

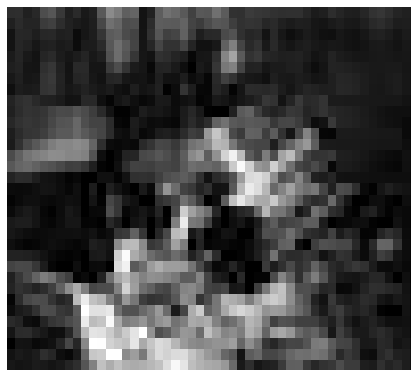
P I E H E A D



Piehead is a canadian label, based in Toronto, operated by Greg Clow and Sheryl Kirby who replied to our questions on October 11, 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.**

Our names are Greg Clow and Sheryl Kirby, and we're the husband & wife team behind Piehead Records. We're both in our mid-30s, and were both born on the east coast of Canada - Sheryl in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Greg in Summerside, Prince Edward Island - although we met here in Toronto around 10 years ago. Sheryl lived in Halifax until moving to Toronto at age 18. Greg's family moved to a small town north of Toronto when he was quite young, and he ended up in Toronto around age 20 after a short time studying computer science at the University of Waterloo.



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

Our first piece of advice for someone thinking of starting a label - especially one dedicated to electronic & experimental music - is don't do it if you're expecting to

make a lot of money! Our second piece of advice would be to handle the money that you do make properly, and ensure that everyone (artists, suppliers, etc.) gets paid. Especially the artists.

As for CDRs making it easier for people to start labels - yes, that is definitely the case, although it's almost too easy as some artists and labels use the convenience of CDRs (and MP3s as well) to release every bit of sound that they record. Any sense of quality control goes out the window, so rather than getting one really good collection of 12 really good tracks, you get 10 discs full of 90% average (or worse) tracks that bury the really good stuff.

But on the other hand, some of the best music we've heard in the past few years has been on home-burned CDRs that artists have sent to us. So it's a mixed blessing of sorts.

- **Your releases are limited to 311 copies. Why such a few ? Do you wish to keep them among a certain circle of connoisseurs ? 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 it isn't the motivation behind your label ? You have been doing a radio show and organising concerts for years. Obviously you do it to spread the word on good music, why not keep on with that attitude for the label ?**

Actually, exposing new artists is definitely one of the motivations behind Piehead. We've simply chosen to start on a small scale and work from there. We don't intend to have any sort of elitist or exclusionary attitude to the label, and we already have ideas for some larger scale releases. But we also like the small scale releases sold primarily through mail order - it has a kind of personal touch, and we like the direct contact and feedback from the listeners.

In addition, we're trying to be realistic about the fact that the audience for the sort of music we're releasing is fairly limited in the grand scheme of things. Mike Paradinas recently made a post online where he said that many of the releases on his Planet Mu label sell less than 1000 copies. This is a label that is run by one of the "stars" of IDM with a reputation for putting out good quality music, and they can barely sell out a single pressing of a CD. Perhaps it's a little pessimistic to keep those sort of thoughts in mind, but we just want to take things slowly and hopefully grow to a comfortable size where we can release a few full-scale releases a year in addition to the small scale, limited releases.

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

No, not at all, we think that there are a lot of great labels out there. In fact, our initial idea was to start up an online mail order service specializing in indie electronic & experimental labels and focussed on selling to Canadian customers, as exchange rates and customs charges often make it quite expensive to order music from the US and other countries. However, after thinking about how much work such a project would entail, we decided on starting our own label instead. Combined with the radio show and our concert promotions, it seemed to fit in nicely.

- **Did you start with a certain idea, concept ?**

The subscription-oriented series of monthly releases could probably be considered the initial "concept" for the label, and it's one that we will probably stick with for at least the next couple of years. But we hope that 2003 will bring one or two one-off releases outside of the series, with more to follow in future years.

- **How would you describe a typical Piehead act ? Could you introduce us to some of the acts on your label ? (names, how you met, anecdotes...)**

We don't think that there is a "typical Piehead act", which is exactly how we like it. Releases in our 2002 series have ranged from percussive ethno-ambient to minimal microtones to glitchy techno to melodic IDM and more. The radio show and our concert presentations have always been open to a wide range of sounds, and we intend for the label to be the same.

As for the acts on the label so far - approximately half of the artists in the initial series are people from Toronto that we have met through our involvement in the local music scene. Many of them (like hellothisisalex, naw and I Am Robot And Proud) are artists that we have booked to play at live events we've presented in the past, and we thought that more people outside of Toronto should hear their music.

I8U and David Kristian are from Montreal, and we've presented shows for both of them here in Toronto in the past few years. They're both extremely talented artists, and extremely nice people, so we were really happy to have them both involved in the series. Other out of town artists like Matmos, V/Vm and Your Favorite Horse are all folks that we've made contact with online over the years, mainly in relation to the radio show.



- **How did you chose the name of the label ? Why ? Do you often eat pies ?**

We have both been known to eat our fair share of pie, but that didn't really have anything to do with the name of the label. The name comes from a silly nickname that we have for our dog Bowie. His head is sort of triangular, and when you look at him from above, it's sort of shaped like a piece of pie, so we started calling him "Piehead". He's sort of the mascot of the label, and there's a picture of him on the website taken when he was a puppy. He's a bit bigger than that now - he weighs around 125 pounds. ☺

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

Labels that have influenced us are those that tend not to stick to one particular sound or style, but simply put out good music. From our younger years, labels like 4AD and Factory Records remain in mind as being good examples to follow. Currently, labels like Kranky, Noise Factory, U-Cover/INC.US, Morr Music, City Centre Offices, Plug Research, Carpark - and yes, even Bip-Hop!

As for labels being influenced by us, I really don't think we've been around long enough or have enough of a profile for that to be the case. Maybe someday.

- **You pay a lot of attention to packaging – each of your record looking similar in a « u-cover » like a series - and your website is good-looking. Could you give us details on the person in charge of the design ?**

We handle all of the design ourselves, including the layout of the covers and the web design. Glad you like it!

- **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 :**
 - a) do not listen**
 - b) do not care**
 - c) can't understand the subtleties**

It's likely a combination of all three. "Microsound" can be a very difficult genre to appreciate, as there is rarely any element of what most people consider to be "musical" in the work. And unlike other "non-musical music", such as aggressive noise, the subtleties of the work require much more attention to be fully absorbed. If you aren't in the right mood or mindset, it's often hard to appreciate or enjoy such releases. And some listeners simply want a fuller or more melodic aspect to the music that they listen to, which is fine. There's a huge spectrum of electronic music out there, and there's no reason to expect that someone who likes sounds from one edge of it will instantly like all of it.

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

The scene for this type of music in Toronto is pretty active, albeit somewhat small. Most live shows featuring indie electronic/experimental artists draw relatively small crowds, but the people that do come are very appreciative and supportive of the artists. There are several regular weekly and monthly events including The Ambient Ping (www.theambientping.com), Future Rhetoric (www.futurerhetoric.com) and Aspect, and other promoters who do one-off events, such as Technot (www.technot.ca) and Clonk (www.techno.ca/clonk). All of the promoters are

extremely supportive of each other's projects, and we all help each other out whenever we can.

Local labels that we are friendly with include 2Top (www.twotoprecords.com), Noise Factory (www.noisefactoryrecords.com) and Suction (www.suctionrecords.com).

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

Not that we can think of at the moment.

- **What's the deal with that Matmos under disguise on your label ? Were they ashamed by the disc ? Exclusive to Matador ? I'm disappointed by this album, not as good as their other records, just a side project they did for a movie ?**

No, they weren't ashamed by the music at all. On the contrary, they had wanted to release this music in some form for quite a while, and felt that the Piehead series was the perfect opportunity.

The whole "secret" aspect of the release is sort of a joke, really, as it's been made pretty obvious who Vague Terrain Recordings really is. They chose to use that name since it was the name they were credited under when the material originally appeared on the soundtracks to several gay porn videos a few years ago. And on some level perhaps the album shouldn't really be considered a Matmos release as the music wasn't recorded with the intention of being released under that name, which makes the use of a pseudonym quite suitable.

As for the quality of the music, that's really a personal preference. Most of the negative comments we've seen have been from people who expected the record to be a new Matmos album, which it isn't really meant to be. Those who approach it as fun and kitschy porn music tend to find more to enjoy. One reviewer has even said that it's one of his favourite albums of the year so far.

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

Greg really wants to release something by Coil. Sheryl really wants to release a Christmas album of some sort. Hopefully, both will happen sooner or later...

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

Our main hope is to simply continue on the same path of releasing good music, whether it be limited CDRs, non-limited CDs, vinyl, minidiscs or whatever. The medium is unimportant to us - it's the music that really matters.

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

Our 2002 series is nearing it's end, with releases due in November from Andrew Duke and V/Vm, followed in December by a compilation CDR being produced exclusively for people who subscribed to the entire series.

We're putting together plans for our 2003 monthly series, which will be limited edition EP length releases on CD3". We've also just started work on a compilation of electronic music by women that we hope to have out on CD sometime next year. No

artists have been officially confirmed for these projects yet, but we should be announcing them soon on our website.

Lastly I'll need a complete discography, record covers, pix.

All of this info is available at www.pieheadrecords.com/releases - if you need further info, let us know

Thanks for this opportunity!