

## Bittles' Magazine | Interview

I first stumbled upon the twisted world of **Mike Paradinas** in 1994 through his remix EP of indie heroes **The Auteurs**. Across forty odd minutes of sonic experimentation he chewed up the original tracks and added huge layers of distortion until what remained was something of a truly mind-expanding listen. Yet just when it would seem that the tracks were too fucked up for comfort and your ears would start to complain, the music would suddenly break into a heartbreaking melody, or a moment of magnificent beauty that lifted the entire project to epic heights. By **JOHN BITTLES**



Thus a musical love affair was born as I eagerly tracked down the albums *Tango N' Vectif* and *Bluff Limbo* and took my first tentative steps into a world of exquisite noise. The music on these early releases was by turns angry, fearful, and wonderfully melodic. It took the blueprint of artists like **Aphex Twin** and **B12** and filled it full of gleeful experimentation and musical contrasts. One minute you are bombarded with almost unlistenable noise, the next you are swimming in melancholic grooves. Both albums were playful slippery beasts that would sneak up behind the listener and caress with one hand while pinching roughly with the other.

More releases followed. Stand outs included the *Fear* single on *Virgin Records* and albums such as *Makesaracket* under his **Jake Slazenger** alias. In 2007 he released *Duntisbourne Abbots Soulmate Devastation Technique* (album titles are not his strong point) which was just as difficult and obtuse as its title. And then... nothing! Sure he was running his own record label *Planet Mu*, but on the production front there was only the emptiness of silence. Then, at the beginning of this year rumours began to emerge that he was back with some of his own productions to release. Eager young geeks everywhere rubbed their hands in delight!

So far in 2013 he has given us the delicious IDM-style grooves of his *Chewed Corners* album and the **Heterotic** long-player with his wife Lara Rix-Martin. Later this month he'll also be bringing out *Somerset Avenue Tracks*, a double album of 'lost tracks' from the 1992-1995 era. With all of these releases you can hear

a sense of playfulness and wilful experimentation that suggest Mike has rediscovered the pure and simple joy of making music. You really sense while playing any of these records that here is a man who is doing exactly what he wants and enjoying himself immensely.

That each of these three releases are well worth checking out should go without saying. *Chewed Corners* starts out all downbeat and moody before climaxing with some sunshine rave. The **Heterotic** album is almost electronic folk featuring as it does the sombre vocals of **Gravenhurst** on numerous tracks. Meanwhile *Somerset Avenue Tracks* features **Mu-Ziq's** trademark experimentalism where you really don't know what you're gonna get by the end of each song.

With this glut of releases, and the day to day business of running a successful record label you would think that **Mike Paradinas** wouldn't have much time for anything else. Yet he very kindly set aside some time to answer some of my questions and open up about his extended break, the new records, and the upcoming **MGMT** remix project.

*Hi there. Thanks for taking the time to answer these questions.*

Hello, no problem.

*2013 has been quite a busy year for you so far with the Heterotic album, Chewed Corners, already out and Somerset Avenue Tracks due out in July. What happened to inspire all this activity?*

Well, the *Somerset Avenue* material had (obviously) been ready for quite a while, but we decided to hold off until the 20th anniversary of *Tango N' Vectif* to release it.

Making the *Heterotic* instrumentals was the inspiration, working with my wife I realised I could make music again without any difficulty. Most of the *Heterotic* album had also been ready for 2 years, but we were always waiting for **Gravenhurst** to complete more than 4 songs - a long wait. It could have been released in 2011. So in the meantime, while waiting, we wrote another *Heterotic* album (with the vocalist Vezelay) and I wrote lots of material which became *Chewed Corners* and *XTEP* and the *Rediffusion* mixtape.

*Were you nervous about making a comeback of sorts?*

I think so. But I needn't have worried. I put myself through the same rigorous A&R procedure that all *planet mu* artists go through, very tough on myself with quality control.

*The Heterotic album was recorded with your wife Lara Rix-Martin. What made you decide to make music together?*

Just for fun. But we were pleased with the results and carried on the collaboration.

*Love & Devotion is a pretty lush listen! Will you both be working together again in the future?*

Thanks, yes, we have recorded a 2nd **Heterotic** album called „Weird Drift“ which we hope to release soon.

*A lot of electronic producers fall-down when working with vocalists but your tracks with **Gravenhurst** on the record are pretty sublime. Can you see yourself producing more music like this?*

„Weird Drift“ was recorded with Vezelay, a.k.a Matthieu de Berre, a French vocalist who sings falsetto, it's more lush and dreamlike than its predecessor.

*Chewed Corners seems to be a lot happier sounding than a lot of your previous offerings. Do you think you've reach a stage in your life where you are more content in yourself and the music that you make?*

That is probably what happened. I have got no arseholes in my life now.

*The production on Chewed Corners sounds very clean and sophisticated. Was this something you were aiming for?*

No, it just happened. The tracks followed on from **Heterotic**, so it's a similar palette. On something like *Fanfare (Heterotic)* or *Monj2 (off XTEP)* I was going for a rawer sound.

*Final track Weakling Paradinas is almost sunshine rave and got me some funny looks for throwing my hands in the air the other day when listening to it on the tube. What were you hoping to create with this track?*

The track started off with that initial riff which is actually quite sad, I didn't know how it would turn out until I got an hour into making it. Happy accident.

*Have you ever known anyone to hear it without breaking out into a huge grin?*

Yes.

*Somerset Avenue Tracks is a collection of unreleased tracks from 1992-1995 and is coming out to celebrate 20 years of the moniker **Mu-Ziq**. What made you decide the time was right to root through the old tapes?*

I had been going through them since 2006 and had many early drafts which included lots of different songs. There are still about another 750 unreleased songs, but I think they are the best from that era 92-95. There is probably room for another volume of later 1995+ tracks.

*How did you decide what to include and what to discard?*

Just listening to it a lot and if you get tired of tracks then get rid of them.

*Is it strange to think that you've been going for 20 years now?*

It feels like 20 years, but I guess when I started 20 years ago was 1973. but we had the punk revolution and acid house which was a big barrier to older people becoming involved in later music scenes. Although there were lots of punks in techno (**orbital, the orb, drum club** etc.)



*How do you think your production style has changed over the years?*

I have good speakers now so for the first time I can actually hear what I'm doing. That's why the mixes are cleaner.

*Your remix album of **The Auteurs** is still one of my favourite albums ever. Would you ever consider working*

*together with another band/singer like this again?*

I am doing a remix of **MGMT** right now

*I am a big fan of your **Jake Slazenger** releases with *Das Ist Ein Groovybeat*, *Ja* being a personal favourite! Do you have any plans to release any more records under this alias?*

No plans, but there was a Russian label which licensed some old unreleased **Jake Slazenger** material off me, but they never paid me (or put the record out)

*You're label Planet Mu has also been very busy so far this year with notable releases from **The Solar Bears**, and **RP Boo** already. What else do you have coming up in 2013?*

We have the **John Wizards** album, they are a band from Cape Town, South Africa, who are really really good. Also records from **Interplanetary Prophets**, **Misty Conditions**, **Ital Tek**, and **Premonitions**.

*What do you look for in a track when considering music for Planet Mu?*

Whether it moves me.

Anyone wanting a listen to some of these records should head to the *Planet Mu* website at <http://www.planet.mu/> where you can also buy the albums if you're feeling flush.

*Photos: © Andrew Antill*

| JOHN BITTLES