

esoteric treasure, wrenched from the bowels of obscurity.



ERRAND BOY
Errand Boy
001 Collective

ERRAND Boy's Myspace.com genre tags are as follows: Emo/Emo/Emo. I was once in the position to ask him whether this brand was a proudly hoisted flag or ironic self-labelling. He fervently chose the latter, suggesting that Emo, here, points to the insecurity saturated quality of his songs. They provide an alternative to overwrought, popularized balladry and appeal to the realness of personal tragedy.

It's easy to see that hardly a scrap of this music would lend itself to the present day definition, however colloquial, of the emo genre, though the overarching concept of Errand Boy's self-titled release is quite obviously 'emotion.'

Errand Boy (a.k.a. Bryan Melanson) is St. John's, Newfoundland's premier electronic musician, whose affected, multi-layered compositions aptly reflect his modest and often self-deprecatory persona, perhaps betraying the inspiration for his songs.

The choppy percussion and brisk, icy feel makes Errand Boy's songwriting highly comparable to Iceland's electro-twee outfit Múm just as meticulously interwoven voice samples invoke The Books. The wistful and brooding sample choices are arguably the record's strongest asset, as they serve to beautifully unify a wide range of integrated styles, as though to say that despite our idiosyncrasies, we all suffer sometimes.

Perhaps the album's most memorable and poignant line, found on the dance-pop track "Stop Watching Me Play Gameboy," is taken from an anti-gay sermon given by Rev. Willie F. Wilson. Over bouncing guitars and synth blips, Wilson angrily quotes his son: "I ain't got nobody to take to the prom because all the girls in my class are gay. And ain't but two of them straight and both of them ugly."

"Big O, Little K" is surely the centerpiece. A deep and sweeping buzz perfectly imitates the squeeze of chemical pleasure one feels at instants of infatuation or disappointment. Children's voices and gritty movie samples send the listener reeling through a very clear and melancholic nostalgia.

Similarly, "The Coming Home Party", a pretty piano ballad, sets us up with the sound of what one would assume to be a rusty, squeaking swing set, a sound that reminds us of how we can never really go back to the time of playgrounds and knee scrapes.

But all post-relationship photo album montages aside, this release is merited by its production value alone. The music is entirely home-made but Melanson has managed to achieve studio quality through skilful use of meager technology.

Another curiosity is the fact that the self-titled release is up for free download (at 001collective.com), an economically bird-brained decision made by humble and vain musicians alike. I'm looking at you, Thom Yorke.

But I guess to sum up the review, I'll quote Errand Boy's Myspace page a second time. "Errand Boy bowls 300, steals your girlfriend, and makes a sandwich in under one hour."

Music For Mutants by Ariella Stok

An interview with Jim Bull and Eric Lumbleau of Mutant Sounds

Imagine a library lovingly dedicated to curating, compiling, and making available to the public all of the rarest, most twisted, experimental, avant garde music from all over the globe and you get a sense of why Mutant Sounds is one of the most exciting places on the Internet for adventurous music lovers. Since January 2007, Mutant Sounds (online at <http://mutantsounds.blogspot.com>) has been hosting a dream collection of the best, weirdest albums that you never knew existed. Long out-of-print LPs and cassette tapes that were released in small pressings throughout the last 40 or so years by artists operating at the musical vanguard, that had up until now been the province of only most rarefied listeners and serious record collectors, have found a home at the site, where they are now made available to all free of charge. The world of Mutant Sounds is vast, often bewildering, and at all times fascinating. One could easily fall through the rabbit hole and spend a lifetime delving into its underground world of music at the edge. In doing so, one realizes to what extent contemporary music has been largely prefigured by work done by the musical Mutants of the past, from primitive electronic tinkers to post-punk visionaries who rewrote the sound of rock for a modern context, making the informal history provided by the site into the workings of the late 20th century musical

vanguard a crucial step to understanding the musical mainstream of today.

Jim Bull, a 40-year old record collector from Greece, founded Mutant Sounds in January of 2007. Eric Lumbleau, a 37-year old musician from Dallas, Texas who plays in the experimental band, The Vas Deferens Organization, encountered the site in February 2007. Within days of his discovering it, Jim put up a post in which he threatened to cease activity. Eric says he, "entered the fray begging him to reconsider and proffering my services as a possible incentive to keep things going, as I (correctly, as it turned out) suspected that Jim would both know of my band and find the idea of my involvement intriguing." The two men have uploaded roughly 2,000 albums of rare, out-of-print music primarily from their personal record collections, generating over 3 million visits to the site over the last year and a half. Jim and Eric were kind enough to correspond with me over email and entertain my questions about how they've acquired such enviable record collections, why they've generously taken on the task of sharing it with the world, and to talk about music.

Ariella: What was the inspiration for the genesis of Mutant Sounds?

Eric: The unlocking/unleashing of lost underground musical arcana and history for the

edification of humanity, perhaps?

Jim: The motivation was my love for the music I post mostly, which is pretty obscure. I wanted to provide it and make it known to a bigger audience.

A: What makes something a "mutant sound"?

E: a) That it's adventurous or offbeat in some fashion, and b) My desire to define it as such. I wouldn't say that we've initiated a genre called Mutant Sounds at all, though I've expounded at length on certain experimental music tendencies that suggest the need for some sort of genre tag to acknowledge them. Mutant Sounds functions more as an open-ended context for bringing into public view a raft of the aforesaid overlooked experimental music tendencies from the last 40+ years, none of which I'd propose to corral into a single formal genre.

J: The term "mutant" refers to many things, not only music. It has to do also with artistic attitude, naiveté, of course strange and "difficult to swallow" sounds, obscurity, etc. Generally it refers to a way of living and thinking. If something is out of the ordinary, shocking, or strange, it is mutant. Some say that Mutant Sounds is an archive of "extreme music." Sure it's weird and kooky, but not always extreme. Besides, what is extreme? Anyone can call many different kinds of music extreme according to his ear and temperament. For example, even sleazy

70s disco can be called extreme by some audiences! I think the wider spectrum of music posted in the blog is in some way obscure and most of the time has a strange artistic edge. I hope this will not be received as elitism – I say “artistic” in the sense that it has more to do with originality and freedom from financial motivation.

A: To what extent do you view your site as a service to the community or an archive of marginalized music for posterity? How large a role does this play in why you maintain the site?

E: To a very large extent. I think of Mutant Sounds as being a virtual Smithsonian of strange music and also as a sort of historical corrective to those in both mainstream and underground media that help re-write musical history through omission, most specifically of anything prog related.

J: Mutant Sounds is neither a library nor an archive. It’s just a simple blog that tries to bring music we love to a wider audience. That music happens to be pretty obscure. We maintain this site just because we love this music, and that is that.

A: How much work goes into running mutant sounds? What’s the time commitment like? Is there a financial investment involved?

E: Maybe 7-9 hours to record, organize and upload each round of my posts (which ordinarily get posted in sets of 5) and another full day or so to write the texts for them. They usually go up about once every 6-7 days on my end.

J: It takes a lot of time and energy. But it’s something we love. When you are in love don’t you spend much time and energy for your partner? It’s the same thing. I never claimed any kind of reward. The joy of finding people who share the same taste and making them happy is our reward. Of course, many people as gratitude provide rare music or music-related stuff and that’s very welcome, but we never asked for a reward. Needless to say that there is no financial investment involved.

A: What kind of feedback have you received from followers of the site?

E: Almost uniformly glowing.

J: Most of the feedback we get is very positive. Of course there are sporadic ruthless and mean comments, but, hey, these things happen. From time to time, friends offer records for upload. And this is very welcome, especially if it’s something Eric or I are looking for.

A: The experimental British band Nurse With Wound led by Steven Stapleton famously compiled a list of 300 or so artists that had inspired them and included it in the liner notes for their first two albums, Chance Meeting on a Dissecting Table of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella from 1979 and To the Quiet Men From a Tiny Girl in 1980. The list, which mostly features outsider artists who created music in the period from 1969-1980, has grown to become a “holy grail” for collectors of underground Krautrock, progressive rock, psychedelic, post-punk, jazz, free improvised and experimental music. To what extent has the NWW List shaped the way you curate the site?

E: “The list” is the backbone of the site insofar as it was largely the point of departure for both Jim and myself as collectors into sonic weirdness, not to speak of innumerable others who also mapped their explorations with this tool. I personally went

so far as to include a sort of reply list to Stapleton’s in the booklet of the “Sweat Your Cheeses, But Not In My Salad” CD by my band Vas Deferens Organization back in the mid 90s.

J: Well, possibly the NWW list was a reason my blog became famous, but it wasn’t my intention. I never thought NWW had such a big audience. They are a living legend of course, but keeping in mind that their music and tastes are pretty difficult, their popularity was a surprise to me. As a curious aside, some of the NWW list LPs (as well as others) that I’ve posted have in fact been Stapleton’s original articles, as I bought around a shelf’s worth of rare vinyl from him circa 2004.

A: What are future goals for the site? Are there certain albums/genres that you hope to branch into or explore further?

E: We’ve pretty well delineated the parameters of our exploits by this point, I think. The future entails more of more.

J: Music continues to exist and much great music has been made in the last few years. We both continue exploring further music through the last, let’s say, 40 years. And believe me there are many to be discovered. There are so many albums I want to post that I get confused and wonder if I will have time to post all that stuff.

A: What are some of the challenges of maintaining the site?

E: In my case, it’s often finding the will to write on demand, which is sometimes a real bitch for me.

J: Challenges have to do first of all with personal/family time. Secondly, we try to post ONLY out of print stuff and believe me, it’s pretty difficult to figure this out. Also, there are too many blogs that post great music, and we cannot always be sure if something is posted elsewhere or not. A new phenomenon is that some record companies or artists reissue stuff that’s posted in Mutant Sounds. I don’t know if it’s intentional or just coincidence.

A: Do artists ever object to your posting of their albums for free download?

E: Other than a handful of times when a title was going to be reissued and we were politely asked to remove it before it came out (which we’re always more than happy to do), we’ve only ever encountered one case where an artist really laid into us for posting his work, which was of course immediately removed, as would be the work of any artist who did not wish for us to share their work. Considering the number of albums posted on our site, I think this is pretty demonstrative of a sea change in how this sort of music share blog activity as a whole is now being perceived.

J: Most of the artists I’m dealing with, they’re so obscure they’re probably glad to have their stuff heard and to have the attention. Yes, I’ve had some reactions. Most of them were polite and asked kindly to remove the links for download. For example, Foetus himself mailed me and very politely asked me to remove the links. How could I say no? There have been some rude and totally unexplained reactions that disappointed me about the thinking of certain artists who I admire. Of course, I prefer not to name them.

A: When did you start record collecting? From where do you buy most of your records?

E: Early teens. Almost all of it has been via mail order except for three occasions when I purchased parts of whole collections that were for sale.

J: I started buying records in 1979 when I was 12-years old. My first LPs that I remember were The Beatles White Album and an Elvis Presley compilation. After that it was Sex Pistols, Joy Division and Devo! And then it started accelerating with no way to speed down. In the mid 80s, I already had a remarkable collection. I started trading with other collectors in Greece. In the mid 90s, this started taking place globally via the Internet. I used to spend a whole lot of money and time finding records but since the year 2000, when I got married and had children, I stopped buying. There was neither much money nor time to spend at that point and the stuff I was looking for by then was extremely rare and expensive.

A: How did you first start listening to avant garde/experimental/mutant music?

E: First left turns from the land of straight music came via Devo, Oingo Boingo and Gary Numan at 12-13 years old. What really knocked me sideways and changed my life was witnessing Pere Ubu perform in Urgh! A Music War at around the age of 13 and trying to figure out where to discover more stuff like that, which led to the discovery of radio shows playing R.I.O., Beefheart, L.A. Free Music Society and the like and the beginning of a lifelong obsession.

J: I started in 1982 when I discovered Throbbing Gristle and Nurse With Wound.

A: Is there a scene or community that you are a part of (i.e. centered around live performances, or record collecting) that has influenced your musical purview?

E: I’ve had my toe in any number of subcultural musical pools over the years but calling myself a member of any specific scene or community would be stretching it. Even in terms of my work in Vas Deferens Organization (we play exceedingly odd music informed by the sorts of stuff you see posted on Mutant Sounds), it’s always been the case that we’ve eluded easy boundary definitions. What’s that old saw about being suspicious of any group that would have me? Precisely. Locally, the creative and bohemian desert that is Dallas, Texas has never and seemingly will never support or act as the base for any meaningful species of artistic subculture, so any sense of cultural connection or identity for me (aside from a small circle of friends) in terms of the like-minded has happened solely via autodidactic and long distance means.

J: I was in the local scene. In the mid 80s I was in a band called Meat Injection, playing distorted psych/garage punk. The strange thing was that I was playing turntables in this band (!) and violin (I had no idea how to play violin) and doing vocals. Then I was in a short-lived, nameless goth band (I don’t even remember the name). At the same time I was experimenting with shortwave radio. Later I was in Spatium Saevus Sonitus, a dark industrial/experimental band influenced by TG, Chrome, Brighter Death Now. We had released a few tapes and 2 cds. During this time I was also experimenting with computer-manipulated voice and voice improvisation. But that’s over.

A: Do you see a lot of live music or is most of your listening of recordings?

E: I’ve seen lots over the years, but I’ve become ever more the recluse over time, so I’ve tended to miss more than I’ve seen in the last umpteen years.

J: I used to see a lot of live music but since 2003 I go only to very special events due to lack of time.

A: Do you have a favorite band?

E: That would change weekly and sometimes daily.

J: I probably have about 20 but I'll try to limit it to five: Throbbing Gristle, Nurse With Wound, Joy Division, Deep Freeze Mice, and The Astronauts.

A: How about a favorite musical genre? Is there a particular city or country whose musical output you like most?

E: At the moment I'm deep in the pudding with Euro (especially French and Italian) 70s library LPs and soundtracks. French 70s underground music tops every other scene before or since. Really.

J: Well you won't believe it possibly but my favorite music is late 70s/early 80s post punk, especially stuff from the UK—the so-called "small labels music." Of course, early 80s synth/industrial/experimental music is and will always be one of my favorite genres.

A: What do you think draws people to the type of music you post?

E: Imagination? A taste for the unusual? The insulting vileness of the musical mainstream? The insulting vileness of most indie rock culture pseudo alternatives to the mainstream?

A: Do you think interest in mutant sounds in general speaks to certain psychological traits?

E: Individuality? The desire to artistically explore states of madness?

J: I think they are all mutants. Well, I think you'll have to ask them yourself.

A: What do you think about the music of today compared to music from decades past? Is there a particular time period that holds a favored place in your musical heart?

E: There's an impossible amount of brilliant music from both the past and present—more than could be digested in ten lifetimes. I wouldn't necessarily posit one as inherently superior to the other, though discovering older forgotten adventurous music has the benefit of invoking the feeling of unearthing lost magic and there's a certain inherent frisson to that that's specifically appealing.

J: As I already told you my heart is stuck in the period from 1977-85. But lately I discovered that there is much great music being made out there. Especially in the wyrd folk/space /droning electronics era. I think that the last 5 years is another golden era for music.

A: What do you think is the future of avant garde/experimental/mutant sound music?

E: A clusterfuck of genre and boundary miscegenation.

J: Time will tell. Things are happening but nothing groundbreaking in my humble opinion. But I think we are close to a big bang if you know what I mean.

A Sample Mutant Sounds Glossary

One of the bonus pleasures of reading Mutant Sounds is that the descriptions accompanying most albums are often as interesting as the music itself. Here are a few terms defined by Jim and Eric that you might encounter as you read the site.

Acid-damaged: The product of a mind that's been warped by psychedelic drugs and has then used this awareness to successful artistic ends; Strange, trippy, distorted psychedelic music as appeared in

the first Red Krayola LP, *The Parable of Arable Land*

Deformed guitar churn: Affected guitar repetition

Minimal synth: syn. synth pop. A genre tag that appears to have been concocted by shrewd record dealers to hype yesterday's bargain bin private press synth pop albums as rare collector treasures. Though having said that, some of these bare bones private press synth pop LPs really seem to actually merit this descriptor; Synth-driven new wave or punk

Octopoidal percussive splatter: Dense percussion attack that appears to be generated by a human in possession of more than four limbs

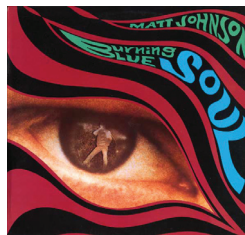
Recommended Download List

For those just perusing Mutant Sounds for the first time, the breadth of music on offer can seem overwhelming. First and foremost, you are encouraged to hold your breath and dive in. Almost everything posted is a unique gem that can be appreciated and marveled at within its context. Furthermore, the albums best lend themselves to personal discovery and seem meant to be communed with on a one-to-one basis. That said, here's a short list of some personal favorites with which you can't go wrong. These are just a small sampling of the albums that have opened my mind to new musical directions and experiences to which I continue to return. All of these can be easily found using the search box at the top of the site.



Psychic TV - Force The Hands of Chance

The first album from 1982 by Psychic TV, founded by Genesis P-orrige, formerly of the legendary avant-garde band, Throbbing Gristle is a fully realized masterpiece. It covers many moods, moving seamlessly from rock ballad to orchestral arrangement to noise and sound art to aggressively spooked-up Pink Floyd sonics to darkly dramatic, poetically-voiced set pieces to poppy post-punk numbers to mongoloid Devoesque bass thumpers to...well, basically it encompasses a full universe of musical ideas that generously rewards exploration.



Matt Johnson - Burning Blue Soul

Released in 1981 by the founder of The The, this is one of the ultimate bedroom tapes. I first

listened to this soon after falling in love with Panda Bear's *Person Pitch* and realized that I love this album just as much. An album both intimate and sonically rich, drenched in multitracked layers of noise, tape loops, drum machine beats, electronic experimentation, and Johnson's mesmerizing lyrics and singing, this is an arresting journey through a singular and fiercely creative musical mind.



Leven Sounds - Hemp Is Here

This 1985 LP was conceived and performed by UK musician Tony Karkut with the help of Maggi Turner's ethereal vocal accompaniment and a variety of analog as well as electronic equipment. A fairly psychedelic take on the post-punk aesthetic, the effect of pairing fractured electronic effects, spare, rhythmic organ loops, and feedback-laden guitar with tribal drum beats and voice produces a global gypsy soundtrack that largely prefigures the sound of a band from today like Gang Gang Dance.

Makers of the Dead Travel Fast - Early Recordings

Although this Australian band's excellent live recordings (also available on Mutant Sounds) link it more with the post-punk label with which its associated, this album of disarmingly haunting instrumentals sounds like it was recorded using an old, slightly out-of-tune piano discovered in an abandoned haunted Victorian manor and other curios of musical instrumentation. It creates a watery world that plays in much the same area as Eno's ambient, minimalist approach to composition circa *Another Green World*.



Various Artists - Kassetentater

Originally released in very limited runs of about 100 copies each, Mutant Sounds has the entire legendary cassette tape compilation series of German minimal synth from the late 70s and 80 available for your listening pleasure. The compilations chronicle the underground German new wave (or Neue Deutsche Welle) scene of the time and feature tweaky, importunate pulses of synth, electronic beats, tape manipulation, and strident punk vocals for a headier, more twisted take on a dance club soundtrack.