

The special street issue

# SOMA

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THE STREET ISSUE

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## THE FSOL: LURKING LATE AND STRIKING STRAIGHT

text Mark von Pfeiffer photo Jim Cherry





**For many** The FSOL are to dance music what Kraftwerk is to electronic music or Pink Floyd is to psychedelic. They crashed onto the UK scene in the early 90s, wild wolfhounds of originality paying no heed to the direction in which the hunt had been running. They had caught a scent and they followed it to their own apotheosis. Almost a decade later, the genre that recreates itself monthly still pays homage to classic FSOL pieces such as "Papua New Guinea" and "Expander."

Garry Colbain is one half of the seminal duo. For the last five years he has been on a cosmic Easter egg hunt. Globetrotting, meditating, exploring the within and the without—reeducating himself on what it means to be a musician at the dawn of the 21st century. This supplication has transformed him into a sort of spiritual mendicant to the electronic world. "Weaving the east and the west together: technology with spirituality into one great possibility. That's the new way," he says as he

beautiful and somehow we've closed it about our ears, changed it into something that is quite gray, political, chemicalized and unnatural."

Indeed *The Isness* is a beautiful album—to be nakedly honest [save my adult diapers and steely gaze] its simple, devotional tone is sometimes heartbreaking. If Colbain's postulates sound a bit heavy, don't fret. He values emotion and instinct supreme and admits that divorcing oneself from intellectualization can be a pisser. "I still hide in the mind. I still try and work out what to do—I still sometimes ignore my instinct. The instinct can seem like the maddest fucker in the world. It tells you to go places, but the more you uncover the more you trust it."

The majority of their peers from the fields of the early nineties are barely hanging on; many headz consider Orb, Chemical Brothers, Leftfield and Orbital to have split the best of their seed and now to be dry-humping the infertile muse of bankrupt creativity. The ravers that geeked

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prepares a millet pudding in his London studio. "Increasingly people are beginning to realize you've only got one chance to find out what your various stages of consciousness are and no one else is forced to help you realize them. Each one of us has been given this great parcel of flesh and energy with which to experiment."

Together with partner Brian Dougans, the reborn FSOL have produced *The Isness*, a magnificent culture jammer of equal parts electric, acoustic and electronic. Using high-end digital equipment the pair have twisted sitar, Hammond organ, trumpet, flute, choirs, flugel horn, tin whistle, violin, viola, drum machine, and cello together into a lustfully sincere candy cane of soulfulness and sent it floating away on a pink carnation cloud that absolutely defies genrefication. Colbain notes, "A truly great modern album will liberate itself from genres, away from the pie chart of the corporate cabal. We're trying to bring to mind the idea that needing to exist within a genre insinuates fear. With modern technology we have the ability to do what the Beatles did in their psychedelic period. Around *The White Album*...sixty-four piece orchestras and the like," he says with trademark ostentation. "We saw it as a similar possibility. What if the genres didn't matter? The album is sampadelic, Rock, reggae, spiritual, cosmic, psychedelic, big band progtronica. It's everything."

"The Isness of life is beyond modern design, future lust and holding on to the past. Allowing yourself to die to the past and be born into the present in each and every moment is the highest way to live. Life is quite

out on glow sticks, lathered their bodies with oil and ate X by the boat-load have matured into "sophisticated" adults. What brain cells they have left are eager to swarm over a more editorial, issue-dense melding of the electronic and the electric. Colbain asserts, "If you write truth or speak truth the world vibrates to it and it spreads. Truth always spreads, it doesn't need a mechanism; culture can't contain beauty. It always spreads. For example, I find Radiohead's depression genuine and quite liberating. There's nothing wrong with celebrating anger, sex, violence...as long as it's genuine. There's a danger in the West of becoming watered-down human beings. We repress anger because we want to appear kind. We smile at our enemies but on the inside we're seething. The seething forms a disease. We smile crocodile but on the inside we want to murder. So to be honest about loneliness or depression is very beautiful."

Yes, after seven long years the infamous, slightly sinister voice that once commanded dance music as its personal golem has once again cleared its throat. Loudly. It perceives a crisis, an overcomplication of the human condition in a confused time. It wants to clarify and it wants to help. "Let's put the stories back in music. It seems to me that the stories are dying because we seem to be accepting the simplest and most straightforward way of selling at the expense of human experience," he implores at the end of a three-hour discussion. "The FSOL was never about computers, it was about a big screaming soul that wanted to find out why and what and wherefore." ■