

Tim Gane on Chemical Chords: track-by-track

NEON BEANBAG

“I already had the title, which I loved – it doesn’t mean anything, it just sort of sounded right. I knew I wanted it to be the title of something overtly poppy - after that everything just sort of fell into place straight away. This is my idea of a classic pop song.”

THREE WOMEN

“Laetitia’s favourite. We intended it to be really repetitious, with a simple, two-note bass-line and so on but it turned out to be quite a trad’ kind of song in the end. The horn arrangement is great; it’s like something off one of those *Best of British Brass* albums...”

ONE FINGER SYMPHONY

“It’s basically a monochordal loop. I mixed this on my little computer at home. It sounds very French, with a heavy delay effect - a very ‘60s sound.

CHEMICAL CHORDS

“This is my favourite track on the record – that’s why the album’s named after it. It has a real soundtracky feel, which isn’t surprising as it was partly done at the same time we were writing the *La Vie d’Artiste* soundtrack...”

THE ECSTATIC STATIC

“I wanted this to be like an elegant procession; instead it turned out to be quite a Motown type song, which really wasn’t intentional. A lot of the initial drum tracks were played by me – and I’m no drummer! Later Andy [Ramsay], our real drummer, played it properly... This was another one that sort of made itself, really.”

VALLEY HI!

“My wife says the chords to this sound like Hey Joe. It was twice as long originally. I really wanted the album to be full of short, poppy tracks – fast and straight ahead - so we cut it in half. I always imagined it being like a classic B-Side. I really like the title; it reminds me of a sunny housing estate...”

SILVER SANDS

“Like the previous one, it’s a really poppy song. This was the first one we did with the vibes, which really bring out the chords. In a way, this typifies the whole album - all the pop elements are there.”

POP MOLECULE (MOLECULAR POP 1)

“This is another of those songs like [*Fab Four Suture* highlight] *Kyberneticka Babicka Pt.1*. which I started with a really tiny sample. That was then looped until everything started to blur; then I reversed the sample, which the band later

replicated. It's a process of 'pop excavation' - close to the pop art idea of repeating something like a cartoon image and using it to make a painting on the very edge of abstraction."

SELF PORTRAIT WITH 'ELECTRIC BRAIN'

"I'm not really sure what the '*Electric Brain*' is, to be honest. Some of the titles were plucked from a record collectors' book – it was full of things called 'Bloop' and so on... This was written at the same time as the soundtrack. I took one major piano chord and pitch-shifted it to build the song structure. It is quite Motown I suppose. I really liked the idea of basing a song on a pounding beat and piano chords."

NOUS VOUS DEMANDONS PARDON

"This is a song built from three or four completely different loops. It was pretty crazy – the most difficult song to make. It reminds me a bit of Love, not intentionally, but once you have those harpsichords and the martial beat... For all that, it's the most electronic song on the album."

CELLULOSE SUNSHINE

"Does this sound like the Left Banke? Yes - with the simple harpsichord chords and the strings, it's totally that sound. They are one of my favourite bands, so it's no surprise. Sean did a great arrangement on this, adding that Gainsbourg style. I love the title. It evokes a certain yellowy, egg yolk kind of feeling..."

FRACTAL DREAM OF A THING

"This has a more complex beat than on most of the album. We did this at the beginning, as a kind of 'test track'. It has a bit of everything on it. The first track is often the most laborious to do, but this actually sounds very live – it sounds like a band just playing it, which it isn't!"

DAISY CLICK CLACK

"Originally I just had the chords going round; then Joe Watson added a crucial fill and it came to life. For a while this was called 'Pub Piano'. I wanted a kind of Lieutenant Pigeon feel - I like their combination of upbeat piano and wistfulness. I would never have written this if I'd used an orthodox songwriting approach."

VORTICAL PHONOTHEQUE

"This started out with just a beat. The original chords started to sound a bit like the Beatles; then I had the idea of making it more baroque with the harpsichord flourishes. After that we reversed the chord structure. It's in a really difficult key for Laetitia to sing. I really like singers in uncomfortable keys..."

David Sheppard (April 2008)

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