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Visual and Aural Culture:
A Critical Analysis of Warp Records

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Audio Tape Track List

(All less than 2 minute excerpts)

Autechre - 1 Basscadet (Incunabula)

2 444 (Incunabula)

3 Yulquen (Amber)

4 Flutter (Anti E.P.)

5 Garbage (Garbage E.P.)

6 Vletrmx (Garbage E.P.)

7 Second Scout (Anvil Vapre E.P.)

8 Dael (Tri Repetae)

9 Leterel (Tri Repetae)

10 Laughing Quarter (Envane E.P.)

11 Tewe (Chiastic Slide)

12 Cichli (Chiastic Slide)

13 Pencha (Cichli Suite)

14 Fold 4, Wrap 5 (L.P.5)

Aphex Twin - 15 S.A.W.2 (S.A.W.2)

RAC - 16 Detour (Diversions)

Blech (Various) - 17 (Blech's Dottir)

Biz - 18 Void/Comm (Time tourist)

Jake Slazenger - 19 Hung Like a Bull (Das ist Ein Groovy Beat Ja)

Seefeel - 20 Ga (Succour)

Plone - 21 Plaything (Wap100)

Boards of Canada - 22 Orange Romeda

Introduction

"There are many imitators, but we are the true creators." - from "L.F.O." by L.F.O (released as Wap5 1990)

In early 1994, a friend introduced me to the album "Amber" by Autechre released on Warp Records. I was instantly drawn mainly due to the fact that I was hearing a type of music that I could not define verbally. I have been an avid Warp fan since, but the reason I chose this topic for my thesis is that I have yet to come across a design-house/record company collaboration which works with such a degree of functionality. As I intend on working in the field of designing for sound, I wanted to trace the history and progression of the Designers Republic/Warp Records partnership.

Although I don't believe in categorising this subject, I attribute the music released on Warp and its surrounding labels to a "post-ambient" techno scene for lack of a better explanation. The music in this scene varies from fast-aggressive to slow-ambient, but all of it contains a common factor: it is designed to pull the listener away on an abstract, escapist journey. On first listen, this music may seem quite cold, aggressive and emotionless, but in many cases (especially with Autechre) the artists are expressing themselves by accentuating the electronic nature of their instruments, so it should be listened to as an expression through sound production as well as musical composition. The point of this thesis is to analyse the imagery which accompanies the records but I felt this was not possible without audio examples of the music, and also a brief look at the history of electronic music (predominantly dance music).

Over the last sixty years, it would be fair to say that "heart-felt" non-commercial musical styles have morphed into the commercial

mainstream of popular musical releases by way of sound, image or composition. The interesting factors within the "post-ambient" scene are the explorations of musical production and form coupled with fresh, functional graphic design which have already showed signs of entering popular culture. The overall sound (and vision) coming from artists such as Autechre, Aphex Twin and Mike Paradinas disregards a lot of the safe genres dictated by fashion which overpopulate pop music today in my opinion. I have gathered together my own knowledge of this largely unpublished scene from various dance magazines, television coverage, my own background in composition and production of music, listening to the music, and musing with the d.j.s and artists who participate in its promotion.

Chapter I - The Production of "Warp Culture"

"We've grown up with club music. But we never listened to it in a club setting. We mainly listened to that music at home, or on our walkman. That may be the single most important reason why we never make music that's geared to the dance experience." - Sean Booth
(Gonzo Circus issue 18 November/December 1995)

In this chapter, I intend to map out the origin, and progression of style, within Warp Records and its following. I want to show how social trends, consumer trends and musical technology have helped to shape the music being released on Warp. So to understand how and why each product is packaged, I will also attempt to trace the production and direction of this subculture.

This music is heavily influenced and sometimes based upon the use of the sampler; an instrument which enables an artist to digitally record and edit any sound, sculpt it, and sequence it. Yet still in this post-modern society most cultural studies writers have not yet grasped the notion of simple musical taste being a skill. This is necessary asset of the modern electronic producer/composer (knowing what sound to capture/sample to create the intended mood), just as much as the skill of visual taste is necessary to a graphic designer (knowing what image to capture/scan to convey the intended message). Theodor Adorno and Simon Frith seem obsessed with artists who are either highly trained musicians and composers or, even more so, the artists communicating hardship through the beauty of simplicity to a non-existing audience, as to profit from the love of their home would be selling out their neighbours.

I am a large believer in the industrialisation of music. A fraction of a weekly wage is a small price to pay for a quality reproduction of a

body of work strategically designed to take hold of my mood and humour for a portion of my day which I may never have experienced otherwise. Sure, we are bombarded with marketing schemes everyday to consume certain products within the musical realm, but our real choice lies in whether we possess the passion to explore the moods which music can create or recreate within us. Much of the music within the Warp "post-ambient" scene centres around experimentation in sampling and synthetic sound, so the moods created are intended to be new.

There is great variety within the Warp "post-ambient" scene drawing many influences, mainly pop, industrial, dance and jazz/funk. Within the media, Warp is always classified as being a section of dance music as its associations with this scene are more apparent than any other. So to realise the foundation of a subsection of contemporary electronic music, we have to trace the foundations of club culture to find out how it emerged. We also have to look at who the artists are and why different elements of dance music influenced these people compared to the more generic producers. I believe the authors of this music to be extremely important, as in some cases an intricate sense of humour is at work alongside a vast back catalogue of experimentation in both retrospective parody and original composition.

Synthetic note structuring has been a feature on electronic instruments for over thirty years, becoming popular in the 1970s (and revolutionising in the 1980s). The majority of these machines were either German or Japanese-made modules covered in knobs and switches to control the sounds. The clinical functionality of the instructional text on these machines (and indeed, most electronic equipment) has been adopted by the Designers Republic and has subsequently filtered through to club culture design.

Also born in the 1970s, was the concept of the disc jockey matching the rhythm of each consecutive record in order to keep a continuous danceable flow at a club. But it was the feel of the music that changed drastically in the early 1980s with the advent of hip-hop and house music. The club culture following changed with this and, in turn, a large section of the musical culture. Disco had created a "feel-good groove" within music consisting of a more predominant repetitive rhythm section which accompanied "feel-good" soulful lyrics and catchy, simplified jazzlike melodies all held together in the popular "verse-chorus-verse" structure. Visually, disco was loud, colourful and commercially appealing with no major design or marketing breakthroughs. But sonically, it was the predominance in rhythm sections which progressed into hip-hop and then survived into the eighties in the form of Chicago house and Detroit techno where the standard "verse-chorus-verse" was replaced by a relentless journey structure.

This repetitive hypnotic groove was mixed with the futuristic sound of the new electronic equipment being produced. This was heavily influenced by German minimalist pop group Kraftwerk who attained their very unique sound by using only synthetic machines and human voice in the late 1970s. The overall sound of their music was cold and machine-like, but it did not contribute to the dance club scene until the early eighties in the States when this sound was coupled with the hypnotic groove.

Such techno figureheads as Juan Atkins and Derreck May pioneered this sound sequencing dark stringed chords, minimal biting "Roland 808" drums (the preferred techno drum machine), funk influenced synthetic basslines and often robotic speech. So the mood of the music was one of cold uncharted territory, sounding more isolated than the unified feel of the soulful chorus lines in disco. At this stage, it didn't prove lucrative, selling mainly to d.j.s and avid fans. The music

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was created in bedrooms on home computers and second hand drum machines and was often played in illegally organised underground clubs. At this time, record sleeve design for dance music was not important, many simply opting for the "white label". The culture gradually dictated that a shop selling techno (or house) provided a turntable and earphones, so the records were sold purely on the strength of the music.

A huge element of socialising had always been dancing, but disco had encouraged people to enter into a hypnotic groove where the repetitive rhythm held you subconsciously dancing. So into the late eighties when house and techno had made their way over to Europe as well as the States, a scene had now been set in subculture entertainment: the pleasure behind this hypnosis was now the main reason for attending these club culture events.

House and techno events became six hour sessions of d.j.s mixing minimal repetitive beats all with a similar sound and mood. So the concept of taking one evening per week and spending it transfixed to a relentless stimulant became commonplace for a section of society. In my view a form of entertainment such as this is then going to call for quicker progression in style because of the lack of variety within a night's entertainment. So from the late eighties into the nineties, house and techno began to split into many different directions including "jungle" and "trance".

But as these forms of entertainment were quite physical, a more psychological phenomenon emerged- the "chill-out" room. The need for an area in a club for relaxing was great, and the musical accompaniment of such a venue had to be far less aggressive. In keeping with the futuristic mood of dance music at the time, the chill-out music had to also experiment with unexplored moods in entertainment. But rhythms were not largely focussed upon as there wasn't call for it, so the exploration

of sound and melody was employed.

The chill-out scene was pioneered in Britain by Alex Patterson (the Orb) and Jimmy Caughty (KLF). They used to perform together in the v.i.p. lounges of successful London "raves", playing BBC sound effects records through echo chambers and phasers. These areas within the clubs became events in themselves, with clubs soon opening solely for relaxation music. The term "Ambient" music had been coined by Brian Eno in the late seventies referring to his own exploration of mood within sound. This term was then taken on board by the chill-out producers. In the early nineties home producers such as the Higher Intelligence Agency and Orbital mixed the spiritual mood of ambient with the repetitive beats and melodies laying the foundations for the music Warp records would release. Here we see early signs of Designers Republic's involvement, designing futuristic sleeve art for the Orb's "Adventures Through the Ultraworld" album in 1990.

As this post-ambient sound progressed, Warp became the home of innovation and experimentation, signing techno wizards "L.F.O." and quirky hip-hop acts like "Nightmares on Wax". The whole European scene has always been scattered with non-conformist eclectic tracks by producers who were not your average "street-style" contenders.

There has always been music written to capture the listeners' mood and take them on an emotional journey. A lot of the Warp music could fit into this category. But what makes it different is the fact that it draws many influences including production techniques and rhythm, from areas in music designed to stimulate the body, rather than the mind. It is this juxtaposition which makes the music stand out.

Chapter II - The Social Significance of Warp

"We're always encountering new problems..." ... "And finding new accidents and harnessing them..." - Rob Brown and Sean Booth (immerse001 issue 1 January 1995)

In chapter I I traced the origins of Warp records and its surrounding culture to show how and why it was created. With the understanding that Warp is a sub-section of modern electronic music, I now wish to show where it is culturally situated today and what makes it different from other areas in the record industry. The majority of the music being produced under the Warp banner is of a non-commercial nature like many independent labels, but what makes Warp interesting to me is how this gave them license to transmit their alternative senses of taste and humour without commercial concern. I intend to show how their use of this "independent license" ultimately accounts for their success.

Dominic Stratini outlines three sets of questioning in his "Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture" paper to assess the social significance of a culture and to ultimately determine its production and purpose. I will apply these questions to the Warp post-ambient scene dealing with 1. power, 2. commercialisation and 3. ideology, to show how their organisational, economic and cultural attributes differ from the rest of the industry.

1. Power

The people who are determining this culture lay between the general public, those involved in all of the elements of the music business, and the people completing the link between those creating the

commodity and the general public. Obviously the people actually buying the records within the scene heavily influence its existence with regards to direction of style, finance and popularity. But also the reaction of the live audience contributes largely to the culture's existence. Much of the music's credibility comes from its performance when played by d.j.s, but there is also the importance of the live act which sets this scene aside from other tributaries of dance culture. As it has always had a live scene boasting progressive sound, it has built the fanbase who want to see the progression performed.

The main objective of this scene and its promoters is to release interesting music which is not dictated by financial gain. The people writing the music are ultimately dictating its culture and increasingly abusing its financial and status benefits. When they have achieved a certain degree of fame, possessing their own soapbox within society, they can increasingly output more amounts of originality, experimentation and "heart-felt" music. Of the artists on Warp, most started out with a sound which could have been categorised, carrying heavy connotations of past or current styles on music. Gradually, non-identifiable styles of music emerged, emitting less connotations and influences as the artists learned to utilise their equipment to their own individual taste. On small labels artists possess more power over what tracks they release and how they approach the public with their product. The difference with Warp is how the artists exaggerate and abuse this power to entertain and influence their fans.

Visually, the Warp label has always been represented with as much originality and integrity as its music and to me the products themselves (the records) are the main source of information into the Warp culture. Its record sleeve packaging always entails realistic and unbiased visual representations of the sounds, humour or moods of the music usually executed by the Designers Republic. This in my view, is

the opposite of patronising marketed design that sells sounds by inoffensive, beautiful images. Warp is not largely represented through promotional video, but any of its endeavours are always close in theory and mood to the music. In 1994, using the concept of a two hour compilation album, coupled with a long play computer generated film (an idea produced by several different companies in the techno scene), segments of Warp's "Artificial Intelligence" series featured heavily on M.T.V's "Chill-Out Zone" (the main showcase for experimental electronic music in Europe).

Since 1995 Autechre, Aphex Twin and Squarepusher have all employed the talents of young director Chris Cunningham famed for his work on the motion picture "Alien 3". He successfully captured the serious, harsh mood of Autechre's "Second Bad Vilbel", the violent and eerie mood of Aphex Twin's "Come to Daddy" and the fast paced humour of Squarepusher's "Come On My Selector". The evocative imagery influenced Madonna to use Cunningham in her 1998 "Frozen" spiritual techno effort which he looked at as merely a money maker. So wherever Warp are given the chance to communicate with the public visually, they exhibit functionality rather than financially driven power.

Within most independent labels and underground scenes there is never a higher power imposing a type of social control on its customers as they are usually set up by listeners or producers of the scene as with Warp. Although providing a vehicle on which artists can deliver alternative music may be looked at as adding to a section of society, it could not be looked at as a type of social control compared with the mass-marketed record companies of today. Speaking with Rob Brown of Autechre, he told me with his vast knowledge of independent labels (Autechre were ripped off in 1991 by a small label) that although Warp has become a subsection of EMI "They're the best label in the world", and of course I believed him. Warp could be looked at as a service, in

an organisational sense, which gives artists with an original sound an honest platform to display their talent to an enthusiastic audience.

2. Commerce

Within the record industry today, even the humblest of companies must employ some marketing tactics in order to survive. In the case of Warp, the influence of commercialisation is not really utilised functionally. Rather than print flyers, posters and record sleeves which advertise the products at every chance, the music is complimented with images which reflect the nature of the music.

The criteria of profitability and marketability, with regard to the Warp culture, never takes precedence over the quality and intellectual challenge. Taking the artist Cylob as an example (who records for Aphex Twin's own label "Reflex"), he recreates the melodies and sounds in the style of early Madonna (or any eighties pop queen) accompaniment on his "Diof '97" e.p. This presents a new intellectual challenge:- to realise the humourous, kitsch aspect of the track, never presented to us as being funny before as you relish in the accurate treatment of a style you love to hate. This kind of release may be looked at as a massive risk to a large record company as it can't be categorised into a modern style of music.

The serious musical side of Warp music regards the exploration of rhythmic and melodic structure coupled with non-conformist production. This lets the audience know these people are about creating new music. I studied classical piano for eight years but the music released on Warp and its closely related labels over the last seven years has completely changed my view on what is acceptable within musical composition. This is where Adorno's attitude towards conditioning may come into play. Listening to Autechre's "Cichli" from their 1997 L.P. "Chiastic slide", the rhythm is written in a ten beats per bar time signa-

ture. At first listen, the track sounds a little uneasy and confusing, but the catchy main melody and travelling bassline help you to feel the rhythm. Adorno would argue that the 10/4 beat structure sounds uneasy due to us being conditioned to the classic pop 4/4 beat structure. But I believe the 4/4 structure to be more instantly flowing and that it has been tried and tested as the easiest on the ear. Autechre a merely exploring and discovering moods which may not be commercially successful on a mass culture level. The evolution of music has been for pleasure, not just a complete coincidence.

It is also the care taken within the merchandising, mail order and Warp internet service. Whilst online, you can view over thirty videos, listen to music months before its release, and leave messages for the artists themselves. These may seem to be quite commercial ventures, but at this stage, many Warp fans buy the records on the reputation of quality music associated with the logo on the sleeve regardless of hearing or not. So the web site is just a means of entertainment.

Pop culture has set out the vehicles and tools which must be used in order for someone to bring any form of entertainment to their fans. Within the industry, the large companies have taken such control over the existing methods of production, sub-cult labels have been associated with pirate radio and independently run fanzines to a large extent. These are an elements of the media where (due to a small audience willing to look to alternative means of information) image and censorship are not prime concerns, so less mainstream ideas are accepted and ultimately Warp music is advertised further.

Looking to pop music, the small impact by Warp and post-ambient techno is escalating. Most notably Bjork, who aided in techno's growth in popularity in Europe due to constant flirtation with electronic production. For her 1998 "Homogenic" L.P., she took Mark Bell (one half

of veteran Warp techno duo L.F.O) on board as her producer. His exploration of expressive synthetic rhythm lines blended occasionally with live orchestral arrangements, successfully brought an experimental scene to the forefront of pop music culture, while also advertising the home producer as an enjoyable section of a live act due to the amount of television appearances.

Using the established method of distributing records is inevitable, so it's the content of the releases that must be judged alongside sales and cultural acceptance in order to clarify whether commerce or quality is winning out. Money is obviously being made as the scene is expanding. New artists are being signed and the older ones are charging more money for performances in bigger venues. But the fact that new artists such as Plone and Boards of Canada are being signed, indicates that the scene is influential in the first place. So commercially, Warp is a company who have enjoyed success through relentless efforts to provide the music buying public with an alternative. An alternative which embodies music written by home producers sold to the public solely on the strength of their music and the consistent quality of the label.

3. Ideology

The ideological role of Warp is purely one of entertainment where no attempt is made to push their music upon the people. A commercially successful bandwagon is not jumped upon as the music is progressive, contributing new ideas to contemporary music. As the label grew from ambient techno, its artists began to explore the production of rhythm. Progressions within the "drum and bass" scene were culminated into a lot of Aphex Twin's, Mike Paradinas' and Autechre's work. Both Aphex Twin and Paradinas using samples of breakbeats from seventies funk records, sequencing them to form hectically tripped beats and fusing them with dark, sweeping and soulful melodies. This

shows how Warp are willing to change the musical direction of their label without worrying about delving into existing musical styles.

Autechre on the other hand, defer from existing scenes and retrospectives in production, thoroughly working into their music to create new moods and sounds. They picked up on the strength of the tripped "two step" drum and bass beat, but produced original sounds to play these rhythms in arrangements intended as ten minute journeys rather than repetitive tools for d.j. mixing. This shows how Warp are always willing to look to the future, not just catering for the current style on the dance floor.

But with the apparent boasting of progression, the trends within main stream pop music have to be acknowledged by the artists in order to know how and why their music is different and escapist. Mike Paradinas (recording as mu-ziq) made this exact reflection on his 1997 "Loonatic Harness" L.P on Hut Records. One of the tracks builds from a heavily distorted minimal rhythmic loop as layers while layers of echoed whispering voices gather over five or six minutes gradually to reveal the words "Wanna be your lover baby, I don't want to be your friend". An obvious stab at the Spice Girls, but its the context of this which must be taken to see the real humour. If this track was listened to on its own, the listener may feel some angst ridden teenager has made an immature satire of a pop song. But when listened to with Mike Paradinas' usual quirky style in mind, the listener may encounter a higher level of humour.

Over the past ten years, Warp and its surrounding labels (Reflex, Planet-Mu, Skam etc) have instigated a progression in modern music without attaining a fully unique sound. The "post-ambient" scene has never stuck to a aural formula like other forms of electronic music but rather delivered progressive music for the home listener.

Chapter III - The Functional Sleeve Art of Autechre

"There's got to be a synchronicity between the music and the visual, otherwise I don't respect it." - Sean Booth (Immerseooi Issue 1 January 1995)

In this chapter, I want to illustrate in detail, the type of product that is released on Warp records and how all of the points made in the previous chapter relate to specific examples. By tracing the discography of the band Autechre, we are given a fine example of The Designers Republic and Warp Records being one of the most important collaborations in the electronic music scene of the nineteen nineties. Taking some of the most challenging music this century and wrapping it in a uniquely interpreted shell has influenced many working within the dance culture. Their partnership is widely known and respected and has often been copied, but never equalled.

The Designers Republic was formed by Ian Anderson in the early eighties in Sheffield. A failed punk, he turned his hand to d.j.ing and band management. It was there he was forced into record sleeve design due to financial difficulty. Taking a degree in sociology, his design skills were self-taught and non-conformist. According to Anderson, his whole attitude towards life and the design world is what keeps his work on the edge, "What a philosophy degree gives you, is the ability to win an argument even if you know you're wrong." (Computer Arts May '97)

Receiving a grant from the Enterprise Allowance scheme in 1984, "the People's Republic of South Yorkshire" was born which Anderson later changed to "Designers Republic". Without a Mac for the first few years, the work consisted of hand drawn bitmaps, tiny

icons and meaningless quasi-Japanese script. With a couple more designers on board and the advent of their very own Mac, the Republic began to churn out bold but complicated handouts and record sleeves. A deal with the late eighties punk-hip-hop fusion band "Pop Will Eat Itself", the Republic took record shops by storm with bastardised corporate logos, generating much admiration and imitators.

As more electronic acts sprang up around the north of England, The Republic's commissions called for more visual depictions of the sound and mood of the music rather than the traditional band performance photo because of the impersonal nature of the instrumental, synthetic music. In 1990, a new Sheffield-based record company emerged boasting some new raw talent in many different styles. Warp was set up by two Belfast men; Rob Mitchell and Steve Beckett living in Sheffield who spotted a niche in the market for a more challenging label prepared to back experimental music mainly coming from the ambient techno scene. Warp boasted acts like "Aphex Twin", "L.F.O." and "Nightmares on Wax". The Republic saw a new medium for translating their more futuristic approach to design.

One act on Warp records whose discography shows the progression of experimental and obsessive work within both companies is "Autechre". Still one of the most experimental British Bands today, members Sean Booth and Rob Brown have always released expressive ideas and worked extremely hard to create a new sound and mood within music. Speaking to Sean and Rob in December '98, I asked them about their relationship with the Designers Republic, "We used to work quite closely with Ian Anderson for most stuff. He has a similar sense of functionality, and he draws a wicked straight line".

As young graffiti artists and B.M.X.ers, both Booth and Brown met up in 1987 and combined their minimal electronic equipment to make post-electro dance music. As the ambient scene formed, Booth and Brown headed in that direction releasing records between '89 and '92 under various different names and labels. Warp snapped them up in '91 releasing tracks on Warp compilation L.P.s until the release of their first single "Basscadet" in '92. The video directed by Jess Scott Hunter, consisting of a 3D computer generated computer virus swimming through circuit boards, proved quite popular on M.T.V.'s "Chill out Zone". "Basscadet" also became Ian Aderson's first collaboration with the potentially difficult Autechre.



Fig. 1

The song itself is loaded with indistinguishable sampled voices travelling over dark, orchestral tunes and powerful resonating basslines. The clinical but distorted staccato percussion lines layer over cold synthetic strings to create a mysterious journey effect. Fig. 1 shows how Anderson tackled the sleeve, setting stark type with such heavy focus on the numerals in the text to emphasize the robotic feeling of the track. The name "Autechre" is abbreviated

down to a simple "Ae" which is the first appearance of Anderson's periodic table-influenced adaptations of Warp band and song titles. The type is layered over a blotchy oil and waterbase experimental background, reminiscent of the acidically coloured landscapes heavily relied upon in "Rave" culture. The release features remixes of "Basscadet" by veteran ambient producers "Baumont Hannon" and "Seefeel" which seem to comply with the coloursceme of the sleeve far more than the darker original. However, the relentless mood of all versions of the track is captured in the background of the sleeve as it gives the appearance of depth, while the stark type echoes the chopping rhythms.

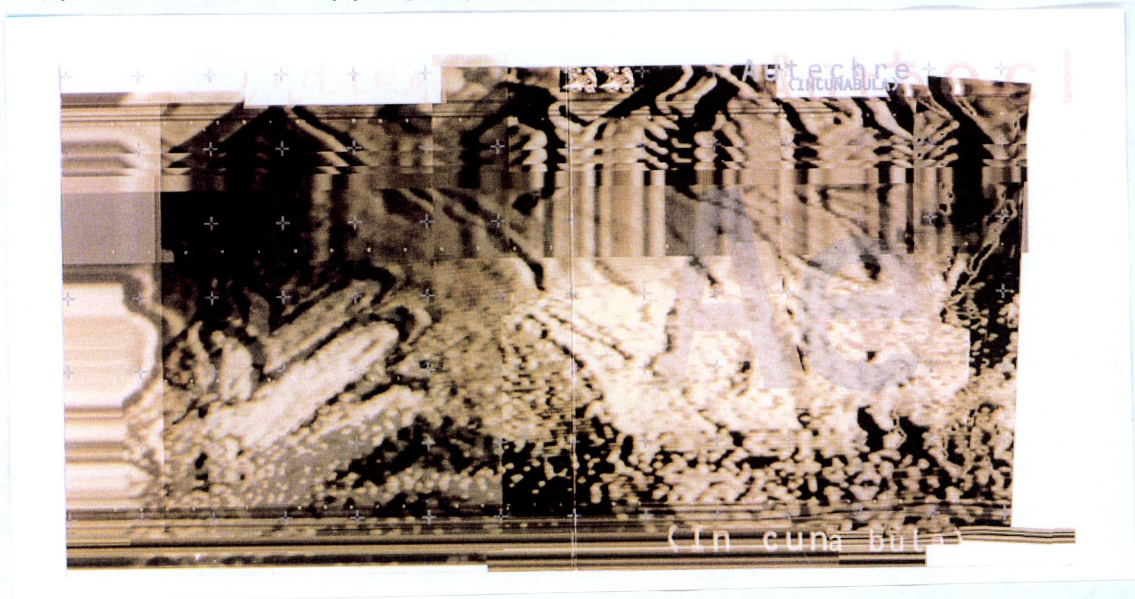


Fig. 2

1993 saw the release of Autechre's debut album on Warp: "Incunabula". This is quite a breakthrough in visual depiction of sound and is an extremely innovative artifact. The album boasts a variety of electronic rhythm and melody exercises, all with a somewhat dark feel to them. With an "electro-trance"-type feel to it, the album became noted for its experimentation within rhythmic Ambient music. Cold reverberating drum machines layered underneath synthetic melodies spinning in and out of phase combine to create a harsh, but sometimes subtle, mysterious mood. This overall feeling was then captured perfectly by the Republic. Fig. 2 shows a

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

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24. The twenty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

26. The twenty-sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Treasury.

27. The twenty-seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

28. The twenty-eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

29. The twenty-ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

30. The thirtieth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

31. The thirty-first part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

32. The thirty-second part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

33. The thirty-third part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

34. The thirty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

35. The thirty-fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

far more complicated vision than before. Chopped, digitized video stills in dark greys, giving the impression of a bad transmission from a space probe, layered behind transparent silver type, give a disorientating feel due to a strange grid structure. D.R clearly captured the cold, confused mood accurately. The distorted video stills of a kind of lunar landscape reflect the heavy use of incoherent speech samples (a technique common in Autechre's work) on the album both morphing like a bad transmission. The chopped and layered text indicates a willingness on Autechre's behalf to permit their record sleeves to be a showcase for fresh, non-commercial design.

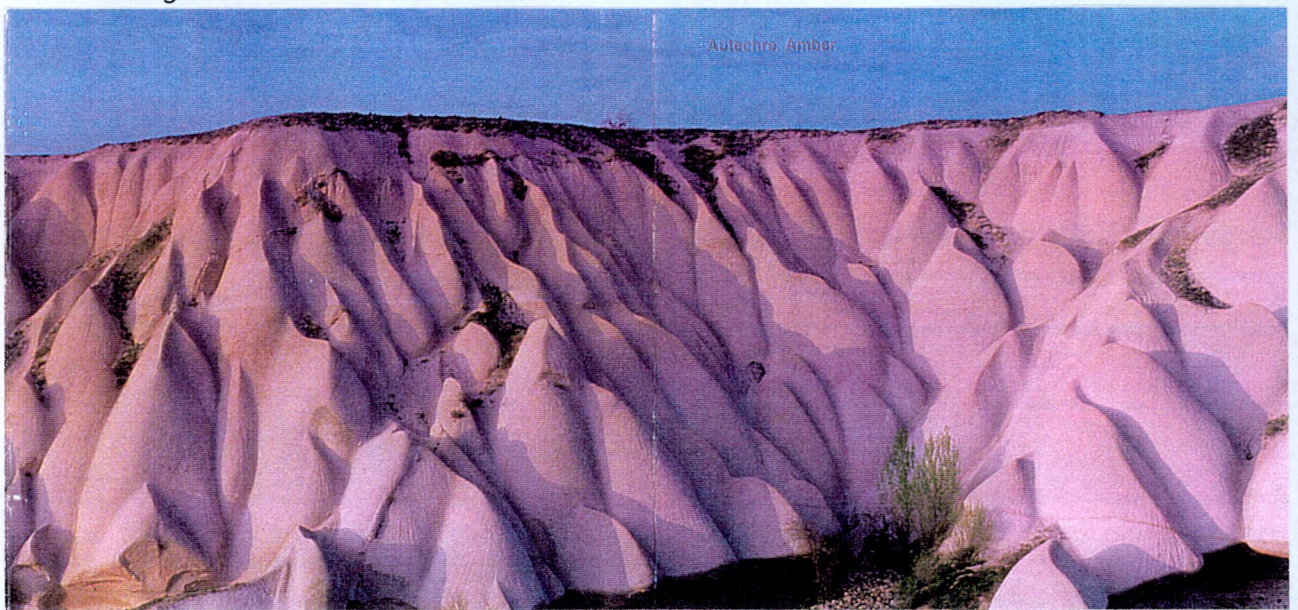


Fig. 3

Autechre's next album release in '94, "Amber" (Fig. 3), saw a less harsh and more refined package. The musical content is more bizarre in its form but takes a placid direction. Each sound is meticulously generated and recycled with pristine expressive qualities. In issue 126 of "Wire" magazine (August '94), Rob Young while reviewing "Amber" remarked,,: "Rob and Sean have little empathy with modern club culture ("We're more to do with head culture"). "You can make your own future up", says Brown. Booth concludes: "That's why electronic music's always related to sci-fi, because it's things nobody's ever heard or seen before.....The music's only

futuristic if you haven't heard it." The percussion lines are calm and minimal while the beautiful melodies are clean and colourful layers over haunting chord structures. The time structures and rhythm lines touched on throughout the album are quite uncommon within the dance culture. With mathematically influenced time shifts the music sometimes connotes the explorations of rhythm by Steve Reich and Philip Glass in the Sixties.

Fig. 3 shows how the Designers Republic treated the sleeve with an entirely different direction. Minimal silver type reads across a photograph of a sand dune formation at dusk. The vibrant colours and strange forms within the image reflect the expressive melodic ambience of the songs but also describe the eerie uncharted territory feel of the production. To me there seems to be a reserved quality to this cover. Most Autechre sleeve design reflects the meticulous work gone into the production of the music but this simply relies on a single photograph and small text. Autechre seem to contain a futuristic air in all of their work and, as Ian Anderson says, "I love the idea of the future. Particularly visions of the future people had in the Fifties and Sixties". Also; "I can't do anything simple. I'm obsessed with detail". It makes you wonder why a simple photograph available on store art disks was used in such a collaboration.

Earlier in '94, Autechre released a far more conceptual E.P. with a very interesting packaging ploy. The "Anti" E.P. contains three tracks: "Lost", "Djarm", and "Flutter". The first two are epic sounding dubbed out techno tracks with a fluid washing feeling. But the third consists of a repetitive breathy melody while extremely fast beat loops swash in and out, never repeating like a ten minute adlib from a realtime drummer. There was an agenda behind this flickering rhythm line: "Warning. *"Lost" and "Djarm"*

contain repetitive beats. We advise you not to play these tracks if the Criminal Justice Bill Becomes law. "Flutter" has been programmed in such a way that no bars contain identical beats and can therefore be played at both forty five and and thirty three revolutions under the proposed new law. However, we advise DJs to have a lawyer and a musicologist present at all times to confirm the non repetitive nature of the music in the event of police harassment.

Important.

By breaking this seal, you accept full responsibility for any consequential action resulting from the products use, as playing the music contained within these recordings may be interpreted as opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill." This is an obvious Designers Republic/Autechre tongue-in-cheek stab at the proposed bill declaring repetitive beats over a certain beats per minute illegal. This information, along with the track titles, was printed on a sticker wrapped around the C.D. The sleeve merely consists of a plain vibrant green with the letters "AeP" printed in orange dot matrix (see Fig. 4). Considering "Ae" already stands for "Autechre", "AeP" now stands for "Anti. Extended. Player.", but to confuse everyone, Anderson prints "Agitate.Educate.Protest" beside the title on the sticker.

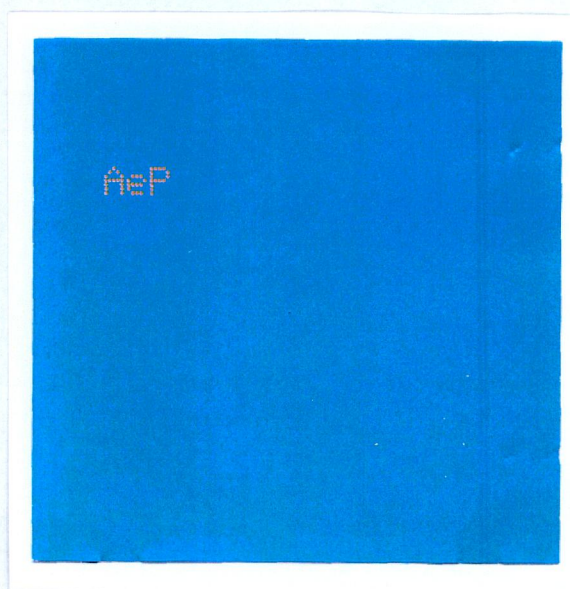


Fig. 4

The "Garbage" E.P. (Fig. 5) released in early '95, saw a new direction for D.R. and Autechre, one which was to remain quite constant for the next year. The track "Garbage" itself, is an electronic epic spinning through many tunes, moods and rhythms. All of the waveform tones are treated with a washing phase and echo, set against rolling snare sounds creating fragmented computerised sequences not possible to human realtime ability. This release also features the minimal dark epic "VLeTrmx x 21", a two bar orchestral haunting melody repeated for twelve minutes, slowly gaining strength and resonance and reducing strength and resonance. This is a pure lesson in the emotional use of filters and equalizers.

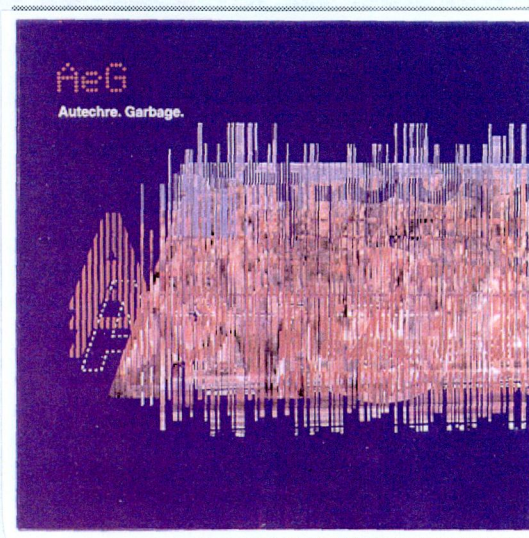


Fig. 5

This sleeve brandishes "AeG" in dot matrix to retain continuity. But the main breakthrough in the visual depiction of sound by D.R., in my opinion, is how the image from the "Amber" (Fig. 3) album has been taken, heavily digitized, fragmented into thin, non-uniform slivers, and then pulled apart and sliced further to reveal the letters "Ae" and other digits relevant to the music. Anderson structures it so the image must be carefully taken in first of all to recognise the photo, and then to read each layer of text. This reflects exactly how the music must be taken in to discover

every layered beat and tune without it washing over you like a blur.



Fig. 6

Later in '95, Autechre released the "Anvil Vapre" E.P. (Fig. 6), a milestone in Warp creations. There is a heavy drum and bass influence to be found with unheard of distorted aggressive sounds piercing in strength. Chopped up female vocals and sweeping minor chords heavily reverberating and echoing across the bleak white noise rhythms create a listening feeling untouched previous to this record. This is the sound they go on to pioneer and the sleeve design is no understatement either.

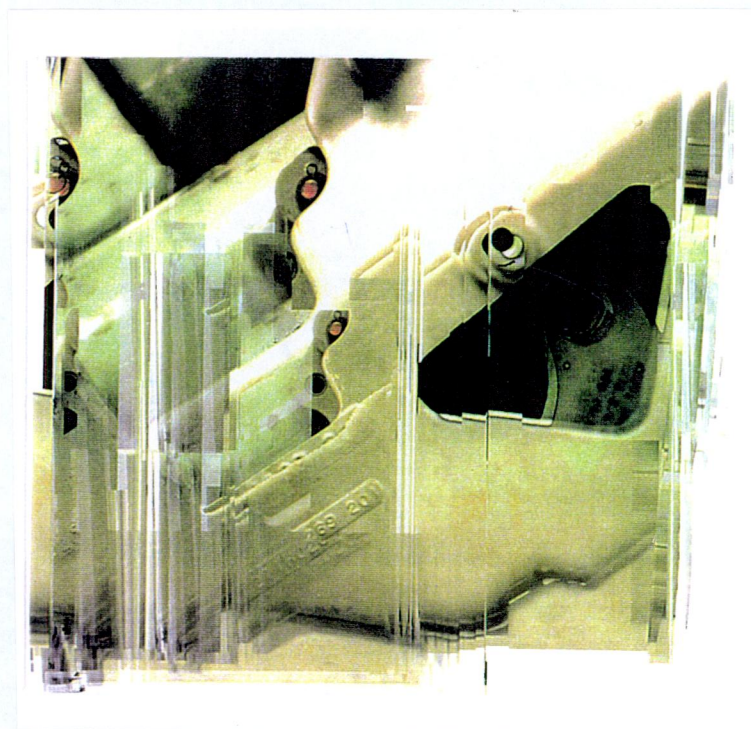
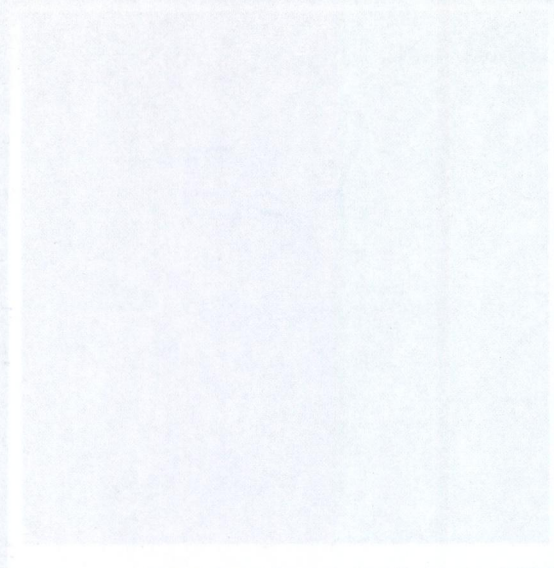


Fig. 7



The sleeve incorporates sliced photographs of cast iron industrial equipment. The cover is so obviously machine made and constructed, it perfectly compliments the robotic sequences of white noise cleanly composed throughout this recording. Fig. 7 shows how the inlay artwork uses more intricately executed photo montage revealing serial numbers and sockets. Fig. 8, also part of the inlay, shows a non-uniform sequence of fragmented photographs perfectly capturing the aura of the music. This new fragmented imagery clearly suited Autechre's new style as they utilised fragmented samples of organic material more frequently. This was the first time I went to see Autechre play live and I discovered that every time they perform live, they have all of the lights in the auditorium switched off so as not to deter the listeners' attention. In the first issue of "Immerseooi" magazine (Jan '95), Miles Wood wrote, "Autechre make the listener work to get into the groove, but conversely, turn up expecting a session of uneasy listening and you might wish you'd worn your Pumas".

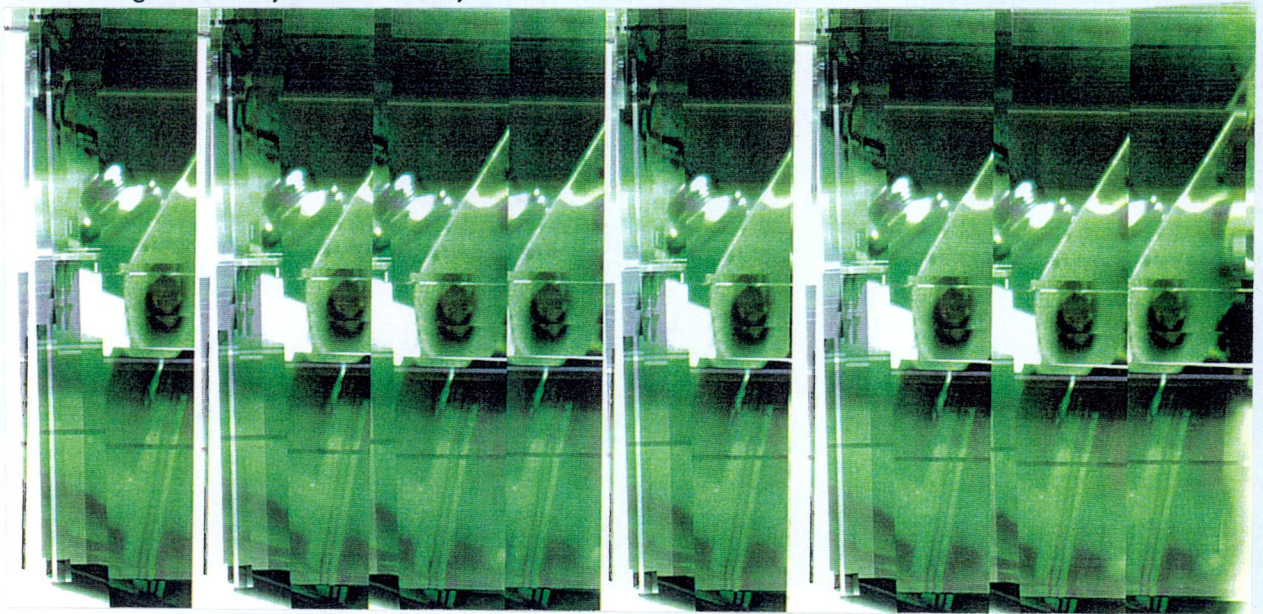
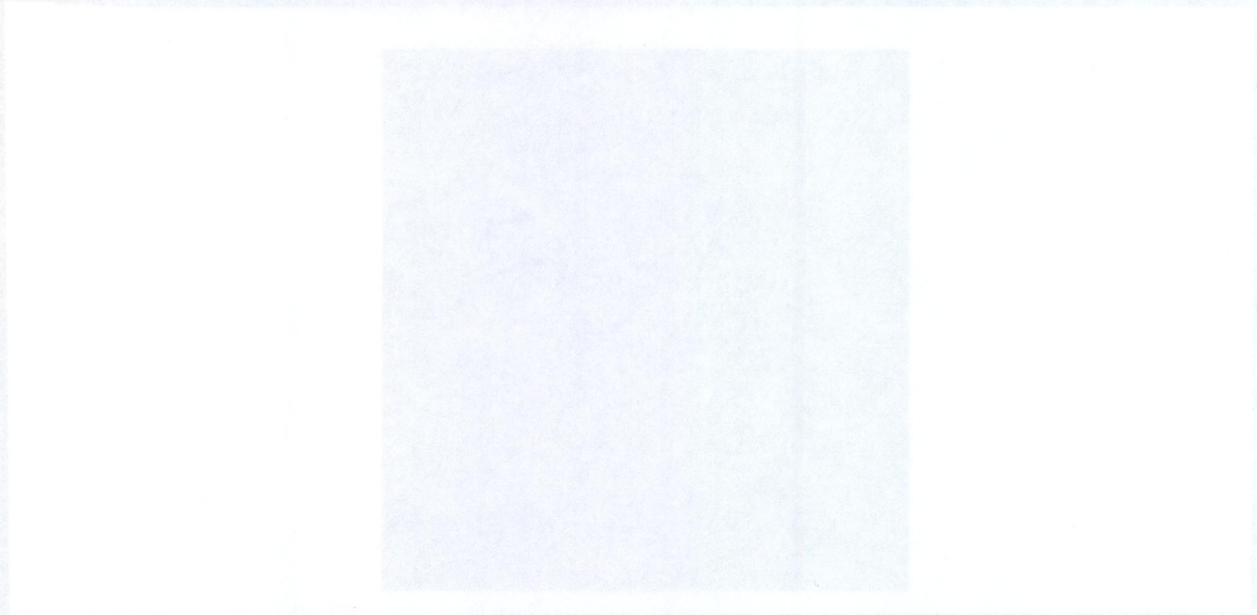


Fig. 8

Fig. 9 shows one of the inner sleeves of "Tri Repetae", Autechre's third album released in November '95. The sleeve consists of beautifully doctored photo montage with decomposing traces of the same photographs on different layers. Anderson fully



understood the objectives of Booth and Brown. He visualised the transforming sounds as disintegrating abstract photo montages, which are clear to all onlookers as capturing the mood of the sound rather than one single designer's visualisation. Fig. 10 shows another inlay from "Tri Repetae" displaying more industrial photography shivering with fragmented uncertainty. The aural production of the album relies heavily on sculpted white noise (fuzz) which is realised visually by plenty of white space. But it was both Booth and Brown's modesty which kept this expressive artwork encased in a metallic olive green sleeve completely textless.

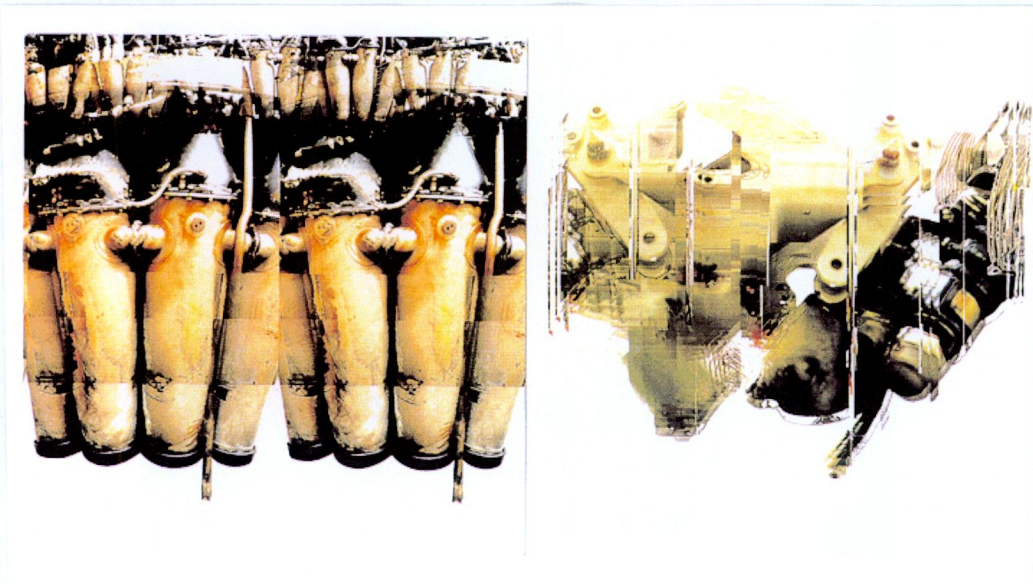


Fig. 9

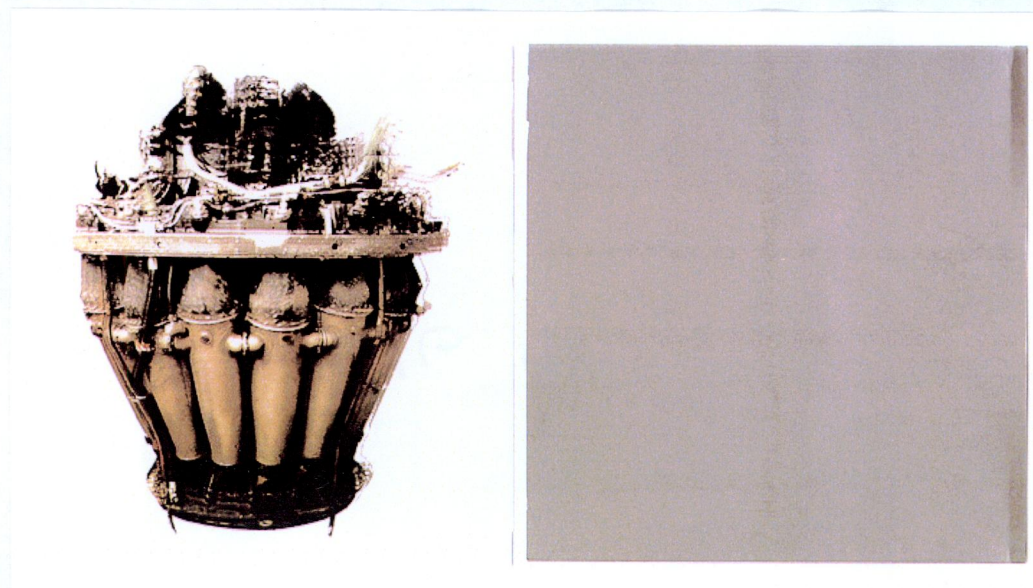


Fig. 10

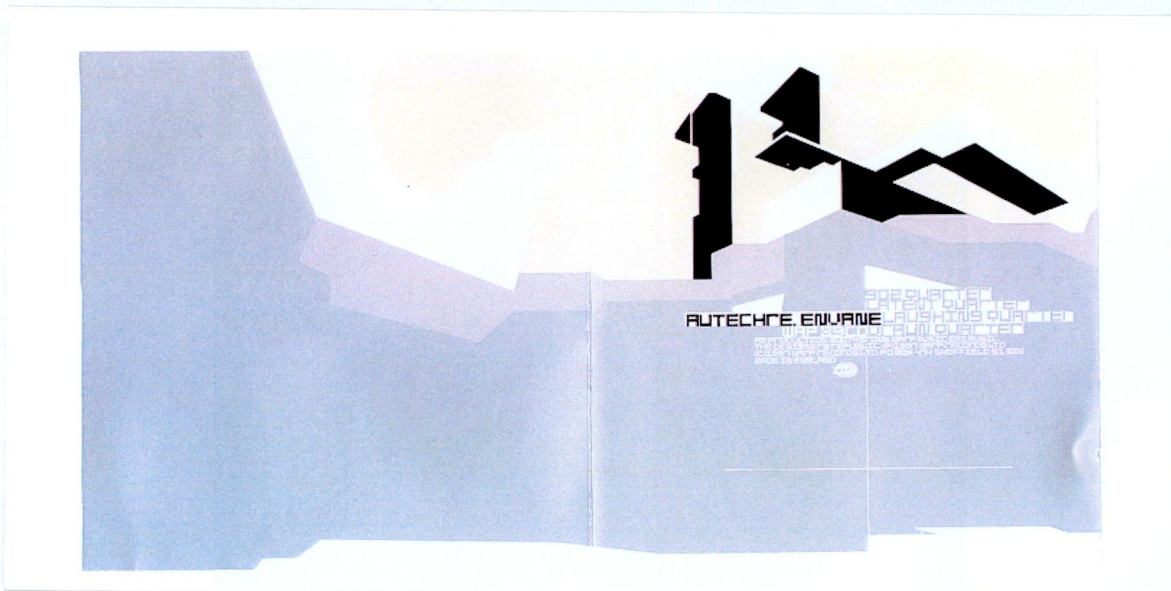


Fig. 11

1996 saw the industrial sounds of Autechre progressing further in sound bites of static electricity on the "Envane" E.P. The rhythmic structures are powerful and minimal but intricately unique. This is well reflected in Fig. 11. On previous releases, photographic images were fragmented to form new shapes and visual sense of movement. Now flat coloured ink has been crafted into abstract forms with sharp edges fitting oddly together to give a slight sense of third dimension but forming impossible shapes. Speaking to Sean and Rob by e-mail in January '99, they informed me that the abstract shapes are in fact based upon Frank Lloyd Wrights "Falling Water" house built in the mid thirties. "Falling Water" represents Wright's ability to combine nature with man made structure in complete harmony and it stands to reason why D.R. and Autechre utilised these images in such a fashion as they did (Rob Brown is an ex-architecture student).

The impossible 3D forms are a direct reflection of the melodies that have been so well constructed; they may trick the listener into misplacing the original rhythm due to ascending and descending phrases in the most unnerving sequential positioning. Autechre's music here contains scraping layered sounds with a

slower tempo than before but also incorporates a futuristic hip-hop feel. The Designers Republic see fit to include their own deconstructive typeface here which although primitive in form, has a somewhat digitally fragmented feel to it. The stark greys, creams and black coupled with spot varnishing create a clean but unfamiliar mood leading only towards a futuristic exterior.



Fig. 12

Later in '97 saw the release of Autechre's fourth album "Chiastic Slide"(Fig. 12). This is quite similar in some ways to "Envane", both visually and aurally, but slightly more intricate. Much of the same production of sound is used, only much of the percussive sounds are injected into long and intense algorithmic sequences. It is impossible to appreciate the detail of the "Chiastic Slide" artwork without actually holding it due to the spot varnish printing. The large white areas of spot varnish are scattered with clear-white thin crosses. These change angle while progressing across the sleeve creating three dimensional angles which reflect the twist in rhythmical quantising within tracks such as "Tewe."

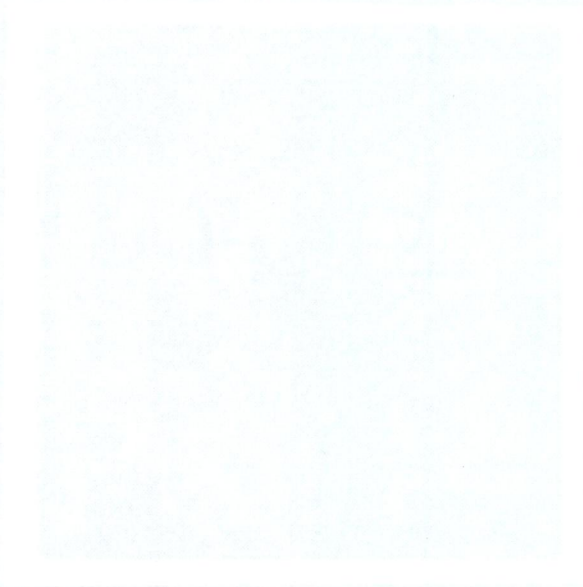
The same deconstructive typeface is used as before, but is set in a rougher, non-aligned fashion. Fig. 13 shows a deconstructive, razor-edged mass, shifting in dimension and angle. The track

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject of the study. It discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It also provides a brief overview of the methodology used in the study.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the study area. It includes information about the location of the study area, the population of the study area, and the characteristics of the study area. It also discusses the data sources used in the study.

3. The third part of the report is a detailed description of the study results. It includes information about the findings of the study, the conclusions drawn from the findings, and the implications of the findings. It also discusses the limitations of the study and the need for further research.

4. The fourth part of the report is a conclusion and recommendations section. It summarizes the findings of the study and provides recommendations for future research and policy. It also discusses the overall impact of the study and the need for further research.



5. The fifth part of the report is a bibliography section. It lists the references used in the study, including books, articles, and other sources. It provides a comprehensive list of the literature reviewed for the study.

6. The sixth part of the report is an appendix section. It contains supplementary information that is not included in the main body of the report. This may include raw data, detailed calculations, or other supporting materials. It provides additional context and detail for the study.

7. The seventh part of the report is a glossary section. It defines the key terms and concepts used in the study. It provides a clear and concise explanation of the terminology used throughout the report, ensuring that the reader can understand the content without confusion.

8. The eighth part of the report is a list of figures and tables. It provides a summary of the visual elements included in the report, such as charts, graphs, and tables. It lists the titles of these elements and provides a brief description of their content, allowing the reader to quickly locate the information they need.

9. The ninth part of the report is a list of abbreviations. It provides a list of the abbreviations used in the report, along with their full names. This helps to clarify the meaning of the abbreviations and ensures that the reader can understand the text without any ambiguity.

10. The tenth part of the report is a list of acronyms. It provides a list of the acronyms used in the report, along with their full names. This helps to clarify the meaning of the acronyms and ensures that the reader can understand the text without any ambiguity.

titles are crammed together with little in between. Autechre, at this stage, are treating their albums as one long journey (a technique mastered by "The Black Dog") filling the spaces between tracks with experimental sound-scaping so the unconventional setting of type is rather apt. Fig. 13 shows the interesting use of barcoding (which incidentally still works). This is the same functional but non-conformist attitude shared between musicians and designers. Once again, the outer sleeve is far more minimal than the inner artwork (Fig. 12) indicating that Autechre may think of their product as something you need to experience before you can understand and judge it.



Fig. 13

In August '97, Autechre released the "Cichli Suite" E.P. (Fig. 14). It contains five mixes of the song "Cichli" from "Chiastic Slide" and is one of Autechre's most complex, intelligent but flowing releases to date. Aurally, this release sounds as if the abstract out of control rhythms of the last album have been held down with a firm grip creating a compressed, digital feel. Each generated sound has its own trait and care is taken to ensure each one is exploited to its full capacity. They then fall together to form chaotic but beautiful phrases which begin to make more sense, the more the tracks are listened to. Of the five songs on the E.P., there lies four beats per

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's development. The second part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development.



The third part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development. The fourth part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development.

bar danceable aggression, incoherent wondering tunes morphing into simple curious melodies, layers of mashing computerised noises set to ridiculous time signatures and epic melancholic ambience.

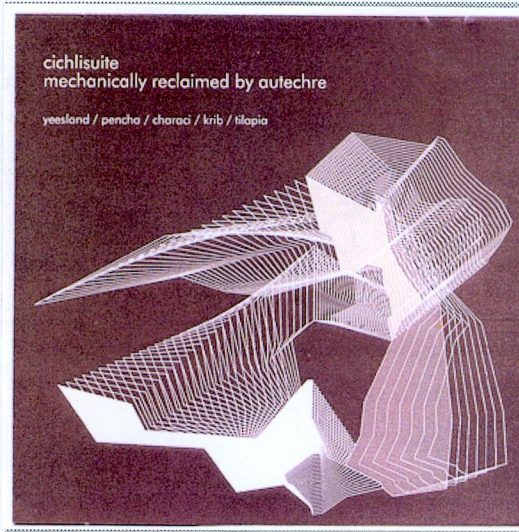


Fig. 14

The cover to "Cichli Suite" displays a wonderful abstract shape (not unlike those on Chiastic Slide) which has sprouted three dimensional parameters reaching back to give the appearance of a wire mesh object which causes a visual impossibility. The futuristic geometric typeface set with calm clarity on either a deep mauve or pastel green background (the release comes in two sections) gives a new classic-modern feel to an Autechre sleeve. This refined quality echoes the new cleaner sound in the music. I have never seen a record sleeve so linked in mood and form with the musical content of the product.

Autechre's 1998 album release "L.P.5" takes, once again, a completely new direction. Speaking to Sean Booth in August '98, he told me they wanted to take a minimal packaging approach creating a bleak, fully opaque grey plastic C.D. cover (Fig. 15). Holding the C.D box, you get the feeling of pristine quality. Nothing is printed on the actual cover except for a small "Autechre" impressed in the Futura typeface in the top right hand corner (same treatment

on pale grey card vinyl sleeve). This approach to sleeve design is hardly original with the Pet Shop Boys completing the same endeavour only in orange in '93, but the classic air about the minimal sleeve emphasises the skilled production gone into the music.

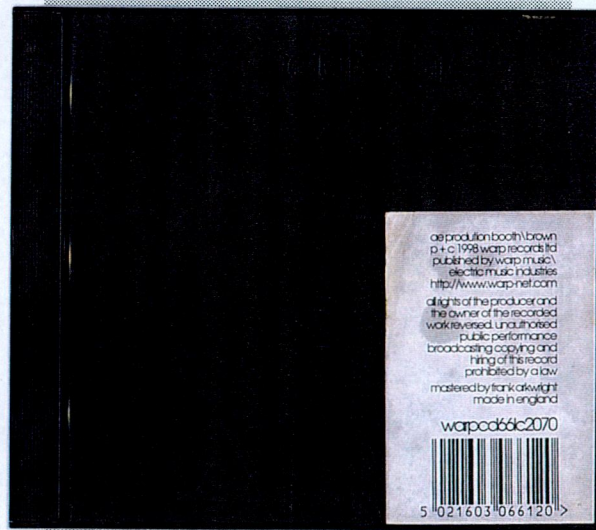


Fig. 15

The music on "L.P.5" spans a vast range of styles, moods and ideas. It is perhaps for this reason a usual D.R. photo/graphic design was not commissioned as the variety of musical styles could not be compounded into one visual style. In December '98 I spoke to Rob and Sean by e-mail about the decision to design the cover by themselves, and why they took such a minimal approach to their most complicated and expressive album yet. Sticking to their diplomatic guns, they merely replied "There is nothing permanent here. The music fits in the box". I took this to mean an Autechre/D.R. collaboration may happen again and that the "L.P.5" packaging is simply to house the music.

Taking a look through the Autechre discography, we see the progression and morphing of aural and visual styles which largely embody the computer. But the Autechre experience is not lifeless and cold. Human expression is still the key factor, their work simply emphasises and reflects the importance of the computer (and elec-

tronics) far more than most composers and sleeve designers would care to admit or discover. I believe record sleeve design to be very important for many reasons; the main reason to many would be to advertise the recording inside the sleeve. I believe the sleeve is most important after you have purchased the product. In Autechre's case, they have taken on board the fact that a sleeve will condition the listeners mood and perhaps hinder them from enjoying the intended emotional journey. So they have tried to strike a balance between the music and its packageing to come up with one complete package.

When I spoke to Sean Booth and Rob Brown by e-mail in December '98 they made no vast claims on the successful balance between packaging and the musical content of their past releases, "There has to be a healthy aesthetic balance between the two. If either the sonic or the visual aspects are more iconoclastic (or anthemic) (same thing?) this gets messed up. In many cases the visual form becomes more dominant purely because its our first sense. Pop videos are an excellent example. We find that our changing love of aesthetic is enough. If we like a piece of music at the same time that we like an image then they are united purely by the aesthetic we like at the time. In other words, to us they fit together."

Chapter IV - The Sleeve Art of Various Warp Artists

"Talent borrows, genius steals, s**t copies." - Ian Anderson
(Computer Arts issue 7 May/June 1997)

One of the most exciting and admirable factors within the Designers Republic's working relationship with Warp Records is their consistent visual functionality. With regards to their work with Autechre, I have tried to point out how Anderson understands their taste in aesthetics alongside understanding the general mood they are trying to transmit within the products they are creating. But when we listen to the music created by other artists on the Warp label, we realise completely different visual styles will have to be employed. In this chapter, I have chosen a number of alternate Warp artists to indicate the Designers Republic's skill at sincerely visualising the music they have been commissioned to package.

Although Autechre and Aphex Twin have always been attributed to the same genre in the media, their music contains very different elements. Aphex Twin's music has always contained a very organic sense, choosing overdriven and sometimes dirty sounds to fill his music. This may be due to the fact that since he was a child, Richard D. James (Aphex Twin) has been stripping apart synthesizers and rebuilding them to his own specifications. If we take his "Selected Ambient Works Volume Two" (Fig. 16) album as an example, we see how D.R. take a completely different approach to any Autechre work.

"S.A.W.vol 2" is a two hour dark journey across a largely percussionless alien landscape where wildly resonating string pads are bent into original compositions designed to reverberate through the listener. Aphex Twin himself described the album to David Toop in his "Ocean of Sound" book as "Standing in the middle of a power station

late at night surrounded by pylons and cables.....on acid". The Album is one of the strangest sounding releases on Warp but stands out on its own as a milestone in electronic production history. The Designers Republic homed in on the strange aspect of this album and came up with a new idea for packaging. There are no track titles on this release, so instead, the sleeve depicts twenty individual pie charts which indicate the ratio of space each track takes up on the disc (Fig. 17). Then beside each pie chart, there is a photograph describing the sound of the individual track e.g. photo of a rusted radiator. All of these descriptions then fit on to a futuristic map to guide you through the album.

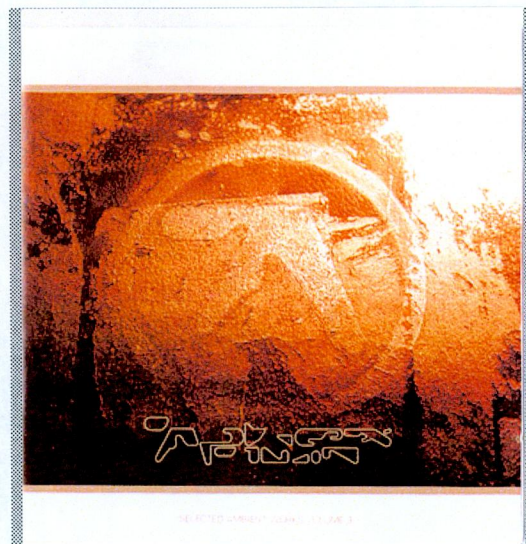


Fig. 16

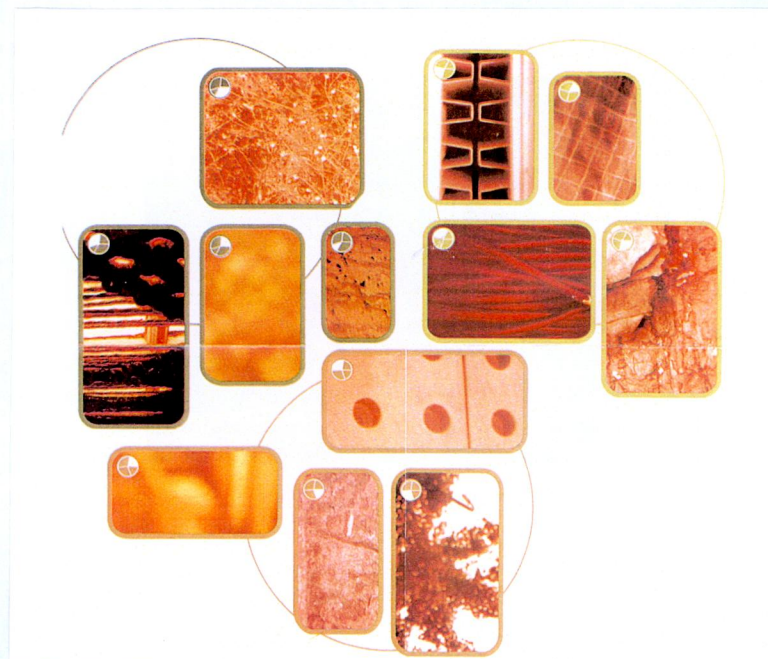
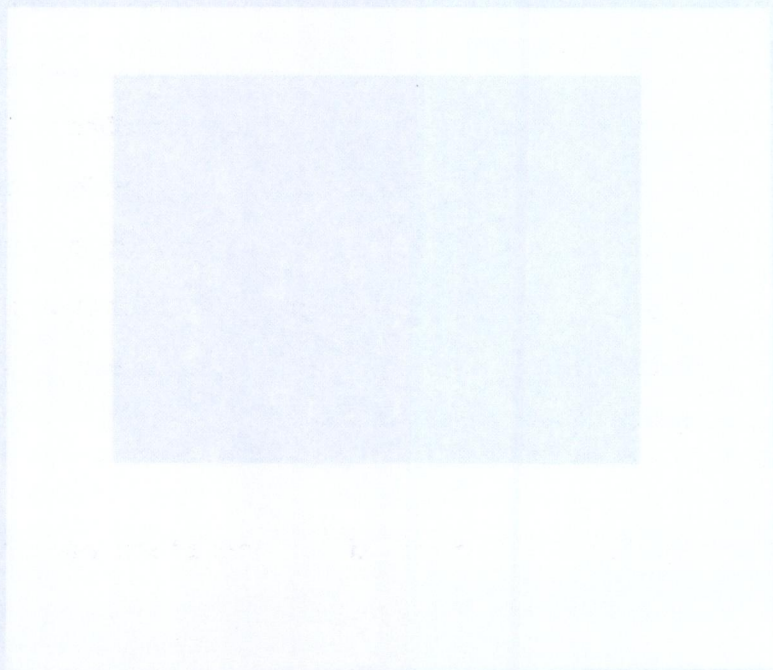


Fig. 17



Across the other end of the visual and aural spectrum at Warp there lies RAC. Their sound is one of progressed retrospective techno taking the clean sound of Detroit and pushing the rhythmical layers and melody structures further than before. But instead of trying to describe each intricate Roland drum machine sound used by RAC, D.R. take a minimal conceptual approach. For their "Diversions" album release (Fig. 18), the Designers Republic went for the obvious pun treating the sleeve as a road sign. The sleeve is basically a large black bent arrow with RAC being set small in the "Royal Automobile Club" logo in black on a yellow background.



Fig. 18

But for me, the definitive D.R./Warp sleeve art comes in the form of the compilation album "Blech". This album is a celebration of Warp's existence within the electronic scene. The album compiles a collection of Warp music by many different artists released between '94 and '96 which has been mixed by d.j.s: "P.C." and "Strictly" together to form an hour long journey into the strange rhythmical athletics that is Warp. The music is whipped up into a frenzy by the DJs and because of this, it follows that the sleeve art should be in your face.

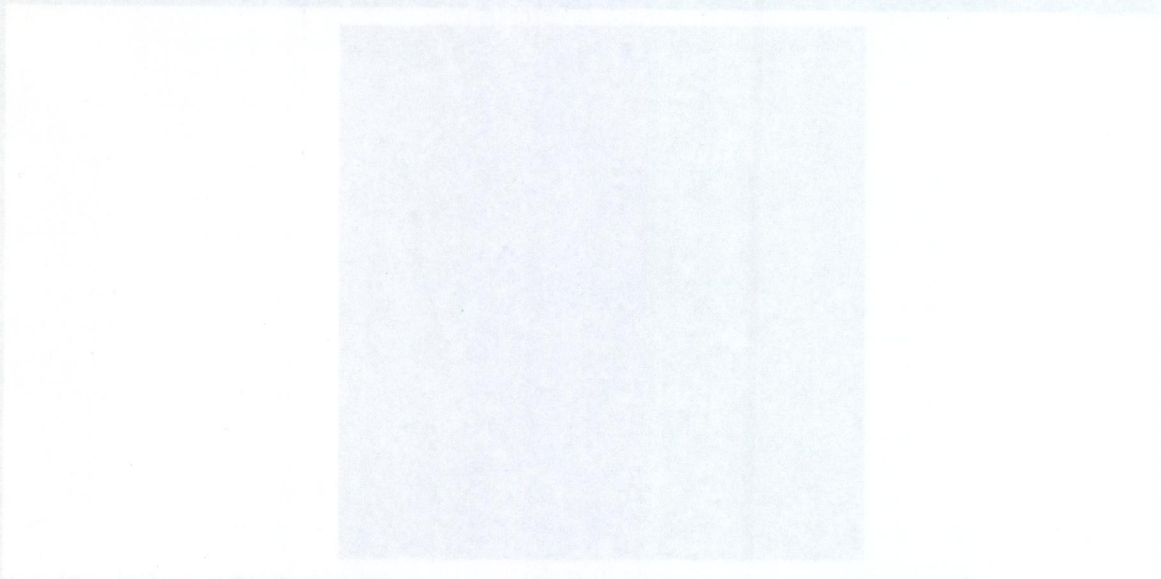
"Blech" utilises D.R.'s personal style more than any other

release. Their patented pseudo Japanese cartoon work is immortalised here in the form of “Sissy” (Fig. 19) the baseball bat carrying little girl. Her geometrically designed face spills out of the pink love heart covered sleeve while any available space is filled with messages and general D.R. gibberish. Messages such as “Lesson 1. Do the things that other people say you cannot do” and “Pho-Ku Corporation. Official Sponsors. Work Buy Consume Die” placed into futuristic grid formations exhibit the Designers Republic’s sense of humour and morals whilst also depicting the fast paced information on the actual C.D.



Fig. 19

One act which truly defines the “post-ambient” techno sound is “B12”. Their 1996 album “Time Tourist” (Fig. 20) exhibits futuristic and escapist audio-visual traits. Their style is largely based on androgynous and serene synthetic string compositions accompanied by metallic, moving percussion. But their sound is not as intensely personalised as Autechre’s opting for a more retrospective “sci-fi” ambient sound. The Designers Republic captured the musical vision by compromising with B12’s future obsessed ideology. The sleeve consists of a Trevor Webb London landscape painting overlaid with some clever D.R. design.



The Designers Republic have packaged the album as if it were a computer game. Reading the script on the inside of the gatefold, you realise that the product is intended to be perceived as if you are living in the distant future and the album is a banal example of 20th Century optimism about what is to come. The inside sleeve portrays homage to 20th Century computer consoles while the intricate, detailed D.R. messages disguise the product faithfully as a computer game.

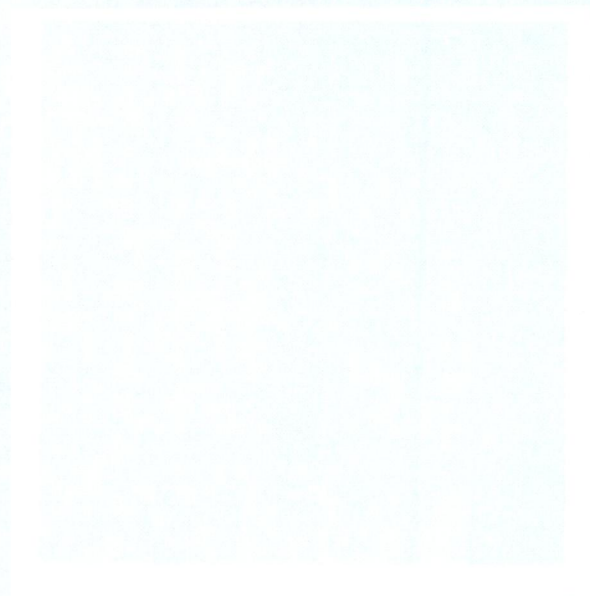


Fig. 20

One artist who may be praised as a bastion of “Warp Culture” is Mike Paradinas. Although he has only released two records on Warp, his vast discography spanning many record labels shows complete dedication to progressing music while epitomising today’s musical production equipment in a sometimes humorous fashion.



Fig. 21



His only album on Warp; "Jake Slazenger - Das Ist Ein Groovy Beat Ja" (Fig. 21) is hailed amongst d.j.s as a classic. Under the guise "Jake Slazenger", he employs the kitsch sounds of long abandoned, early 1980s synthesizers and drum machines. He composes these sounds in a funky setting, leaning heavily on oriental melody and production to create a colourful but cheap sound. The Designers Republic found justification with this album to turn their backs on their usual intricately designed futuristic vision. Instead, a broad 1970s stylised font is set over a simple image of a volkswagen Beetle to personify this loud and kitsch artifact.

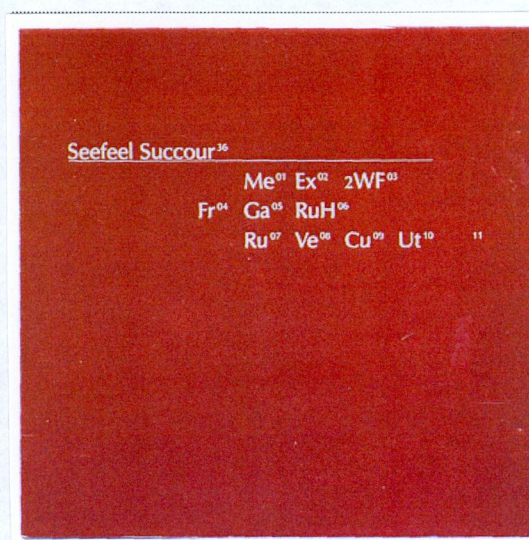


Fig. 22

One of Ian Anderson's greatest talents is to represent the outstanding features in a producer's sound. Mark Clifford a.k.a.: "Seefeel" produces a scientific-electronic sound due to extremely minimal use of melody and aurally textured percussion. For his dark 1994 album "Succour" (Fig. 22), Anderson abbreviated the track titles down to two letters and laid them out in silver on a wine-red background in the form of a periodic table. This cover accurately depicts the reserved and subtle qualities in Clifford's music.

Finally, the last release I want to assess is Warp's celebrated 100th release: "We Are Reasonable People" (Fig. 23). This embodies the music Warp are currently backing and when compared to 1992's "Artificial Intelligence" it shows the massive progression in sound the Warp veterans have discovered while also demonstrating Warp's ability to realise young raw talent. The sleeve is a classic Warp/D.R. collaboration showing minimal and subtle design looking like a pastel coloured "Chiastic Slide". This was released as the 100th single on Warp containing 12 tracks by as many artists and it was still priced as a single.

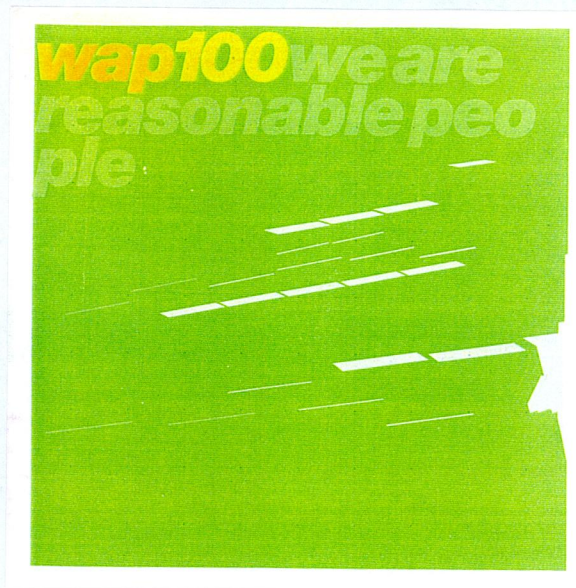


Fig. 23

Conclusion

I attribute the whole "post-ambient" scene to the rapid growth (decline in price) and progression of computer technology. The fact that unqualified young people can set up their own recording studio, design house or record company at home means that experimentation and original expression through computers is inevitable. I hope I have shown that today, it is possible for the home producer to reflect and defer from existing culture without the aid of a large record company or the financial necessity to enhance another's musicianship (the traditional role of the producer).

In the case of Warp, they have strove to provide the record buying public with items of entertainment which enable the listener to experience moods perhaps not experienced before. I believe it was the relentless nature of mainstream dance culture which brought about this sub-culture intended for the mind, more so than the body. Its relaxed attitude towards commerce, passion for the "other", and fresh corporate tactics are what attracted a still growing fanbase.

I have shown that Autechre's work is an intensely detailed progression from intelligent dancefloor music, to an obsessive original sound matched only by the sleeves in which their music is encased. I believe Autechre to be one of the most important musical outfits this century whose musical discoveries, coupled with practical and original graphic design, will be appreciated for many years to come. Due to the variation within its history, the whole Warp package cannot be looked back upon as a genre, but more so as a collection of cutting edge music which is still influential in many different ways while showing little signs of dating.

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