



**“ONE OF THE MOST COLLECTABLE LABELS IN THE WORLD TODAY?”**

WARP RECORDS.

FOR FURTHER EDITORIAL INFO PLEASE CONTACT:

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## IT MUST BE A DRAG RUNNING A RECORD LABEL!!!

Regardless of the music's quality, logistics and industry politics can quickly sap any enthusiasm and before you know it your bedroom's piled high with boxes of unsold discs that you never want to listen to again. Fuss-free new electronica label Ai Records appear to have got it right, though. Since the summer of 1999.

This confident London imprint has released a handful of killer EPs and compilations featuring tracks by unknown producers, quietly making a name for itself as a purveyor of first-class electronics in the mould of Warp, Skam and Plus 8.

This year they've stepped up a gear. If you've ever heard a record by Drexciya, Boards Of Canada, Carl Craig or Richard D James you'll have a good idea of what Ai offer, but when their tracks sound this accomplished, there's little to complain about.

- PIERS MARTIN.

## LABEL PROFILE: FACT MAGAZINE

In the space of barely 18 months, London's Ai records are well into their heavyweight release schedule. Their output is highly diverse and their records already collectable. Tell me more you say! Combining the old and new seems to be part of the Ai character.

All of their artists are releasing music for the first time but seem mindful of the standards of the past. At a time when the electronica scene seems to be almost choking on its tongue, where any one with a computer is making music, standards are everything.

Founded by Steve, Jason and Phil in 1999/2000, the tripos love for vintage Detroit/Transmat material and early Warp/Skam has set the label on a well-bred trajectory. The label's motivation is to keep "making and releasing music that carries on from where electronica was at its best". It seems that they have the perfect consensus of when that period was. Ai's bright technicolour sleeves are currently adorning the windows of record shops around the country but be warned. They don't hang around for long.

- TOM RELLEEN  
FACT MAGAZINE



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"ONE OF THE MOST COLLECTABLE LABELS IN THE WORLD TODAY."

**WARP RECORDS.**

"AI LEAPS TOWARDS THE MAJOR LEAGUE."

**THE FACE.**

Ai RECORDS: SLICK, EMOTIVE AND MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE: ELECTRONIC MUSIC HAS NEVER SOUNDED NOR LOOKED AS SEDUCTIVE AS THIS.

**CLASH MAGAZINE.**

"THEIR OUTPUT IS HUGELY DIVERSE AND THEIR RECORDS ALREADY COLLECTABLE."

**FACT MAGAZINE.**

"THIS LABEL IS SET TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT UK ELECTRONICA LABELS BEFORE TOO LONG." "REAL INNOVATORS LIKE WARP, PLUS 8, TRANSMAT, U.R., AND REPHLEX."

**WWW.BOOMKAT.COM**

"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, A LABEL TO WATCH."

**SMALLFISH RECORDS/LONDON**

"THIS VERY YOUNG LABEL IS ALREADY SHOWING SIGNS OF BRILLIANCE."

**WWW.THEMILKFACTORY.COM**

"COMPARABLE WITH MORR MUSIC OR REPHLEX. ONE TO WATCH."

**SEVEN MAGAZINE**

"AI RECORDS HAS DONE LITTLE WRONG SINCE THEY ENTERED THE WORLD OF MUSIC, AND ALONG WITH LEX THEY ARE ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING LABELS AROUND AT PRESENT."

**RECORDCAMP / NEW YORK.**

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND WATCH THINGS GO MENTAL...

**WWW.BI-WIRE.CO.UK/**

"WILL APPEAL TO EVEN THE MOST JADED OLD CYNIC. PRIMARILY AIMED AT THE HEAD AND HEART RATHER THAN THE FEET."

**DJ MAGAZINE.**

"THIS LABEL HAS GAINED A DEDICATED FOLLOWING AND IS FAST SETTING ITSELF AS THE MOST DESIRABLE, COLLECTABLE AND X-FACTORED LABEL FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SKAM."

**BAKED GOODS/MANCHESTER.**

"SUCH A RESPECTED ELECTRONIC LABEL."

**HOTPRESS.**

AI IS THAT RARE SORT OF ELECTRONIC LABEL: BY DEFYING OR SIMPLY IGNORING MUSICAL GENRES, IT HAS BECOME THE ARBITER OF A CERTAIN SOUND. THIS IMPRINT HAS GARNERED SUCH CRITICAL ACCLAIM-ITS MUSIC RUNS THE GAMUT FROM DEEP, EPIC TECHNO TO WARPED BREAKBEAT, ELECTRO, EXPERIMENTAL NOISE, AND AMBIENT POP. FANS OF GOOD, SOLID ELECTRONIC MUSIC, WHETHER IT BE ON THE DANCEFLOOR OR AT HOME, WILL FIND PLENTY TO LIKE, INDEED LOVE.

**XLR8R.COM**

ALTHOUGH HAVING QUIETLY DEVELOPED IN THE BACKGROUND, AI RECORDS HAVE NEVERTHELESS BECOME, IN THE FIVE YEARS THEY HAVE BEEN OPERATING, A TRULY INNOVATIVE IMPRINT, WITH A SOLID ROSTER. OFTEN COMPARED TO DEFINING ELECTRONIC LABELS SUCH AS WARP, REFLEX OR SKAM, AI RECORDS HAVE GENERATED THEIR OWN BRAND OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC, HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE LATE EIGHTIES/EARLY NINETIES DETROIT AND CHICAGO SCENES.

**MILKFACTORY.COM**

AI.RECORDS IS ONE OF EVERYONE'S FAVORITE NEW LABELS.

**GODBRAIN**

WITH A LABEL STYLE ONE CAN SAVOUR FOR ITS STRONG DANCE DIMENSION AND ITS LUSH SOUNDS

**TEXTURA.ORG**

PROBABLY THE BEST THING COMING FROM THE UK AT THE MOMENT

**CLONE RECORDS**

WELL HOW DO THEM PESKY AI BOTS DO IT. I CANNOT WAIT TO HEAR WHAT IS WAITING FOR US IN THE FUTURE.

**TESSELATE**

## **LABEL PROFILE: CLASH MAGAZINE 2005**

Ai Records: Slick, emotive and more than just a pretty face: electronic music has never sounded nor looked as seductive as this. Ai polish off a chipper year with an impressive flurry of singles which will make your mind dance like Travolta on a cattle prod.

Eminently collectable and with good cause, this London label, now five years old has been steadfastly been furnishing electronic freaks, purists and transpotters with fine musical products through an aggressive release schedule and the creativity of three designers who love exposing unique talent. Label artist Normal aka Jason Smith, who was one of three co-founders explains their driving principle: "Our philosophy is: if a release grabs one persons attention on the label; it goes out. If someone doesn't feel a release then it doesn't go out. I am into my harder, Techno side, Steve is into the more electronic and emotive side and that's why it works and why there's such a diverse range of releases"

The latest series of EPs perfectly encapsulates the ethos of Ai and exemplifies their consequent success. A quartet of varied, high quality electronic releases have found a home together as part of an already coveted series drenched in Icelandic imagery captured by esteemed photographer Dan Holdsworth. Jason explains how it came about: "Two years ago we put a series of EPs out which were by Claro, Normal, Yellotone and Michael Manning – the fluorescent ones. They seemed to work very well as a set, so we thought we'd put out the singles and then put the albums out the following year. That obviously worked so we are doing it again. The idea with the sleeves is to create a sleeve which is very nice, but also works as an entity in itself. Basically there's no type on the front and if you really like it you can put it on your wall as a picture. Packing is very important. All three of us (label owners) are designers so we are always battling against each others sleeves. A lot of people disregard how important packaging is. Obviously working in the majors I get the impression that they are kind of shitting themselves about down loads and they are pumping more and more money into special packaging. Which makes sense."

The first of this latest collection of stunners was Manchester's Yunx who first came to prominence on Skam's '0161' series and who serve up melodic electronica with a crisp edge and patient instrumental passages demanding your full attention. Second out was Jacen Solo who embarks on the same starting point that made label mate Claro Intellecto so unique; positioning himself exactly at the crossroads of Techno and electronica. Dez Williams steps up the weight in the third release as he references Carl Craig but stamps his name all over the recommendation before and the last massive killer dance floor dominator was delivered Confutatis – a seedy Detroitian delver which could flick the switch on any dance floor.

"The secret to our success is the strength of our brand - it's very very strong,' says Jason 'I think a lot of labels around us have got lazy. Every time we do a release people always say: 'that's really really nice, beautifully packaged – I must have that' The music itself stands out from a lot of those around it. And you've got to be passionate about it; if you can't be passionate then why should anybody else be."

The labels biggest name is probably Claro Intellecto whose debut single and LP displayed a massive spectrum of electronic sensibilities with a deft hand subtly pushing his music around his own sonic canvas. 'Neurofibro' was as dextrous an album as anyone could imagine, teeming with finely balanced elements bouncing off each other from start to finish. Equally diverse is the electro-acoustic dream weaver Yellotone whose recent debut - Tar File Junction – is a fabulous fusion of guitars, electronics and several breaths of fresh air. It's a nostalgic journey of sunny riffs, regimented kit rhythms and dislocated basslines which barge in boisterously like a beautiful woman at a busy bar.

As Ai's group of core artists grows so will their horizons next year. To their credit the boys all hold down full time jobs and run Ai as a 'hobby'. Already a taste-making label whose own assurance in their brand is displayed in such productivity, their music is serious enough for the clubs and yet subtle and understated enough for endless hours in the house. Yet another reason why 2004 was an absolute belter for British music and why 2005 is already giving us the eye.



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## AI RECORDS : Q AND A :WWW.AIRECORDS.COM

WELCOME TO THE 1ST OF A SERIES OF RECORD LABEL QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS.

### TESSELATE :WHAT IS THE LABELS BACKGROUND? HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

AI RECORDS FIRST RELEASE APPEARED IN THE SUMMER OF 1999, A 12" EP ENTITLED 'EXPERIMENTS IN COLOUR', IT FEATURED 4 TRACKS BY THE LABELS FOUNDING TRIO OF 'NORMAL' (STEVE HYLAND), 'CELL' (JASON SMITH) AND 'PHYLOM' - NOW RECORDING AS 'FIL' (PHIL PARKER). THIS FIRST RELEASE WAS MET WITH WIDESPREAD ACCLAIM, RECEIVING REVIEWS IN MUSIC MAGAZINES SUCH AS MIXMAG, REVIEWS LIKE THESE HAVE HELPED AND CONTINUE IN HELPING TO ESTABLISH AI AS AN INFLUENTIAL AND NEW DYNAMIC FORCE IN ELECTRONICA. SINCE '99 THE AI CATALOGUE HAS GROWN, AND TO DATE STANDS AT: X1 CD LP 'ESTATE', X1 7"INCH 'SPLIT 7' AND X2 VINYL LP1S 'PRODUCE' AND 'LEISURE' THESE RELEASES FEATURE TRACKS FROM 10 ARTISTS, A VERY DIVERSE MIX AND ALL OF WHOM WERE INITIALLY UNKNOWN IN THE ELECTRONICA SCENE. OUR NEXT RELEASE 'LEISURE.LP' (VINYL ONLY) WHICH SEES IT'S RELEASE THIS FEBRUARY, FEATURES 9 TRACKS FROM 8 ARTISTS (CLARO INTELECTO, CELL, FZV, MICHAEL MANNING, MONTAG,YELLOWTONE AND A GUEST APPEARANCE FROM KONE-R OF UNCHARTED AUDIO) THE TRACKS ON LEISURE WE WANTED TO COMPILER IN SUCH A WAY THAT THERE WAS A DILEBERATE FLOW FROM ELECTRO, HARDER EDGE IDM INTO THE SOFTER, EMOTIONAL SOUNDS OF ELECTRONICA, A RECIPE WE HAD TRIED ON 'PRODUCE AND WHICH WORKED FANTASTICALLY WELL. PEOPLE INVOLVED IN AND AROUND AI HAVE INDICATED TO THAT LEISURE STANDS TO BE OUR STRONGEST OFFERING TO DATE. IT'S A RECORD THAT WE ARE VERY PROUD OF.

### TESSELATE :WHICH OTHER ARTISTS/LABELS ARE YOU INTO? / INSPIRATIONS / INFLUENCES?

BEING COMPRISED OF 3 PARTNERS, AI HAS A VERY DYNAMIC TENSION, EACH OF US A RE PASSIONATE ABOUT ELECTRONIC MUSIC, OUR PERSONAL INFLUENCES INCLUDE AMONGST OTHERS: DERRICK MAY AND THE WHOLE DETROIT/TRANSMAT MOVEMENT , ELECTRO (BOTH IN ITS ORIGINAL SENSE AND THE RECENT OUT POURING OF MODERN ELECTRO, PUNK, HIP HOP , RAVE, JAZZ. WE HAVE A REAL FUSION OF TASTES, MOST IMPORTANTLY FOR US, SO LONG AS IT IS GOOD QUALITY MUSIC WHICH STANDS THE TEST OF TIME AND STILL SOUNDS AS FRESH NOW AS WHEN IT WAS FIRST RELEASED.

### TESSELATE : IF YOU COULD STEAL A FAVOURITE TRACK FROM ANY ARTIST / GROUP FOR AN AI RECORDS RELEASE, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

JASON: SITTING UNDER A TREE / CARL CRAIG WITH SARAH GREGORY - SUCH GORGEOUS TRACK (TIMELESS)

STEVE: TELEPHASIC WORKSHOP / BOC - OPENED MY EYES TO A NEW MUSICAL TERRAIN.

### TESSELATE : WHICH PRINT / ONLINE MAGAZINES / NEWSPAPERS DO YOU REGULARLY READ?

JASON: THE METRO IN THE MORNING CAUSE IT KEEPS ME FROM GOING MAD ON THE TUBE.

STEVE: NEW SCIENTIST - FASCINATED BY ALL THE INVENTIONS AND DISCOVERIES GOING ON ALL AROUND US THAT WE NEVER GET TO HEAR ABOUT.

### WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH THE AI RECORDS LABEL, AND WHERE CAN YOU SEE AI RECORDS IN 5 YEARS?

OUR MAIN HOPE IS TO STILL BE PUTTING OUT EXCELLENT QUALITY MUSIC THAT ULTIMATELY WE'RE INTO, WE HOPE OTHER PEOPLE LIKE IT AS WELL. WE PLAN TO BE AROUND FOR AS LONG AS WE STAY TRUE TO OUR INITIAL IDEAS BEHIND AI RECORDS, MAKING AND RELEASING MUSIC THAT CARRYS ON FROM WHEN ELECTRONICA FOR US WAS AT IT'S BEST. MUSIC FROM A TIME BEFORE THE SCENE FRACTURED AND STARTED BECOMING MORE TECHNICAL AND MATHMATICAL THAN MUSICAL, WE ARE ABOUT MUSIC THAT MOVES YA, MAKES YA THINK (MAYBE) OR EVEN JUST MAKES YOU TAP YER FOOT. OH AND ULTIMATELY OF COURSE PUT AI ON THE GLOBAL ELECTRONICA MAP. WORLD DOMINATION!

### TESSELATE : WHICH ARTIST / GROUP [APART FROM THE AI RECORDS TEAM] IS PRODUCING MUSIC THAT MAKES YOUR HEAD OPEN UP AND LISTEN?

JASON: DIFFICULT TO PIN ANYTHING DOWN AT THE MO AS THEIR IS SUCH A FRACTION OF MUSIC AND IT SEEMS THAT NO ONE LABEL SEEMS TO BE PUTTING OUT GOOD MUSIC CONSISTENTLY. UNLKE IN THE PAST WHERE YOU COULD GO INTO A SHOP AND SAY I'LL HAVE THE NEW ONE ON SUCH A LABEL AND KNOW ITS GONNA BE SHIT HOT. SO I SEEM TO PICK N CHOOSE TO WHAT MOOD I'M IN.

STEVE: I LIKE BUYING ON IMPULSE WHETHER IT'S ELECTRONICA OR WHATEVER. A GOOD REVIEW GOES ALONG WAY BUT I'VE GOT NO FAVOURITES - THOUGH SKAM ALWAYS GETS A CLOSER LOOK.

### TESSELATE : HOW DID YOU GET TOGETHER? AND WHERE AND WHEN DID AI RECORDS BEGIN?

JASON N PHIL MET AT COLLEGE WHILST STUDYING GRAPHIC DESIGN IN WORTHING (BACK IN 1989),THAT'S PRINCIPALLY WHERE IT ALL BEGAN. THEY SET UP A SORT OF DESIGN GROUP TOGETHER CALLED 'AREA 39' AND RAPIDLY CHANGED THE NAME ONCE THEY FOUND OUT SOME JUNGLISTS WERE CALLED THE SAME, TO BECOME AREA INDUSTRIES (CIRCA '92). LATER THEY SPLIT THINGS UP A BIT, NOW THERE'S THE DESIGN DIVISION, 'DESIGN.AI', A MERCHANDISING DIVISION (T-SHIRTS ? RUN BY JASON) 'AREA INFO' AND OF COURSE THE LABEL 'AI RECORDS'. STEVE MET PHIL AT FARNHAM COLLEGE WHILST STUDYING A DEGREE IN GRAPHIC DESIGN, AND BEGAN PUTTING TRACKS DOWN AROUND '97. TESSELATE : WHEN YOU RELEASED 'EXPERIMENTS IN COLOUR' IN 1999, DID IT MAINLY GO OUT TO FRIENDS? OR DID IT MAKE ITS WAY INTO ANY SHOPS? WE SELF DISTRIBUTED EXPERIMENTS IN RECORD SHOPS IN CENTRAL LONDON AROUND THE SOHO AREA (HARD WORK). IT WAS ALSO GIVEN TO DJ FRIENDS WE KNOW IN THE BUSINESS. THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS WALKING INTO 'MASS' IN BRIXTON, JIM MASTERS WAS DJ'ING, JASON HANDED HIM A COPY OF 'EXPERIMENTS' AND HE DROPPED NORMAL'S 'NEPTUNE SQUARE', THERE AND THEN. WATCHING THE REACTION OF OUR FRIENDS AND THE CROWD GATHERED GAVE US THE BIGGEST BUZZ AND MADE UP OUR MINDS, WE HAD TO DO MORE. AI WAS REALLY FORMED AS A LABEL AT THIS POINT.

### TESSELATE : COULD YOU SEE AIRECORDS BROADENING INTO ANY OTHER GENRES SUCH AS FILM / VIDEO, OR RELEASING DVD'S TO ACCOMPANY RELEASE SUCH AS WARP AND SKAM?

DEFO. WE ARE VERY VISUAL (BEING 3 GRAPHIC DESIGNERS). WE KEEP PUSHING THINGS ESPECIALLY AROUND OUR LIVE SHOWS, VIDEO PLAYS CENTRAL ROLE IN THIS,WE HAVE PLANS TO REALLY UP THE LIVE VISUAL STAKES AND ARE VERY INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH VIDEO ARTISTS TO HELP ACHIEVE OUR GOALS (CREATING VIDEOS FOR OUR TRACKS, AND LIVE SHOWS).

### TESSELATE :WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 5 ALBUMS OF ALL TIME? [ANY GENRE]

NIGHT AND DAY / RETROACTIVE / 1989, MR FINGERS / AMNESIA / 1988, B12 / RADIO INTERVIEW LT. EDITION CASSETTE (PRELUDE PART1) / 1993  
BLACK DOG / BYTES / WARP RECORDS 1993, AUTECHRE / INCUNABULA / WARP RECORDS 1993

### TESSELATE : HOW DOES THE AI RECORDS PROCESS FOR SELECTING TRACKS FOR RELEASES WORK?

IF IT'S GOOD WE WILL PUT IT OUT. WE ALWAYS SEPARATELY LISTEN TO THE TRACKS THEN MEET N DISCUSS THE RESULTS, AND COMPILE THE RELEASES THAT WAY.

### TESSELATE : IS YOUR INTEREST JUST IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC OR DO YOU HAVE A BROADER TASTE?

JASON: MY MUSIC TASTE HAS GROWN WITH THE MUSIC BUT ELECTRO STILL STAYS WITH ME.

STEVE: I LOVE IT ALL. EXCEPT CELINE DION.