

P L O P



Plop is a Japanese label directed by nao sugimoto who replied to our question on August 26th, 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.**

i was born in japan and grew up in chicago and now i'm back here again. i studied ethnic world music at school. as an artist, i have released my first album from the US label - Hefty Records under the alias mondii. it was an album based on "toy" using "toy-ish" instruments. after participating and doing remix for several labels now i'm also forming a 7 piece band called RdL and it will be out early next year from a Japanese label called weather.

the plop label was established in december of 2001 to introduce fresh electronic sounds from all over the world to japan and at the same time to introduce great Japanese acts to the world. and our first release was a french artist called gel: which was a license from a french label artefact.

- **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?**

my advice is just keep releasing music that you really believe in. now that there are MP3 labels, i think the development of the technology has made it much easier for the people to start their own label. in japan, the problem about CDR is that most of the shops don't handle them. but this is good in a way that shops can keep control of the technical quality.

- **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 as you are licensing foreign artists and develop them in Japan. Right?**

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

yes, those are definitely the basic concept. for instance, we have licensed gel: because his album was very very hard to find here. i thought someone has to spread this wonderful album to the whole japanese area.

most of the foreign acts are the people that i have offered. for the japanese acts, i find them from everywhere..friends, live shows, demo tapes, introductions.. it's a small country so you get a lot of chance to meet new people. like our next release fonica, they are people that i form a band with. and like flatic (our upcoming artist), i met him when we were mastering the micro blue comp because he was omb's friend. and for omb, a record shop buyer gave me his demo tape. also waki and sora (our another upcoming artist) are from demo tapes and i met taisuke matsuo and kako yuzo when they were playing at a club. neina is a friend of mine. onpack, i heard his amazing debut album and contacted him.

- **I have noticed in your list of distributors that you use two companies, one of which in Italy is mailorder rather than proper distributors, or better say a mailorder-list that has extended their activities and sell to some very specialised Indie record stores. But they do not sell to chain stores. So do you think that it would be useless for your records to reach those music supermarkets ?**
- **Do you wish to keep your music within a certain circle of specialized connoisseurs ? Or did you chose to keep things, prices under control and thus avoid mass-distribution in certain countries ?**

well, the fact is we have just started the export and it's been pretty hard for us to find a distributor out there...everything is so far from here!

we don't divide chain stores and specialized shops because the important thing is to place the cds where everyone can easily access to. the problem right now is that most of these records can only be found in huge cities like tokyo and osaka which is a pity to the listeners in the rural area. and chain stores like Tower records, HMV and Virgin Megastores help us a lot to spread it there.

- **You are helping labels with distribution and promotion in Japan, does it help you to finance your label, get more contacts, press, etc... ?**

yes, all of them. one of the reasons we function as a distributor is to keep ourselves active. helping out labels really helps us too. so i think it's a very positive and healthy business.

- **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" ?**

here, specialized stores are still powerful and influential. and there are both good and bad things about chain stores. the good thing about it is that you can capture new

listeners. and of course the bad thing is that you need a buyer that understands these kinds of music. Specialized stores are hard for some people to reach (especially geographically).

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

i wasn't satisfied with the situation that there are so few japanese labels and artists out there. it's still a foreign culture here too and people tend to pay attention to foreign products.

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

yes, the basic concept is variations of "sound design" - like a graphical pattern. but we want more people to enjoy it as "good music" as well because the releases on plop are meant to be more song oriented in the structure. i'm planning to start a new label next year which deals more strictly to minimal/improvised abstract artforms.

- **How would you describe a typical Plop act ? How did you chose the name of the label ? Why ?**

it would be an open minded artist that is always challenging to create it's own beauty..i named it plop from the sound of it's pronunciation. Also there's a metaphorical meaning which is to focus on the tone itself.

- **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 ?**

there are many labels that i respect. i really like the mille plateaux label for it's innovativion and the constancy to release high quality music with such a various (but in a way common) style. i always love the music from 12K and also the packaging of the labels like lucky kitchen and the fallt label. they are all an influence to me in a way. there shouldn't be any labels that are influenced by us because we have just begun



!

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

the artwork design is by cheason. and the website is made by keiichi. they are the duo's of the group fonica which we are going to release in october.it's hard to tell which is the best since we have only issued two albums so far..

- 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 subtelties

maybe a) and b) because it's so hard to pay attention to smaller sounds when you live in a place where all the street noise and information are flooded. also it's hard to purchase these kinds of music because you have to find it out by yourself in many cases. and of course not many shops stocks these albums too.

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

i think there is no actual scene here. it's not like we gather up or something. there are many events and musicians but most of them are very small and independent. but when you have a famous act, it's like where does all these people come from

- Anything to say on the musical situation of Japan today ?

so many imports but so less exporting. but i have to say it's getting much better.

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

not particularly.

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

yeah, there are too many! but it's important for me to introduce unknown new talents.

- What are your goal as a label. Futureplans ?

there are no particular goals. it's important for me to go on and the music will speak for itself.

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

2002 october

fonica (PLIP-3005/full-length CD)

fonica are duo keiichi and cheason. they uses various live instruments and digital processing to create their original beauty. similar to fennesz. it's their debut album containing 2 remixes from mitchell akiyama (intr_version,raster.noton, background..) and sogar (list,12K..).

keiichi runs his own label called cubic music (www.cubicmusic.com) and is a member of the electro-acoustic group minamo ([apestaartje,quakebasket](http://apestaartje.quakebasket)).

cheason is a designer that takes care of all the artwork for our label. They are also the members of the group RdL.

2002 december

flatic (PLIP-3006/full-length CD)

flatic is hanazato from tokyo, japan. he is a member of the o-parts crew and creates deep micro house. he's background is hip hop music and composes using various samples from his numerous record collection. Very technical that it's hard to believe they are mainly constructed by record samples.

2003 february

sora (PLIP-3007/full-length CD)

ken kurosawa is a student from kyoto, japan. sounds like the digital cut up version of somewhere between tortoise and steve reich. very pleasant and comfortable music.

discography :

PLIP-3003 "-1" Gel:

PLIP-3004 "Micro Blue" V.A.