

### **wReck thiS meSS / Holland / June 2005**

some believe the devil speaks to mortal beings in-between frequencies where no radio station resides. Some think he speaks subliminally through seemingly inarticulate static and white noise. Doug Benford, however, takes a middle road: he gives the feeling that the glitches and static add up to a pretty good approximation of what we hear while on seaside holiday. Thus, an audio place to rejoice and relax. Benford explored waterways and seafronts in a wide variety of world locations [Athens to Vancouver] to create a Beachboy music for the post-Pole set. Highly recommended.

### **KULTUREFLASH #122 / UK / May 2005**

As the evenings are extended and light invades our day, a CD arrives that offers a brushing locked groove to mirror the pattern of your day. From Tears; Beach Archive is dubmeister Douglas Benford's seventh full-length album as the enigmatic si-cut.db, presenting us with a series of works that explore an evocative subaquatic journey through an electronic netherworld. "Before Beach Archive" manipulates a sheet of lightning static, weaving a magnificent transparent textural pattern akin to the finest work of Fennesz, and drawing a nostalgic sketch of a dank, crackling, post "On Land" Eno landscape. "Sustain A Rift" follows a groove trajectory, repeated through much of the album, where the mood is distilled into hiccuping beats, pushed by a dusty bassline, melodies spinning out of phase, shrouded in echo, washing across the pulses and clicks. An elegant release, cocktail music for an industrial generation: just open your windows to enjoy.

Robin Rimbaud

### **THE MILK FACTORY / UK / June 2005**

Away from the bright lights of electronic superstardom, Si-Cut.db's Douglas Benford has spent the last fifteen years creating the most exquisite and delicate blend of dub and micro house, pushing the boundaries of his art further, carving his ever more intricate and detailed compositions out of extremely varied sound sources. Either with his own releases or through various collaborations, notably with Bengie as Tennis, or more recently with Stefan Matthieu for the second instalment in a series of BiP-HOp / Fällt co-releases, Benford has defined a very particular sound, close to that of Pole or Monolake, yet instantly recognisable as his own.

This follow-up to last year's sublime Offices At Night [Vol. 1 - Originals], released on the

ever-excellent Fällt, From Tears: Beach Archive, third Si-Cut.db album for French label BiP-HOp, is the fruit of two years recording. The album was composed and recorded in a variety of coastal locations across the world, including Riga, Vancouver, Aberdeen Athens or Devon in England. Linked by a common beach theme, the eleven tracks collected on here reflect on the very essence of Si-Cut.db. Every since his first forays into

electronica, Benford's music has always been extremely fluid and warm, with relentless sonic waves causing the soundscapes to change almost constantly. Although often based on a typical 4/4 setting, his compositions are meticulously assembled, each detail playing a specific part within a greater scheme, creating very effective and complex formations for the mind to focus on. Nothing is as straightforward as it seems in Si-Cut.db territory. The opening track, Come To The Moments, appears lazy and basic, yet the multiple layers of micro-glitches evolving in the background give it surprising relief and contrast. This is symptomatic of Benford's work; while melodies and rhythmic patterns are left to form and take shape in the foreground, he is found injecting discreet components in the background, constantly fine-tuning their impact to retain the balance of each composition. Perhaps more clearly revealed here on Sustain A Rift or Polite Society, this process is repeated, be it at different levels, on each new track and is ultimately part of Benford's musical make-up. Whether he experiments within the constraints of rhythmic structures or explores beat-less soundscapes, the results remain constantly impeccable and pertinent. Even when he appears to take liberties with his usual sound (the Giorgio Moroderesque Based On The Lost Episode), Benford retains the evocative nature of his music.

With his seventh solo album, Douglas Benford confidently reclaims his ground and refines his soundscapes to focus on the emotional envelope of his music. If Benford doesn't quite reach the same level of intensity here as on Offices At Night, he still manages to produce one of his most confident and mature records to date.

[http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/sicutdb\\_beacharchive.htm](http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/sicutdb_beacharchive.htm)

### **TEXTURA / Canada / June 2005**

According to info posted at the Bip-Hop site, Douglas Benford's seventh si-cut.db album aims to be a 21st-century Another Green World, leading one to wonder if there might be direct links from Benford's work to Eno's, or does From Tears: Beach Archive merely draw inspiration from the 1975 landmark? Certainly a geographical dimension is common to both, with Benford's travelogue mirrored by Eno titles like "Over Fire Island" and "In Dark Trees." Whatever the actual relationship between them, what you won't hear is a literal conflation of the two artists' styles. But even if the relationship is ultimately tangential, that detracts little from how marvelous From Tears: Beach Archive sounds.

Benford's recording developed in unusual manner over a two-year period. Armed with a laptop, he composed its material while exploring the waterways and seafronts of coastal locations around the globe (including Riga, Vancouver, Athens, Aberdeen, England), with the

experience crystallized by the album's beach theme and heard in the music's wave-like washes. Yet the trademark si.cut-db sound isn't wholly re-defined. With its loping bass-driven dub pulse and babbling haze, "Polite Society," for example, largely hews to his established style, while the steely ripples of "Tenure" are familiar too. But if the album's tracks share signature characteristics, there's contrast also, and in some cases the si.cut-db sound is updated significantly. The lulling oasis "Before Beach Archive," for instance, eschews beats altogether while "Authenticity" is upbeat dub-disco, with even a subtle syndrum ping audible within the smearing washes. Other beatless episodes include the somber "From Tears" and "Based on the Lost Episode" where Benford juxtaposes dramatic shuddering stutters against prickly scarred ripples. As with his past releases, there's little by way of conventional melody, a lack that would be a weakness if an hypnotically rich sound design didn't compensate for it. Consider "Come to the Moments" as a representative illustration. Over a relaxed loping groove, punctuating rattles slam accompanied by panning surges and a high-pitched quarter-note pattern while a recurring rhythm of almost subliminal cloud bursts detonates and fades in the background. Dense smears of cloudy hiss waver over an insectile base in the album's longest piece, the nine-minute "Issues? Me?" while dubby clatter pans from left to right; interestingly, the track's Doppler effects recall Kraftwerk's Autobahn more than Another Green World. With their remarkable textural depth and steely character, the eleven pieces comprising From Tears: Beach Archive recall the equally exquisite sound quality associated with the Basic Channel and Chain Reaction imprints.

Note: The album also includes "Belonging," a short Quicktime video that synchronizes si-cut.db's music to abstracted, blue-tinted footage of a night-time cityscape trek that ends at a club with (presumably) Benford onstage.

<http://www.textura.org/newreviewpages/sicutdbfromtears.htm>

### **BLOW UP # 88 / Italy / Settembre 2005**

Per il nuovo album, settimo in carriera, di Douglas Benford in arte Si-Cut.Db si potrebbero riprendere pari pari le parole spese a proposito del precedente "Find Some Shade". Nelle undici tracce audio e in quella video curata da Pixelwrangler soffocante glitch dub ad aria compressa e battuta più o meno bassa, qualche fisarmonica suonata generativamente e la solita discreta ispirazione. Insomma, niente di nuovo sotto il sole (balneare). (6/7) Nicola Catalano

### **AREEN- Eesti Ekspress Newspaper / Estonia / August 2005**

Igapõhivaseid tegevusi soodustav technodub.

Tegemist on Douglas Benfordi seitsmenda albumiga. Sellise staaži puhul on eelduseks teatud kõpsus ja oodata võib midagi enam kui lihtsalt elektroonilisele muusikale omast ajaga kaasa jooksmise põdu. Võib tunduda, justkui oleks tegemist ambitsioonidest loobumisega, aga nii see ka pole, lihtsalt prioriteedid muutuvad aja jooksul. See Riias, Ateenas, Vancouveris, Aberdeenis ja Devoni rannikul Inglismaal salvestatud technodub-album kannab eneses sellist rahulikku mereõhket puhkemeeleolu, kus meeldivad sõndmused juhtuvad iseenesest. Üldiselt on muusikal kui tapeedil justkui negatiivne tõhendus. Kust kõll põhineb niisugune arvamus? Minu arvates on tegemist millegi geniaalsega, kui suudetakse luua helisid, mis igapõhivaseid toiminguid ei sega, vaid pigem aitavad nendesse sõveneda. Siin ongi just üks selline plaat, mis kõlab juhuslikult kõigele vaatamata ka veel nõõdisaegselt. 8

Aivar Tõnso

<http://www.ekspress.ee/viewdoc/E25C107B31BC2314C22570580038C0B6>

### **CONNEXION BIZARRE / Portugal / August 2005**

It's summertime in Britain once again, and to mark this glorious season, si-cut.db a.k.a. Douglas Benford has released this 'archive' wrapped in images of the English holidaymaker at his stereotypically worst; pale, flaccid bodies in sun-hats relaxing in deckchairs on a grim, stoney beach. Thankfully, that's pretty much where the seaside imagery ends. I'm not familiar with any of Benford's earlier work, but I had an idea of what to expect by association with various other artists, and the hypnotic techno minimalism and glitchy sonic manipulations of this 12-tracker came as no great shock. Polygon Window is the first comparison to spring to mind, but then perhaps that's just because the Surfing On Sine Waves album also had a somewhat dreary-looking beach on the cover. Minimalist electronica can get a bit dry and sterile sometimes -- maybe that's the point -- but the more upbeat tracks like "Authenticity" hit a subliminal groove that will set your foot tapping autonomously, which always helps, while "Sustain A Rift" takes DB's usual palette of sounds and crafts them unexpectedly into a deep dub track, and a pretty decent one too. Later on, during "Issues? Me?", these two poles are brought fleetingly together. Elsewhere, here and there, the rhythms give way to shimmering textures and the crackling interplay of digital spectra that first began to appear, to my knowledge, on Coil's seminal "Worship The Glitch" album.

There's no anthemic synth leads here, no catchy samples or obtrusive beats, and the selection of sounds and effects is firmly on the

'restrained' rather than the 'eclectic' side of the fence. None of the tracks here will get in your face and grab your attention, or go round in your head all day, but again, maybe that's the point. Rather, they conceal moments of sublime elegance, like when the bass drum emerges halfway through "Tenure" so seamlessly that you wonder if it was there all along. It's an album that emphasises subtlety and rewards careful listening, but will make perfectly pleasant aural wallpaper if that's what's required.

P.S. - After the eleven audio tracks there's a bonus video track, "Belonging", which in all honesty I haven't seen yet as it's in QuickTime format. What's wrong with MPEGs that will play anywhere? Perhaps someone from the Windows or Mac worlds can write in and let us know what this is like.

-- ABC [6/10]

<http://www.connexionbizarre.net/frameindex.htm>

### **SOMAMAG / Germany / July 2005**

Für sein siebentes Album hat Douglas Benford seinen Laptop in den Rucksack gepackt und sich aufgemacht diverse Küsten zu bereisen, respektive zu vertonen.

Riga, Vancouver, Athen, Aberdeen und Devon sind nur einige der Stationen, an denen Benford über zwei Jahre hinweg sein neues Album eingespielt hat, welches in Dub, Micro-House und Ambient - Gefilden ankert. Digitale Wellen und verwaschene Klänge assoziieren auf Antrieb Meeresnähe und lassen einen regelrecht die salzige Brise spüren, die über die Dünen herüberweht. Gezeitengleiche an- und abschwellende Sounds, digitalisierte Gischt und subtile Grooves sind die Hauptbestandteile von Benford's Tracks, die sich hier ganz entspannt durch weite Küstenlandschaften rauschen, und Musikerkollege Scanner nennt ihn zu Recht den "Dub Meister". Abgerundet wird das Ganze von Twerk's exzellentem Mastering. Mit Sicherheit schon jetzt eine meiner Lieblingsplatten des Jahres. Essentiell.

Falk

<http://www.somamag.de/article.php?id=6507&r=140>

### **MUSIC-SCAN / Germany / May 2005**

Der Meister des Dub si-cut.db aka Douglas Benford ist mit einem Album zurück, das sich thematisch den Stränden beziehungsweise Küsten gewidmet hat. Mit ein paar wie üblich wattig eingepackten Beats, die mir ihrer repetitiven Grundhaltung fast schon meditativen Charakter annehmen, entwickelt Benford einen angenehm verhaltenen Klangraum, in dem es genügend Clicks and Cuts zu Hören gibt, wobei die einlullende Grundstimmung stets im Vordergrund steht. Beim ersten

Hördurchgang hat man unweigerlich das Gefühl, dass sich auf dieser Platte reichlich wenig tut, doch wenn man sich etwas genauer mit den einzelnen Tracks auseinandersetzt, wird schnell klar, mit welcher Liebe zum Detail hier gearbeitet wurde. Vergleiche mit Brian Enos Meilenstein "Another Green World" sind hier zwar reichlich unangebracht, doch von der Grundhaltung und der Herangehensweise lassen sich durchaus einige Parallelen ausmachen. Dabei dürfte diese Platte nicht nur auf der heimischen Couch funktionieren, denn mit seinen betörend repetitiven Grundstrukturen und zyklischen Harmoniemustern kann das auch schon mal außer Haus ganz gut anschlagen. Im Laufe der Platte wünscht man sich zwar bisweilen, eine etwas offenere und weitläufigere Form, doch so kann man sich fast mühelos auf dem Grundgerüst der intelligent arrangierten Songs tragen lassen. Schwindlig wird es einem hier nur, wenn man darüber nachdenkt.

Matthias

[http://www.music-scan.de/Templates/reviews\\_team.php?id=4948](http://www.music-scan.de/Templates/reviews_team.php?id=4948)

### **GONZO CIRCUS / Belgium / May 2005**

Het zevende album van Douglas Benford als Si-Cut.db is een poging om een 21ste eeuw versie te maken van het Brian Eno-album 'Another Green World', één van Benfords favorieten. Met de laptop in zijn rugzak trok Benford langs kusten en andere waterige gebieden in Riga, Vancouver, Athene, Aberdeen en Devon, alwaar hij ter plekke composities verzong. De clicks and cuts komen en en gaan als de getijden, de ritmes dansen heen en weer als terugtrekkende golven. Met de hulp van Twerk, die het album masterde, is 'From Tears: Beach Archive' één van Benfords fijnere albums geworden. Naast de elf minimale muzikale uitspattingen bevat de schijf ook nog een videocollaboratie met filmer Pixelwrangler. Voor fans van Pole, Thomas Fehlmann, AGF, Scanner of Frank Bretschneider. De microhouse is nog springlevend (zie ook elders in deze Gonzo) (mvh)

### **OCTOPUS / France / May 2005**

Après s'être associé à Stephan Mathieu pour un numéro de duettiste electronica dans le cadre de la collection Reciproprocess, Douglas Benford est de retour sur le label marseillais Bip-hop avec un autre projet de longue haleine. *From Tears : Beach Archive* est la résultante de deux ans de pérégrination du musicien britannique au fil de l'eau, puisque la mer et les paysages côtiers, de Vancouver au sud de l'Angleterre lui ont servi de sources d'inspiration. Musicalement, les manipulations chères à Douglas Benford de micro-organismes sonores, sous leurs formes dubby et minimal house les plus pénétrantes, paraissent encore plus épurées qu'habituellement. Avec une nonchalance hypnotisante, Si-cut.db

exploite à merveille les points de rencontre et autres articulations rythmiques et sensorielles qui animent ses entités digitales. Ondulante comme la crête des vagues, berçante et doucement répétitive comme le bruit du ressac, la musique de Douglas Benford est avant tout une superbe démonstration de dub électronique sophistiqué. Des chuintements audacieusement organiques de *Sustain a Rift* aux petits effets spatialisés qui viennent doper les beats moelleux de *Despite of, not Because of*, tout l'album repose sur une production limpide, doucement colorée click'n'cuts, à laquelle a d'ailleurs participé Twerk (Mille Plateaux). Un beau voyage aux confins de l'évanescence.

Laurent Catala

<http://www.octopus-enligne.com/imprim.php?type=oursinsc&article=233>

### **TERZ / Germany / May 2005**

Über zwei Jahre schraubte Douglas Benford diesen wunderbaren Micro-House-Dub zusammen, und er klingt wie aus einem Guss. Dabei wurde er am Laptop an diversen Küsten gefühlt, gesammelt und eingespielt. Schöner geht's kaum.

[http://www.terz.org/texte/texte\\_05\\_05/honker.htm](http://www.terz.org/texte/texte_05_05/honker.htm)

### **DE SUBJECTIVISTEN / Holland / May 2005**

Douglas Benford vormt met Ben D. Edwards het duo Tennis, maar is solo al jaren actief als Si-cut.db. Een naam die al vele varianten heeft gekend: Sidecut>>db, Si'cut.db, Si-{cut}.db en uiteindelijk Si-cut.db. Met zijn nieuwste cd From Tears: Beach Archive wil hij een Another Green World van Brian Eno voor de 21ste eeuw maken. Hij heeft op diverse kusten met zijn laptop gezeten, van Vancouver en Athene tot Riga en Aberdeen. Alle opnames zijn in San Francisco met clicks & cuts-software bewerkt door Twerk (Shawn Hatfield). Een moderne variant op Eno's cd is het niet geworden, hoewel ik daar wellicht jaren later pas achterkom, maar het is zeker een fijne cd vol cyclische dub, glitch, micro-house en idm. Vooral de lekkere grooves in combinatie met de dub- en glitchgeluiden zijn hypnotiserend, maar ook met de rest kan hij goed voor de dag komen. Om de cd helemaal af te maken, zit er ook nog de video Belonging bij van Pixelwrangler. Dat kon Brian Eno in 1975 in ieder geval niet. | Jan Willem Broek |

<http://www.subjectivisten.org/caleidoscoop/>

### **MUSIQUES CULTURES DIGITALES # + WRECK THIS MESS / France / APRIL 2005**

Voici ce que l'on pourrait appeler un album nomade : Si-cut.db alias Douglas Benford a conçu l'essentiel de ce digipack, son 7e opus, sur son portable au gré de ses pérégrinations autour du monde. Entre Riga, Vancouver, Athens, Aberdeen et Devon si l'on en croit sa feuille de route... Et sa musique est sans doute aussi contrastée que les paysages, situations et personnages qu'il a dû rencontrer. Cela dit, Si-cut.db a toujours été synonyme de complexité ("Come to the moments"). Il distille de l'electronica abstraite et disloquée ("Despite of, not because of") mais riche en harmonies ("Based on the lost episode"). Autre

marque de fabrique, le dub dans une déclinaison là aussi très cérébrale et bardée de clicks & cuts ("Sustain a rift", "Polite society", "Tenure"). Mais cette démarche, qui hésite entre expérimentations laptop et ambiances électroniques mélodieuses ("Before beach archives"), n'exclue pas certaines pulsations plus mécaniques ("Authenticity"). Voilà, vous avez une idée de la tonalité ou plutôt des sonorités de cette production atypique qui a été masterisée par Twerk. En bonus, une vidéo / quicktime témoigne des connections de Douglas Benford avec Pixelwrangler (Jon Anastasiades). LD

[http://www.wtm-paris.com/kroniks/kro\\_sicut-beach.html](http://www.wtm-paris.com/kroniks/kro_sicut-beach.html)

### **CRACKED / Austria / April 2005**

It is a beautiful morning, the sun is shinging through your hotel room window, you hear the coastal wind playing with the leaves of the palm trees and the sound of the waves washing onto the golden beach make a wonderful background atmosphere to waking up relaxed. If it was possible to pour this "perfect holiday" feeling into electronic music, you'd get "from tears: beach archive" from si-cut.db. A funky groove with straight 4/4-beats included, this record spells out mellow days in big letters coloured gently blue. The first warm days of a spring finally in full bloom, so I was thinking, that I should get a gentle and laidback electronica-record with funky yet avantgarde beats to get me through summer. So "from tears: beach archive" came in at just the right time. And it is not only the title that evokes images and metaphors richly analogous to summertime, but also the flowing and driving, multi-textured soundscapes of Si-Cut.DB are enhanced with straight, crunchy but never prepoisterous beats. There are little noises buried into the synthie-ambiences and waves of frequencies seem to hazily wash in and out of your hearing range. The feeling is laid-back, somehow as if meditating, yet some basic rhythms and beats keep a pulse going that is akin to the gentle moments when falling asleep.

In "despite of, not because of" or "authenticity" for instance, the clicks and cuts are worked so deeply into the funky beat that what you get is a cool disco-beat for post-modern dance-lounges in Ibiza or any other sunny coastal region of the world, where people get together to have holiday, hang out and look good. All of that mixed to some funky keyboard sounds, that'll make you bang you head, yet not too much. You wouldn't want to spoil your mixed drink. Exceptions to this are some ambient or rather microsound tracks that sit easy between the tracks with a more exponated groove, and the crazy retro-keyboard excursion "based on the lost episode" that evokes memories of Giorgio Moroders stacks of million-dollar-synthies as well as title-themes of long gone science fiction shows. But mainly it is delicately programmed beats with noises and sounds flowing around them.

Now isn't that a long stretch for Douglas Benford aka Si-Cut.DB to have panned? From one of the most interesting and progressive poles of electronic music (Bip Hop, Tennis) to playing soft background music for slightly drunk and sunburned premium-vacationers? What's next – retro-lounge? Well, don't worry, we are still a far place from anything to happen that is tragic. The last album by Tennis, "furlines", might have given it away anyway quite a long time beforehand. And actually, for most people this album will still be as far away from their favorite hearing than his six solo albums and multiple cooperational releases before.

And maybe that is just what happened – while the world turned onwards pretty quickly in the elctronic music scene (as it always does) Benford was busy travelling the world, playing shows, curating festivals, recording here and there and everywhere (with his laptop

in his backpack) that somehow the music seems to have gotten stuck in a time warp. A beautiful, cosy and relaxing little bubble, very much like a luxurious holiday resort, to stay within the established frame of metaphors for this review, but a place where nothing new is bound to happen and all the excitement and exhilaration is relooped every fortnight, when the new customers appear. And nowadays, in a world moving so fast and expanding so tragically over night even, going on holiday just isn't possible anymore, if you catch my drift. In result "from tears: beach archive" is a great record, but with an almost nostalgic feeling to it. Even when speaking out the title of this CD, "from tears" somehow always transforms into "frontiers".

So maybe it is just me, my short attention span, my need for a relaxing summer holiday and my lack of interest, that makes me turn to Droneament, when I need some longwinding electronic ambient mixed with noises, or to Doghouse when I like to listen to some homemade, and to Håpna, if I am looking for a record label to write down the words to "avantgarde with a heart and a mind" new. The most interesting thing might be, that inspite of all the bad things I just wrote down about this record, I am planning on listening to through this year's summer. Because it has a special lightness, an almost lucid tranquility and elusive quality that makes it good listening, for instance while lying in the grass or on a sunbed watching the clouds go by and imagining sitting at a beach and watching the sea for hours. Which is something I like to do a lot. Maybe this year I can go without (I guess I'll have to, due to some reasons) but this record could make up for it.

<http://www.monochrom.at/cracked/reviews/Rev%20sicutdb.htm>

#### **VITAL WEEKLY # 462 / Holland / April 2005**

Douglas Benford both organize concerts at the Sprawl Club. Benford's Si-Cut.db is probably well-known through his various releases on Highpoint Lowlife, Fallt/Bip\_Hop and his own Sprawl imprint. When reviewing

his last CD 'Offices At Night' (see Vital Weekly 432) I wrote that the music was best described as "dubby minimalist techno... Benford takes his time to develop a piece. Starting with a simple beat, a hi-hat and a bass, he will add small synthesized sounds to the piece over the course of the next, say 5 minutes." I also said something about several works being more or less similar up until now, I would maybe be time for a change, but that change doesn't come with this new CD for Bip-hop. Still the same laid-back dubby slow rhythms, that groove nicely on a hot day (which today isn't, but I could turn up the heater). Sipping a cocktail in a shady, warm garden and this CD in the background: it would be nice, but it could have been the previous CD as well. Nice music anyway, but no surprise. (FdW)

#### **AVROPOLIS / Greece / April 2005**

<http://www.avopolis.gr/reviews/default.asp?ID=2535>