

DAZED & CONFUSED

VOL III/18

ATOMS FOR PEACE MARGIELA DINOS CHAPMAN

LOST GENERATION CLAMS CASINO

DAZED

& CONFUSED

THOM
YORKER
RADIOACTIVETHE
NUCLEUS
OF
ATOMS
FOR
PEACEBehind the mask
of MargielaDinos Chapman's
beastly beatsJobs for life?
The UK's lost
generationplus
Clams Casino
vs Mykki Ekko
Juergen Teller
Don McCullin
Justin Parker

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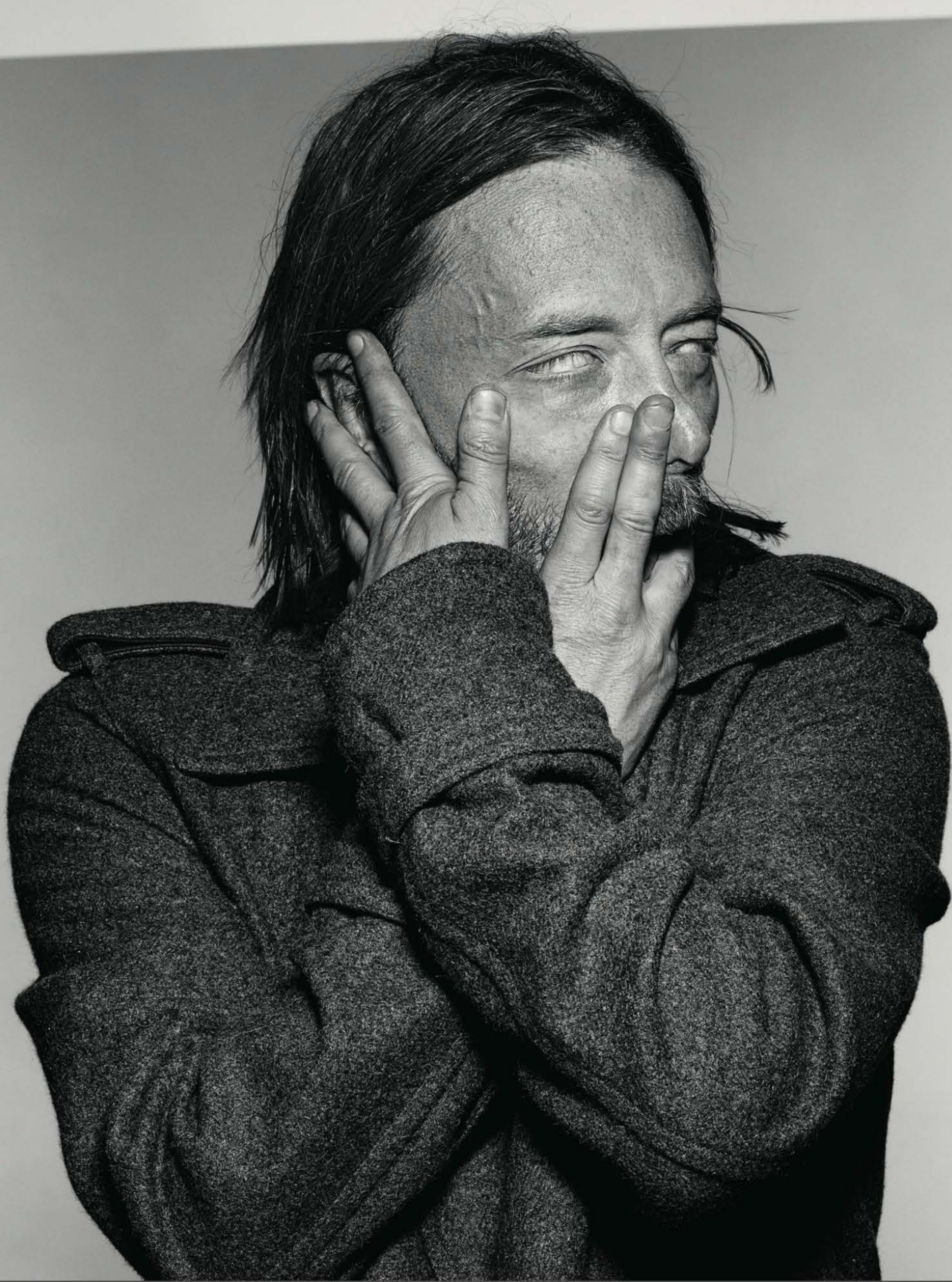
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SPLITTING ATOMS

Splitting Atoms

Anthems of alienation and heartache turned Thom Yorke into the world's most mythologised indie-rock icon. But, as Tim Noakes discovers in this rare interview, these days he'd rather make people dance than cry

photography
Richard Burbridge

styling
Elizabeth Fraser-Bell

It's three days since Thom Yorke flew back home from Australia after completing Radiohead's mammoth *The King of Limbs* world tour. Sitting at a table in the lobby of a quaint 300-year-old hotel to the north of Oxford city centre, he's instantly recognisable but cuts a slight, unassuming figure among the graduates and tourists checking in and out. Dense, greying stubble lines his chin, and long dark-brown hair frames his angular face, curling around his famously asymmetrical eyes.

In the age of PR firewalls, it's a heartening surprise to find him quietly sipping sparkling water next to an open fire in this refurbished relic, rather than locked away in a soulless white suite surrounded by a team of advisers. Not many rock stars would feel comfortable conducting an interview within earshot of the public, let alone one who would rather avoid doing them altogether. Yorke has never liked having his life dissected by others for the sake of selling records. Having shifted in excess of 30 million albums and been heralded as one of the most influential songwriters in history, you can see his point of view. If you want answers, just listen to the lyrics.

When he was last on our cover in 1996, Yorke was riding high on the success of Radiohead's breakthrough second album, *The Bends*. Back then, the self-confessed control-freak cut out the middleman entirely; he sat in a room on his own with a dictaphone and a couple of bottles of wine, got pissed and interviewed himself. What emerged was a fascinating, wilfully schizophrenic portrait of a 27-year-old caught in the heady throes of international fame yet completely disconnected from the person he saw looking back at him in the mirror. A year later, following the massive commercial crossover of *OK Computer*, something inside Yorke "went pop" and he descended into a deep depression, losing faith in everything he and the group stood for. When they emerged again with 2000's *Kid A*, he had persuaded his childhood friends to embrace a radical new approach, replacing guitar lines with abstract synths and drum machines. It alienated much of their indie-rock fanbase, but ultimately proved the key to the band's longevity. They've stuck to the formula ever since.



“When people
rip each
other off
but don’t
add anything
original to
the equation,
it’s painful
because you
hear the
anxiety of
the creator
wanting to
be loved”

with *Amnesiac*, *Hail to the Thief*, *In Rainbows* and *The King of Limbs* solidifying their reputation as one of the few 90s bands who have managed to constantly redefine their musical parameters and stay culturally relevant.

Now 44 years old, Yorke’s insatiable hunger for new forms of expression has led him on a parallel solo quest into the digital realms of the dance-music matrix. The first major manifestation of this was 2006’s *The Eraser*, an album composed entirely on his laptop. Kanye, Pharrell and Lupe Fiasco became so infatuated with the title track that they formed a short lived supergroup and rapped over a remix just for japes. Since then his own re-edits of DOOM, Liars and Major Lazer and collaborations with Flying Lotus, Four Tet and Modeselektor have marked Yorke out as a true EDM renaissance man. He even borrowed Daft Punk’s helmets to DJ at a Halloween party in Hollywood Forever Cemetery, plunging shell-shocked ravers into a pop-culture wormhole that some are still trying to crawl out of.

Next month, almost 20 years to the day since Radiohead’s debut album, *Pablo Honey*, was released, Yorke reveals *Amok* by Atoms for Peace, the first group project he’s undertaken outside of Radiohead. The collective – funky-bass cadet Flea, percussionist Mauro Refosco, drummer Joey Waronker and long-suffering ‘head producer Nigel Godrich – initially formed in 2009 to play *The Eraser* live for a series of American shows. Their musical chemistry was so kinetic that following the tour they decamped to Flea’s Chili compound in LA, got twisted, listened to Fela Kuti, booked three days in a local studio and began embellishing on more of Yorke’s laptop experiments. Feeding the results back into the machine and remixing them over the intervening years, *Amok*’s final nine tracks ingeniously blur the lines between Radiohead’s melancholic rock and the beat-heavy production favoured by today’s generation of bassheads. EDM purists may write it off as a vanity project by a bunch of aging rockers, but that couldn’t be further from the truth: *Amok* is a masterclass in modern songcraft, regardless of genre.

Of course, none of this makes the prospect of actually trying to get the notoriously tempestuous frontman to divulge a deeper understanding of his musical process any less daunting. Fortunately, within a minute of meeting, Yorke gives Dazed a positive indication of today’s mood: “I always crash when I get back from tour. I’m just over it now, so you’re lucky,” he says with a soft, laidback voice, his eyes glinting. “To be honest, if it had been yesterday, you wouldn’t want to have known me. I would have been more like, ‘Get the fuck out of my face.’ But today’s alright. We’re gonna be alright.” Phew.

WELCOME HOME, THOM. HOW HAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OXFORD CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

Oxford doesn’t change much, to be honest. It’s got richer people here now, which is unfortunate. There’s less of the bonkers nutters. Mentally speaking, I think there’s a high proportion of people that are trapped in their own heads in this city. Definitely. My local is full of researchers in all different fields and sometimes I go there and eavesdrop. I love eavesdropping. But these people’s conversations are not normal. They’re all about nuclear physics and mathematics.

DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE AROUND THEM?

Oh yeah! (*laughs*) I wanted to go to St John’s to read English, because that’s what everybody did. But I was told I couldn’t even apply – I was too thick. Oxford University would have eaten me up and spat me out. It’s too rigorous. It’s insane. Especially the literature courses. People jump out of windows onto railings every year just before exams.

YOU’VE TALKED ABOUT RADIOHEAD IMITATORS IN THE PAST, BUT HAVE YOU RIPPED OFF ANYONE FROM THE EDM SCENE FOR *AMOK*?

(*laughs*) Oh, of course! Totally, man! But that’s what it’s about. It’s about how you do it. There’s this theory about our collective imagination, and you’re either in tune with it or not. And I think, yes that can be used as an excuse, but it’s also kind of true. It’s certainly true in poetry and literature. You could even say the same in fashion. It’s how you use it. When people rip each other off but don’t add anything original to the equation, it’s painful because you can hear the anxiety of the creator wanting to be loved. I’m not going to say any names but you know what I’m on about. That desire to be loved, rather than, ‘Fuck you, this is all I got.’



“I can’t say
I love the idea
of a banker
liking our
music, or David
Cameron. But
who cares?
As long as he
doesn’t use
it for his
election
campaigns,
I don’t care.
I’d sue the
living shit out
of him if
he did”

WERE YOU LIKE THAT WHEN RADIOHEAD BEGAN?

That’s how everybody starts out; everybody goes through that period of imitating other things because you’re worried, you want to be liked. Everybody does it; it’s just how soon you realise that it’s not very pleasant to listen to and nobody wants to hear it anyway.

WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU WERE LIBERATED FROM THAT?

The Bends. For the first time ever, we had two months just working on 12 tunes, not seeing anybody, and that was all we did. We went into the studio with John Leckie and the A&Rs and management would turn up, and say, ‘Where’s the hits?’ There was a half-hour period following that where everyone wobbled and then we were like, ‘Fuck you! You’re banned!’ and we pulled out all the phones. Then the anxiety was gone. The excitement of it being our choice and the fact that no one else was making songs like us was liberating. Once you’ve tasted that, it’s like, ‘Ahh, okay! I get it now.’

KNOWING THAT YOU’VE FOUND AN ORIGINAL FORMULA MUST BE BOTH A BLESSING AND A CURSE, THOUGH.

Well, it becomes a massive hit and you’ve got to get your next fix. It’s hard to go through periods when you haven’t got something like that. So I don’t ever stop working.

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF CONSTANTLY CHASING A NEW BUZZ? IS THAT WHY *AMOK* IS ROOTED IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC?

It’s just what I listen to. My missus says to me, ‘Why do you listen to dance music in the middle of the fucking day when there’s no one around?’ It’s just what I do. But to me the *Atoms* album is not dancey enough.

ATOMS FOR PEACE IS ALSO THE NAME OF A SONG FROM *THE ERASER*, AND BOTH ALBUMS HAVE SIMILARLY APOCALYPTIC ARTWORK CREATED BY STANLEY DONWOOD. IS THIS A SEQUEL?

Oh, it’s not like *The Eraser* at all. But it’s not a band album either; it doesn’t sound like a band playing. You never hear musicians exploring that weird grey area, apart from LCD Soundsystem who used to do it quite a lot. We wanted to go into the song realm, because it felt good to do that. If it were up to me, every track would be ten minutes long.

WHO REIGNS IN YOUR EPIC PROG-TRONICA TENDENCIES?

That’ll be Nigel and his intolerance for expanding.

HOW HAS YOUR MUSICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GODRICH CHANGED SINCE YOU FIRST MET?

It’s exactly the fucking same. It’s like brothers: we fight, but it’s always okay in the end. Sometimes I need to be left alone to just get on with it, sometimes he needs to be left alone to get on with it. Sometimes I’m like, ‘You’re not right, you’re wrong.’ And that can go on for days.

DID YOU HAVE ANY TREPIDATION ABOUT EMBARKING ON THE ATOMS FOR PEACE PROJECT?

That was the real head-masher. During the first day of rehearsals it was clear that everyone had really done their homework. So when I got there with Nigel, we just started up and it was just there for the taking, it was fucking mental. It was really the first time I’d played properly with another band, ever, since I was like, 16. No kidding, it was a headfuck. I was buzzing for weeks. It was all informed by what I’d done on my own on a laptop, which I just thought was really wild.

YOU HAVE SUCH A DIVERSE BACK CATALOGUE NOW. WOULD YOU EVER GO BACK THROUGH YOUR RADIOHEAD ARCHIVES AND REMIX IT ALL?

I could do, yeah. I love remixing because you can take something people already identify with and claim it for something else. You can actually spend your whole life going back and sampling yourself – but that would be a bit like masturbation.

DOES THE FACT THAT YOUR MUSIC ATTRACTS EVERYONE FROM TEENAGERS AND MIDDLE-AGED DADS TO BANKERS AND PRIME MINISTERS ANNOY OR DELIGHT YOU?

I can’t say I love the idea of a banker liking our music, or David Cameron. I can’t believe he’d like *King of Limbs* much. But I also equally think, who cares? As long as he doesn’t use it for his election campaigns, I don’t care. I’d sue the living shit

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORKE

The glitchy soundscapes that flow through Amok may have their roots in modern bass music, but what can today's electronic artists learn in return? We enrolled 14 of this generation's most innovative producers in a one-off digital seminar with Mr Yorke to find out the answers to their burning questions

PEARSON SOUND:

DOES DJING GIVE YOU A GREATER INTERACTION WITH YOUR AUDIENCE THAT'S HARDER TO ACHIEVE WHEN PLAYING MASSIVE ARENA SHOWS?

I started doing it as a way of winding down, Prince-style. It was also because I wanted to go out, but people always come up to me and tell me their bullshit. If I'm stood behind decks they can't. It's a way of hanging out and not having to talk to people that want something from you. It's also a way of trying tunes out, seeing which ones work and changing the mix to react to that. I find that completely fascinating.



ACTRESS:

DO YOU STICK TO THE OK COMPUTER REGIME OF GOING TO THE GYM THREE DAYS A WEEK?

I do a minimum of an hour's yoga a day, usually an hour and a half. I run or do something else, most days. That's as much a mental thing as anything else. Coming on and off tour you have this mad adrenaline thing going on, so it's a way of stopping the adrenaline crash that you get, it's also good for depression, which is another one of the main reasons I do it - it stops me dropping. Meditation, yoga and exercise has helped me more than anything else.

GATEKEEPER:

WHAT IS YOUR ASTROLOGICAL SIGN AND WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE ON YOUR MUSIC-MAKING?

I'm a Libra, a double Libra. Bloody hipster! (laughs) Okay, so apparently, whatever that means. It affects my music very directly. The Libra is very conscious of everyone around him and conscious of everyone going in the right way. So in one way it's very ideal and in another way not ideal at all because I'm very bad at making decisions. If it's an important decision, no problem, but it's all the little ones I have trouble with.

THE GASLAMP KILLER:

WHICH BAND OR PRODUCER HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST INFLUENCE TO DATE?

I would still say old Richard D James. He burns a heavy shadow. I used to have this big hang-up when I used to DJ at college, and the most exciting thing that used to happen was when a new Warp record came out. That's what I used to DJ, and the soundsystem would come alive. Aphex opened up another world that didn't involve my fucking electric guitar, and I was just so jealous of that whole crew. They were off on their own planet. I hated all the music that was around Radiohead at the time, it was completely fucking meaningless. I hated the Britpop thing and what was happening in America, but Aphex was totally beautiful, and he's kind of my age too. He's a massive influence.

FATIMA AL QADIRI:

WAS AMOK A COMPROMISE BETWEEN YOUR DESIRE TO MAKE A DANCE RECORD AND THE AUDIENCE'S DEMAND FOR YOUR VOCALS? IF SO, IS AN INSTRUMENTAL DANCE RECORD ON THE HORIZON?

Oh, God no. It felt like the right thing to do. In fact, I think if you just had the instrumentals it wouldn't really amount to enough. I struggle with working on instrumental stuff because it's not like my window, it's not like my first skill. Maybe it is, I don't know. Honestly, my laptop is full of it. I find it so hard to do remixes. I wonder if that's because my weakness is having to have a vocal at the core of it or whether I can't think like that. Maybe ultimately I'm still a guitar strummer and I need three simple ideas and I'm off. I hope not.

CARIBOU:

I'M TERRIBLE AT SITTING STILL: I ALWAYS WANT TO MOVE ONTO THE NEXT THING. HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT DOING NOTHING?

I'm fucking useless. When we got back from tour I gave myself a week off from the studio and that was it. That's me maxing out on time off. I was cheating anyway because I was actually working on my laptop on the quiet. I'm addicted to having a breakthrough on something. I'm just looking for that all the time, whether that's a sound or a one-bar phrase you find in the middle of something that makes you go, 'Yeah! That's it!' I go through phases of doing different types of stuff. At the moment I've got all these nice little boxes for my studio, and I kind of half know how to use most of them but really I just enjoy writing words sitting at a piano. I tend to lose interest in the drum machine, but doing that is quite a novelty at the moment.

LAPALUX:

DO YOU THINK LISTENING TO OTHER MUSIC WHILE YOU'RE CREATING MUSIC IS AN INSPIRATION OR A HINDRANCE?

I think you have to listen to music that's so far away from what you're doing that it almost cleanses you. When we were doing *OK Computer* we listened to a really extreme Coltrane track, the one that apparently sent Syd Barrett mad after he had done acid. It's so intense, just 20 minutes of freeform jazz - it's like taking a shower, there's so many notes. It's like, 'Okay, I'm ready now.' I was beaten to a pulp after listening to it. Anything coherent after that sounds wonderful. (laughs)

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MAKE THE LAPTOP
A MORE ENGAGING PERFORMANCE TOOL THAT
TRANSLATES THE INTIMACY OF RECORDING
AN ALBUM INTO A LIVE ENVIRONMENT?
I wonder about that a lot. Half the
reason I had that strong urge to do
Atoms for Peace was that I wasn't
happy just going onstage with some
machines and having them run through
a clock and having me just sing over
the top. I've always really struggled
with that. I do it occasionally, but
I don't know how you would change
that perception. There's lots of
interfaces that are quite visual but
that all gets a bit *Star Trek* for
me. My whole thing is that it doesn't
matter what you create, you can
scribe it for a musician to play.
I was fascinated by the concept that
a laptop is intimate but it's also
intricate - you can be so intricate
with it because you don't have to
share all your ideas with anybody.
It's all just in there, going directly
to your machine. You can be really
complicated and endlessly change it,
but when you give it to musicians to
play it gives it a new edge and brings
it full circle.

HOLLY HERNDON:

RYAT:

WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE FEMALE ARTIST
OF ALL TIME?
I've got two - it's still Björk and Polly
(PJ Harvey). That's my generation.
I still obsess about *White Chalk*. Polly's
(2007) album. Their records changed
my life. Just everything about them.
I couldn't pick it apart, but they
resonate for me on an emotional level.

FLYING LOTUS:

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS. WHAT INSPIRED
'PYRAMID SONG' ?
You're obsessed! We were in
Copenhagen, we just started recording
the first session after *OK Computer*,
and we were all deeply dysfunctional,
especially me. And there was an
exhibition, they had a whole Egyptian
section where they went on about
religious beliefs and stuff, and they
had these figures in these little boats
ready to go wherever it is they were
going to go. We were having a really
shitty session, but we got in the
morning afterwards, sat down, played
these chords and I just said, 'That's
nice,' made a note of it and then
wrote words, and it was very quick. We
recorded the drumming a few months
later, and it sounded like something
from a Charlie Mingus record. It was
just one of those weird things of, when
you make a record, eventually you get
to a flow and that was just part of the
flow. We were going through this bad
period where nothing was going right
and this was a big breakthrough. But
I never expected it to be such a popular
single. When we play it live people go
nuts for it, and we're like, 'Really?'

FALTY DL:

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH WRITER'S BLOCK?
Don't be so complicated. Slow down, keep it simple, do one thing.
When I've had writer's block I've had to force myself to stop
doing anything at all. It doesn't matter how much you stop, things
just keep going in there, but you become less worried about the
results because you're not doing it day-to-day. So when you
actually do it again, it's more of a sense of release, you get the
excitement and the sense of being able to do it as a privilege
back. When you lose it you realise how lucky you are that you can
do this shit in the first place, and it's really easy. My missus
said to me, 'Go back to drawing, put your energy where it won't
be judged for a little while,' and it really worked. And sometimes
when you think you've got writer's block it's probably the best
stuff you've ever done, but you can't even hear because your
brain isn't in the right place.



HAVE YOU EVER FELT PART OF A MUSICAL MOVEMENT OF SOME KIND, OR PRETTY ISOLATED
AS A BAND AND SOLO ARTIST?
Well, I certainly never felt part of Britpop. I think that the scene you come
from is stronger as a movement than it is as an isolated artist, so that can be
a good thing. It's great when there's a sense of healthy competition between
artists and they're all hanging out together. When we started out as a band
there was no sense of healthy competition, there was just fighting and vicious,
petty bullshit. It was horrible. Dance culture doesn't seem to get like that. I'm
sure it's there but believe me, it ain't nothing like what I was used to. Things
are happening so fast nowadays, it's good for musicians to stick together.

PANGAEA:

WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE RAPPER?
DOOM. Ultimately to me it's not rapping at
all, it's poetry. The way he freestyles his
verses and puts it all together, I don't
think anyone else does it like that.
I don't necessarily like a lot of the
beats, but he's always amazing. 'Guvnor'
(from JJ DOOM's key to the Kuffs) was my
single of 2012. It's genius, that tune.

ARCA:

MACHINEDRUM:
IT'S COOL YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO READ
MUSIC TRADITIONALLY. I CAN'T READ
MUSIC EITHER SO I FOUND THIS EXCITING
AND ENCOURAGING. DO YOU THINK IT'S
IMPORTANT TO TEACH EAR TRAINING WHEN
DEVELOPING MUSIC SKILLS?
Apparently you can get into Juilliard's
music school in New York not being
able to read music now. You will
have to pick it up but it's not a
prerequisite. So much great music
would never have happened without it,
but nowadays it's not as necessary
as it ever used to be. When we work
with orchestras they can be quite
inflexible in understanding rhythms.
The rhythm side of it is very strange
for classically trained musicians
to understand - ideas like swing
emphasis - but when you work with
jazz musicians or someone like Flea
they get it. They can all read music
but that's not where they started,
they all started by ear. For me,
writing down music is unnecessary.
Your work is intricate, dense and very
complicated, so to me you're treating
the laptop like a score anyway.

artwork: LOST ANGELES LOST by STANLEY DONWOOD



“Politics is
not a fun
thing to
write about.
Now it's too
fucking dark...
When you're
presented
with that level
of stupidity
it kind
of blows
your mind”

out of him if he did. I'm now getting this thing where a cute 18-year-old girl will come up to me and she'll say, 'Aww man, will you sign this for my mum?' She turned me onto your music when I was tiny.' And I'd be like 'Ohhh, fuck's sake!' That spins me out on a number of levels. I've got two generations now.

YOU WROTE *THE ERASER'S* 'HARROWDOWN HILL' ABOUT THE SUICIDE OF BIOLOGICAL-WARFARE EXPERT DAVID KELLY. DO ANY OF YOUR NEW SONGS HAVE A POLITICAL AGENDA?

The David Kelly thing was very much an exception. I thought it was just so horribly English, so fucked up. I get obsessed and that often ends up in lyrics. Politics is not a fun thing to write about. Now it's too fucking dark. I went to the Copenhagen summit (on climate change), and that permanently flipped my lid, because the whole thing was so wrong. Obama stormed straight past me after the meeting he had with China, and it was just horrible. It sort of spun me out permanently to be honest.

BUT SHOULDN'T THAT HAVE PROVOKED YOU TO WRITE SOMETHING?

Yes, but when you're presented with that level of stupidity, it kind of blows your mind. Which sounds terrible, because I don't want to be the person that goes, 'We're all fucked,' because I don't think we are. I'm trying to convince myself not to care. It's like this phrase I keep seeing around - 'I couldn't care less, it's such a mess.'

ARE YOU SICK OF PEOPLE SAYING THAT YOU ONLY WRITE AND SING MISERABLE SONGS?

It used to piss me off and then I thought, 'Well, people hear something in my voice and respond to it, and there's nothing I can do about it.' You could say the same thing about Scott Walker. Recently it's not as heavy, it's a lot lighter, because I'm more into rhythm and the fact that it dances through the track rather than grabbing you and being the centre of attention. Sometimes I don't want it to be. Sometimes I just want it cruising through the rhythm.

DO YOU EVER FEEL CAGED IN BY YOUR VOICE?

Absolutely. Maybe not as much now, but certainly it can be quite frustrating. I've done enough stuff now that it's not such an issue - at some point you've got to say, 'This tone is me, there's no getting round it.' Now, in a way, having that signature is licence to do more. It's kind of liberating to say, 'Well, that's my instrument, and that's a very clear limitation right there.' But what's nice is you can make a really complicated piece of music and then just put a simple line through it and suddenly you don't see any of the complications there at all.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR IMAGE? HAVE YOU BECOME MORE OR LESS CONFIDENT ABOUT YOUR LOOKS OVER THE YEARS?

I'm never confident about how I look, but I'm always into being shocking and visually interesting. It comes down to whether I'm comfortable or not. It takes me a long time to get my head around that. I was deeply uncomfortable with the 'Lotus Flower' video. I did the whole thing, it was such a crack, and then they showed me the rushes the next day and I was like, 'This ain't going out.' It was like paparazzi footage of me naked or something. It was fucked up. But if it's a risk that's probably a good thing.

ARE YOU SURPRISED THAT 'LOTUS FLOWER' HAS NOW BEEN WATCHED OVER 20 MILLION TIMES ON YOUTUBE?

It's a massive kick. That's what everybody wants. If it's something you've worked at and it goes over the edge like that then that's great. If you do a few duffers it puts you off for a while.

WHICH ARE THE DUFFERS?

Oh, I couldn't possibly say... (laughs)

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

'Karma Police' is still my favourite, because when I watch it or see clips it just reminds me how much of a laugh I had shooting that. It was brilliant. Especially because I'm totally wasted in it.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING?

All sorts. (laughs)



“I was so
driven for
so long,
like a fucking
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DO YOU THINK YOUR VIDEOS AND YOUR RELUCTANCE TO DO MUCH PRESS HAVE BUILT UP THIS MYTHOLOGY AROUND YOU? DO YOU ENCOURAGE THE MYTHMAKING?

No, I think it just extends to whatever you're doing next, to see if you can bend people's heads out of shape. It's the old art student in me really. If you're going to do something you should at least shock or mess with their expectations - not that it's necessarily art.

WHEN YOU WERE LAST ON THE COVER OF DAZED YOU TALKED ABOUT NOT RECOGNISING YOUR REFLECTION. WAS THAT TRUE?

I really didn't. It was quite scary. It's hard to explain. It was all part of this weird catatonic headspace I was in. I can't do a lot of photographs because I become too aware of that projected image and I can't handle it. It sounds really precious but that's just what I know and how I know it is.

YOU ALSO ADMITTED THAT YOU HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO BECOME FAMOUS. SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER, HAVE YOUR FEELINGS CHANGED?

I guess it depends what you've become famous for. Fame for fame's sake, or for working your nuts off at what you do. Also when I was a kid, I always assumed that it was going to answer something - fill a gap. And it does the absolute opposite. It happens with everybody. I was so driven for so long, like a fucking animal, and then I woke up one day and someone had given me a little gold plate for *OK Computer* and I couldn't deal with it for ages. I moved down to Cornwall, went out to the cliffs and drew in a sketchbook, day in, day out. I was allowed to play the piano and that was it, because that was all we had in the house. I did that for a few months and I started to tune back into why I'd started doing it. That's how I remember it anyway. I remember having nothing in the house, except a Yamaha grand piano. Classic. And the first thing I wrote was 'Everything in Its Right Place'.

DO YOU HAVE MUCH RECOLLECTION OF WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE YOU BECAME FAMOUS?

I'm now painfully aware that I've been doing this for longer than I haven't. Which is pretty fucking mental. Am I aware of how it was before that? I think so. I mean, we did sign our deal when I was 22, so for my whole 20s and 30s I was working. I don't even remember it. It's quite weird.

HOW WELL DO YOU THINK YOU'VE AGED?

My favourite quote of Tom Waits is, 'I wish to age disgracefully.' And I'm doing that, that's me. I'm probably easier to deal with but I wish to remain disgraceful, if at all possible. (laughs)

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE BEEN PORTRAYED AS SUCH A MERCURIAL CHARACTER OVER THE YEARS?

I'm not as volatile as I used to be, which is good 'cos I'd have burned out if I was. I can still be a nightmare though.

THERE'S A QUOTE THAT I THOUGHT WOULD BE A GOOD WAY TO FINISH. IT'S FROM YOUR FRIEND STANLEY DONWOOD TALKING ABOUT HIS ARTWORK SERIES *LOST ANGELES*, FROM WHICH THE COVER FOR *AMOK* IS TAKEN: 'THERE IS NO FUTURE, THERE IS ONLY THE PRESENT... NO ONE SEEMS TO CARE MUCH ABOUT THE PRESENT.' WHAT DO YOU CARE MOST ABOUT RIGHT NOW?

The present. Trying to stay in the present because that's how to not get ill. Don't overthink. Let it go.

AMOK by Atoms for Peace is out on February 25 on XL Recordings. atomsforpeace.info

all clothes THOM's own

hair TOMO JIDAI at STREETERS using SHU UEMERA; make-up LAURA DOMINIQUE at STREETERS using BOBBI BROWN; set design DAVID WHITE at THE MAGNET AGENCY; photographic assistants JEFF HENRIKSON, KIM REENBERG; styling assistant KATY FOX; hair assistant MICHIKO YOSHIDA; make-up assistant KAMILA SIEMIATKOWSKA; set design assistant KILA CARR-INCE; digital operator ANDREW KENNEY