

F A T C A T



FatCat is a label based in UK, Dave Howell replied to our questions on October 8, 2002.

- I'd like to know a little biographical information about you, such as how old you are, where you grew up, your schooling... Any sort of information that could help readers to understand how you got to be who you are today.

Not sure really how relevant this is... FatCat is now basically 6 / 7 people - ages ranging from 21 to 33, musical and social backgrounds all pretty diverse...

- Which friendly piece of advice would you give to someone who wants to start his / her label?

The first advice I'd give is just to have a pretty good idea of what you want to do and why you want to do it... There's already a million and one mediocre, visionless labels out there, why do we need another one? It's better to see labels emerging who have some kind of solid idea / attitude / originality, some genuine aims... If you're doing it because you think you'll make loads of money, forget it... You should try and be honest with your artists and stay true to yourself... Don't be afraid to turn people down (never release something you don't actually like even if it's by some artist you generally love)... Don't be afraid to stand up and speak your mind...

Other advice would include getting access to someone who can take care of your accounts and someone who can look out for legal issues... and of course, working out decent distribution is probably the biggest key to success, so you need to scope out and send your CDRs to as many potential distribution outlets as you can find, and see who's interested... Oh, and be prepared for one long, stressful heartache and periods of disillusionment / depression - it's a real labour of love...

- What used to be tape-only labels are now CDR-only labels. Do you think it makes it easier for people to start their label and run less risks?

Yes, the availability of relatively cheap technology like CD writers, and of cheap CD pressing costs has definitely made it easier for someone to start out their own CD label. Think that's born out by the number of people actually doing this right now...

- **To me the role of a label should be to discover new acts, help them get promotion, distribution, spread the word on their creativity. It seems that could be the motto behind your label. Right?**

It could be one of them - don't know if that's our sole aim... We have always tried to put out a consistently good quality series of releases, and to keep things interesting and challenging by being very varied in the styles and sounds we deal with, to keep the label developing and expanding musically, and also by trying to operate with an ethical agenda... But, yes, we have also always tried to support and encourage good new artists and labels, regardless of whether they've signed to us or not. This is something that carries over from the ethics of the old fatcat shop – they were always stocking fanzines and tapes and supporting and pushing good new music - it didn't matter if it was some big 'name' artist or just some kid with his first ever CD - if it's good music, it's good music and it needs to be heard... we get sent 5 or 6 demos every single day and we check each one out properly and reply to everything that's been sent. A lot of it is very mediocre or inappropriate, but the small percentage that's good or interesting, we try to help out further. There have been a lot of fatcat releases that came in from demos - people like Process, Janek Schaefer, DAT Politics, Kid 606, Duplo Remote, Motion, Xinlisupreme, Giddy Motors, etc., etc., but (especially now that we have a larger, more stable roster of artists and a release schedule stretching 8 months into the future), there's now less chances of us picking new artists up this way (unless it's something that really blows us away)... at the start of 2001, we bought out that 'no watches. No maps' compilation as a way of helping out some of these artists, and we also curated a large section of the website (www.fat-cat.co.uk/demo) which is showcasing MP3s of the best demo artists we'd had material sent from, and also hosting a whole load of information for people who wanted to release stuff themselves (you know, listing manufacturing plants, shops, distributors, lots of articles on mastering, etc.)... also, we have helped a lot of smaller labels / artists we like by mailing out CDs for them and getting them in touch with people we think might be able to help them or give them better support than we can. The website is still under construction at the moment, but we have a whole stack of new demo MP3s to go up there when it does eventually get relaunched...

- **Could you introduce us to some of the acts on your label? (names, how you met, anecdotes...)**

god, there's so many artists now, that it'd be impossible to know where to start without running into pages and pages of answers... But I guess I could introduce a few of the current roster...

Sigur Rós were discovered when they were totally unknown, playing at the bottom of the bill at a Gus Gus party in Reykyavik that FatCat were Djing at in February '99.

Xinlisupreme are 3 kids from the bottom end of Japan who were discovered via an awesome demo - a great band that we deal with entirely via very funny, caustic, clipped e-mail conversations. We'd love to get them over to tour, but it'll probably never happen...

David Grubbs is someone we've always admired who just happened to e-mail us asking if we'd like to release his stuff in Europe. Of course, we'd all been fans, so we jumped at the chance, and that last album I think is beautiful. He's over at the moment on a European tour - immensely clever and interesting person, awesomely talented guitarist...

Múm are another of the Icelandic connection - we've been in touch with them for ages now, and things are looking really positive for them. Unfortunately, Gyda has just left the band because of her school commitments (she's studying cello in Reykjavik), but they're all immensely talented, creative musicians and they will be fine...

We've also been in touch a long time with Adam Pierce who runs the the Bubblecore label / distribution company in New York. We released one of his Mice Parade 12"s early on and then an album (still when Mice Parade was just his solo project), and then he began distributing FatCat in the US, so we have kept a pretty tight relationship with him. Bubblecore is a bit of a creative umbrella for a bunch of other groups that we've released.. Dylan Christy from The Dylan Group also works there and drums in Mice Parade now, as does Doug Scharin from HiM. One of our next releases is a HiM remix 12"... they're all very talented musicians, all totally into collaboration...

Giddy Motors are three Londoners who sent us a demo a couple of years ago and who we've just released an album by them. They are very funny guys playing pretty angular, punky songs and a great band to see live...

If you want me to talk about all the Split 12" or Spliner Series artists, I'd be here forever... So can I stop now??



- **Your records are very well distributed. Most of the time by bigger alleys which give priority to chain stores. So do you think that it is useful for all your records to reach those music supermarkets?**

Well, it's good in the way that this enables more chances for people to find them... but I don't think this really happens with all of our releases. Of course, we have one or two bigger-selling artists (obviously Sigur Rós being by far the biggest one). The level of popularity and expectation here, means that of course we have to market these releases in different areas and different ways, and that we have to go through the bigger avenues. But many of our releases don't go through the chains and don't have anything like the popularity.

We are actually in a quite strange situation - at one end of the scale we have Sigur Rós selling like 350 - 400,000 records and then at the other end there's some really experimental, uncompromising electronics or noise or something that struggles to sell 1,000 - 1,500 copies. The bulk of our artists sell between 1,000 - 4,000, and the goal is to try to use the popularity of Sigur Ros to try to turn people on to the rest of the catalogue ... but it is a hard battle because most of those big chains just see a lot of this as inaccessible and unsellable... i guess we are either masochists or we like battles...

- **Today, there are more and more chain stores and less and less passionate /smaller record shops. Are you affected by that (de)evolution, or did you deliberately chose to stay away from that "market" ?**

Having originally been one of those incredibly passionate little record shops, we will never forget that ethos and that market. We keep very close ties with a whole bunch of independent stores in the UK - we mail them our releases up front, send them posters and postcards, keep them informed of what we're doing, and just try to keep in regular contact. The big chains are just big sales machines - they do not have anything like the same passion or obsessive interest or creativity of the indies, so you should know where our sympathy lies. But, like I said above, it is really important for us that we use the chains as well. If we didn't we would be shooting ourselves in the foot...

- **What gave you the reason, or motivation to start your label? Weren't you satisfied with other labels' music?**

Yes, but we thought we could offer something different, and try to mix things up in ways that people hadn't really done before... The label was started because the fatcat shop was forced (for financial reasons) to close down... a lot of people expected that we would be just banging out a stream of techno releases (because this is perhaps what the shop was best known for selling), but the intention from the start was always to keep people guessing and to cut against expectations. We were looking up to labels like Thrill Jockey and Domino and Kranky and Mille Plateau, Irdial, etc.... and trying to find our own space where we could releases techno alongside improv hip hop alongside noise alongside electronics alongside 'post-rock' or whatever... we didn't want to become just another 'genre' label that could be instantly identified easily by its sound / style... I think some people find this confusing and don't know quite where to place us, but maybe that's a good thing...



- **How would you describe a typical FatCat act, seems like a difficult thing to do?**

There isn't really any 'typical' fatcat act... it's funny - some people think of us as an electronic label, some as a 'post-rock' label, and some just don't know what to make of us or where to place us... You also have to remember that FatCat is the result of 5 or 6 people's differing tastes... I think there are maybe a number of similarities and threads that link things together on the label, like an interest in rhythm or texture and some kind of adventurousness... We generally seem to work with people who are pretty multi-talented and creative... and with people who try to escape genre-traps, who try to throw odd things together and properly explore things...

- **How did you choose the name of the label? Why?**

It came from the name of the shop, which was found literally by blindly sticking a pin into a dictionary - pure chance...

- **Most labels have an example, or a favorite other label which they like, and you? Any label you could say was an influence on you?**

We all have different favourites...

- **Any label that you think has been influenced by yours?**

We've given advice and encouraged a few people to start labels or to release their own music and I'm sure we have influenced a few others, but hopefully not in the way

that they would try to imitate us... I'd rather someone was influenced by our attitude and ethics / beliefs...

- **You pay a lot of attention to packaging and your website is good-looking. Could you give us details on the person in charge of the design?**

Thanks... The website is still basically just an information-based holding page, and it's going to look awesome when it's re-released... We've always done all of our artwork in-house. Firstly, because getting people in from outside can be pretty expensive, and secondly, because we then have more control over it, and because those of us actually doing it have come from art backgrounds anyway, so why pay out when you can do a good job yourself for free... Initially, the artwork was done by myself and a friend called Lisa McFarlane. Then we took on Alex_Tea who did the www.e-rmx.com website and is redesigning the fatcat website, as well as doing lots of sleeves, etc. and most recently, Dave Thomas who is doing stuff alongside me.

- **What is according to you the most beautiful record/art-object you ever issued?**

It'd be difficult to nail it down to one thing. I still think the split 12" sleeves are strong and immediately recognisable. The whole e-rmx series was a great-looking project and the website Alex did for this was stunning. I think our design is getting a lot tighter now and things like the new Sigur Rós CD, Giddy Motors CD and Xinlisupreme CD look really good...

- **Often people do not consider "microsounds" to be rich and believe that very few is happening... Often associating it with the theory of "less is more", whereas a lot of things and ideas can be noticed in the music of many so-called "microsound" artists. Would you say that this is because many listeners:
do not listen
do not care
can't understand the subtelties**

Possibly all of the above... But if you want to group it together as a genre, then I think there's the same problems as any other genre - there's people doing interesting and stunning and cutting edge stuff and then there's also a whole load of people just mimicking others or just releasing pretty boring or patchy stuff... We get sent lots of 'microsound' demos, and some are great, but there's also loads that just sounds pretty clumsy or derivative, or where you can just totally hear the programmes they are using... It's no different to the situation in any other style...

- **Could you give us some precisions on the actual scene in your area? Any other label, activists that you feel close to?**

Do you mean in our geographical area? (Brighton? UK?)... It's hard to say... we definitely don't feel part of any scene, but there are various people we do feel close to. In Brighton, there are people like Semiconductor (who did awesome videos for Mum and QT?), and a few local individuals, small labels and bands. In the UK



there's a whole load of different activists / labels / artists, but like our output, they don't conform to any single style, they go right across the board and there's really too many to list...

- **Anything to say on the musical situation of England today?**

Not much... As always, there is a lot of good and a lot of bad music... Too many people looking back rather than forward... Too many people (in all styles) trying to copy things... generally pretty unhealthy music press governed by advertising and people trying to invent and create scenes... But also some very good new music and labels and people who stand up and do their own thing...

- **How does your selection process work? Are they pieces personally requested, or volunteered to you?**

It has always been a mixture of approaches. Like I said, we get an awful lot of unrequested demos sent through, and a small percentage of these have been released. Also, we get times when artists we admire just unexpectedly send us stuff

(as happened with releases like Set fire to flames or David Grubbs). Then there's times that we ask people if they'd be interested in doing something for the label, or times where we just stumble upon seeing someone playing live that amazes us and that we then follow up (like Sigur Rós, Team Doyobi,...)

- **Is there anything that you regret or that you'd change if you could?**

Of course! I wish i'd had more skill in the design packages we were using when we started. At the time, I had hardly even used a computer, let alone photoshop or quark, so it was a lot of learning on the job and learning from mistakes. So I would definitely have changed some of that. Also, I think there are a few releases that don't look so good in retrospect. But again, this is all part of the fun of starting up a label - you have to learn from mistakes... None of us had any experience running a label before fatcat, so it was a bit like just jumping in at the deep end and teaching yourself to swim...



- **Any album or band that you wish you had issued on FatCat?**

Too many - Sonic Youth, Fugazi, Shellac, Sensational, El-P, Royal Trux, Smog, etc... I'm sure there's loads of others I can't think of right now...

- **What are your goals as a label. Futureplans?**

To keep our heads above water and keep releasing adventurous and awesome music that excites us and hopefully others... to stay true to our roots and beliefs... to get our website in order finally... to finish the split series...

- **Upcoming releases ? Please give some details on every band, name of the record, etc...**

XINLISUPREME - 'Murder License' CD (FAT-SP06) - awesome new 7-track mini-album of fucked rhythms and guitar noise from japan

SIGUR RÓS - '()' (FATCD22) - long-awaited new album...

HIM - 'Remixes Part One: Japan' 12" (FB-01) - first part of a 3-part remix series of Him, features mixes from Susumu Yokota, Nobukazu Takemura and Ultra-living.

GIDDY MOTORS - 'Magmanic' (7FAT08) - second single from this angular punk / jazz outfit...

BLACK DICE - 'Beaches & Canyons' (FATCD24) - genius band from New York doing totally their own thing - somewhere between Can, Throbbing Gristle,

SYLVAIN CHAUVEAU - 'Une Autre decembre' (CD13-02) - beautiful sparse piano and programmed details

DORINE_MURAILLE - 'Mani' (FAT-SP05) - beautiful, twisted French folk songs and dense, fractured melodies / textures. If you like Oval or Fennesz, this is for you!

FATCAT RECORDS - DISCOGRAPHY INCLUDING 130701 RECORDS, E-RMX SERIES AND MERCHANDISE

ARTIST	TITLE
FatCat / Split 12"s and CD singles	
WEB	EVA E.P.
GRAIN	UNTITLED
VARIOUS ARTISTS	8,8.5,9
INSYNC v MYSTERON	TALES FROM THE CRYPT
LIVE HUMAN	IMPROVISESSIONS
V/M / THIRD EYE FOUNDATION	SPLIT
TO ROCOCO ROT	SHE UNDERSTANDS THE DYNAMICS
VARIOUS ARTISTS	REMIXES(AUTECHRE,POLE ETC.)
AD VANZ v GESCOM / FOEHN	SPLIT
TRANSIENT WAVES	BORN WITH A BODY....
DYLAN GROUPE	IF I HAD BEEN ABLE
GRINDVERKE	THERAPIST
MICE PARADE	MY FUNNY FRIEND SCOTT
SONS OF THE SUN	HEAVEN LAMP

GRAIN
GRAIN
FONN
LIVE HUMAN
KID 606 / CHRISTOPHE DE BABYLON
PROCESS
BJORK Mit FUNKSTORUNG
BJORK Mit FUNKSTORUNG

PAN AMERICAN / JANEK SCHAEFER
JAMES PLOTKIN / POLE

JAMES PLOTKIN / PIMMON
SIR EDDIE REAL & THE REALISTICS
BANNLUST / CHASM
MATMOS / MOTION
IMMENSE
DR SMITH & PROFESSOR LUDLOW
AMM / MERZBOW
SPEEDRANCH ^ JANSKY NOISE / TONY
CHILDS / ANDREW REID
THE BUG
REQ / TEAM DOYOBI
PROCESS / DAT POLITICS
DR SMITH & PROFESSOR LUDLOW
SIGUR ROS
SIGUR ROS
STROMBA
DI LACUNA
SIGUR RÓS
SIGUR RÓS

DUPLO REMOTE / COM.A
GRAIN
ALEJANDRA & UNDERWOOD / QT?
ANNA PLANETA / ULTRA RED
MúM
MúM
FENNESZ / MAIN

FatCat 7"s and CD singles

IMMENSE
XINLISUPREME
DROWSY
GIDDY MOTORS
CHARLOTTEFIELD
MúM
MúM
PROGRAMME

UNTITLED
UNTITLED
2*12"
ORANGE BUSH MONKEY FLOWER
SPLIT
UNTITLED
ALL IS FULL OF LOVE
ALL IS FULL OF LOVE

SPLIT
SPLIT

SPLIT
WHERE'S THE MONKEY?
SPLIT
SPLIT
SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION
PROFESSORS SAY RAAS
SPLIT
SPLIT

LOW RIDER
SPLIT
SPLIT
RINSIN' WITH THE DOCTORS
SVEN – G – ENGLAR
SVEN – G – ENGLAR
THE PINCH
TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF QUIET
NY BATTERÍ
NY BATTERÍ

SPLIT
UNTITLED
SPLIT
SPLIT
TBC
TBC
SPLIT

DEATH TO THE GREMLINS
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE WAS NOT TRUE
CARELESS ME
WHIRLED BY CURSES
PICTURE DIARY
GREEN GREEN GRASS OF TUNNEL
GREEN GREEN GRASS OF TUNNEL
UNE VIE

E-RMX series

GRAIN / PROCESS
MICE PARADE / VVM / MUM
SMITH & LUDLOW / STROMBA
ANTENNA FARM / MOTION
LUCKY KITCHEN / TEAM DOYOB
FOEHN / CHASM
IMMENSE / FONN
DI LACUNA / TRANSIENT WAVES

ERMx1
ERMx2
ERMx3
ERMx4
ERMx5
ERMx6
ERMx7
ERMx8

FatCat Albums

FATCAT COMPILATION
FATCAT COMPILATION
TRANSIENT WAVES
TRANSIENT WAVES
LIVE HUMAN
LIVE HUMAN
MICE PARADE
MICE PARADE
FONN
FONN
IMMENSE
IMMENSE
VARIOUS ARTISTS
VARIOUS
PROCESS
PROCESS
DYLAN GROUP
SIGUR RÓS
SIGUR RÓS
HIM
HIM

ACROSS UNEVEN TERRAIN
ACROSS UNEVEN TERRAIN
SONIC NARCOTIC
SONIC NARCOTIC
MONOSTEREOSIS
MONOSTEREOSIS
RAMDA
RAMDA
FIELD 831
FIELD 831
EVIL ONES AND ZEROS
EVIL ONES AND ZEROS
8, 8.5, 9
SPLIT SERIES 1-8
SHAPE SPACE
SHAPE SPACE
UR-KLANG SEARCH
ÁGÆTIS BYRJUN
ÁGÆTIS BYRJUN
OUR POINT OF DEPARTURE
OUR POINT OF DEPARTURE

FATCAT COMPILATION
HIM
HIM
MICE PARADE
MICE PARADE
GRAIN
GRAIN
Múm
Múm
STROMBA
STROMBA
GIDDY MOTORS
GIDDY MOTORS
DAVID GRUBBS
DAVID GRUBBS
SIGUR RÓS

NO WATCHES NO MAPS
NEW FEATURES
NEW FEATURES
MOKOONDI
MOKOONDI
TBC
TBC
FINALLY WE ARE NO-ONE
FINALLY WE ARE NO-ONE
TBC
TBC
MAKE IT POP
MAKE IT POP
RICKETS AND SCURVY
RICKETS AND SCURVY
()

SIGUR RÓS
VARIOUS
BLACK DICE
BLACK DICE

()
BUDGET COMPILATION
BEACHES & CANYONS
BEACHES & CANYONS

Múm
Múm

TBC
TBC

Splinter Series albums

FOEHN
JANEK SCHAEFFER
XINLISUPREME
ULTRA-RED
DORINE_MURAILLE
XINLISUPREME

HIDDEN CINEMA SOUNDTRACKS
ABOVE BUILDINGS
TOMORROW NEVER COMES
LA ECONOMIA NUEVA
MANI
MURDER LICENSE

FatCat Soundtrack Albums

HILMAR ÖRN HILMARSSON and SIGUR RÓS ANGELS OF THE UNIVERSE

SET FIRE TO FLAMES
SET FIRE TO FLAMES
SYLVAIN CHAUVEAU

SINGS REIGN REBUILDER
SINGS REIGN REBUILDER
UNE AUTRE DECEMBRE

Merchandise

DESIGN
Plus / Minus T-shirts

COLOUR
Grey

Plus / Minus T-shirts

Blue

Plus / Minus T-shirts

Pale Blue

Plus / Minus T-shirts

Pale Blue

Artists T-shirts

Grey

Artists T-shirts

Grey

Artists T-shirts

Pale Blue

Artists T-shirts

Brown

Splinter T-Shirts

Grey

Splinter T-Shirts

Black

Splinter T-Shirts	Black
Splinter T-Shirts	Steal Blue
Slipmats x 2	Cat Logo
Slipmats x 2	Text
Slipmats x 2	1 x Cat Logo + 1x Text
record bags	Black
laptop bags	Black