

CRACKED / Austria / January 2006

To hear such a hearty and joyous mixture as that of east European folkloristic harmonies and electronic glitchery as in "nothing yet", the second track on Chris Cook's new album under this moniker (otherwise he is known mostly as Hot Roddy), is a joy to behold. I am quite sure that he didn't set out with a plan to mix these two quite contrary parts, partly because there is no hint for it in his background, since underground breakbeat artists aren't usually found doing too many experiments outside their chosen area. Hence the different stage name. And partly because the mixing of contrasting parts into playful and at times humoresque cocktails runs through (almost) all of the tracks on "sharp edges". Though it doesn't always work as well as during "nothing yet", but that finally is down to personal taste.

If you prefer synthie-keys from late Eighties crime shows, you might prefer the slim, echoey pads of "red yellow porpoise". There are some breakbeats as well ("hammer"), usually mixed subtly into the background and a little muted. The field recordings of a nightly park garage gyrating slowly around plucked strings of guitars and later on a sitar, is a fascinating moment in music as well, especially when the rising volume of the strings starts to push the noise bits into the background and a whole changing set of interesting dynamics starts to roll. A different thing altogether is the sitar plaining. If you are fond of anything with a sitar, you'll also love most parts of "sharp edges". Especially the overdrawn, enormous "deforestation", which uses the sitar throughout its great length. The variety is held up during most parts of the record, and it is fun to remark upon the things that change just the same as on the things that stay the same. For music so almost academical there is a remarkable amount of fun hidden in these tracks for sure.

All in all "sharp edges" dabbles a lot more in music concrete or a certain style of pop-avantgarde that is at the same time both academic and driven from the subconscious, than being pure electronica. Aside from the fact that for pure electronica, the drums sound too authentic and there is a fair share of "real" instruments to be heard, especially strings; from guitar strums the sitar. The paradigm-shift in progressive, audience-oriented experimental music has been proclaimed by me last year already, when more and more records were released on so called or self-proclaimed electronica labels, that included acoustic guitars, voices and other traditional parts, so that isn't the main point of surprise. The sitar isn't one either, though it is an obvious point for sure. For Bip Hop it is quite a step, in regard to main Bip Hop stars Tennis, si-cut.db or Hakan Lidbo. On the other hand, the vocalism of Iris Garrelfs might have marked a turning point for the label as well. Is it now a reactionary jerk when I feel the more downbeat oriented tracks to be more to my liking? There are some laid back grooves with slowed down hip hop beats on here ("dulcimer scramble suit") and those I feel way more relaxed and inclined to listen to at the moment than to the almost cubist, structured pieces ("sharp edges") that turn up at other places on this album. I have been listening to this album several times off and on during the last weeks and I am still unable to pin it down as to what it is. Which is a good thing. The more you know about music and the more music you know, the less surprised you can be and the harder it is to summon up the fascination you once felt. My latest most remarkable musical experience was a concert of an unknown opera by Antonio Vivaldi. But that was only two days ago, so what it comes down to is staying interested. Your reward will drop in steadily in the discovery of the eminently important small things and bits that make a lot of music

interesting and differentiate it from the bland rest. But I guess, if you happen to reach these here shores of musical thinking and tinkering, you have still a lot of the spirit of a discoverer in you. And then, of course, you will also be able to enjoy this piece of music. Within the canon of Bip Hop "sharp edges" might be one of those releases that cry less for attention than others, but with time to come it might evolve as the one deserving the most attention.

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

THE GUARDIAN / UK / January 2006

Conjuring ear-catching fragments of instrumental music from stringed instruments and a big pile of technology... twangling strings here, spooky ring modulation there - it can sound pretty compelling.

BOOMKAT / UK / January 2006

The alter-ego of Chris Cook, Same Actor has thus far been keeping the CDR trade alive through releases like 2003's 'Extreme Pumpkin' - as well as pumping out material (Wrong Music etc.) under a range of guises to rival the cast list of Lost. His first proper debut LP, 'Sharp Edges' sees Cook further indulging his love of sampled acoustic instrumentation - twisted and remodelled so as to resemble something entirely new. Predominantly comprised of guitar, sitar and dulcimer, Cook feeds the raw material into one end of his laptop, before all manner of intricately plotted digital machinations emerge from the other. Opening with 'Light Years', Cook resembles The Village Orchestra, albeit with corners that could have your eye out, before moving onto the almost dubby crackle of 'Nothing Yet'. Elsewhere, 'Celeriac' increases the rhythm for a chiming set of muted guitar and twitchy silicon, 'Hammer' delivers electronic pins and needles, whilst 'Morph' massages Celtic folk into waterfall of bass and tronics.

<http://www.boomkat.com/item.cfm?id=20220>

TEXTURA / Canada / April 2006

Same Actor's (Chris Cook aka Hot Roddy) album debut Sharp Edges opens with the by-now familiar cut-and-paste strategies associated with laptop electronica but quickly veers into a unique zone inhabited by dulcimers and sitars as well as the more customary guitar. Cook repeatedly sculpts sampled acoustic sounds into arresting configurations, layering sitar lines over glitch-inflected reggae rhythms ("Nothing Yet") and working them into Technicolour arrangements ("Red Yellow Porpoise"). Interestingly, the latter's bold splash evokes Plaid, while the Warp duo's trademark breeziness brightens "Dulcimer Scramble Suit"; elsewhere, the rather Plone-like "Squash" gets a boost from Jane Bartholomew's serene coo. In addition to the African juju flavour his guitar injects into "Morph," Cook channels his inner Ravi Shankar on multiple occasions, nowhere more so than in the 27-minute real-time meditation "Deforestation" (with ragas sometimes extending from night to dawn, the length of Cook's piece is hardly off-putting though it is overlong). Such East-West fusions sometimes lapse into New Age banality but the harder edge Cook brings to material like "Hammer" and "Tread Carefully" generally allows his compelling 'world' project to sidestep that trap.

<http://www.textura.org/>

MUSIC SCAN / Germany / April 2006

Zum Glück wird das französische Bip-Hop Label nun schon seit geraumer Zeit nicht müde, die geneigten Hörer mit abseitiger und angenehm experimenteller akustischer Kost zu versorgen. So darf man auch Same Actor alias Chris Cook zu den erfreulichen Erscheinungen der experimentellen Musikszene rechnen, der sich vor allem durch seine breite und ausgefallene Instrumentierung auszeichnet. Da kann es schon mal vorkommen, dass glitchige Clicks'n'Cuts auf Sitarounds treffen, um im nächsten Moment von weiteren obskuren Seiteninstrumenten aufgefangen zu werden. Sehr erfreulich ist, dass Cook zu keiner Zeit auch nur ansatzweise in schreckliche Worldmusik-Gefilde abdriftet, sondern stets eine Menge Geschmack und Feingefühl seinen Sounds gegenüber zeigt. Dabei ist er einer bestimmbaren harmonischen Verortung überhaupt nicht abgeneigt und auch im rhythmischen Bereich kann er sich überraschend oft auf so etwas wie einen durchgängigen Beat einigen. Das Ergebnis hört sich entsprechend natürlich und organisch an, auch wenn dieser Eindruck immer wieder durch die etwas steril wirkende Elektronik unterlaufen wird. Doch vor allem muss man Cook zu Gute halten, dass er einen recht eigenständigen und streckenweise gar neuen Ansatz in dieser zunehmend eindimensional und statisch agierenden musikalischen Ecke gefunden hat. Das können die Wenigsten von sich mit Recht behaupten. Deshalb ist "Sharp Edges" alles andere als ein Fehler.

8/10
http://www.music-scan.de/Templates/reviews_team.php?id=6288

KINDAMUSIK / Belgium / March 2006

India meets elektronica. En waarom ook niet?

Die elektronica komt in dit geval uit Brighton, waar Chris Cook een lokale held is die in verschillende bandjes speelt, waaronder Hot Roddy. Maakt hij onder die noemer vooral breakbeats, als Same Actor zoekt hij het meer in het kleine en subtiële gebaar. Drie jaar geleden maakte hij al een album, maar die CD-R reikte niet veel verder dan vrienden. Toch belandde er een exemplaar op de burelen van het Franse Bip-Hop, dat wel wat zag in de combinatie van Indiaase sitars en andere akoestische instrumenten met moderne elektronica. Op z'n beste momenten klinkt Sharp Edges als The Black Dog in Bombay ('Celeriac') of als Dead Can Dance in een futuristische hindoeitempel (het prachtige 'Tread Carefully'). Maar er staan ook een paar stuurloze nummers op, waarin maar weinig spannends gebeurt. Live schijnt Same Actor heel bijzonder te zijn, omdat hij erg veel instrumenten meesleept. Dat willen we wel eens zien dan. Rene Passet

<http://www.kindamuzik.net/artikel.php?id=12173>

CALEIDOSCOOP / Holland / February 2006

Het Franse, prestigieuze elektronicalabel is ontwaakt uit de winterslaap en gaat er meteen goed tegenaan. Als eerste is dat met een uiterst originele release van Same Actor. De cd Sharp Edges zou net zo goed "soft edges" kunnen heten, maar dat is een kwestie van of het glas half vol of half leeg is. De man achter Same Actor heet Chris Cook en heeft dit project in het leven geroepen om subtiële muziek te maken met gitaar, sitar en hakkebord, die hij

elektronisch bewerkt en van ritmes voorziet. Hij houdt er ook andere projecten op na als Remote en Hot Roddy. Ondanks vele cd-r's is dit album het debuut van Same Actor. Hoewel de elektronica bepaald geen ondergeschikte rol spelen, vallen de snaarinstrumenten, met name de sitar en hakkebord, wel heel erg op. In een nummer als "Extreme Pumpkin" staat het dan ook erg op de voorgrond. Om een idee te geven: soms lijkt het wel op Autechre of Boards Of Canada, waarbij de helft van de elektronica door sitars is vervangen of op Aphex Twin uitgevoerd door een stel Boeddhisten. Maar ook de speelse elektronica van Gel: in combinatie met zigeuners uit Rajasthan en het springerige van Prefuse 73 al blowend met de grasmaaier gebracht vanuit Goa komen voor. De afsluiter "Deforestation" van bijna een half uur zal je zeker in hogere sferen brengen. Het is niet alleen een album dat lekker wegdraait, het zit ook nog eens verdomde goed en origineel in elkaar. Spirituele en vooral verslavende worldtronica van hoge kwaliteit.

<http://www.subjectivisten.org/caleidoscoop/archief/002168.php>

The WIRE # 265 / UK / March 2006

Prolific Brighton musician and producer Chris Cook records and performs under a number of different names, Same Actor and Hot Roddy being the more familiar ones. You can see why he might need them. Start wiring up delicate, highly resonating string instruments like sitar, dulcimer or guitar to laptops, and issues of diversity and duration spill over into questions of identity. Over its 70 minute plus running time, Sharp Edges has to accommodate the neatly delineated pop exotica on "Red Yellow Porpoise" and "Squash", both sweetly reminiscent of Ananda Shankar's early fusion work, the genuinely twisted vocal effects on "Morph" and the endless twiddling that comprises "Deforestation", which for some reason brings to mind the interminable lulls in outdoor festivals when they're just glad to have someone in front of the crowd while they rewire the stage.

VITAL WEEKLY # 511 / Holland / February 2006

'Made predominantly with guitar, sitar and dulcimer, processed into subtle music' - that is if you exclude the many rhythm sources used. Certainly at the beginning they are more than present and the stringed instruments seem to play a smaller role. But as the CD progresses they become clearer, such as the vaguely arabic 'Extreme Pumpkin' or the Micheal O'Shea like 'Hammer'. This makes this CD limping on two legs. One is the techno inspired rhythm pieces at the start, to purely guitar like pieces towards the end. And some of those are a bit too long, sounding a bit unstructured. That is a pity. A better selection would have certainly made the album shorter, but no doubt also a bit stronger. (FdW)

TERZ / Germany / February 2006

Der scheinbar minimale Aufwand des Equipments von Chris Cook aus Brighton scheint im Gegensatz zu seiner hochkomplexen und -verdichteten Musik zu stehen. Das Live-Prozessieren von Gitarre, Sitar und Dulcimer, das auf keine präproduzierten und sequenzialisierten Sounds zurückgreifen will, wird durch Beats und einmal auch durch herausragendes Vocal-Processing überaus präsent und zugänglich gemacht, ohne je seine intelligente Konstruiertheit verleugnen zu können oder wollen. Die 13 Stücke sind beste Beispiele für zeitgemäße integrierte dekonstruierte Musik.

http://www.terz.org/texte/texte_02_06/honker.html

BAD ALCHEMY # 49 / Germany / January 2006

Chris Cook in Brighton ist offenbar ein umtriebiger Bursche, der seit 2001 als Remote und Hot Roddy oder wie hier bei Sharp Edges (bleep 30) als SAME ACTOR schon eine ganze Reihe von CD-Rs in Eigenregie produziert hat, mit weiteren 3“ mCD-Rs bei Here’s My Card Records und Wrong Music Complaints Dept vertreten ist und auch noch Zeit findet, bei Projekten wie El Maes, Rashomon und The Spirit of Gravity mitzumischen. Seinen eigenen Sound sucht er per Saiteninstrumenten, er zupft, streicht und behämmert Zither- und Dulcimerähnliches (,dulcimer scramble suit‘, ,hammer‘, ,take a bow‘), auch eine akustische Gitarre plinkt mit, ein E-Bass plonkt, eine Rhythmuitar loopt und Beats, die manchmal fast nach echtem Schlagzeug klingen (,squash‘) und meistens nicht, geben einigen Tracks fast einen angerockten Anstrich. Und als besondere Note schickt er den Sound einer Sitar per Max MSP auf elektronische Abwege. Vieles wirkt spontan und groovy hingedaddelt, aber gleichzeitig manieristisch verwirbelt, laptop-zerhäckselt, Oval‘istisch zerstottert, als ob die

CD hängen würde. Der derart schlingernde und zuckende Drum‘n‘Bass-Groove gibt Cooks Cloud 9-Tripps ihren deliranten Kick. Aus dem Farbenspektrum swingender Saiten, elektronisch zermorpht, entspinnt sich ein indo-keltischer Psychedelikzauber, an den man sich spätestens beim finalen ,deforestation‘ verlieren kann. Mit 27 Minuten nimmt dieses polymorphe Etwas, das dem Titel nach die Axt gegen die Bretter vorm Kopf schwingt, fast die Hälfte der Spielzeit ein und poliert dabei mit seinen Mizrabtwangs und elektronisch knarrenden Knochentrompeten die Linse des dritten Auges, damit man wieder klar den Abgrund zwischen heiligen Kühen und goldenen Kälbern erkennt.