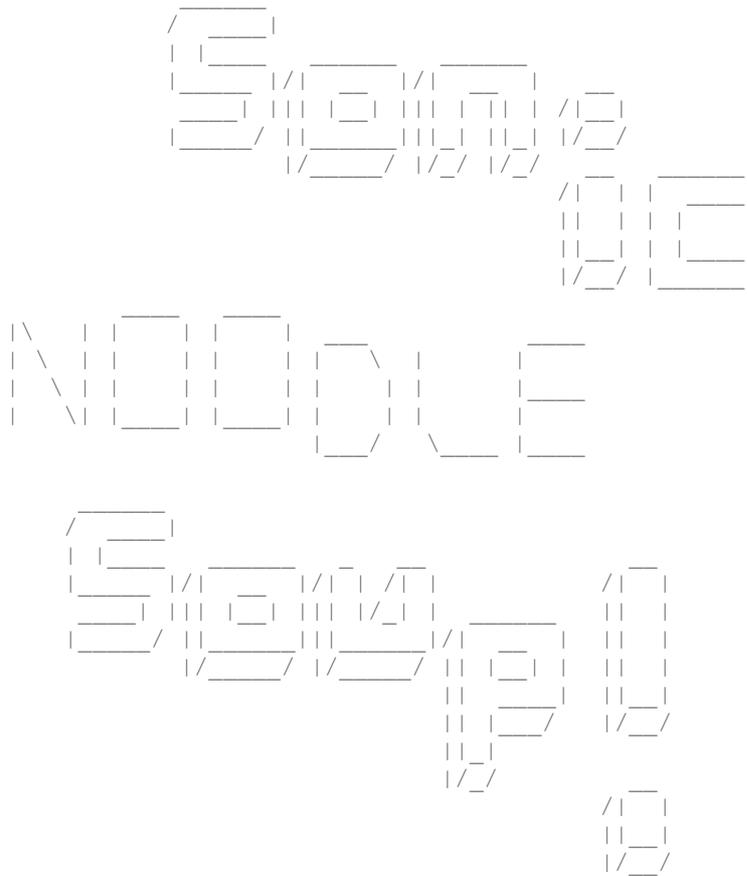


[Return to SNS mainpage](#)



++ SONIC NOODLE SOUP ++

irregular and sometimes irreverant electronic noise zine
issue 2 July 2002

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/Index

(REGULARS)

Words from Audiobot Central
RetroTeChnoFunkAnoOdleHoUseMusic

(FEATURES)

A visit to the Synth Museum
Pacific State of Mind : An interview with Martin Price
Software review - Wavelab 4
Metempsychosis : A statement of values
Noodling and Autechre - A rant by Wayne
Music review - Cydonia by The Orb

(INFORMATION)

Network
Concept/submissions/subscriptions
Credits

=====

< Words from Audiobot Central >

Welcome to the second issue of SNS. Thank you for your words of encouragement and thanks to all the new subscribers :) I recently decided, at 2 AM, to sort through all of my vinyl and pull out the good stuff. After collecting for years, you can imagine the dodgy wax I found inhabiting my record boxes. I

caught myself asking just why I valued 'French Kiss' by Lil Louis all those years ago, or how I ever thought Milli Vanilli were any good (please, I'm embarrassed enough as it is)! Of course, I did also discover my prized Orb twelve inch...'A Huge Evergrowing pulsating brain...' and the words 'Ambient House for the E generation' on the back cover. Music for hazy lazy Sunday summer afternoons in the bedroom...

In this issue, something really cool ! I managed to get an exclusive interview with former 808 State band member Martin Price. He's been lying low for ten years, but I caught up with his new management and the music is flowing again. Anyway, enjoy this issue and just drop me an email if ya wanna. (Steve)

< RetroTeChnoFunkAnoOdleHoUseMusiC >

Serena X by Yennek : Exemplifying the ambient Detroit techno sound, Kenny Larkin's Serena X is a gentle and warm cascade of lovely tingly synth chords and sublime ascending bubbles of gorgeous curves. The original was pressed onto the 'Panic in Detroit' album, first available in 1992 and now long out of production.

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/A visit to the Synth Museum

I wrote this article a few years ago when I was living in the US. It was never published and I recently discovered it on one of my discs. It tells the story of my visit to the New England Synthesiser Museum, located in New Hampshire. A fine place indeed for anyone into gear! It has been edited for brevity and clarity.

>From the moment I first discovered the website of the New England Synth Museum, I was intrigued! The collector and curator of this gear sanctuary is Dave Wilson. On the website he is pictured alongside racks of synthesisers and looks pretty happy surrounded by all those circuits and random resistors. Since I just had to get a peek, I decided that on our fateful journey to Boston and New Hampshire over the holiday break I'd try to make my way over there. Convincing the people I was with proved to be quite another story, as they had very little interest in seeing dusty Moogs and the like.

One morning as we were busy scoffing down brunch, I was handed a cell phone and told to call this Dave guy and arrange an appointment. Since his museum is in his home, appointments are a necessity. Now, I won't go into how impractical it was to get to this place and still have time to visit Salem, or how my obsession with old keyboards made me drag everyone else into it for the entire afternoon (needless to say, I felt rather guilt stricken AFTER I'd seen the keyboards!). Just let it be known that if you plan on doing this, please try to go with like-minded Gearhounds!

We crank-turned the old doorbell and Dave appeared at the entranceway into his eclectic abode. He was big, round and bespectacled and he was shrouded in the shyness of the avid collector. As we stepped over the threshold I could see masses of loose resistors like colourful candy spilling over the staircase steps. Circuit boards and crumpled grocery receipts filled the gaps in between.

We navigated the shaky stairs and entered a room where I saw the silicon brains of an Oberheim sticking out of its silvery gray shell.

"Oh yes, I'm currently repairing this one", Dave said with quiet authority. He then explained to me what each bit of the circuit does and what sounds are generated. I failed to understand at least half of it, but it sounded great! There was a Casio CZ1000

propped up in one corner, flanked by a Poly Moog and straggly bundles of wire. It really was a grand feast for the senses.

"What's that over there?", I asked, dizzy with excitement.
"Ahhh, that's a synth I'm building. I do it on and off, when I have the time. Its unusual in that it's..."
This is where I have to stop because my limited understanding won't do his explanation any justice. It was some kind of analog/digital hybrid from what I gathered, which is rather unusual in nature and operation. This guy definitely knew a whole lot about synthesisers!

In full tour mode, Dave took us into a side room where he showed us a rack of keyboards. I could see that the second one down was a DX7 Mk2. Cool. He flexed his fingers, punched a few keys and began to play the top board. A fat and juicy Organ sound belched from a hidden speaker. Whew! It was a Roland Rogers W50. A modern version of old circuit controlled Rogers Organs, hence the gutsy Organ noise! Dave displayed nimble fingers and a passion for the music as he rocked back and forth punching those keys. Impressive.

The DX7II was warm and ready to go. Dave chose to play us a few particular patches he had designed. One evil sounding patch in particular, Dave explained with eagerness, took him eleven years to create!

"They all told me that you just couldn't get this sound out of a DX7. But listen to this!"

It was a rough edged sounding tweakathon of Moog-like proportions and Detroit sensibilities, patterns of sharp squared up noise.

Now was the time I'd been waiting for!

"What would you like to play?", he asked me casually. I couldn't hold back a wee smile. After deliberating unsuccessfully for some moments I stuttered,

"Well...all I know is that I want to play something old and cool!"

"Ahhh, well then, you'll want to play the MiniMoog!", Dave smiled a little smile.

Ahh...the MiniMoog! Creator of fat noise and fat bass lines.

I could see it sitting on top of a dusty Mellotron and encased in its warm wooden shell, it positively glowed. Kraftwerk always believed that machines have a life of their own. I could feel the friendliness emanating from this old MiniMoog! At that moment I WAS Florian Schneider!! Well, just for a brief second anyway.

Then, I was in sonic heaven! Switching between white and pink noise, turning the oscillators and fiddling with the envelope produced some great sounding grainy sweeps. They were rough and ready tones that could paint a dark dreamscape. Somewhere at the back of my mind, the desire to ask him if I could take it home with me...but reason prevailed.

We thanked him and I signed the visitor book. I guess a lot of gearheads come this way because the book is packed with names! One last wistful look back at the austere Poly Moog leaning against the wall and we left his Museum. Yes, there is a synth Heaven my friends and it's in Nashua, New Hampshire.

If you want to visit the museum online, browse to
<http://www.synthmuseum.com/>

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/Pacific State of Mind : An interview with Martin Price

Ok, some of you might be wondering, 'Who the heck is Martin Price?'...well, he was one of the original members of pioneering Mancunian band 808 State. He was part of the brains behind monster Ambient House smash 'Pacific State' and the edgy cut and paste Acid House classic 'Newbuild'. His new management recently

got in touch with me and I've been able to grab an exclusive interview.

SNS: OK, the first question on the lips of all 808 State fans who have not heard from you in ages is, what happened to you? Why did you leave 808 and what have you been doing the past decade?

MARTIN: Hi Steve.

Besides being nuttered by the reality of family and personal pressures - the state of showbiz, promotion, gigs and glitz into which we appeared to be heading (as 808 State) were not the road to follow for a studio nutcase like me. Being the founding member of EASTERN BLOC RECORDS I was hearing up to date import tracks from all over the world and amongst these records were some of the best tunes I had ever heard. I wanted to be making better records than them or at least their equal. DJ culture was at its rampant height and the politics of the scene that had started making big money was as cut throat as anything could be and having been the guy who sold these brilliant records to the public and DJ's, I could see clearly how toes up the situation I was in with 808 and Madchester Ha, ha, ha. I was totally into club culture and all I ever wanted to do was be in the studio making music.

I could see the record company culture was not ready to deal with what we did and I gave it the best go over the years (2 or 3 ?), with 2 DJ's in the band (Andy Barker and Darren Partington) who were doing their own nights and competing outside 808 for gigs. I could see that we were almost in competition with each other and that brings problems of getting your own stuff played in the arena.

I was pleased for them being popular and getting loads of extra work and don't hold them to blame, as we were all chasing our tails all over the shop. Never having had any money before, the business side was difficult for all 4 of us, not forgetting MC TUNES. That was raverastic England.

Since the split I have always done my own stuff but I was the guy who had run away from 808 being under contract etc. and getting up and running again in a showbiz arena that screamed JUST GIVE US ANOTHER HIT! constantly I was just collecting up a backlog of material of any style and composition that I thought I wanted to do. I knew that I'd done a couple of big tunes but I also knew they were never going to be heard outside of a few friends. My attempts to interest the record execs were met, yet again, with: WRITE US ANOTHER LIKE PACIFIC STATE. I am also not much of a party ligger, going to see other bands just for the sake of being seen. Every fucker developed their own agenda and just wanted to go for the cash, I wanted to stay in studio mould full time which now at last I can do.

SNS: Was there any kind of friction in the group when you decided to leave or was it pretty friendly?

MARTIN: To split was intensely upsetting for both parties. I never felt any animosity towards the others. I still miss them and, corny as it sounds, I love them all.

SNS: Electronic music has moved on a bit since you were part of 808 State, so I'm wondering how you see its evolution.

MARTIN: How do I see music's evolution? Well, there are so many different categories and directions and influences. Tempo's go up, tempo's go down, boy band/girl band British pop style is dreadfully out of control and at the moment the Yanks are kicking ass big time in all categories. All music movements that have had a real social impact eventually end up flabby and tired because of record companies not knowing just what they've got and why they are so flavour of the month. Mercury music awards etc don't achieve if they do not sell to Americans. There will always be the underground and technology is allowing more and more people with PC's and MAC's etc to produce up to a good standard of music but as for selling it.....it's a buyers market. People should always take risks !

SNS: One of the things that many people do not understand is the close relationship between technology and electronic music. We've been witnessing the explosion of software based studios in recent years and with that has come the emergence of a new underground or independent scene. What are your thoughts on it?

MARTIN: Paradox rocks! Reason makes me cheerful. Shareware is everything. Laptop studios can take away the pressure of having to create your music behind the garret walls of your workplace. You can work in the light and airyness of ANYWHERE you want to. I have been in and out of loads of software studios and there seems to be something good in nearly all of them. One day maybe all of them will end up in the same program and I will be full of delight.

Cubase went dodgy as soon as it turned into Cubase audio. Nuendo is OK for time stretch and pitch stretch but apart from that it sucks ass big time. I love the internet for research etc but I think there are far too many crap drum loops and samples given to you on a plate. Half of the fun is always found scuffling about trying to unearth killer loops and sounds from the unlikeliest sources. I love vinyl and will never stop looking in junk shops in the hope of finding some unusual shit. The development of PC music is where the future for dance experimentation lies. Process is everything. PS... Windows operating systems are wank !

SNS: What is Graham Massey really like? If he's anything like his musical ideas, he'd be a bit kooky I think!

MARTIN: Is Graham Massey kooky ? YES !

SNS: What does the future hold for you?

MARTIN: The future for me is to carry on making stuff that I like in the vain hope that 20 squillion others will too. I'm in the process of a project called MR SKREWFACE featuring MC TUNES - as soon as he recovers from his broken ankle that I gave him for not remembering my birthday.....that'll learn him! I'm also hopeful that some unheard stuff will see the light of day as I have never been as prolific without an outlet. Maybe I shall give away a free compilation?

Cheerio
Martin

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/Software review - Wavelab 4

In this age of software studios, the one type of program I find absolutely indispensable is a solid audio editor. There are some good ones out there, but the two biggest players by far are Sonic Foundry Sound Forge, now in it's fifth incarnation, and Steinberg Wavelab. Recently I was able to get hold of Wavelab 4 and I've been using it extensively.

As you would expect, Wavelab has all the basics, so it's simply a matter of how useful the bells and whistles are compared to its main competitor in Sound Forge. So how does Wavelab compare? Well, the one feature that has always been in Wavelab's favour is the smooth integration of Direct X AND VST plugs. With SF recognising only Direct X, Wavelab has always been an attractive option. The only thing that sold me on SF was the ease of use and intuitive interface. I had always felt that earlier versions of Wavelab just lacked something in this department. But no more! With the release of Wavelab 4, Steinberg have seemingly ironed out the kinks and just made it easier to use.

If you want to do some mastering, look no further than Wavelab. Everything can be previewed in real time, FX can be chained, swapped and turned on and off very very easily. All you need to do is trust your ears. One feature, possibly underrated, is the ability to record what your soundcard is playing. Sound pretty uninteresting? Well, a few weeks ago I had recorded some live sounds and I wanted to clean them up, so I booted Wavelab

and EQ'ed out the low end which proved to be extremely easy given the real time preview function, unlimited undo and a number of readily accessible frequency spectrum monitors. I decided then to run a VST distortion effect over it and record the live output back into Wavelab. After pressing the Record button and selecting 'Record sound card output' I could tweak the VST effect in real time and it would be recorded back into Wavelab as a wave file. A fabulous feature.

Steinberg have built on the existing functionality and added extra tools. Saving and opening files is faster than in Sound Forge and for day to day use it's rock solid and works like a charm. I have now dropped Sound Forge as my main editor and moved to the superior Wavelab. It's a decision I certainly do not regret!

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/Metempsychosis - A statement of values

What follows is a discussion with Luke (aka Mr Eel) of the Metempsychosis Krew; an online collective of electronic music artists who share their work and philosophies.

SNS: Hello there Mr Eel...I may call you that right? Ok, so one day I stumbled across the Metempsychosis site and basically thought it rocked! How did the concept come about and what do you hope to achieve?

METEM: The idea for the site was first put to me by Samuel (orpheus) way back... damn awhile ago anyhow. Initially our idea was to have something like MP3.com, but electronic-centric and sans advertising.

We got a few other cats interested (Comma, Contax, minusbaby) and started by putting mp3s of our music up on the website. We started talking about stuff like members, collective etc. Basically we had to rethink the whole idea of what we were doing and what we wanted to achieve.

What we struck upon was the idea of a collective. We wanted to use Metempsychosis as a platform for releasing and promoting our music. The collective itself was intended to support each other. Give feedback, criticism and general support. I think it's paid off big time, because I can listen and hear that the writing of the Krew has really improved. Truly, it just knocks my socks off.

SNS: There are a ton of online music labels around right now...many of them devoted to electronic music in some form or another. It seems like the software studio explosion has gone hand in hand with new developments in the independent music scene. What are your thoughts on it and how does Metempsychosis fit in?

METEM: I think the proliferation of web labels and electronic music in general is fantastic! It's the new folk music (I'm paraphrasing someone else here).

People without expensive tools or training making music in their homes. It means we will see a lot of ideas emerge that might not otherwise appear, because the current tools and the internet allow people to express themselves without any other individuals or groups interfering (producers, record companies). The downside is that there is alot of shitty music about. But, oh well. It's a fair trade off I think. Given the opportunity, many people writing crap music now, could be writing fantastic music in the future.

The online labels that I think will make a big impact are the ones that get organised. Focus on quality and a strong vision. And really importantly, try to be professional about it. It seems like a bit of a contradiction, since many artists on web labels might be considered amateur, and the whole scene is a bit rough and ready, but to make a strong impression with the punters, I think you have to take the whole thing seriously.

This is what we are trying to achieve with Metempsychosis. It's how we will seek to differentiate ourselves from other weblabels. Not that we wanna be kill-joys or anything, but we do love our music and do take it seriously. We just want to impress

that to our listeners.

SNS: I can understand the parallels with Folk music certainly. I also perceive quite a strong DIY punk ethic, especially with the creative bedroom artists popping up all over the place. There has always been an element of 'commercial success' versus 'underground values' and in some ways I believe that this whole independent electronic wave, represented well by online labels, comprises a new type of underground movement. There seems to be distinct political values associated with it sometimes. So you would suggest that it augers well for the music?

METEM: It's a more sophisticated version of punk DIY, with a focus on technology as an... enabler. That's probably got alot to do with the techfetish you find in electronic music. Almost from it's genesis there has been an element of technology fetishism. Now, take that and add the internet. It is the single most important piece of technology to hit our generation. Individuals following thier muse + techfetish + the internet = something strange and new.

The single most distinct political value found in the scene is anti-commercialism, or at least an ambivalence towards commercialism. I think that has to do with the DIY ethic. The idea that this music is different and important and that commercialism somehow compromises that.

I'm sure that this is the reason so many weblabels are turning up. It's dead cheap to distribute music over the internet, but much more difficult via commercial avenues. Internet distribution fits in well with the DIY ethic and with that ambivalence towards commercialism.

And yes, I think it's a good thing. I think it will move the production of music from being something like an exclusive club (which despite punk it has remained, because... well studios are expensive), to being something more inclusive. Music production will probably be something that alot more people will do simply for thier own pleasure. The idea of exclusivity will diminish, but not completely dissappear. People will always have thier heros and there will always be an elite of some kind, but it will be a less of a pop start kinda thing.

The only problem with this is, I don't see it extending beyond electronic music at this point, and it all has to do with the means of production. For a bedroom producer, computers an synths are relatively cheap. For a band, a studio and good recording kit is still expensive.

I look forward to seeing cheaper and easier to use recording gear. Hopefully we can then see the the DIY weblabel movement move into other forms of music.

Thank you Mr Eel! And if you'd like to have a look at the Metempsychosis website, trip to <http://www.metempsychosis.com/>

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/Noodling and Autechre - A rant by Wayne

I must say I generally agree with some points made in Steve's article on "The Noodle Factor" last issue. Whilst I do believe the Aphex Twin has been responsible for some hard bastard industrial clatter over the years, he has produced some meaningful and approachable music as well, typified most aptly by 'Selected Ambient Works' Volumes 1 and 2 and even 'Surfing on Sine Waves', his Artificial Intelligence Warp release.

Autechre, on the other hand are a different digital ballpark. Their tracks 'Crystel' and 'The Egg' were amongst my favourites on the first Artificial Intelligence album and their follow up 'Incunabula' album offered similar fare - electro-organic textures and melody.

After their next album, 'Amber', which, as Steve notes, began to show signs of their coming method, Autechre releases came to be characterised by cryptic graphic design and even more cryptic music. Throbbing waves of humming sonic swathe and binary gristle. Music that seems intent on alienating the listener entirely.

As Simon Reynolds, in Generation Ecstasy puts it (of Autechre)
"...the mind's eye conjures up a vision of two small boys
surrounded by techno toys, lost in a preverbal world of
chromatics, texture and contour" ('Generation Ecstasy' p185)

I love electronic music. I have done for many years and my
ears have developed an affinity for most styles over the years,
melodic or otherwise. Autechre, for me, have been a nut I have
been unable to crack however.

As for 'The Noodle Factor', the image of the artful, ponderous
electronic bedroom nerd stroking his chin in nodful appreciation
is not such a bad thing! Maybe Autechre and Aphex both fit
somewhere into this category, but without the Noodle Factor,
many other great albums wouldn't have been released, let alone
the fact that chin stroking and experimental tweaking is
an essential component of the electronic music canon collector
cum bedroom innovator's repertoire.

What I'm more interested in is 'The Stoner Factor'. Now THAT
deserves an article!

(written by Wayne)

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/Music review - Cydonia by The Orb

The Orb have always been the tongue in cheek ambient jokesters
of the industry. Along the way, they have cracked open old
sounds for new ears and decorated the lounge room with Pink
Floydisms and extra terrestrial control panels for late night
feed your head sessions.

'Cydonia' is a slick affair. The packaging is typically playful
and the music production values are high. I had to turn the
volume right down on my amp, lest the basslines shake my walls!
That's not necessarily a good thing mind you...I have never been
a fan of overslick production.

The album begins with 'Once More', a shiny twirly femme pop
number, all twangly synths like cut price ambient house for the
jaded generation. Nice all the same. 'Ghostdancing' is a
majestic walk through clouds, snatches of melody, floating organ
like sounds and Eno-diva vocalisations. Sublime.

Tracks 4,5 and 6 are forgettable sample sessions, silly beatbox
clatter and playground sensibility. Not much here I'm afraid and
they make for fluffy album filler.

'A mile long lump of lard' sounds more like a mile long gaggle
of throbbing Teutonic arpeggios and mashed up Nine Inch Nails
rhythms. Once again, very forgettable.

'Centuries', thankfully, breaks the extra bacon fat monotony.
That mysterious Orb-adoring diva pops her head up once more and
this is indeed a dubwise festival of slow beats, funky up sub
bass and swirls of melody for the side of your head. Nice enough.
The rest of the album seems a torrid core of pointless clunk and
clutter, pixelated bursts of noise and devolved samples. Nothing
to report here.

Listening to 'Cydonia' makes me yearn for a glimpse of that
ultraworld pulsating brain they once described. There are stabs
of their best in some of the more melodic pieces, but the album,
as a head experience, falls far short of what they have
achieved. I understand that 'Cydonia' was delayed release for a
few years, but this does not account for the lack of vitality
that seems to infest this work. It sounds jaded and sold out.
Not worth admission price I fear.

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/Network

If you're looking for an open minded music E zine, have a gander
at Incursion Music Review - <http://www.incursion.org/>

Curious about 808 State and their music? Check out the official
site: <http://www.808state.com/>

Do you remember the KLF? Go have a look at this little site:

<http://www.klf.de/>

ElectronicScene - a better mp3.com for electronic music heads
with a great forum. <http://www.electronicscene.com>

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/Concept/Submissions/Subscriptions

So, what is Sonic Noodle Soup? Ok, it's my little rant on
electronic music, technology, bedroom studio madness and life in
general. I write it up and email it to a list of people
interested in this sort of stuff.

I'm open to submissions, so if you want to rant in an
informative and entertaining fashion, feel free to get in touch.
Email Audiobot Steve here:
electro@picknowl.com.au

I may or may not include your words and I may also edit them ;-)
But I'm sure you expected that anyway. If you have an idea just
get in touch with me and tell me your proposal.

Please feel free to email issues of Sonic Noodle Soup around.
Print it, read it, pass it on...whatever.

To subscribe to Sonic Noodle Soup please email Audiobot Steve at
the email listed above.
All email addresses remain private and you can opt out at any
time.

I tend to produce it when I can and it won't flood your inbox. I
suspect it may appear once or twice a month.

Regards,
Audiobot Steve

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/Credits

Edits by Steve the noise munching Audiobot
ASCII art by the incomparable Mr Eel
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