

#### **ALL MUSIC GUIDE / USA / June 2004**

The second quarter of 2004 brought an outburst of publications from David Toop. This collaboration with Max Eastley came out almost at the same time as his duet with Akio Suzuki (Breath-Taking, on Confront) and his book-plus-compilation album Haunted Weather. Breath-Taking is an extremely quiet, evanescent live date, while Doll Creature is much more engrossing and generous. Eastley and Toop use a large variety of sound-makers, from computer treatments to sound sculptures and automatons, from flutes and guitars to "organic matter" and "insectoids." The range of instruments is typical of electro-acoustic improvisation, but the duo's music is busier, denser and more varied than what you would expect from, say, Keith Rowe or Günter Müller, bringing it closer to a form of live electroacoustic composition. It is better to ignore the instrumentation altogether and simply dive in and let yourself be carried by these beautifully crafted pieces. The sense of listening to something thoroughly composed prevails, although this doesn't mean the music sounds stiff or lacks spontaneity.

But Eastley and Toop are very precise in tailoring specific sound worlds and sewing them together. Considering the tools used and the level of abstraction found in the music, the album is surprisingly warm-sounding and kind on the listener, avoiding harsh outbursts or awkward silences to offer a consistently absorbing assemblage of sounds. Toop's story about a doll creature and its misadventures provides a narrative actually gloomier than the work of music it is associated with. Highly recommended.

François Couture

<http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&uid=UIDSUB040405191134571788&sql=Argh9kemtdq7m>

#### **VITAL WEEKLY # 432 / Holland / August 2004**

Some people make an album every three days (maybe even every three hours, who knows), but there are also some who take more time. 'Doll Creature' is an example of a late album - the third collaboration between musician David Toop and soundsculptor Max Eastley in thirty years (following their release on Obscure in 1975 and 'Buried Dreams' in 1994). It's not that they are lazy or uninspired people: they have so many other things at their hands that they simply don't meet up too often to do their work together. On 'Doll Creature' the roles are strictly divided. Eastley produces the sound in his sculptures and Toop processes the sound via means of computer and adds a small bit of his own sounds (through guitars, flutes, tubes, organic matter etc.). It is often forgotten that Toop is an improviser and here he is in his element: taking the sounds of Eastley and loosely processes them in a rich tapestry of delicate sounds. Small particles fly around, loosely organised within each of fifteen miniatures on this CD. And although indexed at fifteen, it's also possible to see them as one long piece, as pieces seem to chance texture in a rather small way and a new piece starts out by simply leaving the previous one behind. This is a very fine disc, crossing the lines of ambient, improvisation and sound sculpture. (FdW)

#### **VENTRILOCUTION / Portugal / september 2004**

Doll Creature gains conscience. The blurred shapes start to look perfectly distinguishable as the eyes adapt to the thick, dusty atmosphere, but the scenario of desolation and random destruction is no better sight than the primeval unidentifiable smudges of colour and form. As the wind echoes and swirls through the shredded and broken structures of twisted metal and defaced concrete, Doll Creature raises itself, barely relying on its thin wire arms, and gazes at the sun, which is falling like a slow fire bomb. Its promenade slowly begins, as it (it is still mostly mechanic and not-alive) drags itself through the marshes, and this promenade is more of a journey of evolution than a degradation trip, which, though not interacting directly with the human element, subtly reminds one of its existence.

The Doll Creature is somewhat of a strange hybrid between a disillusioned Pinocchio and the main character of the notorious Steven Spielberg film *Artificial Intelligence*, specially if one imagines a final sequence added to said film, in which the child/robot would survive the apocalypse, shredded and barely held together, and where all traces of human and robotic existence are mere fragments of things.

The metamorphosis undergone by this entity (if one may be so bold as to give it that epithet) is the main theme and concept of this hour-long journey through various atmospheres and scenarios crafted electronically, but its main flaw is precisely a certain excessive recurrence to the more mechanical and electronic side of the issue, and that deprives the album of a certain lushness and ambience concerning its human side. The idea conveyed by the descriptive introductory text and the innate humanity of the doll gives the listener a glimpse of something beyond the limited spectrum of programmed machinery, but the only aural hints at such a thing are scarce and barely perceptible (the ending of nights, demixed, circles per example). However mechanical and incongruent its movements may be, there is some beauty to be found within the sequential exploration begun by the Doll, especially in three sand voices, which depicts in vivid fashion the notions of motion and interaction below a hovering and ubiquitous sound of voices in an unrecognisable dialogue. Moth cinema impressively creates a scenario where leopard moths and owl moths envelop his head (the Doll is temporarily attributed the masculine genre) with wings beats pressuring his personal air space, tipping him off balance, while metamorphosis of *tabanus bovini* allows enough room for contemplation and produced silence, themes that fill the following track green silence. Dust of points and graphite in prussic indicate a certain discomfort, which is rapidly fought in inscription in skin, which again brings contemplation into the scheme, complemented by swimmer, dreamless more oceanic undertones.

Ending our experience of the Doll's journey is vital flow meters an indication of continuity and, eventually, repetition. This finale left me with that impression of repetition and circular motions, as if the Doll were stripped down of memories at some given point, and restarted the whole trip, each time through a different course, almost as if searching for the right path.

The closest one could get to fully realising the complexity of it would be by going through it in that exact same fashion, randomly picking the way through the 1,307,674,368,000 possible combinations of paths at its, her, his disposal and, thus, making our own journey throughout the album. Personally, I think I won't be trying too hard to achieve such a feat, but I have to say my admiration goes to anyone that attempts it.

Pedro Serôdio [09/2004]

<http://www.ventrilocution.net/vz/index.htm>

### **THE MILK FACTORY / UK / September 2004**

Forever at the epicentre of the digital world he recently described in *Haunted Weather, Music, Silence & Memory*, published earlier this year, David Toop appears to constantly question his role through his books, articles, installations or records. Thirty years after their first collaboration, *New & Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, released on Brian Eno's *Obscure* label, and ten years after its follow up, *Buried Dreams (Beyond, 1994)*, Toop and sound sculptor Max Eastley reconvene for the third time. With Eastley providing all sorts of mechanical instruments, sculptures and devices and Toop configuring recordings of these on computers, *Doll Creature* is more than a simple extension of their previous work together. *Doll Creature* sounds like a world listened to through magnifying microphones, as if the most minute sounds and noises had been captured for the first time and made available for all to hear, while remaining entirely foreign to the human ear. Could it be the hum of an insect colony oblivious of the intrusion captured on *Moth Cinema*, or is it human skin cracking under the sun? Is *Cardiomancy* a symphony for faulty radiators and air conditioning units or

the much sombre deed of parasites? Could *Metamorphose* be the true sound of ice melting? There is no answer to be found anywhere, no pointers, no clues to what Eastley and Toop depict on this album. Even Toop's accompanying text ultimately leaves the listener with more questions than solutions. But *Doll Creature* is not about explaining, but about dreams and tales, and the listener's imagination is put to contribution all the way through. Both Eastley and Toop with their respective machines invite their audience to interact with their music, give their personal interpretation of these sonic constructions and reflect on their meaning. Yet, it is possible to distance oneself from this album and simply appreciate its content for what it is. With *Doll Creature*, Max Eastley and David Toop create a truly organic and dense piece of work, relying on bare sonic assemblages and often obscure soundscapes. If melodies are rare and incidental, they however form part of the album's skeleton. Although never clearly emerging, and seldom appearing to have been placed at any particular point on purpose, they are no trick of the mind and help shaping up the structure of these fifteen tracks by giving them a common thread. *Doll Creature* is mysterious and difficult, and not for everyone to enjoy, yet, it is also a very rewarding piece of work if given the necessary space to develop and spread.

[http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/medt\\_dollcreature.htm](http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/medt_dollcreature.htm)

#### **PHOSPHOR / Germany / September 2004**

Max Eastley and David Toop go away back. Their first cooperation was released on Brian Eno's *Obscure* label in 1975. Their next collaboration *Buried dreams* came out on *Beyond* nine years later. Another decade went by and now *Doll creature* sees the light. Their third album reminds of the first walk on a dark, newly discovered planet. Mysterious low-key rumbling goes along with metallic snippets, enstranging peeps and concrete, mechanical sounds. It's like hearing an active soundinstallation, without seeing what is going on. David Toop wrote a small story about it, which describes the album quite well. Mechanical sound sculptures scraping at the green silence and issuing frequency whistles. A great part of the album is quite "unhuman", no traces of any human activity can be found, which makes *Doll creature* a mysterious, imaginative listening experience full of delicate micro-motions.

<http://www.xs4all.nl/%7Ephosphor/newreleases.html>

#### **INDIE WORKSHOP / USA / August 2004**

File this one under unsettling experimentalism. One for putting on when passing out the Halloween candy or for listening in the dark while curled up in the fetal position. While many ambient-minded releases are content to invoke blissful, weightless textures, Eastley and Toop work in a more claustrophobic atmosphere of shadowy machinations, scuttling insects, and their protagonist the *Doll Creature*. Eastley and Toop have collaborated since the arguable birth of the modern ambient improvisatory electronics genre. Brian Eno released their first album, *New and Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, on his *Obscure* label in 1975. Their next recorded effort, *Buried Dreams* [*Beyond Records*], did not occur until 1994 but was met with acclaim among European critics. The French label *Bip Hop* brings this latest installment. Having not heard their previous releases, I can't make any points of comparison other than that Eastley's sound sculpture machines and the use of organic materials are again emphasized, with creepy results.

*Eastley: mechanical and whirling instruments, sculptures, bowed Arc, percussives, abrasives, Purple Ray Vitalator, insectoids, weather, computer.*

*Toop: computer, guitars, flutes, tubes, organic matter, book pages, dog whistles, percussives.*

These liner notes, and a photo of the duo performing live at their sound desks amidst a circle of leaves, sculptures, and what must be expensive microphones, point to the origins of the sounds on this disc but the ears quickly tire of logical comprehension and become disoriented

in Toop and Eastley's sound world. The manipulation of objects occurs quickly, with a live improv pace (one track "Inscription On Skin" was recorded live in Tokyo 2000). Strange whirrings and scrapings abound, either very close in the foreground or deepened with reverb. This artificial sense of space they use is a harsh one, not a limitless and soothing cushion, but one with definite walls against which sounds collide, scrape, and reflect.

Occasionally something can be identified, like the clacking of a handful of small stones or resonant wood, but Toop and Eastley masterfully cloak and manipulate much of their layered source material. Toop's guitars and flutes are digitally elasticized until they resemble damaged synths or drone instruments of the most secluded indigenous rites. Eastley's insectoids seem to be interesting noise generators, though I have no idea what they are. They often lay down a bed of buzzes and hums upon which Toop works on top of, and sound at times like the original and remixes of Merzbow's Frog released by Misanthropic Agenda last year. It is unfortunate that these sculptures were not made visible by more photos or CD-ROM enhancement.

While certainly only for those interested in sound manipulation and close listening, even experimental diehards might not want to invest in this disc. Though the digipak construction is nice, it is conceptually flimsy. The hokey Doll Creature looks as if it crawled out of an art school dorm or SNL's "Sprockets" and risks self-parody. Toop's onomatopoeic text serves as a guide to the journey and transformation of Doll Creature: "Scattered, shattered, Doll Creature strokes brush lines in fine dust, ksst...ksst; hears music in the sliding of a coral snake." The clear disc-tray panel features a drawing of a moth soaring over an oceanic landscape. The overall design leaves you wishing for a more minimal sensibility (see the truly ominous Deathprod 4XCD box) and detracts from the power of these strange and unique recordings.

<http://indieworkshop.com/reviews/1040/>

### **JADE / France / February 2005**

Max EASTLEY est un musicien accompli de la scène indépendante qui après avoir accompagné Nico, entre autres c'est surtout fait apprécier aux côtés d'Andy Diagram et Richard Harrison pour son travail au sein de SPACEHEADS.

David TOOP, pour sa part, malgré assez peu d'albums à son actif, parce que journaliste et écrivain avant tout, est une des grandes sommités des courants indépendants, notamment dans le domaine des musiques nouvelles, tous courants confondus. On lui doit un album référencé sur SubRosa et un travail de compilation pour Staubgold en marge de la sortie de son nouveau livre Haunted Weather. Comme le suggère la photo intérieure, le respect des musiciens, fondé sur la connivence, leur permet de se soustraire au regard de l'autre, se tournant fréquemment le dos lors des sessions d'improvisation. Les apports de chacun sont facilement perceptibles, Toop privilégiant la matérialisation sonore d'atmosphères micro-organiques, mouvantes, monde du début du monde, climats imperceptibles et environnements pré-humains. Max Heastley, intégrant plus volontiers ses parties d'improvisations libres, à base de frottements, de manipulations d'objets non sonores en périphérie de micro, de préparation d'instrumentaux. Il y a un moment dans le disque, aux alentours de nights où les 2 hommes et leur savoir se rencontrent pour ne plus se séparer. C'est à une leçon de biologie moléculaire, de scrutation au microscope à balayage que nous convient ces 2 scientifiques du son. Et comme bien souvent, l'infiniment technique rejoint l'infiniment philosophique et donne une petite leçon de vie, pas nécessairement musicale, d'ailleurs.

Julien Jaffre

<http://www.pastis.org/jade/nov04/TVMnov04.htm>

### **SURREAL SOUND / Belgium / December 2004**

Doll Creature est la troisième collaboration entre Toop et Eastley en 20 ans !

Autant être direct, ce CD requiert énormément d'attention pour l'auditeur, même habitué à ce genre de production. 15 titres minimalistes évoluant vers la fin du CD vers des drones un peu plus présents. Les sons microscopiques se succèdent à une cadence de plus en plus rapide. Le CD était terminé depuis de nombreuses minutes sans que je m'en rende compte. Je ne pouvais même plus me rappeler ce que j'avais écouté. Ah si, le sujet : une réflexion sur l'homme et la machine. Vaste programme.

Malgré une qualité musicale évidente, Doll Creature ne s'inscrira pas dans les annales. David Toop sortant des disques à la pelle en ce moment, il serait peut-être sage de sa part de se freiner et de ne garder que le meilleur.

[http://www.surrealsound.net/chroniques/m\\_026.html#m29](http://www.surrealsound.net/chroniques/m_026.html#m29)

### **GONZO CIRCUS # 65 / Belgium - Holland / October 2004**

De huisgenoten liggen te slapen, het licht wordt gedimd. De hoofdtelefoon wordt de leidraad voor de nacht. De veteranen Max Eastley en David Toop zijn de gidsen. Het imaginaire, in nevel gehulde bos ziet er somber uit, niet de plek om te verdwalen. Op deze planeet blijkt de natuur deels opgebouwd uit metalen, gemuteerd met organische structuren. Als de bomen en het struikgewas beroerd worden door de wind, stijgt een onheilspellend geschraap op vanuit het bos.

Het krioelende ongedierte maakt bevreemdende geluiden bij het schuifelen over de ondefinieerbare, maar wakke bodem. Het bos en de vlaktes blijken vol leven te zitten. Goed dat het nacht is en we niks waarnemen met onze ogen; onze oren en geest maken het al erg genoeg. De voorstellingen die deze geluiden oproepen, voorspellen niet veel goeds. Gelukkig hoeven we de hoofdtelefoon maar af te zetten. Eeuwig op deze planeet vertoeven zou een straf zijn. Maar terugkeren doen we, het werkt verslavend. We stoppen de oren terug tussen de hoofdtelefoonschelpen en vertrekken deze keer voor een plezieriger uitstapje.

(tw)

### **wReck thiS meSS ~ Radio Patapoe 97.2 / Holland / October 2004**

Great head-on collision of electronic manu-wizardry and a man who plucks the Ur-timpanic nerve. Electro-phonic-acoustrocity on a terra sonorous - where you hear significant sounds coming out of the crowns on your molars.

### **THE VIBES / Italy / October 2004**

Chi scrive di musica (ma non solo) si accorgerà dell'abilità di David Toop (non solo scultore sonoro, ma anche redazionista di the Wire) nell'aver descritto questo espettorato delle macchine sonore sue e di Max Eastley. Ve ne proponiamo un estratto: *"Doll Creature drags his feet through salt marsh and leaf fall, skrikkkk... skriikh, calligraphic tracks unfolding in his wake, blown into broken lines by harsh winds from the north. Seasons tick, sun falling like a slow fire bomb, moon rising as a aghost, in the reflection of a glass eye, landscapes roll out their scrolls of secret text. The scratching stops, suspended in a frozen moment. He puzzles over the marks before him, signs made from moss, rock and steam, then hobbles on. This gloomy space is flooded. His ears are soaked in submarine calls, the amphibous dwellers of two worlds. Boots thresh through floating roots. Nothing is alive yet the air crackles with life. [...] Scattered, shattered, Doll Creature strokes brush lines in fine dust, ksssf... kssf; hears music in the sliding of a coral snake. Her hands and arms are open, inviting the world. She lies face down in low water, deliberately inviting the attention of electric eels."*

Ha dello psicotico e dell'onomatopeico l'uso delle parole per descrivere le vicissitudini rese tattili di questa Doll Creature: pur non escludendosi un intreccio di metafore che per pigrizia non ci sforziamo di sbrogliare, sembrerebbe più che altro una forma quasi romanzata

dell'esperienza sonora decisamente concretista frutto della collaborazione con Max Eastley, terzo in trent'anni -il primo (New and Rediscovered Musical Instruments) risale al 1975 e fu pubblicato dalla Obscure (l'etichetta di Brian Eno), il secondo dal titolo clockdvagongesco (Buried Dreams) risalente al '94 ebbe il bronzo nella classifica dell'Album of the Year di The Wire (che strana coincidenza...) dietro Massive Attack e Portishead. A parte la raffigurazione di questa bambola proiettata in un'ambientazione post-apocalittica, i suoni (per non parlare dei titoli... vengono citati persino i tafani e l'acido prussico -noto per l'"odore di mandorle amare" nei libri gialli, era la base del terribile Zyklon B, insetticida tristemente noto per l'uso che se ne faceva sugli uomini nella camere a gas e presente anche in certa frutta-!) di questo terzo album sono ben costruiti e combinati in strutture aritmiche (una qualche idea di movimento fa capolino nelle ultime tracks). Un brulichio abrasivo di stimolazioni disciolte in una matassa di cavi per la corrente elettrica lacerati che solleticherà i vostri cavi elettrici organici. Sarà proprio la maniacalità nella cura del dettaglio o le suggestioni concretiste con il tentativo di creare un'adeguata ambientazione per ciò che potrebbe suonare oscuro o incompreso ad aver suscitato l'interesse di Philippe Petit della francese BipHop. Per chi ama un approccio ludico-sperimentale al suono è un buon disco. Per chi preferisce generi più convenzionali potrebbe astenersene dall'acquisto.

<http://www.thevibes.net/rec2004/dollcre.html>

#### **CONNEXION BIZARRE / Portugal / September 2004**

Sometimes you hear an album that makes you regret the sad inadequacy of your listening environment and wish you had the peace and quiet to pay it the attention it deserves. And then there are those that come up against the immersive ambient noise of the city around you and just can't compete. Which category the new Eastley/Toop album falls into is, I'm sure, very much a matter of opinion. In either case, a desk by an open window onto a main road on a windy day is not the ideal place to take in the finer points of detail and texture to be found in this CD.

As the first of fifteen tracks, "Mouthful of Silence", gets going, we are enveloped in drones and a solitary sine wave while something chittery and abrasive scuttles around out of sight. A police siren outside the window hails the arrival of some oddly organic creations that sound rather like electronic pigs; the staccato bursts of noise on "Bandaged Moments" begin to play some sort of call-and-response game with the car horns of passing drivers. "Cardiomancy", appropriately, brings in a rhythm, a pulsing metallic undulation that would struggle to be called a beat. And so it continues, in the same kind of vein. Listening at night is slightly more successful from the point of view of clarity, and more suited to the atmosphere, but the combined hard drives and fan sounds of three PCs and an old-fashioned Ethernet hub still give our ambient heroes a run for their money, and I am forced to make a conscious effort to type quietly. The bassy rumbles on "Nights, Demixed, Circles" underscore all this with a somewhat more effective aura of menace, and the menagerie of scraping sounds and pizzicato twangs on "Three Sand Voices" have enough presence to make themselves more consciously apparent. More volume helps a bit but the tenuous, insubstantial nature of the production limits the usefulness of cranking up the amp -- these are more like fleeting apparitions than instruments -- and besides, the occasional squeals of feedback and wooden percussive reports might wake my girlfriend.

If you don't mind the restrictiveness of headphones or like your music subliminal, then this might be for you. Issues of audibility aside however, I am not convinced that there is enough in the way of dramatic tension here either. "Metamorphoses of Tabanus Bovinis" and "Graphite in Prussic" achieve a kind of sonorous eeriness, but much of the CD creeps past unmemorably, leaving behind just some oddly-shaped footprints and a faint smell of self-indulgence. And Toop's accompanying prose passage is, in all honesty, somewhat twee. Stick

to the day job please. That said, I would very much like to see this performed live; I suspect Eastley's mechanical sound sculptures and Toop's 'organic matter' noise sources might supply a much-needed point of focus. On CD however the process must take a back seat to the effectiveness of the results, and here "Doll Creature" is lacking. -- ABC [6/10]  
[www.connexionbizarre.com](http://www.connexionbizarre.com)

#### **OCTOPUS / France / Septemr 2004**

Perpétuant la tradition des grandes rencontres, BiP-HOp publie le troisième volet (en 30 ans !) des aventures musicales de Max Eastley et David Toop. Doll Creature s'enfoncé davantage encore que le précédent album Buried Dreams dans les profondeurs telluriques d'une ambient-music crépusculaire. Le mariage compulsif des structures sonores hirsutes de Max Eastley et des manipulations aigres-douces de David Toop s'avère corrosif mais aussi plus confiné, plus grouillant qu'auparavant, leur univers ne laissant transpirer que quelques éléments organiques (sons de flûtes, de guitares, d'abolements) surgissant, diffus et égarés, comme des têtes d'iceberg s'extirpant avec peine d'un océan de matière en ébullition.

Laurent Catala

<http://www.octopus-enligne.com/imprim.php?type=jetsencre&article=10>

#### **PROSIEBEN / Germany / September 2004**

Der britische Autor und Musikjournalist David Toop steht kurz vor der Heiligsprechung, gelten seine Bücher "Ocean Of Sound" und jüngst "Haunted Weather" als eine der wenigen ernst zu nehmenden Schriften zur neuen elektronischen und digitalen Musikkultur. In diesen Werken beschreibt David Toop nicht nur die Produktionsbedingungen der neuen Musik, sondern entwirft auch imaginäre Landkarten der Klangkunst und gibt den theoretischen Überbau zur sinnlichen Erfahrung der Töne.

Max Eastley nennt sich "Klang-Bildhauer" und teilt mit David Toop nunmehr das dritte gemeinsame Album in 30 Jahren. Ihr gemeinsames Debüt reicht bis 1975 zurück, als man folgerichtig Brian Enos "Obscure"-Label bemühte, um den Klangexperimenten den richtigen Kontext zu geben - in den 90er Jahren fand man sich bei dem Label Beyond zwischen Biosphere und Higher Intelligence Agency mit dem Album "Buried Dreams" gut aufgehoben - von der Kritik zuweilen als das "furchteinflößendste Ambientalbum überhaupt" gefeiert.

Eine Dekade später ändert sich an Haltung und Gestus nichts, allein man weiß die Sparsamkeit zur Tugend zu maximieren. Kein lauter Ton, und dennoch tönt es in jedem Moment eindringlich aus den Lautsprechern. Längst sind Liedstrukturen oder noch weitergreifende narrative Linien zu Gunsten von unmittelbaren Klangeindrücken verworfen. Der Hörer ist gefordert eine neue Sprache zu lernen, die wenig mit bekannten Signalen aus ausgetretenen Musikpfaden gemein hat. Es geht um Intensitäten und die reine Erfahrung des Klangs. Vielleicht auch einmal mehr um eine Form der Musik die nicht um Gefallen bettelt, sondern die Erfahrung des Hörens neu vermittelt. Schon vor fast einhundert Jahren forderten die Futuristen nach "neuen Formen der Schönheit" - Max Eastley und David Toop schenken gar noch neue Strukturen hinzu.

[http://www.prosieben.de/music\\_cd/showmusic/index.php?15479](http://www.prosieben.de/music_cd/showmusic/index.php?15479)

#### **RUMORE # 152 / Italy / September 2004**

A volte ritornano (insieme)S Ovvero, a scadenza più o meno precisa di dieci anni l'uno dall'altro (1975-1994-2004), ecco il terzo album di due autori storici dell'avanguardia d'oltremarica.

Quello descritto da Toop e Eastley in Doll Creature è un paesaggio (sonoro) immaginario, mappa acustica in divenire, deriva emozionale ed emozionante fatta di fanta-folklore e colori terrigni, intimi tramestii e frinire di grilli meccanici in ovatta ambient, spazio fisico e digitale,

pura fenomenologia del suono elaborata tramite un armamentario alquanto stravagante (sculture, strumenti meccanici, pagine strappate da un libro, varia materia organica e altri eccentrici attrezzi accoppiati a più usuali computer, chitarre, percussioni), un acquirino limaccioso nel quale, una volta tanto, è dolce naufragare. (valutazione: 3/5)

Nicola Catalano

#### **CRACKED / Austria / August 2004**

The darkest, scariest record Bip Hop has ever dared to release. A fine work, as anyone would have expected by these two artists, who apparently live within their own framework of time and meaning. At least when getting behind their various instruments and apparatuses to produce atmospheric sounds. Fringe, indeed, but the outermost corners of your mind more than anything, releasing a sucking motion that will draw into a realm of translucent thoughts coming to live. Behold, the doll creature walks the night again.

This here doll creature is an eerie specimen. A nightly ghost, solemnly wandering through dark areas, swamps and woods, empty halls and closed down machinery plants, and delighting in the tiniest sound made by small critters rustling over cemented floors or unseen predators laying hunting somewhere in the bushes. A scary and dimmed environment that makes the inner self turn outwards and the outer ambience seep magically inwards. Boundaries between the self and the outer dissolve in the pauses between rustling and crackling sounds that follow the random order of nature into the synthetically manufactured setting of a sound installation in downtown Birmingham, rainy cobblestones, seedy air and scary characters included.

I am too young to recount the history of these two artists meaningfully. Of course, as a reader of *The Wire* I have come across Toop's writing (sometimes also in other magazines such as *The Face*, *Spin*, *GQ* – obviously Toop knows no boundaries for himself as well) and books. Then heard about him again as a curator and composer for festivals and compilations, various CDs of his own and so on. Whatever someone tries to do, when he wants to make a living on avant-garde music. Max Eastley is more of an unknown to me. I know he is also a painter, I once downloaded a track he did with the Spaceheads from *Epitonic* and if I really tried hard I would have remembered his connection to Brian Eno.

But in 1994, when the last collaboration of Eastley and Toop was released, I was heavily into Japan Noise (as well as hyperfast hardcore-punk), so I never came across that, which I attribute to the fact that Austria still was a subcultural backwater back then (though I once saw *Illusions of Safety* play live scaring away a hored of goths gone industrial, though I guess mainly by wearing blue jeans, sneakers and old pullovers and only then by the music they played). Judging from what I can hear today, "Buried Dreams" must have been more scary than the whole Masonna-backcatalogue. Max Eastley and David Toop have of course worked together a lot over the years, but I leave the internet search to you. Especially since I feel that I haven't explored into the whole Eno-Ambient-avantgarde-music enough yet, to be able to judge this record rightfully. So I'll stick to judging the actual sounds on this work instead.

"Doll creature" is also a frightening record, until you stop connotating every sound for the result of some organic movement, from the wind blowing to unheard of monsters lurking in the dark. (Always the dark) As soon as you take sound for sound and nothing else, the scariness is almost gone. Whenever your mind starts to fill the holes and pauses between the scarcely sounds – for instance with the faint echoes of human voices as happened to me yesterday late night with "bandaged moments" – it becomes even more scary. The invisible appearance of ghosts howling somewhere out of reach while listening to this kind of ambient after midnight on headphones is more than a grown up person can take with the lights out. So I turned them back on again. Adding to my personal act with "doll creatures" of the broken,

tumbling and retarded kind such as can be found in music videos by Tool or in Jan Svankmeier-movies.

"Doll creatures" offers a lot of free space to listeners trying to find their own spiritual boundaries instead of the music giving to them. Titles have tracks such as "eyelash turned inwards", "flooded garden" (the relationship of Toop with his own backyard garden is allegedly a legendary one) or "green silence" and it is exactly this kind of confronting separated bits and bytes of the memory, the mind or the perception to make them fuse or at least build connections, that is so exciting. Like the hidden organic and the clandestinely built mechanical. From "the golem" to "metropolis". The age-old struggle when parts of separated worlds come together and the Darwinian rule that they should stay that way as opposed to the lure of evil that makes anything once thought of come alive for real.

<http://www.monochrom.at/cracked/reviews/Rev%20Eastley+Toop.htm>

#### **DE SUBJECTIVISTEN / Holland - Belgium / August 2004**

Veteranenmuziek, daar moet je respect voor hebben, zeker in het geval van geluidsculpteur Max Eastley en componist/schrijver David Toop. De theorie in praktijk brengen lijkt altijd hun credo. Ik vind dan meestal wel dat je je op de praktijk moet richten. En op Doll Creature is dan ook meer dan genoeg te beleven. De klanken zijn origineel, maar wat wil je met sculpturen, Purple Ray Vitalator, schuurmiddelen, insektachtigen, boog, computers, gitaren, (honden)fluiten, buizen, organisch materiaal, bladzijden en percussie instrumenten. Daarmee maken ze minimale composities die een desolate sfeer uitadememen en je een gevoel van derealisatie geven. Het geeft je het gevoel in je eentje rond te lopen op een totaal verwoeste aarde, na een korte maar felle atoomoorlog. Hier en daar leeft nog een dier, onder het smeulende puin misschien zelfs andere mensen. Het decors van The Matrix als angstaanjagende waarheid. Wanneer muziek -als ik die langzaam voortschrijdende klanken, kraken en klikken die in een musique concrète-achtig jasje gestopt ten minste zijn zo mag noemen- dat bij mij teweeg kan brengen, dan dwingt dat ook respect af. Ongrijpbare schoonheid.

<http://www.subjectivisten.org/archives/001159.php#001159>

#### **IKONEN / Germany / August 2004**

Eastley und Toop, zwei Klangkünstler, haben bereits 1975 auf Brian Enos' Obscure-Label ihre erste Zusammenarbeit veröffentlicht. Ein zweites Album folgte 1994, und das nun vorliegende "Doll Creature" ist somit die dritte Zusammenarbeit in 30 Jahren. Die Covergestaltung lässt fast auf eine bodenständige Industrialästhetik schließen, die beiden Soundtüftler bieten hier jedoch eher vertrackte Ambientmusik im ganz ursprünglichen - von Eno hergeleiteten - Sinne. Mit ausgeklügelten elektronischen Strukturen erschaffen sie eine geheimnisvolle Klanglandschaft, die sich in ihren minimalistischen Ausbrüchen fast zu einer Reisegeschichte formiert. Filigrane, gläserne Sounds, digitales Zirpen und akustische Quellen fließen zu einer befremdlichen Musikskulptur zusammen. - Unheimliche Experimentalelektronik, nicht leicht zugänglich, aber ein genaues Hinhören wert. MaNic

<http://www.ikonemagazin.de/rezension/ExperimentalSept2004.htm>

#### **AVOPOLIS / Greece / August 2004**

<http://www.avopolis.gr/reviews/default.asp?ID=2206>