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SONIC NOODLE SOUP

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irregular and sometimes irreverant electronic noise zine
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/Introduction

Firstly, thank you for your interest in this little zine :) My aim with Sonic Noodle Soup (or SNS) is to provide something of a forum for like minded people...that is, people who love electronic music. SNS will be composed of semi serious ranting, sober gear reviews, software opinions, production techniques, music reviews, useful links and pretty much anything else that is related. I certainly encourage relevant submissions and

useful web links, so feel free to get in touch with me.
If, at any time you want to unsubscribe, just let me know :)
I also encourage you all to email this around to anyone you
think might be interested. The more readers, the wider the range
of expression :)
Let me know what you think of it!

Regards,
Audiobot Steve

/Autechre and Aphex - The noodle factor

What is it with Autechre? There seems to be this unearthly
fascination with them and their music. I don't get it. Sure,
these guys have been around for a while, they've made some top
notch stuff, but they're what I like to call noodlers. They sit
about all day twiddling knobs, pressing buttons and churning out
waves of cold, hard digital mulch. They're massive pretentious
noodlers.

The 'Incunabula' album was sweet. It was cool, different and
actually moved somewhere. There was a progression. Even 'Amber'
was somewhat friendly, but even here they were moving off into a
vast digital sea of binary, edit functions and heavily
calculated coldness. They are like the technocracy of the
electronic music world. I'd go so far as to say that they
inhabit a technocracy alongside the likes of FSOL, Orbital and
Aphex. This group form part of the institution of electronic
music. They've all become so revered that they have come to
represent, through a feedback loop of public awe, the essence of
modern electronic music.

Richard D James is another guy who can sit behind his laptop and
just crank out a world of noise. Basically the guy is a drug
addled chin stroker. He makes music for chin strokers and late
night noodlers. A myth of genius has grown up around him and I'm
sure I'd be disappointed if I met him!

So, I say regard the noodlers and chin strokers with caution.
Electronic music can often become an obsessive technology
fuelled artform that goes around in circles.

/Button Madness!

I have a lot of audio software. Plugins, editors,
softsynths...all sorts of stuff. I don't use most of it and like
most people I have daily favourites that I boot up and get into.
So, when I grab a new bit of software I use a couple of filters
to test whether I'll be using it more, or less often, or not at
all. Firstly, if I can't figure out how to make a sound with it
in 10 minutes it gets uninstalled. If I can crank out some
sounds pretty quickly, then I consider the program further.
Secondly, if the interface is chugged up with crap and modules I
get a headache. I'm getting sick of seeing potentially good
software ruined by button madness. Reaktor suffers from this I
reckon and yes, I'm fully aware that there are heaps of people
out there who love it - you're all major noodlers of course -
but I just cannot get into that heavily modular interface. I'm
no sound scientist, so why bother with a piece of software that
assumes I am? There are times when I envy non electronic muso
types. They get to bang drums and strum strings. They can feel
the music and don't need to worry about serial numbers, arcane
oscillators and squinty little buttons on a screen controlled by
a dodgy and dusty mouse.

Ok, let me get to the real point. Reaktor makes cool noise, I
appreciate that and I admire people who can defuse it's
interface. So it's worthy software. However, there is a tendency
among audio software programmers to try to emulate hardware
design when it comes to software interfaces and functionality.
Computers offer lots of advantages that hardware does not. Take
Native Instruments Pro 5 for example. It makes sweet sounds, it
works fine, but do I really need to see a wood panelled
interface? Besides the kewl factor, what purpose does it serve?
I'd rather have a simple interface, with easy to use sliders
rather than tiny squinty knobs. It might even reduce the cost of

the software, the time involved in designing it and yes, even the CPU load. We don't all have loads of money and super powered computers.

/Audiowarez - Supporting the nation?

The question for today is, if pirate audio software was somehow completely stamped out, would the electronic music scene collapse?

I've considered this for quite some time actually. Yes, it's there, it's prevalent and it's very easy to download. My view is that it feeds directly into the electronic music scene and guarantees content. Without it, overnight the scene would collapse.

/Software - Orion Pro

I've been using the Orion Pro studio for about a month now. Before that I was heavily involved with Fruity Loops and Acid, but I just wanted to shake up my world a little bit and begin using different music making techniques. Orion provided that outlet for me.

I like Orion. It's easy to use and pretty complete as a package. Having said that, it's sometimes buggy and composing in it is too much like putting Lego blocks together.

I love trying out new VST instruments and Orion gives me the freedom to play around with them using a decent interface. I can make tons of loops and track fragments with it and it's easy to save them and work on them later. It supports VST and Direct X and it's own internal synths are solid. I like the 909 module in particular, as tired and clubby as it can be sometimes.

I also love the ability to record parameter changes. So, for example, if I patch in the internal Wasp softsynth, create a little song playlist and hit the Record button, I can then twiddle the knobs on the Wasp box and Orion will record all of my movements! Yes, I know Fruity can do this as well, but somehow it seems easier in Orion.

There are some issues with VST instrument compatibility I've discovered. And not all of the third party modules will record parameter changes. I'd guess that's more of an issue with VST standards though.

Though Orion is not as resource hungry as some other sequencers, pile up some instruments, modules and FX and you're computer will chug if it's not up to scratch. There is a handy CPU meter in the corner of Orion so I keep an eye on that, but sometimes it overloads to the point where the sound loops endlessly and I have to crash out of the program.

I've already mentioned that composing in Orion is too blocky. That can lead to a real composition fatigue in myself. I begin thinking in terms of calculated measures and blocks rather than simply listening. The only other downside to the interface is that all of the modules you use gather at the bottom of the window when not in use. This makes for a mighty pile of minimised rectangles just piling up like Tetris blocks. Overall though, I like Orion. It's a useful tool and pretty easy to use.

/Software - Mozilla

Yes, I'm one of those people who have been looking forward to the release of the Mozilla browser for 4 long years. Granted, I haven't been obsessed with it and my days have not been filled with idle daydreaming of browser code and unbelievably fast renderings of nested tables, but all the same, when Netscape released the source code in a last ditch effort to stick it to Microsoft, I thought it was cool.

Now, 4 years after this event, all open source arguments aside and with IE dominating the consumable browser market, Mozilla 1.0 has been released to the public. I went and downloaded it immediately and I have been well impressed.

It looks slick, it handles well and turns corners with smooth

ease. For skin fanatics, this puppy is eminently skinnable, just don't expect the same variety you'd find for Winamp.

The browser engine is called Gecko and does very cool things :) For starters, most pages are rendered quickly and smoothly. Tables are done well, unlike in Nutscape 4x, and you can almost feel the data from the web server pumping along the pipes to be crunched up by this little Gecko fella.

I had some problems with IE friendly pages, but I blame Microsoft for their proprietary tags and shit rather than Mr Gecko. The 10.3 MB Windows download contains all the basics, although I chose to install just the browser at this stage for testing. I hear though, that the email client is robust and from what I've seen of Composer, it's far more solid than it ever was in Nutscape.

Mozilla is primarily aimed at seasoned web surfers and developers and when you look in the preferences, it shows! This lizard is filled with good stuff. It has everything you'd expect to find plus more and would take me more room than I have to explain them all.

Mozilla features tabbed browsing, something Opera users have been used to for a while now. This is great for power surfing. Do not tolerate anymore the many window instances opened in a single browsing session! Just minimise them all with one click. Overall, a smooth browsing experience. It still takes a while to load, although, there is the option to pre load some program elements at Windows startup. The splash screen is pretty neat too :) Lots of people probably don't realise just how deep IE has its claws in the Windows operating system and that removing it is something akin to cutting out a tumor and every bit as delicate. But this is a real browser. In the world of browsers it's got real balls.

/The state of 808

I've always been a huge 808 State fan. Ever since I heard Pacific 202 on vinyl back in 1990, I've been hooked. I've followed their career and even bought some of the tripe remixes they've done. So where are they now? Well, 808state.com is still running and the lads are still churning out material. I write about them now because they've recently been signed to a label called Circus Records who will be releasing a new album for them called 'Outpost Transmissions'.

I've always thought they were hard done by in the music press. They used to be the electronic geek darlings of Manchester but for some reason music history seems to have all but forgotten them. Considering they pioneered live shows well before The Prodigy and released some inspirational and groundbreaking music, they've come up pretty short in the press. Still, it's good to know they're still going, 14 years and counting. And in the electronic music scene, that's a bloody long time!

Oh yeah, newsflash...former 808er Martin Price may be on the move again. I've recently had news from a source close to him that he'll be releasing new material, possibly with 808 state. I've requested an interview and if I can get it I'll publish it here.

/Review - Geogaddi by Boards of Canada

'Geogaddi' is the long awaited second album by Boards of Canada - the dreamy nostalgic duo hailing from Scotland. I enjoyed the first long play, 'Music has the Right to Children' and so I picked up GeoG just recently, excited at the prospect of hearing more of the good stuff.

Beginning in typically detuned and drifting fashion, GeoG moves pleasantly through the landscape of past, present and an uncertain future. 'Music is Math' is crammed with odd pads and distant panned samples, underscored by relentless BOC beat funk. It is pleasant and unnerving simultaneously. An atmosphere BOC capture very well.

GeoG, like their previous full length outing, is composed of complete tracks connected by a plethora of swishing and twisty

fillers, many of which sound like track fragments. Sometimes it makes for incomplete listening.

'In the Annexe' is beautiful Boards. A detuned warm melody cascading over the ears...distant childlike voices and all atmosphere. '1969' is outstanding BOC-pop. A beat to catch you, uplifting warm pads to embrace and a robotic voice out of nowhere speaking of the past. This is classic Boards of Canada and is what they do better than anyone else. Superb. I think the whole album holds together well and is structured as a listen better than 'Music has the Right to Children'. Robotic dream pop for sentimentalists. Well worth a listen for sure. BOC do not claim the arrogant trappings of fame. I get the feeling that they make the music they enjoy and above all else, I admire that quality.

/Network

Check out <http://www.metempsychosis.com/>
There is a ton of good free electronic music to be found here.

If you like your VST instruments as much as I do you'll need to go to <http://www.databaseaudio.co.uk/>

Also check out Quark Kent. Quality Australian electronic noodling ;-). He's also offering his latest album for free online. Great support for the independent community.
<http://www.quarkkent.com/>

Grab some outstanding soundscapes at <http://www.subsource.de/>

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/Concept, submissions and distro

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.

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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