

Art Pop Intersections – Producing Dutch Uncles and Robin Richards

This practice based research submission represents a portion of my creative output as a producer / engineer, centered on collaborations with the UK art pop band Dutch Uncles and their primary composer Robin Richards. The collection comprises two full length albums (Dutch Uncles – O Shudder 2015 / Big Balloon 2017), two film scores (Robin Richards' Birdsong, Stories from Pripyat 2017 / Phone of the Wind 2019) and one Robin Richards EP.

Although there is much popular music which incorporates instrumental arrangements of a broadly 'classical' nature, I sought to establish a soundworld where a fully integrated dialogue between contemporary classical, electroacoustic / electronic (synthesized) and aesthetically ambitious popular music might take place. The project was led by the following research questions:

- How would traditional recording practice associated with classical forces need to adapt in order that Robin Richards' complex instrumental arrangements could co-exist with the dense 'art pop' aesthetic of Dutch Uncles?
- How might scores focusing primarily on the interaction between subtractive synthesis and string quartet be integrated in a spatial and timbral environment which was musically supportive and aurally evocative of the associated films subject matter?

The recordings were captured utilizing both traditional and innovative techniques in a variety of acoustic spaces which were chosen specifically address the research questions. Upon mixdown, the pieces in question were treated in a radically different way to that of 'standard' self-balancing acoustic works. The associated Figshare collection is organized to best exemplify the rigor and significance of the practice.

The albums and EP's have been released internationally by the influential labels Memphis Industries and Prah, receiving significant arts funding specifically in order to enable ambitious instrumental arrangements and recording methodologies (PRSF Momentum Fund). The Films and accompanying scores were made possible via funding from ACE, HOME (Manchester) and the Japanese Sasakawa Foundation.