



designsport
ART BOARDS
HESSENMOR is a new Skateboard Company that hail unusually from the not so distant shores of Germany. Emphasis is most definitely on design, as opposed to blank decks and mini logos, and the artwork of the skateboard and its role within the sport and lifestyle is highlighted. The first series of decks, along with a line of hardware and clothing, is scheduled for release sometime in March, and is entitled Experiments in Truth. The range will feature original artwork from the likes of Andy Jenkins, Evan Hecox and Shepard Fairey, and will be followed with future ranges that will have at least one ‘visiting designer’ per deck series. Other planned designs include contributions from the in-house creative arm of the company. A series of photo-designs showing major German cities and featuring the artwork of home-based designers is planned for this autumn. ■ **CG**



SPIKE JONZE VIDEO

eventfilm
AUDIO VISUALS

I've often thought that the music video is sometimes wasted on a 21 inch pixelated screen. I mean, all that work, creative effort, stress and strain, and not forgetting financial input going into something that is nothing less than a short film being shown on a bog standard telly. I also remember the hype surrounding Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video release back in the early eighties, video-taping its late-night showing (because at the time it was premiered only after the midnight watershed), and watching it over and over the next day – everyone at school was buzzing about it. There is no question or debate that the video has changed the very fabric of the music industry and music as a whole. If, like me, you think that the music video genre should be viewed on a medium that shows off all that art to its full potential – ie on a big fat movie screen with surround sound – then you should hightail it down to the National Film Theatre for their March season of Music On Screen. Every Monday the NFT are showing the finest collection of music videos gathered from the last three decades – from Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (arguably the first true music video as a stand alone art piece), through Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (the first major dollar budget), and on to the more modern day work including videos from Michael Gondry, Spike Jonze, Chris Cunningham, Hype Williams, and the like. The NFT will be showing roughly 25 videos on screen each and every Monday (though there are only three events left), each night with its own flavour and theme. The evenings kick off at 8.45pm, and along with full length director's cuts of the videos (the list is far too long to print here), various video directors and producers will be talking about their work (some live, some taped). Well worth looking into. ■ **MN**

MARCH 13TH – SPIKE JONZE AND THE NEW AMERICAN ALLSTARS
MARCH 20TH – MICHAEL GONDRY AND THE VISUAL WIZARDS
MARCH 27TH – ICONS AND SUPERSTARS
FOR FULL INFORMATION, VIDEO LISTS, AND TICKET INFORMATION CALL THE NFT BOX OFFICE ON 020 7928 3232

techcustom
NIKIA?

Problem: you've covered ninety-five percent of your anatomy with hallowed and almighty Swoosh™ but deep down inside you feel that you still want to pay more homage to the great god knight and his ever swelling bank account. So what do you do? Tattoo? Ouch. Windscreen graphic? Pass me a bucket. No – the only option left for the growing hordes of Level social adventurers has to be this Nokia cellphone graphic. As a self confessed Nike gimp I almost fell off my chair (and that's no mean feat considering that I was driving at the time) when I received the image completely out of the blue from a mystery source. Simple, subtle, and too cool – just like all the best 'good Nike' stuff. Get this – if you can. ■ **ANGELFISH**



musicpeople
MILK ROCK

On my first visit to Japan I had an enormous list of things to look out for, and this included a huge amount of CDs unavailable elsewhere. One of the artists was Takako Minekawa – or Minekawa Takako in Japanese (surnames come first in Japan). While I had some previous knowledge of the majority of the other music on my list, the Minekawa items were something of a gamble. However, I went ahead and purchased three of the most recent albums, including the beautiful foil-embossed special edition pack of her latest release, *Fun9* – pronounced 'Fun-ku' (the Japanese for nine being 'ku'). Of the thirty-plus albums I brought back to England, the Takako Minekawa titles are up there with the best, not only because they could have been a terrible disaster, but the fact that this music is – as one critic put it – "some of the most wonderful and inspiring electro-pop ever heard." Electro pop seems an inaccurate description though; while it does explain some of her work it does detract in some ways from the quality and complexity of what it is she is producing. A simple way of describing Minekawa and her music is possibly thinking of a Japanese Björk with a touch of Stereolab, but again this only describes a small portion of a palette that is wide and varied. There's definitely a nod towards some of the early pioneers of electro music, even paying homage to Kraftwerk in *Kraftpark* (from her 1997 album *Cloudy Cloud Calculator*), like a 90's version of *Autobahn*, starting off true to the German band's ethic then speeding up to incorporate live drumming and vocoder narration, ending with a skid and comical *boing!* Having appeared in commercials for Playstation, mobile phones and a regular spot in a host of electronics magazines, she's certainly well known. One of my friends in Tokyo told me that among the girls she knows many of them copy Takako's hairstyle – they've also lovingly modified her name to 'Mineko'. In some respects Takako Minekawa is a female embodiment of her partner Cornelius, albeit with a slant towards electronics as opposed to Cornelius's penchant for metal. Minekawa creates a tremendously cute but abstract world full of amazing ideas and musical landscapes which can often become melancholy while still remaining beautiful. The space that the music creates is one which seems inhabited by Minekawa-san's presence; "The world I live in is mostly a world that I *imagine* I live in. So I guess my songs are mostly a world in my imagination." An example of her distinct way of looking at things is apparent when you consider the title *Fancy Work Handicrafts* which can be seen as a logo design in the packaging of the latest album and also appears partially in one of the track's

titles. When I asked her about this, the response signified her distinct approach to the work; "When recording *Fun9* we used Protocols, computers, etcetera. Colours come up on screen tied to the musical notes and the whole thing is like patchwork or *shugei*. It's like weaving or knitting or patchwork, handicrafts... female stuff. Being female this is what I felt watching the males tackling Protocols... fancy work handicrafts." A collection of layered electronics form the basis for much of the music, mostly old analogue devices. Her favourites include an eighties Casio VA10 (with a hundred sounds – small but huge), a Moog Prodigy, Mini Moog and the Source which she enthuses in, "more of a patch type synth. You can touch or press as well as twist and turn. It comes in a stainless steel look." This is one of the similarities between Minekawa and Stereolab: both rely heavily on old analogue synthesisers, electronic music in general and a definite French influence. They've taken part in joint interviews and recently played live together in Tokyo. There's also an interest in obscure French cinema which has some influence, with directors such as Agnes Varda and Philippe Garrel. She also had the opportunity to produce some work relating to one of her favourite American directors, Hal Hartley, whose films are simple in many ways yet remain powerful and ingenious – very similar to the work of Takako Minekawa. When playing live she faces the difficulties of trying to captivate the audience while playing electronic equipment; "with guitars and stuff you can run around, head-bang and show off your emotions physically, whereas with synthesisers etcetera, it's difficult to do so." She isn't really that kind of person to begin with, often worrying that the audience at the back will get bored because she doesn't seem to be doing much. With live performances it seems as though both her originality and shyness come though, both traits being equally fascinating, but succeeding in transporting the viewer to a fabricated world of dreamlike proportions. To begin her set at the recent Bape Worldwide Heads Show in Tokyo she had three guitars all set up on stage, after adjusting some of the electronics she played a chord on each guitar, all three were instantly sampled and looped producing a beautiful melody which she began her first song to while playing an additional acoustic guitar herself. Later using a Stylophone, playing along with a live band she paused briefly to play the five note tune from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It's tiny moments like this which make her stand out from much of today's musicians, male and female. A continuous interest in creating has brought about entire album remix projects,



HAVING APPEARED IN COMMERCIALS FOR PLAYSTATION, MOBILE PHONES AND A REGULAR SPOT IN A HOST OF ELECTRONICS MAGAZINES, SHE'S CERTAINLY WELL KNOWN. ONE OF MY FRIENDS IN TOKYO TOLD ME THAT AMONG THE GIRLS SHE KNOWS MANY OF THEM COPY TAKAKO'S HAIRSTYLE

With Ximer Cloudy Cloud Calculator Remixes and Recubed's Roomic Cube Remixes. This helps with interest overseas, the many western bands who like her music often take part in these projects. For Takako however this is all something of a new venture; "I didn't know or wasn't interested in remixes until recently. Nowadays, I feel remixes are like writing letters. Trading ideas. Like tape sessions, sending ideas on tapes back and forth between people." These have included Buffalo Daughter, Sukia, Cornelius, Kid Loco, Oval, Trans Am and Nobukazu Takemura. Although remixes are fairly new to her, collaborations are not. Working equally alone and in collaboration with others dependent more on her mood or feelings at a particular time, "It's great creating with and being inspired by people who I admire." It's generally a process which benefits all parties. She explained that when you trade ideas you are inspired to create new ones, thus furthering the creative and inspirational process another step every time. Work is soon to begin on her new album, with the possibility of UK performances to follow; "I've only been in the UK for a day as a transit passenger. I stayed at this hotel Hansel & Gretel which smelt of curry... My only experience of the UK. So I definitely would love to experience more." ■ **LEE BASFORD**

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