

Aphex Twin Interview

By Heiko Hoffmann (heiko@groove.de)

Place: Nettuno, a cheap Italian restaurant on the first floor of the Elephant&Castle shopping center, South London.

Date: September 1, 1-4pm.

You still live in this old bank building around the corner from here, don't you?

Yeah, it's a really good area. I really like it. It's very untrendy down here which is why I moved here. There's no young people at all - I never get recognized down here. I think I've been recognized twice in five years. In the Eastend, where my girlfriend lives and which has become a very trendy place, people just go round your house all the time. They're just like: „Oh, you live in a cool area so we come and see you.“ Whereas down here it's like: „Oh, you live down there! I'm never going to go down there.“

I've heard that the Ministry Of Sound club is a neighbour of yours.

Yes, and if the queue is long enough it goes all the way to my house. Sometimes I throw water balloons on the people that stand there with my friends. I do that on a regular basis, although the last time is already three months ago. We just do it from the roof. It's wicked because nobody knows where it comes from. It's really dark and you can hide easily. I've got a really good video footage of my friends in those teddybear things I used to have. They just walked across to the queue in these costumes and were harrasing people. I've got that friend Damon on Rephlex who videod it. He's been constantly videoing everything for three or four years. He's mad. He's not a very good film maker. He never films the good bits. But because he's had it for so long and because he films everything he has actually loads of good footage just by mistake. He has all this amazing footage of Rephlex stuff and we keep saying to him that he has to make a video. But he has 150 tapes and it would take like three years to get through them.

Last night you djed at a party at the Victoria & Albert museum. Your set sounded like a history lesson in breakbeats in the last ten years - ranging from happy hardcore to jungle to drum & bass and finally your own tracks.

I wanted to play really trashy rave music because it was in a museum. The obvious thing would have been to play really classy music but I thought it would be more funny to play something trashy.

Do you play different sets for different occasions?

I've been doing lots of different sets. Although I haven't been doing any ambient or sort of weird sets for ages. I do lots of stuff with my laptop and that can really mean anything. It's usually a mish-mash of live and djing. But noone knows I'm playing live because I never actually say it. I've been doing this now for about a year and a half maybe. The reason I'm doing this is because if you're saying you play live then it's more like a gig and people just go and stand and stare at you. But if you say you're djing then everone dances and gets into it.

I remember that at Sonar festival in Barcelona this year you were playing more of a hardcore gabba set.

It depends on the place and on what mood I'm in. In dance places like massive raves I am more into brutally fast music. There are lots of people on drugs and they try do dance to it. I find that amusing. Lots of people just stare at me know in clubs. They just come up and stare, they don't even smile. And you get the impression that you're only playing towards five people because you can't see anyone behind them. Sometimes I can't be bothered and I end up just playing total noise just to fuck them off. Before I was more famous I really loved djing in the middle of the dancefloor. People just danced and didn't really take any notice of you. But if you're more a celebrity kind of thing everyone just stares at you and it doesn't work.

You seem to dj quite a lot recently.

Yes, just for the moment. Because the tracks I've been making recently are really for the dancefloor kind of things. I've been getting into raving again. I didn't do that for ages. If you're making these tracks it's just brilliant to be able to dj them the day after you've made them and see if it works.

Last year your music was played along a video by Chris Cunningham at the Royal Academy in London. Yesterday you djed at the V&A museum and in October one „Prichard G. Jams“ is scheduled to play at the Barbican as part of a Stockhausen festival. Do you enjoy having your music played in such traditionally highbrow places?

I'm not making a conscious decision to play in these places. I'd rather play in a shit club anyday. I'm doing this Stockhausen thing because it will probably be his last gig and I actually just wanted to get tickets. He's played live a few times recently but only new things and I don't really like them. They are conceptually amazing but I don't really like the music. They are probably too advanced or whatever. (laughs) But this time he is playing his first three electronic pieces. Some musicians who started out in really dodgy places and have been underground all their lives all of a sudden play only in (London concert venue) the South Bank and stuff like that. I think that's just wrong.

You are also known to play in the living rooms of other peoples houses.

Yeah, I have played in people's houses. Last month we got an email from this bloke who said: „my grandmother's died and I inherited lots of money“. So we thought that sounds cool and went over with a massive tour bus. Those are actually my favourite gigs: a mixture of mates and a random number of people from the street. I'm also playing at a wedding reception soon and just recently this girl asked me if I would like to play gabba at her graduation party in art history. I said: „yeah totally!“ As long as it's in London and I have the time I like to do these things.

Would you also play at this restaurant if they'd ask you?

Yeah. Definitely.

What do you like about gabba music?

I'm well into the aggression kind of thing. But I usually don't like it when it's all distorted. I like controlled aggression. I think it's much more effective. If someone is just turning the gain right up on the mixer it's not really that scary. But things like the new stuff from Squarepusher I find them more disturbing because it's just so fucking off his head. But it's not even distorted at all, it's totally crisp. But the intensity is much bigger. You feel their mind, their motivation behind it and that's so much more brutal. That's the difference between a mad man who's just gone mad in a shopping centre using his knife and a serial killer who is really cold and calculating. The serial killer is loads more scary.

What does Warp Records mean to you these days?

(laughing). Not a lot. The difference between them and any other record company is getting smaller and smaller which is why I'm not going to release any more records on Warp. One single maybe but I doubt it. I have to stop them all the time. I did a promo for the album and they wanted to release it as a single. If've got to constantly make sure that they don't push me too far.

Isn't there a personal bond between you and the people who work there?

Sort of. But I don't know most of the people working there now. I was more friends with Rob (Mitchell, Warp founder) and he is very ill now and he doesn't really run Warp. I like Steve (Beckett, Warp founder) but I've never really been best mates with him.

Why do you release your new double album „Drukqs“ on Warp?

Eh, that's quite a good question. I'm sort of contractually obliged to release with them. I've got no problem with them at all, so it's not a big deal. At the same time me and Squarepusher are starting up our own label. I released those acid mixes („2 Remixes by AFX“, MEN1). That's our first release.

Is this new label a Rephlex sublabel?

No, it's just me and Tom (Jenkinson, Squarepusher) but Rephlex are going to help bits and bops to do it. But it'll be mainly run by me and Tom.

Why do you want another label?

Mainly because Tom's got a real problem being on a label where there's other artists he hates. He hates everything on Warp. He doesn't like Autechre, he doesn't like, mmh, I don't know. He likes the old things. „LFO“ is probably the last record he liked (laughs). He doesn't like to carry everyone along. I don't mind being on a label where there's shit people. I don't like that music on Warp either. And I'm aware that they benefit from what you do. They're like „Oh, we're on Warp“ and people take notice of that and then they buy their records and stuff. But it doesn't bother me as much as Tom. But because he's a good mate I understand what he's saying. So we prefer to do it ourselves because it's more pure. If it was up to me „Drukqs“ would be on Rephlex but I contractually have to give it to Warp.

When you started working with Warp you signed a six album deal, didn't you?

I was supposed to give them two or three more albums – I can't remember. Before I gave them this album I said to them: „If I give you another album I have to be not be signed to another label.“ (laughs). I thought they were just going to go: „No way! We're going to sue you.“

What does that mean?

I hadn't give them a record for like three years. And I said to them: „Alright I'll give you like a double album but you have let me do my own label afterwards.“ And they just said „Yes!“ I tried to do it with Warner Brothers (Aphex Twins record company in the US and Japan) as well but they are more hard to convince. I said like: „I want to do

Aphex Twin on Rephlex“. And they were just going like: „No way, we’ve bought you, we own you.“ It was going back and forth. I was going: „If you don’t say yes, you will never get anything.“ And then they were like: „Well ok, then we won’t get anything.“ I’m allowed to use AFX on Rephlex so I’ll just have to go back to that.

Is the name Aphex Twin important to you?

It is really. I mean I could just use other names but I wanted to do Aphex Twin and then just do like very experimental stuff. There are lots of people who are going to buy my (Aphex Twin) album who are not really into my stuff at all, I reckon. And I’m quite into the idea of them buying something very experimental.

The 30 tracks from „Drukqs“ have already come up on the internet. Does that bother you?

I think it does it good anyway being on the internet. Because if you make an album that people like then it probably does you justice. People will go: „Yeah, download it“ and it’ll spread by word of mouth. It will probably make you sell more I reckon. I’m not sure if that’s true, I heard when Napster came out CD sales went up, apparently.

You’ve said in the past that you don’t care about many records you sell.

Well, with this one I want to sell as many as possible. I want to really rinse it. It will be the last promoted thing I do for Warp. I just want to rinse it for the last one basically. Not in terms of music but in terms of promotion.

Ok, you want to sell as many records as possible but you won’t release a single, there will be no video, you won’t have photos of you taken, you are only giving three interviews worldwide and you are not going on tour. Is that what you mean by promotion?

(laughing) I’ve made a few compromises. With the CD it’s just in a normal case and it’s gonna to be really cheap. If it was up to me I’d do it in really nicely designed digi-pack and stuff. But it would cost a bit more and you would lose lots of money. Little things like that. Also if it would be up to me I wouldn’t do any interviews at all, I wouldn’t do any promotional gigs. To me doing a little bit is as much effort as I’m going to make.

You’ve mentioned before that there might be a new single in addition to the album coming out.

I’m hinking of doing an extra single with a twisted Cunningham video. But I probably won’t do it and if I will it won’t come out for another six months. I really enjoyed working with Chris (Cunningham, director) on „Come To Daddy“ and „Windowlicker“ and I would like to do it again. It’s not my favourite thing to do, I’d rather just sit

at home doing new tracks. Warp want to do it because they just got dollars in their eyes. But I had a really good idea for a track that Chris would really like.

Why do you compromise at all?

Because it’s the last thing. For the next one I won’t have to do anything. So I just might as well do a little bit of work. The other reason is that I reckon that with this album I will have reached a maximum audience that I’d be happy with. I think I will have exposed myself to enough people. That’ll be enough for me. Then I can afford for years not to do any promotion.

Don’t you think that you’ve been in a situation like this at least since „Windowlicker“ came out two years ago?

Yeah, maybe. But I just reckon that it needs one more little thing. One more little push. I stopped Warp from doing it too much. I didn’t want to do a kind of Blitz, because they wanted to a really big things. And I’ve been pushing it back a bit.

Why is the album coming out now, five years after your last album „Richard D. James“?

(laughing) The reason I release this actually is that I lost one of those mp3 players and I had 282 unreleased tracks of mine on it and 80 unreleased Squarepusher tracks and I left it on a plane. I was with Grant (Wilson-Claridge, Rephlex owner) on a flight to Scotland to do a gig about four months ago. I’ve had the mp3s for like six months and he was laughing at me saying „Are you going to lose that?“ and I was like „I’m never going to lose this!“. And then five minutes later I left it on the plane.

Didn’t you have a copy of the music on your hard-disc?

Oh, I didn’t lose anything. I have the copies. I think I would’ve committed suicide if I’ve lost the masters. Since then I’ve been keeping my eyes peeled on the internet. I thought that they would appear somewhere in about five seconds. I had written „Aphex Twin – Unreleased Tracks“ on it! (laughs). If they’d started to put the tracks on the internet I’d be round their house – wherever it would be in the world – and get my fucking things back. But probably an air stewardness nicked it off the plane and they looked about 35 and they were probably into Bryan Adams or something like that. And if they would’ve heard it they would’ve probaly just deleted it. If a fan would have got it I wouldn’t mind at all. It’d be a very nice present for someone to get it. I’d like that as long as they wouldn’t put it on the internet and destroy my earnings for like the next ten years. I told Tom (Jenkinson) very quickly but I think he didn’t listen to what I said. (laughs) So that’s why I wanted to put out as many tracks as

possible as soon as possible. I was gonna stick out four cds but it would've just been overkill and it would have been too much work. A double is already a headfuck – just to get everything right, the artwork, the mastering, the cutting and all that.

„Richard D James“ was not much longer than half an hour. When it came out you said that „nobody listens to more than 30 minutes anyway“.
(laughing). Yeah, but mp3s weren't around back then and I didn't know that I was going to own a device that could have all my tracks on it and that I was then going to lose it.

Do you think that people can fully appreciate a double cd of yours?

You could listen to all of it in one go but I think you'd be dead if you did.

So the only real reason why you are putting an album out now is because you wanted to officially release as many tracks as possible before they get around unofficially?

Yeah, pretty much. It's kind of like an mp3 album really. I don't reckon that many people will do it, but the way I listen to music now is that I buy a CD, put it on the computer and just take the tracks I want anyway. I'd hope that people would do the same with this CD.

Why would you mind somebody putting your unreleased tracks on the internet?

Because then I won't be able to earn any money off it. It would just fuck me off, basically.

Why would you mind not earning any money with it?

Because that's the only reason why I release music.

You've been previously thinking of putting out a DAT with four hours of your music for free, with no copyright on the recordings. Have you changed your mind?

(laughing) Yeah, it's a bit of a contradiction, I think. But if you gonna bother to release some things you may as well rinse it to the maximum. It depends on the tracks I reckon because with other things I don't care what happens to them. When I said that I was gonna release a DAT of four hours on it I meant older tracks that I wouldn't ever really release on an album. In that situation I wouldn't have really cared whereas the ones I lost were all new ones, none of them were more than two years old.

Apparently Mixmaster Morris recently told you that he found a CD for two pounds in Moscow that had all your tracks as mp3 files on it.

It's going to get even stupider. You are going to get a DVD with mp3s of „Electronica 95-2000“ or

something like that. You can probably get 100 albums on a DVD that way. You could get the Warp or Rephlex back catalog on a DVD.

Do the tracks on the album sound new to you?

Not really. A lot of them are quite old-style sounding, I reckon. I've done loads of tracks which are really new in style and which don't sound like anything else but I didn't want to release those tracks. What I found is that if you release something that's really new ideas then everyone just copies that very quickly and then it becomes very old, whereas if you make things in an old style then you know how it's going to age. I've made tracks before which are really fresh and then loads of people copy it and that just ruins it.

One thing one could always rely on when a new Aphex Twin album came out, was that you were going to be surprised. At least that was the case until „Richard D James“. If you've heard the 12“ „Hangable Autobulb“ before you would have got a pretty good idea for the sound of „Richard D. James“. With „Drukqs“ it mostly seems to be more of the same.

In some ways that's true. But they are not really the same as before. Style-wise they are the same but not depth-wise. I haven't done something in so much detail before. There's about a hundred times more details than in older ones. There's maybe only one track, number seven („Bbydhyonchord“), that is slightly different, different kind of beat or whatever. And I've done loads of stuff like that and I just don't want to release it.

How old are the tracks on the album?

They range from seven or eight years until a few months ago. But most of them are new. The last one I did is also the last one on the album, „Nanou2“.

On the cover of „Drukqs“ there's a photo of the inside of a piano. And on the album you've included quite a few piano pieces.

I've loved pianos since I was little. The one I used to have as a child got woodworm and my mum had to sell it because the worms were eating all the wood in the house and I was really upset. A year and a half ago I bought a new piano, it's a midi-controlled one from Yamaha. They usually have them in hotels where the keys all plat themselves. People with too much money own them (laughs). That bloke from Take That, Gary Balow has got one. He's got a white one though and I wouldn't get a white one. I was going to have four of them all linked together for live shows.

This is the first time that you've recorded the piano for a record, isn't it?

No, I haven't really done piano tracks before. I thought that I could keep my piano for a few more years and then release stuff and it's going to be loads more accomplished. But I like to put things out early and it's my first effort.

Some of the tracks sound very simple on others it seems as if you have prepared the piano.

Yeah. A lot of the tracks are modified. I've prepared the strings. I use screws and nails and bits of rubber, I've made lots of little things so that you can change the harmonics of the strings. When I bought this piano, because it was really expensive, I thought I am going going to break it straight away if I'd started to take it apart. So for one year I just did very normal piano tracks and then after one year I started to take it apart. I've also done some really complicated ones, sort of electronic versions, which are really programmed. But I didn't put any of these on the album because I wanted to put out the really simple ones first. My favourite piano tracks are really simple ones. I don't like it when they are flamboyant. Satie for example is my favourite piano composer. His tracks are deceptively simple, he's not wasting any notes anywhere.

You've already played around with a prepared piano as a child. But did the work John Cage (classical composer who was know for his prepared piano pieces) have any influence on you getting back to the piano?

I totally know all his stuff and I probably got the idea from him to do the newer things. But when I was younger I used to only record the string sounds anyway. If you've got an inquisitive mind and someone gives you a piano then you just naturally gonna take the back off and start fucking around with the strings. It's probably not an amazing idea of John Cage. I've listened to loads of his piano stuff and I don't like any of it. There's only like one track that's really really nice, although I can't remember what it's called. But most of the are just these random things that don't have any emotion in them at all.

What is the meaning of „Drukqs“ – the title of your new album?

I'll leave it to the people to make their own mind up. But I would say that it doesn't mean „drug“. Everyone is like „Oh, it's ‚drugs‘ or ‚drug use‘“ or anything but it's not. It does actually mean something and I really wanted to call it that but I don't want to tell.

Is that also the case with track titles?

Yes. Many of the titles are made up or Celtic. I know some of the words just from living in Cornwall (where Richard James grew up). A lot of them are just made up from either Gaelic or Welsh or some mishmash.

Do you think a lot about naming the tracks?

It depends. I've made some of them while I wrote the track, others were first untitled and then I've made up the titles afterwards. You can put out untitled tracks but it's just a headache for publishers or when people play your tracks on the TV or the radio. They get pissed off and you'll never get the money either. But I wanted to make the tracks completely unpronounceable. (laughs)

How did you choose the tracks that made it on the album?

People always ask me „why don't you put out this or that track“. But it takes like an hour or so to get through one Dat and I've got hundreds and hundreds of DATs. And by the time I would've gone through ten I would have forgotten which ones were good and stuff. You can't remember all this. So it's just impossible to compile an album. I just have to select a certain amount of tapes to go through and then do it from there. But I can't to a proper compilation of all my music.

Is the order of the tracks important to you?

It is and I spent ages getting it right. I don't usually spend so much time doing it but I did for this one. It's like a journey, it's like a musical life diary. It's in order of personal events as well. One track in the middle for example is „Mt Saint Michel + Saint Michaels mount“ and that's my summer holiday track. It did that track on a laptop in France while travelling around. Other tracks I've done in Wales or in a car and stuff like that. A lot of people are doing this these days and I really like this. With a laptop music is becoming more like folk music again. You can do it so quickly and you don't have to rely on the studio any longer, which is not a very realistic selection of your life.

It has made it easier for you to catch certain moods and atmosphere.

Yes, and I'm definitely better at it than I used to be. I hope my music has become more personal over the years. No, I definitely think it has. You lose your naivety when you get older and you can't really get back to that but I think I'm better at expressing myself in music than I used to be.

Is it easy for you to do come up with new ideas?

Yes, it's really easy.

The last obvious outside influence on your music were probably breakbeats and jungle.

I just really love it. It's really exciting and it comes from early rave music and there's no one that can do it anymore. That music was like a fairground ride but no one seems to be doing it at the moment. Some people try to but they are never as good as the hardcore stuff that was made by people

who were totally off their faces on E. I haven't heard any buzzed up music that really excites me. I listen to shitloads of music on the internet and thousands of demos by unsigned artists and the only person that I have heard with that kind of energy is Bogdan (Raczynski, Rephlex artist). But even he seems to have gone a bit disillusioned and doesn't really want to do it any longer, unfortunately.

Do you find interesting music on demo tapes that are being sent to you?

No, actually you never find good music that way. The stuff that people send us is always really generic. If I want to find something new it's not going to be through Rephlex's post box.

People are sending stuff to Rephlex because they think that it would fit on the label but that's not the stuff that you want.

Exactly. It's the opposite and I always tell people that. I actually find lots of good stuff in mp3.com. I'd wish everyone would use mp3.com, it would be brilliant! You search for the „sounds like“ basically and then you just pick things that are obscure, that way you can get good stuff. If I search there I don't search for „Aphex Twin“ because that's bad, instead you look for something that's really obscure like „Venetian Snares“. Because if anyone thinks that they sound like „Venetian Snares“ then you know that they are going to be a bit more eclectic. I also like to search for gabba but unfortunately there's not very much gabba on mp3.com.

„Windowlicker“ sold about 300,000 records. Do you have the feeling that the music you do is now more acceptable than it used to be?

People are getting more used to listen to weird shit. More and more people listen to noise music. More inharmonic sounds are being accepted. It's lush I reckon.

Your music has been hugely influential. One of the more prominent musicians who've said that they've been inspired by your records are Radiohead? Did you listen to any of their last two album „Kid A“ and „Amnesiac“?

I don't like them. I heard maybe five or six tracks and I thought they sounded really really cheesy.

Cheesy?

Yeah, really obvious and cheesy. I mean I'm just comparing it to my favourite music and I think it's terrible compared to that. But compared to all the shit boring R&B tracks it's probably alright. Compared to those teen punk sort of bands or whatever they are supposed to be called, who think that they are really anarchic and stuff like that, they are probably amazing. If you're only exposed to that kind of stuff and then Radiohead come

along you will probably think that they are geniuses.

Don't you think it's a good thing if only one percent listen of the people who buy a Radiohead album will then go and check out stuff like Rephlex?

I'm not that bothered honestly. I'm quite happy with the state of things at the moment. I like there to be shit music around. I like people to not be informed of what's around. If too many people would listen to what I listen to I wouldn't like it. I always wanted to be seen as being different. I like to like things that other people don't. If Merzbow was in the charts I wouldn't like it anymore. Some people don't wanna do what everyone else is doing and some people do. It's very simple. (laughs)

Are there sounds that you can't bear to listen to?

The only thing I can't really listen to for a long period of time are high frequencies. I've got a few electro-acoustic tracks that are all very high frequencies and I find that very hard to listen to. But I've never found noise very hard to listen to. Even when I was young I didn't have a problem listening to noise.

When your first records like „Analogue Bubblebath“ came out ten years ago you were considered a perfect example for the „faceless“ techno artist who disappeared behind his equipment. Now, next to Moby and Keith Flint from The Prodigy you have probably the most well-known face in electronic music.

(Laughing). Yeah, but in a sort of different way. I did it because the thing in techno you weren't supposed to do was to be recognized and stuff. The sort of unwritten rule was that you can't put your face on the sleeve. It has to be like a circuit board or something. Therefore I put my face on the sleeve (first on 95's „I Care Because You Do“ album). That's why I originally did it. But then I got carried away.

Do you think you got carried away too far?

(Laughing). No. Who cares? I don't care. I mean I would if I'd got recognized in the street by people. If I did I would think I got carried away too much.

Do you have the feeling that after „Come To Daddy“ and „Windowlicker“ your image has become stronger than your music?

Maybe in some ways. But I reckon that only people would recognize me that know my music. If it would be the other way around I wouldn't like it. The other day „The Face“ wanted to do a cover with me and I was going „No way!“ but then I thought I'll do it if I can't be recognized. But then they didn't do it anyway and I was quite glad. I'm just a little away from it being too much. I would

know because I'm the one who gets recognized. And I only get recognized at my gigs, in record shops and in clubs and only in clubs if someone like Squarepusher is playing. I wouldn't get recognized in the Ministry of Sound or places like that.

You chose not to put your face on the cover of your records this time.

Yeah, and it's totally on purpose. And I haven't done any more videos and it's not my fault that they keep playing the same videos over and over again on MTV or where ever. I don't like to be forced down people's throats the way other famous people are. I don't want to walk in a shop and people go „Oh no, not that fucking twat!“.

„Windowlicker“ and the images attached to it will probably be the reason for many people to go out and buy your new album.

That does happen and it is a bit gutting. But the thing is that now most of the people who like my music started with „Windowlicker“ or „Come To Daddy“. But then they find out what I've done before. If they only like „Windowlicker“ because of the video and that more commercial edge then they are going to throw the new album in the bin when they listen to it. That's why I didn't do another „Windowlicker“. I'm not a commercial artist but I can be if I want to.

Speaking of more commercial artists – both Madonna and Björk have asked to work with you, haven't they?

(laughing) Yeah, off course! They all want it!

What is the difference between the two of them?

Björk's loads more interesting. A million times more interesting – personality wise. Madonna is pretty normal, she is like a very famous „Sharon“.

They seem to have a similar interest in picking young and upcoming artists to work with.

Yeah, it's pretty similar. I can't guarantee it because I don't know her so well, but knowing Björk though, I think she does it out of (pauses)... Björk is like a little girl in a sweets shop. She's like: „Oh I love this, I love this! I want this, I want this!“ Madonna is more like brutal. Like: „These are trendy, I can keep myself young and modern if I use them!“ You know? Björk got that as well obviously but her motivation is that she just loves the musicians and would love to work with them. She picks people that aren't really that famous.

But Madonna was the first of them, for example, to work with Chris Cunningham.

She's got a reasonably open mind, I'd reckon. I was actually really into doing tracks with her. But I just didn't want to do it then. She was just too famous. If I did it everybody would just be like „Oh yeah,

you're the person she did a track with“. You're whole career would just disappear. Everything that you'd work for before would disappear.

Wouldn't it have been interesting to do something with her on your terms? For example for Rephlex?

I was going to but she was more into me doing a track for her album or a single and I didn't really want to do that. I was thinking of a white label on Rephlex and I actually wrote a track for her and I had all these ideas: The track is this fucked acid thing and I wanted her to just do stupid noises, there wasn't to be any singing on the track. Just like grunts and moans and pig impersonations. I really wanted to hear Madonna doing a pig impersonation! (laughs) She was sort of into it. Maybe she even would have done it but at the time she was more concerned with her next single. I wasn't really that bothered and I'm sure she wasn't bothered that much either. She'd just be like „Yeah, there's plenty more fish in the sea!“

When was that?

Last year. I actually spoke to her quite a bit. I told her about my love life and stuff. I know she fancied Chris (Cunningham) and she wanted to shag him and he didn't fancy her at all. (laughs) I think she was a bit pissed off that she couldn't have him. Usually she can probably get everyone that she wants. She also came to one of our Rephlex nights in London. But it was very intimidating because she had her bodyguards with her. I was going like: „You don't need those in here because no one is going to hassle you.“ The bodyguards weren't always around her but they were always watching and you can't really have a conversation like that.

Did you have any other pop star visitors at your parties?

Kylie (Minogue) came to Rephlex (Rephlex' party night in London) as well. She knows (Warp DJ) Russell Haswell and he really likes her and was trying to shag her for ages. So she came to our party and all my mates were trying to get off with her. And one of my mates who usually only gets off with dodgy birds was dancing with her and feeling her arse up and she was really into it. And this other friend of mine was videoing everything. It was wicked. She also did the lights for about an hour while I was djing.

Why did you turn down Björk?

Björk was also on Tom's (Jenkinson) case. She's been on everyone's case. She also did some stuff with Bogdan (Raczynski). He was going to do a track on her album and they didn't use it. They were quite sort of crafty and business. They just wanted to give him ten percent but I think if you work with someone you should always get fifty percent. It doesn't seem very respectful. But she

doesn't get involved with that stuff she has people doing it for her in case it goes wrong. It's a bit sad in some ways. I mean she wants to work with the people she likes but at the same time she's really obsessed with „this is the newest thing“, you know „goldfish memory“. For some reason people always think that the best things are the most recent things.

I'm actually quite surprised that Björk wanted to work with you. I would have thought that you are too established for her.

(laughing) Yeah, that's what I thought. I mean she's also worked with other old people like that string quartet and stuff like that. And they are not famous. If I really wanted to work with her I could make it happen but I'm not really that bothered. If I'd work with singers I'd rather work with someone no one has ever heard of. Like opera singers or things like that.

Wouldn't you be interested in doing something with Björk the musician rather than with only Björk the vocalist.

Oh yeah. I always tell her that anyway. I always say to her: „I don't understand why you get all these people you should just do it by yourself.“ And she's been trying. She got her laptop and everything. Maybe she will do that when she's really old and everyone thinks that she's not pretty anymore. I think then she'll have to do it. Because then she won't be able to get all the little techno boys to work with her because they will be like „Björk? Oh yeah, you mean that old woman. I'm not going to work for her!“ At the moment she can just phone them up, talk some Icelandic and they will be willing to do everything. ... With Björk she's really business when it comes to things like that. When you deal with Björk she's like: „Ok, I'm going to fax you the details and you are going to send me that...“ If I'm going to do a track with someone I'd have to be their friend. I'd have to spend some time with them and you'd have to come around my house and drink fifty cups of tea and smoke some spliffs and get pissed. You can't just send me the track. That's really cold and I think she didn't really understand because she has done it that way all her life. I think she has forgotten how to relate to people.

But you have worked with musicians as well in the past that you didn't really know.

Yeah, but only with remixes and that was just to get some money. And that's not really like working with someone either.

You've mentioned in the past that the only to people you'd really like to work with were Tom Jenkinson and Luke Vibert. Are you still planning to do more with them?

Tom's difficult because he's insane. He just disappears. I just think he's gone mad at the moment actually. So I haven't spoke to him for a month. We haven't even worked out the name of our record label. MEN is only the catalog number. He just cancelled his US tour. His brain is switching all the time. He says one thing and does another. He'd totally do your head in as a friend because he would be around your house every day and then you wouldn't see him for three months and neither will anyone else. At the moment I'm actually quite worried about him because I don't know anyone who spoke to him recently.

But do you still want to make music together?

Yeah, but we haven't been using the same equipment and we're trying to get on the same programme so it's been impossible to do some tracks together. But in the next six months me, Tom and Luke will do tracks on the internet together from our houses.

You seem to spend a lot of time online.

I bought like 3000 CDs in the last 12 months – all online. I got all the mailorder companies like Amazon in one email folder. I'll just get the CD put it on the laptop get two tracks off an album and then sell the CD. (laughs) I phoned up a record shop and they just send someone round to get the CDs, so I don't even have to take them to the shop.

What are the last three CDs that you bought?

Lou Reed's „Metal Machine Music“, some Jungle CD and a Kraftwerk bootleg.

Do you get on well with your postman?

They fucking hate me. They really hate me! They never ring my door bell, they always put the cards through. There are always boxes of shit so I have to go down to the post office to get them all the time.

Are there any new artists that you'd like to recommend?

My favourite artist at the moment is Ceephax Acid Crew. It's Andy Jenkinson, Tom Jenkinson's brother. It's fucking wicked. It's funny because if people ask me „So, who's going to be the next big star of electronic music?“, I always say him. But he only does a new track like every three months or so. I'm his biggest fan and I'm always raving upfront at all his gigs.

Is it true that you've recorded material in the past that has come out under other people's names?

I've done other tracks for commercial things but no one has ever worked them out. Oh and Squarepusher, that's me. (laughs)