

Liz Evans: Can you tell me more about the sonic landscape that is tētēma?

Anthony Pateras: When writing the songs I wanted somehow to create, tabula rasa, a kind of otherness. A mysterious, intangible, compelling, yet somehow very physical and close otherness. Through this, I focused on elemental sonic aspects of rhythm and timbre, which is very much a Xenakis-inspired approach to composition... some of our record for me was trying to get some of those late 20th century compositional approaches to somehow function in a radicalisation of the song form. The orchestration itself was very much about electro-acoustic hybrid - taking recognisable instrumental forces into a hallucinatory context via their juxtaposition with rarified electronic resources...then the vocals came and framed this landscape in a tangible way, and I think that's how the white heat of the music is generated...

LE: And the ideas around the 'murder of place' (Geocide) and 'the hell of now'?

AP: The murder of place is very much inspired by the Paul Virilio's ideas around geocide. Without wanting to be reductive: the eradication of urban space to preference pure capital. In fact, the 2nd track on the album is an homage to his extensive interview with Sylvere Lotringer, *Pure War*, whom I ended up actually working on a film about Artaud's trip to Ireland in the 30's to return the staff of St Patrick.

The de-realization of our everyday lives via technology is something I became very focused on while making this music, and I guess I was striving with Mike to find a way to articulate that sonically - to create a space where some kind of commentary on that could exist, without being didactic or preachy. Our song *The Hell of Now* somehow relates to this, but that is a much more straightforward expression of frustration...for me though, the present is great way to radicalise in some ways, and change is always painful. The thing is, right now, things are going so fast the change results in a kind of oppressive homeostasis, everyone is so distorted by speed and the resulting scrambling solipsism that results seems magnified and intensified somehow...

LE: How much is *Geocidal* a response to digitalized culture, both good and bad, in terms of the possibilities and also what's been shut down?

AP: *Geocidal* could not have existed without digital technology - the whole thing was composed via the internet, all the travel I did during the making of the record would not be possible in past eras. Technology avails access to everybody in the wealthy western world, myself included, so I'm not going to pretend that I don't benefit from that.

Certainly, some music software enables compositional techniques that were previously either very expensive or impossible, however, I think music software for the large part, is about making money, not about providing useful creative tools for composers. It's not developed for us, it's somehow developed to create an industry around the idea of creativity, rather than creativity itself. Especially now, when purposeful obsolescence is

basically built in to create future profit, things are getting pretty cynical. I personally feel you should develop something to the point where it works great, then move on to making something else that works great - not constantly profiting from various versions of the same idea to the point where the innovation and imagination of the original concept is negated for the market.

In terms of what's been 'shut down' when I see most communication, between people who used to talk to each other anyway, mediated through corporate enterprises, I start to wonder - where is this all going? Is this just mass organised distraction so powerful people can operate more stealthily? I feel social media is a way of shutting down conscious thoughts, introspection, analysis, awareness, lucid, personalised and articulate communication...all of things which made being a human great. You can still have all of that of course, but I would argue you have work a lot harder to block out the noise these days. As for selfie sticks...

LE: Thinking of place, I loved your defense of Australian culture in an interview I read on the FNM Followers website. As an ex-Londoner I am pretty familiar with the cultural projection borne by Australia, and how it's been internalised and perpetrated by Australians in particular. Why do you think Australian musicians/artistes continue to overlook the undercurrent of experimentalism and innovation that shapes the culture they are part of?

AP: Well, the musicians and artists I spend time certainly don't do that! Experimentalism in music here goes as far back as Percy Grainger. It's easy to be dismissive of him, given his ultimate capitulation to European tropes, but whichever way you look at it, you can't deny the pioneering undercurrent in his later work with Burnett Cross. Besides, he had the first idea for continuous electronic glissandi on Albert Park Lake in the late 1800s...anyways, I think what you're maybe alluding to is that Australian artists look overseas for validation. I certainly remember feeling like that when I was younger, and admittedly, it was easier to get gigs in Europe for example based on the fact that as Australians, we were somehow 'exotic' (!) That's all over now, of course, and in many ways I'm grateful for growing up in Melbourne precisely because it provided opportunities that would not have been available to me otherwise. I wanted to work on my thing here and then find a way to take it out - I didn't want to graft myself onto an already existing hierarchy - that's not tenable unless you're a great politician, which I'm not. I wanted to cultivate my own practice then see if there was a context for it, not try to bend to an existing context. Australia makes that possible.

LE: Is tētēma, for you, a way of addressing that in some way?

AP: Sound for composers is an extension of the self. tētēma for me provides an opportunity to explore the constantly changing inner landscape I have as a musician and bring it out in different constellations. The record was very much about consolidating my wide-ranging musical interests, regardless of geo-specific context and history, into a powerful, unified sonic statement. Mike does that in a lot of his music - but is perhaps more sensitive to style than I am. I wanted to create a styleless otherworld...whether it

succeeded or not I don't know, I can still listen to the music while preparing for this show so that's a good sign!

LE: Mike Patton has been described as 'predictably weird'. (I first met Mike when I was a music journalist in the early 1990s, on tour with FNM in the US and then in Europe, and later with Mr Bungle... I remember I helped him buy a pickled baby from a taxidermist in London. He took it on tour with L7, and it turned black on the bus. So that was pretty weird. But actually his refreshing disregard for all things rock starry was probably the weirdest thing for the music press to get their heads around back then....). He's a particularly interesting character, having had mainstream success in the rock business while pursuing entirely individual musical projects, so with this in mind what does Mike bring, personally as well as musically, to tētēma?

AP: Mike is a great example of how important the constant rejuvenation and questioning of approach is in art-making. It's in the contradictory consistency that you can make a life doing this stuff. He is disciplined, free, serious, ridiculous, focused, chaotic all at once, and that's how worthwhile music happens, at least in my experience.

LE: This probably ties in with my first question, but how much do you think our ideas about predictability and weirdness are subjective or collective? And what lies at the intersection?

AP: in the current climate, where the channels on dissemination are becoming increasingly corporatised through things like Clear Channel, Facebook, Snapchat, or whatever the fuck people waste their time on...we are presented this gigantic mirage of options, but on the contrary I feel things are becoming increasingly homogenised and distinctive culture is disappearing, at least in the Western world. I think musicians for the most part are becoming lazier - the software does the tuning, the feel is programmed, the rhythmic nuance is quantised....don't get me wrong, there are great things happening: I just bought 3 great albums today all made in 2016 (solange, death grips, nxworries), but I'm a pedagogue too - I sense, first hand, that attitudes are changing in the majority the younger generation because so much of being alive for them is about being 'LIKED'. Great music isn't about being liked! It's about not giving a fuck and doing your thing with as much discipline, intensity and skill as you can muster! If someone understands it or gets something out of it, great, lucky you, but that shouldn't be the focus. It's becoming more about the network, not the work, and that's the tragedy of the 21st century. Weirdness is simply a lazy signifier to throw at something, it's what people say when they are not open enough to address foreign forms.

LE: I'm curious about the relationship between the specific place of MONA and the space created by your music, and thinking it might be hard to have a better situation than Mona Foma for tētēma's debut. Especially with the theme of 'old as new' this year.... In lots of ways tētēma is completely new, but there are some beautifully old sounds tucked in there too....

AP: Well, I don't believe in rejecting the past totally to create something new. I think creating something new is about elaborating on points of rupture in musical practice and incorporating them within a response to the current situation. You have to remember that standards of music have not changed. There's a huge history of wonderful possibilities across the entire sonoscape. Many people who have tried to make a difference by playing with the code itself, and for me it's always important to try that, because that's the stuff which lasts, and that's the stuff that keeps me going.