ambientrance.org/0202/bovl-se.html>

### **CLYZENN – France – February 2002**

Bien que l'allusion à l'ESB soit assez évidente dans son appellation, l'Écossais Chris Dooks aka Bovine Life n'a pas eu de préjugés à venir signer son premier album au pays des vaches folles. Il faut dire que le label marseillais Bip-Hop fait preuve d'un talent insolent en matière de musiques électroniques, et offre en plus de bien beaux CD's aux packaging luxueux. Exception qui confirme la règle, la pochette de "Social Electrics" n'attire pas beaucoup le regard... Ceci dit, comme on dit souvent, l'essentiel est à l'intérieur. Ce premier album n'en est cependant pas réellement un puisque il s'agit du fruit quelque peu hétérogène de la collaboration de Chris Dooks avec d'autres DJ's dont un membre de The Third Eye Foundation. Peut-être est-ce là que réside le problème... Bien que démarrant de façon assez enthousiasmante, "Social Electrics" se perd assez rapidement dans un nombre un peu excessif de directions musicales, sans prendre le temps de les exploiter à fond. Si l'écoute n'en est nullement désagréable, l'auditeur sentira peut-être un sentiment d'inaboutissement, voire une certaine frustration, à l'écoute de ces 19 titres trop courts et trop éparpillés. Les nombreuses collaborations étouffent sans doute un peu la créativité initiale de Chris Dooks et on ne peut que souhaiter que l'Écossais carnassier puisse nous présenter un album plus personnel et reflétant plus justement son art. On pourra cependant constater que l'homme manie aussi bien la caméra que les séquenceurs, puisqu'en page CD-Rom, on peut découvrir "No One Sees Black", un court-métrage muet et angoissant réalisé par Dooks en 1999. Encourageant !

Mario

<http://www.chez.com/clyzenn/chronique36.html>

### **SUBSTANCE – USA – February 2002**

To explain the title a bit: Chris Dooks has a severe illness and collaborates with fellow artists whenever he is fit enough. On this record the filmmaker comes up with 20 tracks and a short movie (No One Sees Black, 1999). He

builds abstract Electronica tracks with contributions from Octorock, Kohn, Janek Schaefer and Matt Elliott just to name a few. Often it sounds like a mix between Casio Electro Pop and cut up collages, Now We Are Traffic is like Solvent getting lost in a fairy tale forest. The music is quite nervous in the poppier parts of the record, but between the fierce frequencies some beautiful moments can be found.

René

<http://www.substancezine.com/music/framesetmusic.html>

### **FLEX – Austria – February 2002**

Menschen, die solche Musik machen, sind zwar vielleicht ein wenig faul, doch ihr Kopf kann nicht träge sein. Die Frage nach Dilletantismus oder nicht stellt sich hier gar nicht erst - sie wäre auch nicht zu beantworten. Sounds und Beats stürmen hier aufeinander zu und verbinden sich dann doch zu einem als Vergnügen wahrnehmbaren Ganzen. Die Sounds sind unrein, die Samples witzig und die Tracks haben Titel wie "O.J. Simpson" oder "Tired But Wired". Immer wieder gemahnt das an die Wahnwitzigkeit einer Third Eye Foundation (Same Samples??), leider ohne deren Perfektion zu erreichen. Für Zeiten, in denen man sich gerade nicht konzentrieren muss, ist diese CD das Ideale, um sich abzulenken und einzutauchen in eine undefinierte Klangwelt, in der hinter jedem Takt eine Überraschung stecken kann.

Martin Mühl

<http://www.flex.at/html/platten14.html>

### **MATAMORE – Belgium – January 2002**

« Chris Dooks, compositeur de musique électronique et réalisateur de film (certains ont été primés) est surtout connu pour ses réalisations sur les musiciens en Grande-Bretagne. Il a en effet tourné des courts métrages sur des artistes reconnus comme Scanner...., mais également des sujets autour de labels indépendants. ... Malheureusement Chris est atteint depuis 1999 d'une grave maladie, baptisée Myalgic Encephalomyelitis ou plus simplement Fatigue Chronique. Sa carrière aurait dû ainsi prendre fin. Mais il n'a jamais renoncé et sous le pseudonyme de Bovine Life s'est entièrement consacré à ce qui n'était qu'un hobby, la musique. » peut-on lire dans la bio.

Les trois quarts des plages qui constituent ce disque sont nées de collaboration via Internet avec divers artistes électroniques comme Matt Elliott (Third Eye Foundation), Jurgen De Blonde (Köhn, de Portables), Janek Schaefer ou plus obscurs, issus de labels comme Alku ou Plug Research.

Musique électronique certes, mais on reste cependant éloigné des productions Warp. Bovine Life semble attaché à l'utilisation de sons plus concrets, réels, au sein de sa musique, ce qui la rapproche de certaines productions électroacoustiques.

On ne sombre pourtant pas dans un quelconque académisme ou extrémisme, les pièces restent toujours courtes et plaisantes et l'ensemble de l'œuvre ne perd aucune cohérence de la multitude de ses intervenants.

Parmi les différents exercices de collaboration, on mettra tout particulièrement en relief ceux avec Matt Elliott de Third Eye Foundation. « Ether Works » I, II & III prolongent quelque peu l'œuvre de ce dernier, poussé par Bovine Life vers un peu plus de minimalisme. Trois variations autour d'un même thème qui constituent les phases et les intermèdes les plus apaisants de « Social Electrics ».

A vrai dire l'écoute de ce disque correspond pour moi à des instants d'indifférence et de fatigues, aux dernières poignées de minutes, une fois la nuit tombée qui me séparent encore de l'instant où j'irai me coucher. Instants de fatigue, mais aussi d'indifférence et de désillusion.

« Social Electrics » est pour moi la b.o. de ces instants fades autant subis que vécus. Il n'y a rien d'exceptionnel ni de déplaisant ici. Juste quelque chose qui reste secondaire, qui m'émeut peu et que j'ai plutôt tendance à fuir.

Didier

[http://www.matamore.net/annexes/chr\\_bovine.htm](http://www.matamore.net/annexes/chr_bovine.htm)

### **GREEN UFOS – Spain – January 2002**

El artista digital y reconocido -ganador de premios en el Reino Unido- director de cine Chris Dooks era famoso por su trabajo visual con músicos británicos, dirigiendo documentales de todo tipo, desde luminarias como Scanner a The South Bank Show, o pequeños sellos de dormitorio perdidos quién sabe dónde. Su carrera brilló durante la

década de los noventa. Como quiera que sea, Chris enfermó y su enfermedad le obligó a permanecer prácticamente encerrado en los confines de su propio cuarto, dejando, por obligación, su cine apartado. Aquí es donde debería acabar la historia. Pero, no siendo nunca una persona que se deje derrotar con facilidad, Chris se armó de pseudónimo (Bovine Life), e hizo que su, hasta entonces hobby, la música electrónica, pasara a tener mayor relevancia. Utilizó el internet como la guía de una serie de excursiones tanto en solitario como en colaboraciones, que eventualmente han formado la fantástica y ecléctica sorpresa de este nuevo lanzamiento para BiP-HOp. Sus trabajos exclusivos con artistas y sellos como Köhn, Alku, Mego o Plug Research, o los tres temas con Matt Elliot (antes The Third Eye Foundation, aquí simplemente "?"), están todos incluidos en este lanzamiento de 20 canciones. Hay canciones en solitario, o colaboraciones con artistas menos conocidos de Puerto Rico, Suecia o California. Destacar que Chris no ha conocido personalmente a ninguno de estos músicos "realmente", siendo su colaboración más bien a través de MP3 y diálogos vía chat cada vez que podía acercarse al teclado. ¡Ésta es realmente música de protesta! ¡Protesta contra no sentirse bien! Bovine Life ha estado creando jams a través del módem, hablando en lenguas electrónicas, sonidos secretos que versan sobre sentirse inmerso en fluido amniótico... Este CD también presenta un film de 6 minutos que Chris dirigió justo antes de ponerse enfermo. También firma la banda sonora. Es raro que haya artistas que destaquen en más de una disciplina, pero Bovine Life está lleno de maravillosa variedad, y ni en Green Ufos ni en BiP-HOp podemos predecir qué vendrá después...  
[http://www.greenufos.com/web/grupos/b/bovine\\_life.htm](http://www.greenufos.com/web/grupos/b/bovine_life.htm)

### **Geiger - Denmark - January 2002**

I 1999 stod Chris Dooks på tærsklen til en lovende filmkarriere. Med en række dokumentarprogrammer om engelske musikere - bl.a. Robin Rimbaud og dennes Scanner-projekt - havde han etableret sig som en ung, kreativ filmmand. En pludselig debilitetssygdom svækkede ham dog i en sådan grad, at han måtte lægge både videobåndene og kameraerne fra sig. I stedet kastede Dooks sig over musikken, etablerede sit eget lille hjemmestudie og udnyttede internettets muligheder for udveksling af musik og lyde. Muligheder, der er blevet udfoldet i form af musikalske samarbejder over nettet mellem Dooks og en række andre både ukendte og mere etablerede musikere - bl.a. Matt Elliot (ex-The Third Eye Foundation), Köhn og Janek Schaefer.

Hele denne solstrålehistorie er der nu - et par år senere - kommet electronica-albummet Social Electrics ud af. Et album, som - ud over bl.a. de nævnte samarbejder pr. modem - også indeholder den sidste film, Dooks nåede at indspille inden sygdommen tog overhånd. Overordnet set bygger Social Electrics på en række aktuelle tendenser i den mere eksperimenterende elektroniske musik. Eksempelvis benytter Dooks sig - på de fleste numre - af click'n'cut'ens knitrende og springende lydelementer. Pladens egentlige styrke ligger dog i, at denne æstetik i udpræget grad søges sammensmeltet med blandt andet det mere direkte og aggressive udtryk, som prægede 1980'ernes techno- og industrial-genrer. Det er ikke udelukkende verdensfjern og instrumental elektronisk musik, der er på færde her. Med et sample, der lyder som en forvrænget retssalsreportage, på "O.J. Simpson" - samt rablerier om amerikanske indianere på "The Smiles of God" - genoptager Bovine Life den mediekritik, der især kendetegnede industrial-genren.

Med mørkt messende og forvredne vokalsamples spiller numre som "Atay Atae" og "Sweepea" også industrial-genren op mod en fin fornemmelse for den nutidige electronica - bl.a. en mere letbenet drum'n'bass-lyd. En blanding af avantgarde og populærkultur, som leder tankerne hen på f.eks. Throbbing Gristles 1979-album 20 Jazz Funk Greats. Et nummer som "Ether Works pt. 1" - et af pladens bedre øjeblikke - benytter en lignende strategi i sine lyd- og genreblandinger. Nummerets rygrad er et sammenstød mellem to vokalsamples, som klippes sammen på kryds og tværs af hinanden: En hymneagtig, sfærisk vokal og en stump dagligdags tale. Det førstnævnte sample lyder stort og pompøst, mens det andet - ordet "loneliness" - såvel klangligt som indholdsmæssigt spænder ben for det foregående udsagn.

Alt i alt vrimler Social Electrics dog med så mange indfald, at man bliver en smule forpustet. Flere steder er det som om, at lidt for mange gode idéer er blevet presset sammen til ét stivbenet nummer uden de store indre begrundelser. Andre steder er det lige omvendt. Her resulterer sammenstøddet mellem de kontrasterende lyde og stilarter i en række vellykkede skitser og fragmenter, der ikke stivner - der ikke lader sig indfange i færdige former. Men hvor om alting er, står man i hvert fald med en cd på hånden, der udviser noget så sjældent for den nutidige elektroniske scene som politisk bevidsthed. En cd, som det - på grund af dens skitse-agtige æstetik - både på godt og ondt tager lang tid at lytte sig igennem.

<http://www.geiger.dk/>

### **HARAKIRI – Germany – January 2002**

'Bovine Life', dahinter steht ein preisgekrönter britischer Filmmacher und Medienkünstler, der sich im Gefolge einer schweren Krankheit auf sein Hobby, die Soundfrickelei, verlegte. Er erregte schon auf der letzten bip\_hop-Compilation Aufsehen. Hier nun sein Soloalbum. Es dokumentiert seine unterschiedlichen Kollaborationen über das Internet - Konstruktionen auf Basis von mp3-Dialogen - mit Künstlern wie köhn, Matt Eliott und mit Labels wie Alku und Mego. Zusammengebastelt wurde das Ganze in den seltenen Momenten, in denen der Künstler die Kraft hatte, sein Keyboard zu bedienen. Musik also aus einem Extremzustand heraus. Die Momente, in denen dies hörbar wird, machen das Album aus. Nebenbei, im Guten wie im Schlechten, zeigt es, was mit abstrakter Klangforschung derzeit noch zu leisten ist - und was nicht.

Das Album ist jedenfalls eines der frischesten in einem schon leicht nach Verwesung riechenden Genre, obwohl das Ganze nach zwei Dritteln eigenartig deutlich an Intensität verliert. Weniger und besser ausgewählt wäre hiermehr gewesen.

(JR)

<http://www.harakiri-kulturmagazin.de>

### **EXCLAIM – Canada – December 2001**

Highly abstract boogie; this is an odd album where each track is dedicated to a particular concept. Some tracks are nothing but repetitive distorted vocals repeating a name or phrase, while other tracks are merely repetitive abstract electronic noodling, still others are rhythmic electro grooves that incorporate a fun, quirky personality. Pulsing, clicking, popping and crackling, this album is loosely structured music and defies formulaic convention. Social Electrics contains edits by Bovine Life, along with collaborations with the likes of Nathaniel "Chief" Forrest, Kohn and Octorock. Social Electrics also features a six-minute video.

I. Khider - December 10th 2001

### **TRAX # 47 – France – Novembre 2001**

Petit frère du label hardcore pandemonium, Bip-Hop est underground et pointu. Mais l'électro foutraque de Bovine Life a ceci de particulier qu'elle ne néglige pas une certaine forme d'humour. Ce qui fait de «Social electrics» un grand premier album. Bovine Life, aka Chris Dooks, documentariste pour la TV anglaise pourrait se situer entre Readymade pour le côté funk déglingué et Muslimgauze pour l'utilisation du courant alternatif. C'est dans ce genre de métissage qu'on fait les plus beaux bébés : on voit un avenir radieux s'ouvrir à «Weak Latte Symphony», seul 4/4 de l'album, véritable petite bombe à faire danser le cerveau. Même s'il ya des pièces un peu trop «larsen qui nique tes oreilles» (au casque en tout cas), l'ensemble s'écoute. On garde la sensation d'avoir passé un moment dans un endroit recouvert d'une saine couche de crasse, celle qui trahit des préoccupations plus ambitieuses que passer le plumeau. [ Victor Heitz ]

### **RECYCLE YOUR EARS – UK – January 2002**

Bovine life is the project of Chris Dooks, a former film maker now producing electronic music. Most of the tracks on "Social electrics" were written in collaboration with other artists (and none of them is familiar to me), therefore providing a lot of diversity to this album, whose 19 tracks often jumps from a genre to another, even though the overall feeling of the disc is kept. "Social electrics" sounds gentle, poetic, but always a bit twisted, a bit withered. Sad but not dark, this is an album that has an interesting atmosphere, and which translates it to music in an original way.

Bovine Life's blend of electronica is a highly analog, melodic and clear one. Real beats are scarce and, when present, are not too heavy (even though one can distinguish some short outburst of drum'n'bass pattern every so often). The tracks are structured like songs, and you could well imagine somebody adding a voice to several tracks, for example the opening "Tired but wired". very tweaked, the sounds used on this album are really original and do not sound like a factory preset at all, having a nice texture and adequately fitting the calm and dense atmosphere. Sometimres reminiscent of Oval, sometimes close to Neutral (and one with notice that one of the sound used in "Trigger finger" is exactly the same as one heavily used by Somatic Responses)., this is an album with high and lows, but which flows nicely, and changes often, enabling the listener to forget quickly about the less inspired passages.

Finally, the CD also comes with a video called "No one sees black", which is really well done (which is not surprising since Chris Dooks was a film maker before being a musician), and whose music is more ambient and orchestral than the rest of the CD. Anyways, a nice little treat, as it always is with Bip Hop's bonus videos.

Not beat-oriented enough to be IDM (there is nothing to dance to here), but definitely "intelligent" and well done, "Social electrics" is a warm and touching disc that might lack a bit of coherence, but still plays nicely and is thought well enough to make you forget about its hybrid nature and its weirdness. Probably not something for everybody, but nonetheless charming.

Nicolas, January 8th, 2001

<http://www.recycleyourears.com/index2.html>

### **TERRA – Poland – January 2002**

Niezbyt zajmujący album brytyjskiego reżysera Chrisa Dooka, który zamiast robić filmy wiać się za muzyką. Dostyc mocno wyeksploatowane brzmienia ukłajające się w konstrukcje, które już przywoływane przy okazji innych recenzji p?yt z francuskiej wytwórni Bip-Hop, mianowicie konstrukcje znane z albumów wydawanych przez Warp Records. Muzyka Bovine Life składa się z dwóch, wyraźnie oddzielnych elementów składowych: rytmu i melodii. Pomiedzy wrzucono jakies śmiechy i rozmowy. Całość robi wrażenie skomponowanej na poczekaniu bez wiekszego wysiłku. I pewno właśnie tak było. Chris przywołuje w całym przywołanej wkładce, jak to będąc totalnym nuworyszem na polu eksperymentalnych dzieł, za namową znajomego został wysłany do Londynu po dziwne p?yty Hafler Trio, zapakowane w papier ścierny. Dzisiaj rozmarzony, wspomina ten fakt z rozrzewnieniem i cieszy się, że "jest w klubie". A moim zdaniem powinien poświęcić więcej nie tylko tej podrapanej p?yty w papierze ściernym, ale bardziej przystępnej muzy, by nie popełniać wtórnych i mało ciekawych rzeczy.

Kamil Antosiewicz

[http://www.terra.pl/recenzje/b.html#bovine\\_life](http://www.terra.pl/recenzje/b.html#bovine_life)

### **JADE – France – Janvier 2002**

On savait l'humour de Chris Dooks grinçant. Il nous donne une fois de plus raison en nommant son projet musical électronique « Bovine Life ». Une vie de Bovin, qui prend une dimension cynique et tragique lorsqu'on considère les conditions de vie actuelle des vaches, et le lot quotidien de Chris Dooks, paralysé à vie par une Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. Pour autant qu'on puisse se résoudre à ne plus manger de vaches, on aura une difficulté autrement plus grande à se priver des petites mélodies digitales et autres bizarreries électroniques qui encombrant la tête de ce polyvalent anglais. Polyvalent dans la mesure où sa première passion, le cinéma documentaire, l'aura amené à côtoyer de talentueux artistes, parmi lesquels Scanner et dont le rendu (ses documentaires) lui auront permis de s'asseoir une sérieuse crédibilité et une belle renommée dans le milieu.

Une maladie grave, réduisant sa mobilité et ses capacités n'aura pas pour autant terrassé sa soif de création, trouvant alors dans la musique et les nouvelles techniques attendantes, la possibilité de créer et de collaborer à moindres efforts. Le résultat de ses rencontres virtuelles figurent sur ces 20 titres ( avec des collaborations de Köhn, Future Pilot AKA, de Third Eye Foundation à Komet en passant par Alku ( Mego), Ylyptik et des morceaux sur des labels amis (Plug Research, Bip-Hop, Diskono ...) ainsi que des artistes moins connus mais célèbres dans leur pays. Abstraction faite de la charge émotionnelle et des efforts consentis pour faire naître cet album...on réalise assez vite qu'on est devant un trublion de la nouvelle génération, qui n'hésite pas à gommer les contours un peu stricte ou ronflant de l'expérimentation électro (si, si, ça existe) pour nous entraîner dans des versants plus pittoresques et accidentés, obligeant notre corps aux déhanchements où à la gnuflexion, autant de mouvements qu'on souhaiterait voir exécuté par Bovine Life. (La pochette où figure des ombres chinoises d'enfants s'ébattant en dit long...) 20 titres, quelque part entre du grand Aphex Twin et des prises de voix directes mutines (abstract hi-hop, classique) et des comptines cheap rétro, qui résonnent comme les 20 commandements personnels d'un hymne à la vie .

<http://www.pastis.org/jade/janv02/topbruitjanv02.htm>

### **AQUARIUS newlist – USA – November 2001**

Bovine Life presents a weird album of abstract electronica, sounding like the mid-90s clunky techno of As One or David Moufang with plenty of mechanical sequencing sort of like Tackhead, but with the purposefully angularity of Laurie Anderson to guarantee qualifications of this as "conceptual." Bovine Life offers some collaborations with Smyglyssna (Plug Research), renowned turntable experimentalist Janek Schaefer, and a bunch of unknown factors (Nathaniel "Chief" Forrest, Duodecimo, Octorock, M.C. McCough Dog, Kohn, and Yituey).

<http://aquariusrecords.org>

### **AREEN [EE] – December 2001**

See on just sedalaadi, ühtaegu täiesti arusaamatu ja lõbustavusele pretendeeriv eksperimentaalne elektroonika, mis teil suure tõenäosusega juhtme kokku ajab. Bovine Life on filmimees, keda (nagu bukletist lugeda) on tabanud mingi raske tõbi, mistõttu tal filmitegemine pooleli jäi. Seda, kuidas või miks ta siis järsku plaadi tegi, ei seletata. Pisut filmimuusika moodi on see küll - sãmplitest ehitatud filmimuusika, kuid mitte ambient. Kui teate selliseid artiste nagu Köhn ja Janek Schaefer, siis ka nemad ja veel teisedki on siin esindatud. Plaat ise on huvitav, kuid ebaoluline. Kõige imelikum tema juures ongi see, et selline (iseenesest mitte ju paha, kuid täiesti seletamatu) plaat üldse tehti. Ilmselt on siin mingi seaduspãrasus, sest täpselt samal põhjusel imestasin ma kunagi ka ühe Köhni albumi üle. 6

### **ALL MUSIC GUIDE – USA – January 2001**

^Social Electrics is Bovine Life (aka Chris Dooks)'s first full-length album, following the release of his first tracks on the compilation CD Bip-Hop Generation Vol. 3. The artist filled his duties without creating something particularly strong. The album is thoroughly enjoyable, good clean fun in the world of late-1990s electronica -- playful, witty, intelligent -- but it lacks substance. Coming from the Bip-Hop label, it remains surprisingly risk-free. Then again, if risk is not something you are looking for, you will like it. Dooks' music is mostly beat-driven and has a minimalist crystalline feel fans of the Mego crew will appreciate. The 20 tracks tend to be a bit repetitive (the sound palette shows little variations) and some go absolutely nowhere Alku Hearbeat may be the worst example. Yet, there is nothing to be bored about: beats bounce, cleverness abound, and a sense of fun and leisure permeate the whole thing. Dooks produced only six cuts solo, the others are the result of collaborations. Notable guests include Janek Schaefer, Köhn, Matt Elliot (ex-Third Eye Foundation) and Nathaniel Chief Forrest, the latter responsible (at least in part) for the best moments. This enhanced CD also contains a 6-minute movie by Dooks (also a film maker) titled No One Sees Black . A strange, slightly surrealist tale without words, it contrasts heavily in atmosphere with the music. Bovine Life's tracks on the aforementioned compilation were already the lightest of the CD and this album simply follows the same direction: enjoyable yet forgettable.

François Couture

<http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=A9rn8b5p4psq0>

### **CONTENTMENT – Austria – December 2001**

Menschen, die so eine Musik machen sind zwar vielleicht ein wenig faul, doch ihr Kopf kann nicht trãge sein. Die Frage nach Dilletantismus oder nicht, stellt sich hier gar nicht erst - sie wãre auch nicht zu beantworten. Sounds und Beats stürmen hier aufeinander zu uns verbinden sich dann doch zu einem als Vergnügen wahrnehmbaren Ganzen. Die Sounds sind unrein, die Samples witzig und die Tracks haben Titel wie "O.J. Simpson" oder "Tired But Wired". Immer wieder gemahnt das an die Wahnwitzigkeit einer Third Eye Foundation (Same Samples??), leider ohne dessen Perfektion zu erreichen. Für Leute und Zeiten in denen man sich gerade nicht konzentrieren muss, ist diese CD das Ideale um sich abzulenken und einzutauchen in eine undefinierte Klangwelt, in der hinter jedem Takt eine Überraschung stecken kann.

Martin Mühl - CG

[www.contentment.at](http://www.contentment.at)

### **NEURAL – Italy – December 2001**

Bovine Life è il progetto personale di Chris Dooks, filmmaker britannico del decennio scorso costretto a vivere fra le mura casalinghe per una malattia che gli ha precluso la strada del successo su celluloidi. La disgrazia lo ha però fatto concentrare sul suo secondo interesse: la musica. In particolare quella elettronica che ha potuto continuare a creare anche in questa situazione di disagio e che gli ha aperto le porte della label francese Bip\_Hop. Così dopo alcuni lavori su cd split e compilation (vedi 'Bip\_Hop Generation vol.3'), eccolo al suo vero lavoro su lunga distanza; al disco collaborano molti artisti fra i quali spicca Matt Elliot (Third Eye Foundation) i cui campioni vengono usati in alcuni dei pezzi più ieratici della raccolta. Ben venti tracce, che in taluni casi riescono a mettere i brividi con le loro atmosfere cupe e paurose, dove si avverte la componente descrittiva adatta ad accompagnare chissà quali visionarie riprese cinematografiche. In altri momenti spicca il lato divertente e ballabile, che convince anche i visitatori abituali di discoteche d'n'b. Ma quel che colpisce maggiormente sono le alterazioni vocali, i bleep ed i i click ottenuti attraverso le collaborazioni via modem che Dooks ha registrato e ricostruito durante gli ultimi 2 anni. Una segnale elettronico del suo PC che si fa linguaggio a distanza e che crea musica attraverso una reale interazione digitale. Completa il disco un corto di 6 minuti girato nel '98 da Dooks che ben accompagna il prodotto musicale per temi e suggestioni.

Michele Casella

<http://www.neural.it/rec/bovinelife.htm>

### **GONZO CIRCUS # 51 – Belgium – November 2001**

Bip-Hop is het meer dan verrassende, elektronische sublabel van het Franse Pandemonium. De labelbaas heeft al diverse interessante compilaties samengesteld, «Bip-Hop Generation»; v.1,2 en 3, vol exclusief materiaal van de meest uiteenlopende intelligente techno-acts. De lat wordt bijzonder hoog gelegd, ook voor de overige cd's op het label. Nu valt de beurt aan Chris Dooks alias Bovine Life, die op «Bip-Hop Generation v.3» al prettige harddisk experimenten aan de kritische luisteraar liet horen. De cd «Social Electrics» is ook echt sociaal (en elektronisch) geworden, want 14 van de 20 tracks worden geremixt door collega technici Nathaniel 'Chief' Forrest, Rupert Cogan (Duodecimo), Jurgen de Blonde (Köhn, Wio, De Portables), Henrik Johansson (Smyglyssna), Eric Sherman (Octorock), M.C. McCooch Dog, Roc (opopop), Claudio Chea, Janek Schaefer en Matt Elliot (voorheen The Third Eye Foundation). Vooral de drie versies van het nummer «Ether Works» waarin prachtige Third Eye Foundation-samples gebruikt worden, zijn om je vingers bij af te likken. Maar ook de andere artiesten brengen ieder hun eigen, bijzondere geluid, zoals Köhn met prettig gestoorde, repetitieve klanken. Bovine Life smelt weirde geluiden, electro-industrial en intelligente techno samen tot een eigenzinnige mix. Van Autechre en Aphex Twin tot Hafler Trio, Köhn, Neotropic en Third Eye Foundation. In de nabije toekomst zal er een album van Bovine Life and/or/vs Komet (Frank Bretschneider) uitkomen. (jwb)

### **ELECTRONIC ART NETWORK – Germany – November 2001**

[slacker] verstört läuft ein mann durch ein industriegebiet. er scheint etwas schlimmes getan zu haben, seine ärmel sind zerfetzt und an seinen händen und in seinem gesicht klebt blut. immer wieder blitzen merkwürdige bilder und visionen auf, begleitet von beklemmender musik. auch wenn der mann vielleicht gerade amok gelaufen ist , schwarz sehen tut er jedenfalls nicht. "no one sees black" heißt der kurzfilm, und er ist der letzte, den chris dooks gedreht hat. nicht weil er keine lust mehr hätte, nein, eine krankheit hindert den preisgekrönten filmemacher daran. doch statt aufzugeben widmete sich der engländer nun ganz seinem hobby, der elektronischen musik. ergebniss der arbeit ist "social electrics", ein 20 track langes album plus seines letzten films. zu hören gibts hier sehr ausdrucksstarke tracks irgendwo zwischen elektronika und soundscapes, die allesamt zwar unkonventionell, aber meist durchaus hörbar sind. da sie nicht den anstrengend nervigen beigeschmack anderer elektronik-späckereien besitzen sondern wirklich interessant sind, sollten auch leute, die sonst nicht auf experimentelle musik stehen, hier vielleicht einmal Reinhören. Es lohnt sich.

<http://www.electronic-art-network.com/frames/index.html>

### **BRAINWASHED – USA – November 2001**

Chris Dooks, the musician behind Bovine Life, understands that post-techno electronic music need not be a dour affair with art-gallery justification. His debut full-length CD is thoroughly fun and enjoyable, proudly home-made and full of inspired musical ideas, while sitting within that strange gray area between danceable electronica and contemporary computer music. One-finger melodies and concise compositions (averaging two and a half minutes long) dominate the album, which is a nice touch. That Dooks uses very few elements in each song is to his benefit as well; he establishes an open and engaging atmosphere that persists even on the darker, more abstract pieces. The most interesting aspect of "Social Electrics" is the home-made nature of the recordings. The album makes remarkable and inventive use of the technical limitations of DIY home recording; a Dr. Sample makes its presence known many times, as does the factory pre-set hand-clap keyboard sound, the telltale rise-and-fall swoosh of a ring modulator, and the unmistakable stutter of computer time-stretching. Evidence of human interaction with the sound-producing materials is present throughout in the form of manually turned knobs and punched keys, quite the antithesis to the faceless and flawless sheen of Raster-Music or Mille Plateaux. I suppose it's similar to the raw sound of DAT Politics, so a fan of one artist would do well to check out the other. Pretty damn fun stuff.

Howard Stelzer

<http://www.brainwashed.com/brain/brainv04i46.html>

### **[UZINE] 01.23 – Belgium – November 2001**

Moo! Filmmaker/musician Chris Dooks, who has previously collaborated with artists such as Third Eye Foundation or labels such as Plug Research, Alku or Mego, now releases a full length of his own... though only six of the twenty tracks actually appear to be solo work. Among the people with whom BL collaborated: Janek Schaefer (1x), Smyglyssna (1x) and Jurgen 'Köhn' De Blonde (2x); he also used samples of work by Matt Elliott (3x). (Incidentally: Bip-Hop will soon be releasing a number of Bovine Life collaborations with Frank 'Komet' Bretschneider as well.) What do these "Social Electrics" sound like? Well, as Laurie Anderson put it, it's a 'difficult listening hour'. Most of the music is very hard to describe in other words than 'electronic', 'experimental', 'without a storyline' and 'vèry undanceable'. "Sweepea" reminded me a bit of "Beating The Retreat"-era Test Department but most of the time, no points of reference seemed to apply to this album. The general atmosphere is quite cold and post-industrial and not much emotions are being conveyed, one might safely say, but that's about it before words once again fail you completely. Some of the music is annoying, some is fascinating. Among my favourite tracks: "Alku heartbeat", "Weak latte symphony" and "Now we are light"... a choice which might imply that the last part of the cd is more accessible. This cd also features a six minute film (QT for Macintosh & Windows) which Mr. Dooks directed. (pv)

### **ABSORB – UK – November 2001**

another oddball release from the consistently excellent french electronic label bip-hop. chris dooks is the guy under the strange psuedonym of bovine life and is an experimental film maker and digital artist. turning his hand to lo-fi electronics he has produced an intriguing if somewhat obtuse piece of work. collaborating with musicians via e-mail from such diverse locations as puerto rica, sweden and california, this twenty track cd straddles the line between deeply experimental noodling and a slightly more accesible form of braindance.

it sounds tough going, but it isn't really. most tracks clock in at around the three minute mark and feel like short experiments as opposed to lengthy detailed compositions and should be treated as such. opening with the distorted noise of 'tired but wired' and 'o.j. simpson', the latter backed to a phlanged speech of oj's lawyer johnny cochrane. 'now we are traffiic' is an amusing, cheeky nod back to bleep techno that sounds remarkably like capitol k. collaborating with matt elliott (third eye foundation) yields three tracks of unsettling ambience akin to matt's own work and the end result is some of the best tracks here ('ether works'). but elsewhere, tracks 9 to 12 can be easily dismissed as avant-garde nonsense with things picking up on the funky 'trigger finger'. ending with the weightless ambience of 'now we are light'.

bip-hip's brand of electronic music will not be to everyone's taste's. i've heard criticisms about its lack of warmth or humanity, as cold as the hardware and software that produced it. and this could apply here, but with the punctuation of the human voice samples and occasional real sounding instrument, the often clinical production is made slightly more accessible by these elements. to the trained ear, this is strangely compelling.

(6.5)

[http://www.absorb.org/reviews/a\\_bovine.html](http://www.absorb.org/reviews/a_bovine.html)

### **L'ENTREPOT - Belgium – November 2001**

Chris Dooks is known for his film work with musicians, he has collaborated in that way with Scanner. But Chris became ill in 1999 and has to give up his film work. Happily for us that fact stimulated his other hobby: electronic music. The Internet became in that way his friend. Via the Internet he collaborated with people as Khön, the Alku label, the mego label, the Plug Research label, Matt Elliot (ex Third Eye Foundation). You can find still one video of Chris on this CD, which he finished before his illness.

In terms of music he is part of the new electronic movement of which also people as Köhn, Vert or Scratch Pat Land are part of. They use electronic (digital) generated sounds but they differ with sound engineers as Autechre because of their use of concrete sound material. In that way their music lays nearer to electro-acoustics, but is not that pretentious, their music stays funny and sometimes even naive. A surreal sound bricolage, pasted at an associative manner. Analogue and digital are mixed together in an extreme mix. The result is exciting.

Chris Dooks is bekend geworden voor zijn filmwerk met muzikanten, zo werkte hij als filmmaker bijvoorbeeld samen met Scanner. Maar Chris werd in 1999 ziek en moest het filmmaken opgeven. Gelukkig voor on stimuleerde hem dat om meer werk te maken van zijn andere hobby: elektronische muziek. Het internet werd daarin een handig hulpmiddel. Via het internet kwamen samenwerking tot stand met onder meer Khön, de lables Alku, Mego en Plug Research, Matt Elliot (voordien in Third Eye Foundation), enz. Verder is er nog één video van Chris op deze CD aanwezig, die reeds afgewerkt was wanneer hij ziek werd. Muzikaal gezien zit Bovien Life in dezelfde nieuwe lichtung elektronische knutselaars als bijvoorbeeld Köhn, Vert of Scratch Pet Land. Er wordt gebruik gemaakt van elektronisch opgewerkte geluiden, maar ze verschillen wezenlijk van geluidsknutselaars als Autechre door het vele gebruik van concrete geluiden. Hierdoor licht hun muziek dichterbij electro-acoustiek. Maar hun muziek is naïefer, grappiger ook. Een surrealistische geluidscollage op een associatieve manier samengebracht. Analooq en digitaal worden samengebracht in een vreemde en bij wijle extreme mix. Het resultaat is spannend, en bevreedend.

[http://users.skynet.be/entrepot/rev/b/bovine\\_life.html](http://users.skynet.be/entrepot/rev/b/bovine_life.html)

### **WSUM-Madison Student Radio**

David Parisi (Friday 10pm-12am):

Another of the slew of Bip Hop releases coming WSUM's way, this one has many leaves at the bottom of the barrel to reach in for. There are plenty of computered beats and bass toned beeps - enough for anybody's body rawkus - along with choirs, wondering about the middle of indian country, and lonesomeness. The whole CD is almost a compilation of various artists, ears. Standouts are "The Smiles of God" with Nathaniel Chief Forest, "Now We Are Light" by just Bovine Life, and all the "Ether Works" with mystery material provided by... ? And so, the electrics here have an unknown element to them as well. So, if you figure you're better than cowflop, now listen to poet Jonathan William's friend Hermit Cackleberry : "You ain't, not a bit" Bovine Life knows it and keeps his world together with help from fellow sound blasting shitfaces. People's slippery feet and selves are ready to enjoy.

### **FREQ – UK – November 2001**

BiP-Hop continues in its mission to unleash adventurous and creative Electronica on the world. Bovine Life is another fine example. Social Electrics is a great mix of eclecticism, collaborations, glitch-driven rhythms, electronic melodies, nicely awkward drum and bass, and sonic collages (the tracks in the "Ether Works" series with ? and "O.J. Simpson" come to mind.)

This album also demonstrates what MP3 was put on this earth for: Internet collaboration. Chris Dooks, a.k.a. Bovine Life, was known for his film making before becoming ill in 1999. His interests in electronic music grew ... and grew some ... from a hobby into the album you have before you ... or at least should. Via MP3 he has collaborated with Köhn, Matt Elliot from Third Eye Foundation, the labels Alku, Mego and Plug Research, along

with people from Puerto Rico, Sweden, and California. The collaborative project is by no means over ... take a look at the Bovine Life website. The kit of Bovine Life samples are up there along with the invitation to make remixes. This is such a damn great idea, how can I help but love it? Social Electrics and Bovine Life are able to make even the hardest hearted cynical web designer look at the Internet with enthusiasm again. What else needs to be said?

-ap-

www.freq.org.uk

### **AMPERSAND ETC – Australia – November 2001**

The following was the opening para to my volume 3 special edition on Bovine Life and DeadScsi: "The Bovine Life Digital Audio Project is the work of Chris Dooks and collaborators. He intends to make a release every few months using his own pieces and ones worked in collaboration with people. To stimulate further collaborations, Bovine Life also include « the kit » - a set of 16 small samples (from less than a second to 9 seconds: beats, noises and sounds) which people can use as a base to work up something for Bovine to add something to/treat it for future releases." Two Social Electrics releases came together (spring and winter) with a broad and interesting variety of collaborat{ors/ions}. And then the site became inactive. But Dooks has returned, on Bip-Hop v3, and now with a full length album which includes some material from the website, but is mainly new stuff - of the 20 tracks, 6 are by Bovine Life, the rest are collaborations: carried out at a distance.

The album either suffers or benefits from its origin, depending on your point of view. Most tracks are short (around 3 minutes or less) and with the variety of compositional intersections creates a mood which is a cross between a compilation disk and a series of sonic experiments. In order to consider the album I have split it into three arbitrary groups: solo, voice, the other collabs – which are intermingled through the set.

Many of the solo tracks have an almost classical feel, either from the melody (Now we are light), the use of organs (Tired but wired1, Now we are traffic) or a mixture of these and the rhythms (Weak latte symphony) – we could labour the relationship with the jumpy cd in Slate stone glass wind. But probably the thing that unites them is the restrained or atypical use of beats – they come in late, or are somewhat off centre – interesting melodic lines, diversity in mood, feel and sounds, and varied directions – from the jumping cd, fairly straight burly melody and propulsion in Tired or the slow, funereal beat of Slate. It is this diversity which focuses the album.

On this broad base we find the vocally infected tracks. With Nathaniel Chief Forrest there are looped samples thrown in the mix: O.J.Simpson has processed voices through, probably commenting on the same, with a gritty support, shifting into a weird drifting centre and back, while The smiles of God has cut up and looped comments over a rubbery base. There are three Ether Works (parts 1, 2 and 3) scattered across the disk – collaborations with ?, and are among the more impressive single pieces. More abstract and angular, they work with voice tones and loops, clicks, buzzes, rumbles and organs to create quite moving dramatic pieces that move towards electroacoustic. (The credits indicate these tracks use samples supplied by Matt Elliot, but unlike all other tracks on the album, these have no copyright indicated: mysterious!) Maeow with Duodecima is a slow, deep and gentle piece, fitting this category through the use of backwards voice loops, and shifting in some synths. The longest and most complex track is Sevumpteen, with Kohn, which cycles from a hissing pulse supporting the title looped, ebbing and flowing, into a cycling tonal mix with sqrls and descending tones, then beats and radio whips before ending with the vocal loop again. With Octorock, a slower track using phonemes, reflected in the title Atay Atae, and finally in this group a rap song with M.C, Mccoch Dog providing an interesting, ironically edged poem over forwarded beat and tonal play.

Ok, so what slips out of these incredibly broad categories? Dusseldorf Girl a slow pulsing beat that builds with an organ and chits from Smyglyssna, Bovine Life eating Alku (all other collaborations are vs) in a glitchy dinner with a messy echoed melody, high tones, crackles and strange percussive melody, this intricate track something of a battle between melody and noises. The second Kohn piece (Homeostasis) is a shorter spiky, glitch which builds, Vida Torpe with Yituey bleeps and swirls and is more percussive and finally another glitch piece, crackling dark swirls, computer clicks, pulsing bloopy melody and long whistly tones in the collaboration with Janek Schaefer Dog Day Cicada.

Again, lots of variety in short packages, although the presence throughout of Bovine Life ensures a continuity of sorts, although taken in many different directions. I enjoyed the stuff from his web-site, and the pleasure continued with this. Not every album needs to be long tracks with complex structures (or really short dramatic ones, vide the

1 minute glitch approach) and these pieces work really well in this structure. Its good to see this material in hard-copy form, and a forthcoming album will expand the collaboration with Komet which was also on-line.

In addition to this fine music, the disk also contains a six minute video Dooks made in 1999 called No One Sees Black : a darkly dreamlike following of a man who appears to have been bashed, is probably dying, as we cut between him and probably memories and visions. Seemingly simple, it is complex and memorable.

<http://ampersandetc.virtualave.net/ampersand.html>

### **ETHERREAL – France – November 2001**

On a déjà pu écouter quelques travaux de Chris Dooks sur le volume 3 des compilations Bip-Hop Generation avec 4 titres magnifiques petites comptine électro-minimalistes mêlant mélodies légères et rythmes/basses plus graves, bruts.

Cet album est en fait un peu particulier puisqu'il contient un nombre impressionnant de collaborations avec des artistes d'horizons divers. On va commencer par les titres qui sont entièrement de son fait comme c'est le cas avec Tired but Wired en ouverture. Il débute avec une musique électronique nerveuse mais comme le montre ce disque, Chris Dooks est un touche à tout et il passe aisément d'un style à l'autre, que ce soit des ritournelles naïves (Now We are Traffic), des collages sur une rythmique rock (Sweepa) ou des plages plus atmosphériques comme Slate Stone Glass Wind ou Now We are Light qui clôturemagnifiquement l'album avec ses nappes d'orgues.

Ambient également, mais beaucoup plus sombre, avec une trilogie intitulée Ether Works qui s'articulent autour de samples de Matt Elliot aka Third Eye Foundation. Trois superbes morceaux très proches des ambiances de Third Eye Foundation avec voix aériennes, cloches, sur lesquels Chris Dooks ajoute mélodies, rythmiques et bruitages pour créer un nouveau morceau parfaitement cohérent.

Parmi les autres collaborations on trouve Kohn avec qui il fait deux morceaux très différents : Sevumpteen plutôt atmosphérique avec un travail de collages vraiment réussi tandis que Homeostasis est un violent déluge sonore.

Egalement une participation de Janek Schaeffer très belle, ambient avec une texture grésillante.

On citera rapidement les autres artistes tels que Duodecimo, Smyglyssna, Octorock et Alku pour un magnifique Alku Heartbeat aux sonorités vraiment originales, amusantes et passionnantes.

En effet Social Electrics contient une multitude de morceaux très séduisants, à la fois intéressants et accrocheurs, bourrés d'idées. Mais on regrettera la construction de l'album, peut-être trop riche, partant dans tous les sens et qui finit par perdre l'auditeur à force de passer d'un style à l'autre sans crier gare.

Les titres étant en général très courts, on n'a à peine le temps de s'en imprégner que déjà on est passer à autre chose, ce qui rend le disque assez difficile à aborder.

Fabrice A.

[http://www.etherreal.com/magazine/music/cdreviews.php3?file=bovinelife\\_socialelectrics](http://www.etherreal.com/magazine/music/cdreviews.php3?file=bovinelife_socialelectrics)

### **HOUSE OF TECHNO – France – NOVEMBER 2001**

Chris Dook est un artiste protéiformes. Réalisateur de films et de documentaires pour la télé, c'est aussi un musicien éclairé qui actue sous le nom de Bovine Life. « Social Electrics » est une immersion dans le monde des machines, créatrices d'ondes et de perturbations sonores. Ce pourrait être le recueil de données partagées entre musiciens du monde, connectés au réseau de Bovine Life. Ces collaborations virtuelles entre Chris Dook et Matt Elliot (Third Eye Foundation), Janek Schaefer, Rupert Cogan, Henrik Johansson, etc, ont pris forme par le biais d'envois d'informations musicales à travers internet. « Social Electrics » est le résultat de musiques concues sans visage, sans rencontre physique, anamorphose de rythmes alambiqués habités de spasmes électriques, sur lesquels viennent se greffer des ondulations léthargiques, convulsions de courbes spectrales et évanescentes, par fichiers MP3 interposés. Le résultat est là : abstrait et tentaculaire, organique et physique, sérigraphie de visions en mouvement perpétuel, sans accroche sur la matière. Envoutant.

Roland Torres

<http://www.house-of-techno.com/Pages/tests/testambient.php3>

### **HAUSMUSIK – Germany – October 2001**

chris dooks aka bovine life ist ein englischer filmmacher - digital-künstler, der bekannt wurde durch seine filme über musiker (z.b. scanner). Auf dieser cd arbeitet er zusammen mit matt elliot (third eye foundation) sowie diversen musikern der labels mego und alku. Futuristische elektronik-sounds auf insgesamt 20 tracks. Dazu als bonus einen 6 minuten film von chris. let there be bleep!

[http://www.hausmusik.com/cgi-bin/uebergabe.pl?f=\\*ARTIKELNR%2C\\*INTERPRET%2C\\*TITEL%2C\\*LABEL%2C\\*BESCHREIBUNG%2C\\*DESCRIPTION&t=temsearch&start=1&dif=8&c=bovine+life&submit.x=43&submit.y=8](http://www.hausmusik.com/cgi-bin/uebergabe.pl?f=*ARTIKELNR%2C*INTERPRET%2C*TITEL%2C*LABEL%2C*BESCHREIBUNG%2C*DESCRIPTION&t=temsearch&start=1&dif=8&c=bovine+life&submit.x=43&submit.y=8)

### **INDEPENDENT ELECTRONIC MUSIC – Russia – November 2001**

The background of this work is really strange story - the illness which usually dissipate creativity or at least gives to musician a strong basis for negative imagination, here it was the reason of which this project was started. But the price for this kind of revelation was the abandoned career of professional filmmaker, if I understood right. Chris Dooks, the main person behind this enigmatic virtual movement called "Bovine Life", was struck down in 1999 with myalgic encephalomyelitis, and for those two years he was not able even leave his house alone without somebodys help, so the only way to continue his communication with the rest of the world was computer and modem. The irony behind the project title is actually the living situation in relationship of people, the very character of music is quite self-consisted - 20 tracks, with very limited duration, but really electrified, absorbing raw and rough, buzzing and vibrating sounds, dazzled with freaky electronic flavour and refined digital structures. All in common, it seems to be a collection of city life sketches, miriads of similar ways and faiths which people are, becoming somehow useful only in the process of global and constant social metabolism. His project was open for every human input, it was enough to download some samples from his website and make any desired reconstructions with them. Many contributors have been ok to leave anonymous, but even the names of the rest musicians are unknown for me. Also short movie is included, that Chris directed just prior to becoming ill and was unable to market.

FOLLOW THE LINK AND SEE/PRINT IT IN RUSSIAN for your pressbook

<http://svalemor.chat.ru/b.htm#7>

### **NUTA – Poland – October 2001**

Niezwykła i dla wielu irytująca może być ta płyta, pod rewelacyjnie elegancką szatą graficzną ukrywająca dadaistyczne rozpasanie i niepewność: czy to, co słyszymy, jest poważną propozycją, czy historycznym wykopem wykolejonego artysty? Nagrywający jako Bovine Life, Chris Dooks pochodzi z Edynburga i zanim zajął się dźwiękami, realizował się w multimedialnych instalacjach i dokumentalnych filmach. Płyta zawiera zresztą nagranych w '99 sześciominutową fabulkę, której paranoiczne wykreślenie na pewno coś mówi o osobowości twórcy. Spośród 20 utworów wiele powstało w wyniku wirtualnej współpracy z różnymi eksperymentatorami, wśród których warto wymienić Matta Elliota (Third Eye Foundation), Kohn, Smygłyśna czy Janka Schaefera. Jest tu wszystko: samplowanie mniej lub bardziej niezidentyfikowanych głosów, zmutowany hip hop na podkładzie z przetworzonego elektro, trzaski i szumy, delikatne ambienty z przepływającą gitarką, naiwne syntezatory, zapętlone breaki... Przychodzi na myśl skojarzenia z Residents, chociaż wykorzystywanych przez Amerykanów klasycznych instrumentów raczej tu nie ma. Jest zabawa konwencjami, absurd i specyficzny humor. Wszystko w niecałą godzinę, więc raczej się nie znudzi. Na stronie [www.bip-hop.com](http://www.bip-hop.com) takżę kawałki do odsłuchania i nieco dla oka.

Autor: MASS

<http://www.nuta.pl/plyty/plyta.html/769.html>

### **SOMAMAG – Germany – September 2001**

Chris Dooks - der Mann mit obigen Pseudonym - ist vor allem als Macher vieler (Dokumentar)Filme über englische Musiker bekannt geworden. Aus gesundheitlichen Gründen musste es 1999 die Filmerei an den Nagel hängen. Aber einmal Künstler, immer Künstler. So hat er versucht aus dem Hobby Musik etwas mehr zu machen,

was ihm wie man an der Existenz dieser CD sieht, auch gelungen ist. Viele Tracks sind in Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Künstlern aus verschiedenen Ländern entstanden. Und das ohne, das sich die Partner jemals im realen Leben begegnet sind. Basis waren meist MP3 Files, die sich die Künstler jeweils hin und her geschickt haben. Herausgekommen sind dabei 20 sehr abstrakte und meist ruhige, starke Tracks, die nicht versuchen ihre digitalen Ursprünge zu kaschieren. Social Electrics klingt auf jeden Fall ziemlich bedrohlich und kalt – ist aber irgendwie auch spannend. Auf der CD befindet sich auch noch ein 6minütiges Quicktimevideo, welches ich allerdings auf 2 Rechnern nicht zum laufen gebracht habe, das muß aber nicht unbedingt etwas bedeuten.

<http://www.somamag.de/platten/platten.php3>

### **NAMSKEIO / New releases / week 36 – Switzerland – September 2001**

What an excellent release on the growing French Bip-hop label, releasing more and more interesting record. Bovine life's music is somewhere between analog, computer and a kind of enigmatic electronic music. This is clever, interesting, unusual, original, and at the same time very relaxing and enjoyable. A very rich and innovative release in the field of electronic music. Recommended.

### **Aquarius Records - New Arrivals #121 - USA - 19 September 2001**

Bovine Life presents a weird album of abstract electronica, sounding like the mid-90s clunky techno of As One or David Moufang with plenty of mechanical sequencing sort of like Tackhead, but with the purposefully angularity of Laurie Anderson to guarantee qualifications of this as "conceptual." Bovine Life offers some collaborations with Smyglyssna (Plug Research), renowned turntable experimentalist Janek Schaefer, and a bunch of unknown factors (Nathaniel "Chief" Forrest, Duodecimo, Octorock, M.C. McCough Dog, Kohn, and Yituey).

### **VITAL WEEKLY - Week 38 / Number 291 – Holland – September 2001**

Bip Hop is not just busy releasing excellent compilations, but also CD's by one artist. One such is Bovine Life, aka Chris Dooks. He was a filmmaker until a debilitating disease ended that career in 1999. His hobby of making electronic music was expanded and here is a whole CD of his work, either solo (six tracks) or in collaboration through the internet with others (fourteen tracks). Included are people like Kohn, Smyglyssna, Janek Schaefer and Third EDye Foundation (denounced with a ?, maybe to avoid legal problems?). As you can imagine with so many tracks, they are fairly short (just over one minute to just under five). Bovine Life's music is a mixture of rhythm and samples, occasionally backed with some lines on the keyboard. Not every track is a diamond, as some are just plain doodlings around a rhythm and a sample, but there are nice enough pieces included here to make a worthwhile release, without being a total masterpiece.(FDW)

wReck thiS meSS / Adventures in UNsound: no. 153 > Bip Crop

Amsterdam - Maandag, 17 September 2001 (17:15 - 19:05)

"Social Electrics" on Bip Hop out of Marseille, France <[www.bip-hop.com](http://www.bip-hop.com)>. Is the sound strategy moniker of UK filmmaker Chris Dooks <[info@bovine.org.uk](mailto:info@bovine.org.uk)> which is a hodgepodge tapestry of [re]sourced sonic bits. He collaborates with other international electronic bedroom musicians via the internet and mp3 sonic dialogs. Very interesting.

### **THE MILK FACTORY – UK – October 2001**

#### **THE PROS AND CONS OF BOVINE LIFE**

Chris Dooks has just released Social Electrics, an album he has recorded in his flat in Edinburgh, and for which his computer and the Net have been key elements. Chris has collaborated with a handful of artists from all over the world. The result is probably one of the most challenging and powerful piece of work released this year, and comes close to the sound structures explored by Mike Dred and Peter Green in their Virtual Farmer collaboration. Despite suffering from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, which affects energy levels and makes the time he can spend working very precious, he has kindly accepted to answer the questions from themilkfactory. The man is about to blow your mind!

"Sometimes a lack of energy means I am able to make decisions about composition more easily as I have only about an hour a day to work on material..."

Chris, what are you up to at the moment?

Right now I am mastering an extremely limited CD release through ISIS arts ([www.isisarts.org.uk](http://www.isisarts.org.uk)) and getting design ready for it. It is the result of a UK "Year Of The artist" residency ([www.tees.ac.uk/artist](http://www.tees.ac.uk/artist)). At least I am trying to do this, but my flatmate Ken is playing a song called Hot Pussy on an acoustic guitar and it's er, distracting to say the least. We are quite a juvenile flat at times, which helps keep things light considering I have recently hit 30 and no longer a young upstart like Kid 606. There's an obsession in my flat with the films Jaws, Silence Of The Lamb, Withnail & I and Seven. So at any time of the day, you will find these things uttered and quoted and general tomfoolery abounding. Sometimes that's at odds with my Buddhist practice...(!)

See [www.rigpa.org](http://www.rigpa.org)

On a more serious note, I am also getting some packages ready for a video art piece about the Black Death I did with a dance company in Edinburgh. That is called Leg Across My Kin which is an anagram of "Mary Kings Close" – the location of the film. The film is being screened in Canada soon. I spend most of my time just trying to look after myself and the art sometimes has to take a back seat. It will still be there when I feel better ! (As I write Ken is now doing the entire Beatles back catalogue whilst leeching at the women on Neighbours)...

How did you come to film making in the first place? Can you tell us about your career behind the camera?

When I was 8 years old, I had two epiphanies. One was that death is a real event, and two, that cinema is wonderful, emotional and a naïve form of immortality. I was obsessed with super 8 cameras and video. But even at this stage there was always a healthy distraction in other areas. I wouldn't get involved with narrative and this has never been my strong point even though I was reasonably good with words. I remember doing a kind of Blair Witch thing when I was 14 and I would get sidetracked into filming the shapes of the leaves and the sound of the wind. Then I realised that the material didn't make sense, in the conventional sense. My family have watched my messed up art evolve over the years... I am the weird sheep of the family and I haven't had a straight linear path into an evolving career like some of my peers. They usually make video films, then 16mm shorts, then a 35mm short, then a bit for telly, then maybe a feature... I have gone video, abstract sound, music, directing documentary and just before I fell ill I was writing a feature idea, a western that has taken me three years so far to collate. I have to work much much slower than regular folks who don't have M.E.

I presumed, stupidly, that the best way into filmmaking was through education. I couldn't have been more wrong. I went through four colleges and the best bit of advice I ever heard was from Kubrick : "Go outside. Film 30 different things. Edit them in a different order." Brilliant.

It's an ego thing wanting to be a director – an auteur, unless you have an altruistic motivation I suppose – so I guess I was trying to stop dying, or somehow investing in my own immortality. I have lightened up a lot since I got ill and not worried so much about making my "defining cinematic moment" and I have decided that more collaborative art forms are more beneficial for me. Filmmaking is wonderful, but it suits a particular kind of artist. I need to be having creative satisfaction every single day. Being ill is a bit like people in prison. Prisoners sometimes get the chance to do Open University courses or to use the "enforced retreat" to learn about Spanish. I did my art and music in my cell-like cupboard.

What is your best souvenir as a filmmaker?

Without a doubt, filming killer whales at St. Kilda – a very remote island, 8 hours from Scotland's west coast. I went there with my girlfriend Sarah in 1994 and it's an amazing place. You have to go with the army. I also have some lovely audio and video trophies from working in the American wilderness...

You've worked on a film about Scanner. Did you actually meet Robin Rimbaud? What was he like? Was he one of your "heroes"?

I wouldn't say he was one of my heroes, it was more the fact I was pitching an idea for The South Bank Show and Robin fitted the bill because he gives good interview. It was either going to be him or Autechre, who are my heroes. The problem in doing a South Bank Show on Autechre is that although they can be incredibly eloquent and

intelligent – they would prefer to remain out of the eye of the camera. Robin is a nice guy though and I really enjoyed working with him. I also directed one of his promos when he was signed to a thrash metal label in Sheffield. The track was a collaboration with Si Cut (Db) called Michael Jackson so I could say to people I was doing a Michael Jackson promo and it wouldn't be a lie...

Social Electrics includes a short film, No One Sees Black. Can you tell us about the story behind it? It's that old chestnut death really. It's also a reaction to the fact that films made in Scotland are either about wee bonnie kids or abuse or Scottishness on the sleeve. What could be more universal than death? We are crap at death in this country. We don't die very well and we don't care for the dying very much. So I made a tiny film about some of the images that may or may not be the last visions of this man. It's not 100% successful but I have a soft spot for it. It's total freedom working in this way. You see pictures and you hear sounds. It's abstract. We don't have a problem with abstract music so much, but abstract filmmaking grates people, so it's nice to be the fly in the ointment... The film was 50% improvised and was shot by a great cinematographer – my flatmate Ken (the guy that fancies the women on Neighbours)...

Where did you get the Bovine Life name? Has it got any specific meaning?

Sure. I made a film in 1994 called The Sound Of Taransay – before The BBC went to make Castaway 2000 there on this Scottish island. I fell in love with the idea that highland cows were somehow spiritual animals, slowly hoovering up grass and the machair all day, wise sage-like sentient animals... so I named my production company Digital Cow Productions. The film was shot in Harris, which is just beautiful... and Bovine Life comes from that. If you see a Digital Cow Productions, it's my film work. Bovine Life is always my musical side. But since I got ill, I was pursuing a Bovine Life, like a slow motion human... so that was it...

How did you come to music? Bip-Hop.com implies that you turned to music after contracting Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, as it had become too difficult for you to carry on making film, but was music always at the back of your mind? How did the whole Social Electrics project start?

I always worked on the periphery of music. I made my living as a documentary film maker and artist and never really had the courage to do my own stuff, until I met the right people to inspire me, like Sushil K Dade AKA Future Pilot AKA. I had worked on programmes with musicians for a long time so it was just the confidence to say "I am a music maker" that really got it going. That and the Net. Social Electrics began as a net research project. I was funded by Edinburgh College of Art staff development fund to research the use of the net in a collaborative manner. So I made friends with strangers and, like Sushil says, "just contact your heroes. Sometimes they say yes!" Sushil also promotes the idea of travel without moving. Ideal for when you can't move much!

Social Electrics is quite a complex record in the way it deals with sound structures. Was it deliberate?

Yes, it was for me to kind of work out where my interests lay. I wanted to use my collaborations to learn about all the different types of electronic sound being made all over the world. I just plugged in and learned. It was also to have a bigger sound. You know how the net sometimes joins machines together for the SETI project and so on, well, my idea was to increase the availability of tones, timbres and noise from other folks' unique studio set ups for my own project... Now, through this process, my own voice and real interests are coming out. I think the next album is going to be a reaction against the last one. And it won't be so eclectic... or will it?!

Where do you get inspiration? On your album, there are signs of hip-hop, electro or electro-acoustic even. What would you say your influences are?

The Mego label was inspiring and I met Alku (Opopopp) through Mego. I liked their attitude being a cross between high art and dysfunctional hard drives. On another tip in Cologne, Wolfgang Voigt is wonderful. A real subtle style of artist, I wish I could get a collaboration going with him. It's not for the lack of trying. His Gas project is amazing. Take track 5 off POP for example. I listen to it every night before bed and it's different every time. I swear it changes every time. His stuff is so deceptively simple – just layers of thick dense matter. Huge swabs of sound are compressed to form this dense ambience. Meditative stuff. Part of you wants him to do more with them, but you know they'd be ruined if he did more... Autechre are total heroes. I know this is hardly original for me to say that. For me the last track of Envane is the favourite piece for me. I think they were stronger before they got too DSP obsessed. Confield is a good, if not great, piece of work, but like Aphex, there's so much "fuck you" in

their music these days. It's a very male thing as well, just look at the kind of people that turn up to their gigs. I couldn't see one lass in Edinburgh! They've lost a bit of sensitivity. Maybe artists need to do that to evolve, and that's useful, but their recent live stuff has been a bit compositionally weak for me. People follow them like sheep. I have a soft spot for string quartet and I am a huge Gavin Bryars fan. He has some great ideas, but I am not fond of his recent output. I used to love early Nyman too, when they performed live it was ea

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