



May 25, 2005

## AUSTRALIAN WIRE MUSIC

Post-contact outback Australia is a land that has been divvied up and delineated by wires – wires nailed to fence-posts to mark out properties; wires strung atop poles to deliver power and telecommunications. If you've spent any time driving through it, these wires (and the road under your wheels) are often the only discernable reminders of the European conquest of this sparsely populated continent. (Until, of course, you come across the inevitable roadhouse/internet café in the middle of nowhere.)

So, its somehow appropriate that the two artists who have been most active in exploiting the musical potential of such long-span wires, are both Australian.



First up is [Alan Lamb](#), who records the sounds made by telegraph wires as they vibrate in the wind. He started doing this in the late 80's, after acquiring a property near Fitzgerald National Park in southern Western Australia, that was traversed by these wires. The recordings he made were done by attaching contact mikes to the wires and waiting for the wind to set them in motion. The results are an eerie mix of glacially surging tones and slow-motion laser gun blasts. Here's a [remixed sample](#) from his 1995 CD, [Archival](#)

### Recordings.



Unlike Lamb, who passively records the sounds produced by wires, avant-garde violinist [Jon Rose](#) seeks out continent-spanning barriers like the rabbit proof fence, and hammers and saws tones out of them with help of violin and cello bows. Where Lamb's recordings surge and spike, Rose's rattle and splinter. Here's [a sample](#) recorded on the perimeter fence of a communications site near Alice Springs. Its taken from the CD, [Great Fences of Australia](#) (which was released with a complimentary piece of barbed wire.)

Posted by Warren at [01:20 AM](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

November 10, 2004

## LISTENING TO THE SKY...



With massive solar storms causing the polar aurora to [venture far into temperate skies](#), now seemed like the perfect time to post these sites set up by boffins who use Very-Low-Frequency radio receivers to produce audio portraits of the EMF emissions that seethe through this planet's atmosphere.

Over at NASA, they have an audio stream of sounds picked up by their [VLF receiver in Huntsville, Alabama](#). By and large, they emanate from far off thunderstorms that produce a lovingly categorised array of noises with names likes sferics, tweeks and whistlers. (via [Web Zen](#))

Stephen McGreevy also records low-frequency atmospheric sounds but he heads out into the action;

monitoring the aurora borealis in Northern Alberta, or travelling to RF noise free environments like Death Valley to capture “whistler showers”. He has a wide variety of sound files of recordings from these field trips on [his website](#), and also has [CDs for sale](#).

Posted by Warren at [10:58 PM](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

October 05, 2004

## BROKENHEARTED DRAGONFLIES: INSECT ELECTRONICA FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA



There will no doubt be much better records that come out this year – records that rock your world; that restore your flagging faith in the life-affirming power of music; and so on... But nothing will slap your preconceptions about “music” in the face quite like this new release from Sublime Frequencies....

If you were to listen to it without being told anything about its creators, you might think that it was the latest work by some European or Japanese drone-n-sine-tone electronica artist... Or you might pick that its sourced from field recordings, but conclude that its been heavily processed, sequenced and composed... But its none of these... Supposedly, it’s a series of unprocessed field recordings of swarming insects recorded by Tucker Martine in Thailand, Myanmar and Laos. The title of the album refers to a Burmese folk-story which claims that these are the sounds of the hearts of post-coital male dragonflies bursting from their chests... Something which seems entirely plausible when you hear the "orchestrated" insect shriek crescendos in this excerpt from [Morning Fanfare](#)...

If want more, you can purchase the album from the [Sublime Frequencies](#) website.

Posted by Warren at [11:50 PM](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

July 17, 2004

## THE CONET PROJECT: MINNOW MAULS SHARK IN COPYRIGHT ACTION, REISSUES CLASSIC CD SET



[The Conet Project](#) is a landmark 4 CD set that documents the intriguing phenomena of “numbers stations”- shortwave transmissions of voices endlessly reciting sequences of numbers which apparently served as coded messages for Cold War era spies. It was originally released in the late 90’s and, in 2002, a sizable chunk (1 min 3sec) of one of its recordings ended up in a track on the universally acclaimed album [Yankee Hotel Foxtrot](#) by Wilco. (The name of that album is taken from a Conet Project track which featured a

woman repeating this phrase.) In response, Irdial sued Wilco’s label, WEA, for breach of copyright and, in June this year, they received a healthy settlement from the “infringing” major label.

All of which has [raised a certain amount of ire in online “information-wants-to-be-free” circles](#). After all, how can one claim copyright in recordings taken straight from radio stations?... If you’re in America, it seems you can’t – the simple recording of a pre-existing radio transmission doesn’t have the requisite originality to give rise to copyright. (Although there are still issues of originality arising in the “selection and arrangement” of recorded material.) The case was played out, however, in the UK where the “fixing of a work” in a particular format instantly gives rise to copyright. (There’s an interesting discussion of the issues in the different jurisdictions [here](#).)

The upshot of all this legal activity is that Irdial has apparently used their settlement to reissue the Conet Project, which you can purchase from the die-hard Project fans at [Aquarius Records](#). Unfortunately, it comes with a hefty US\$62 price tag... But if you're not using it for commercial purposes, you don't need to pay that because the otherwise-litigious folk at Irdial offer a [free download of all 4 CDs](#) on their website.

Posted by Warren at [03:34 AM](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

April 26, 2004

## ANTARCTICA BUDAPEST BHUTAN: ONE MINUTE VACATIONS (ORIGINALLY AIRED 8TH SEPT 2003)



*Take a one-minute vacation from the life you are living...*

Since January 2003, professional field recordist Aaron Ximm has curated a web-site called [One-Minute Vacations](#) on which he invites anyone to submit a 60-second mp3 recording of the ambient sounds of a place they have visited. Each week he posts one of these mp3s on the site. The result is vast array of aural snapshots from every corner of the globe; some of which are accompanied by the most amazing stories. To give you a taste, here are the three one-minute-vacations (and their accompanying write-ups) that were featured on the show:

[Elephant Island, Antarctica](#): "I went on a trip with my family, for fun, for about two weeks in February, 2001... The day I made this recording, we were taking a tour of an abandoned research site on Elephant Island. The woman who was singing is a marine biologist in her 50s. She's withered and tough and somewhat shy. But she took us into the oil drum to demonstrate its acoustic qualities, and let a sound come out of her that was so angelic it brought tears to my eyes..." [Jules Bernstein](#)

[Budapest](#): "While walking along Vaci Utca, on the Pest side of Budapest in August of 2001, I encountered an eccentric elderly man singing in tongues and tones while playing what appeared to be homemade stringed instruments. The voice in the background towards the end of the recording was a man attempting to serve as an accomplice in relieving tourists of their Forint (HUF) — or perhaps he was simply a voluntary interpreter." [Shoepal](#)

[Paro, Bhutan](#): "In October of 2001, the town of Paro, Bhutan opened its first Internet cafe. As with any new business venture, this was done with an all-day blessing ceremony. I happened to be in town and was invited to attend. There was a lama and a half dozen monks in the back room, thick incense smoke, drums, flutes, food and drink offerings, and painted scrolls on the walls. At one point they all went to the front of the shop and threw holy rice on the computers." [Brian Romer](#)

Posted by Warren at [11:27 PM](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)