

BARDO POND

"The name in my mind is a place. A place -in-between, an island in space where there is a pond. There is grass and moss around the pond, and in the background it is dark, only shadows of trees visible. We are sitting around the pond and occasionally huge beautiful fish come up from the darkness of the water to the surface then dive down again into the bottomless black hole of liquid. We hang out watching, and sometimes we fish, and somehow we get songs and music out of this activity. OK, can I have another drink now?"

So responds Clint Takeda, bassist extraordinaire for Philadelphia, PA drone-rock improvisers Bardo Pond, when I ask him about the origins of their mystical name.

This response perfectly illustrates the visionary zeal with which the band have approached the making of music for nearly ten years, more so than the usual rational Tibetan Book of the Dead explanations. Because the world's most essential psychedelic rock experience should defy rational explanation and scholarly deconstruction. No tablature can define for you what these latter day cosmic couriers bring to the table, no lyric sheet will give you access to their text; you put the music on, close your eyes, and dream your equivalent of the pond into existence. Bardo Pond has the outward specifications of a rock band - guitars, bass, keyboards, drums, occasional but crucial flute and violin and vocals - but the rivers that converge into the band's oneiric flow have their headwaters in the outlands of ecstatic jazz, free noise and the avant-garde. Their slow-motion avalanches of churning instrumentation and voice suggest drugged states but don't necessarily require them. They alter brain chemistry by the alchemical effect of distressed sound alone, aspiring to become engineers of the soul's passage to alternate states of consciousness. At the foundation of the pyramid, the drums of (originally) Joe Culver and (now) Ed Farnsworth and the bass of Clint Takeda lay down a sinewy, sexy and hypnagogic bottom end. At the centre of the pyramid, the twin guitars of John and Michael Gibbon send out emissaries of fire, flaying flesh from bone in a storm of holy liberation. Isobel Sollenberger inhabits the place where the pyramid meets the eye of their storm, weaving fibres of voice, flute and violin through the din. I heard someone comment recently that the limits of music have now been defined, bracketed by John Cage's silence at one end and Merzbow's maximum noise at the other, leaving only the option of filling the spaces in between. Bardo Pond demonstrate how much scope there is to innovate within that continuum. If rock music is to have any relevance

in the new millennium, it is bands like Bardo Pond that will make it so.

It's late 1995 or early 1996 and I've just received a copy of Bardo Pond's 'Bufo Alvarius, Amen 29:15' CD. By this time I know the LP quite well and normally that would be sufficient, but some instinct tells me I need to hear the CD's additional track 'Amen 29:12'. It's a four-track home recording dating from slightly after the rest of the recordings on the disc, and notably marking the return of Clint Takeda to the band to play bass. Little prepares me for the experience. Whereas the majority of 'Bufo Alvarius' suggests a band still very much searching for their fated groove and sometimes finding it and sometimes blowing up the chemistry set trying, 'Amen 29:15' captures the band at the point where their geo-drone corpus has coalesced into early maturity. A sound that may or may not sampled church bells cycles like a broken metronome through the early part of the piece. Guitars hum and rotate and focus meditation like spinning wheels of prayer, but also excoriate like a sandstorm if approached too closely. Floating deep-space tones are created, enveloping the listener in comet tail luminosity. Disembodied voices fly circuits like dispossessed angels in an ambiguous afterlife - if indeed they are vocals, rather than the decaying isotopes of some harmonic accident caused by the other instruments melting together in the furnace. Occasionally a single guitar breaks free of the lava flow to hurl itself outward like a solar flare. Otherwise the fusion is delirious and total. There are no drums to regulate and militarise the tidal progression of 'Amen 29:15', no percussive anchors to tether it to earth. Takeda's bass provides a central riff that is as arresting as it is simple and sufficient. Clearly, a fire has started in the minds of the members of Bardo Pond and in an instant they graduate from bracing din-shapers in the mould of the Dead C to cosmic improvisers that don't look out of place in the same section of a record collection as Guru Guru and Ash Ra Tempel. A propensity for ascension seeking behavior has been established and things will never be the same again. Everything fades just leaving church bells. Amen.

The first time I see Bardo Pond live is at the inaugural Terrastock festival in Providence, Rhode Island in April 1997. They cut through my undead cerebellum fog of travel fatigue and day three festival sensory burnout like a scimitar of light. By now their groove has widened into something resembling the Grand Canyon and they ride it's flow effortlessly. The audience is leaning into the sound in surrender, and the sound enters each of them, journeying through capillary rivers into their primary arterial flow. Reality sways like a field of wheat in the wind. Audience and band are made for each other and achieve a fugue state based on pure guitar overload communion. I still have a set list

from this performance folded up and shoved in my card file. It's a fault line in time, and an insight into the Bardo process. Reading it and I'm off down the rabbit hole and back there digging it. The first track listed is just called 'Feedback Tune' - it's new and lives up to its name with crushing strata of drone stacked to the rafters. Undoubtedly it morphed and grew and entered the mix of their 1997 album 'Lapsed'. The much loved 'Affa' from the Terrascope's own 'Succour' compilation is fittingly next, crashing through the room like space junk coming home. Something unreadable follows, struck out and replaced by the now legendary 'Tommy Gun Angel' - unreleased at the time and eventually flagship track on 'Lapsed'. All I remember is a clambering out of the rubble of my skull after it. Then 'Yellow Turban', an old favourite from 'Amanita' dimming the lights with its wattage drain. A track called 'Chicken Gun' gets the chop, and the Pond conclude with a new one, called 'Roswell', which hasn't appeared on record to date, unless it changed shape and name. It's a forceful signoff, and we're officially abducted by it. The set list yellows and crumbles in my hand. Dust and angels again.

The second time I see Bardo Pond live is just after the Terrastock II festival, at The Bottom of the Hill club in San Francisco in April 1998. I don't remember what pieces they played, probably a mixture of material from 'Lapsed' and early versions of compositions that would appear in 1999 on the 'Set and Setting' album. It's a small venue, one hardly able to contain the sound of a band growing in power with each performance. They start playing and the walls seem to bulge out like a pressure vessel about to blow. Isobel's stage presence has grown exponentially, and energy funnels into her from the rest of the band like flux lines converging at one of Earth's magnetic poles. It's impossible to take your eyes off her as she spins around and rocks from side-to-side and teases her hair into a turban in some kind of oblivious trance. You can almost see the Jack O'Lantern witch fire coursing out of the ends of the Gibbons' guitars and forming a glowing cage around her. It's like being witness to a beautiful private moment, but at the same time it's strongly, albeit unconsciously, theatrical. Closing eyes to concentrate on the sound, it seems to pour out like concrete into the foundations of the world. Culver and Takeda are a slow-burning reactor core of a rhythm section tonight, and their anti-matter explodes on contact with the night to propel everything to new heights. The daisy-chain of effects pedals wielded by the Gibbons brothers drives a tormented stream of electrons into amps that are pushed beyond "11" to "Apotheosis" volume levels, but somehow the result is melodious and soul-centered, marked by an infinitude of internal harmonic intervals receding forever like reflections in a hall of mirrors. At the

end of the day you could say that this is just rock music, but that's like saying Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman just played a little jazz. There is a level of free expression being accessed and mined here that goes beyond the formal confines of genre, and through the practice of constant and obsessive improvisation together, Bardo Pond have worked out how to project their inner journeying out to the world. A praxis drawn in flux.

'Dilate' is an appropriate title for the fifth Bardo Pond album, continuing the "they're there if you want them" drug references of past album titles, but really acting as a wider metaphor for their consciousness-expanding musical aims. And dilate is what the band do on the new album, opening up the lens of their craft to frequencies at both ends of the spectrum. The album travels from dream-like acid folk to monstrously riff-laden psychedelic rock as it expands like a star's evolution into nova, but the tracks on 'Dilate' only ever take those styles as starting points for free exploration. Some of the most intensely blessed moments on 'Dilate' lie somewhere in between these opposites, like the opening track 'Two Planes', which joins a long list of memorable opening tracks on Pond albums. It's fundamentally a folk-rock piece, with a stellar chord progression adorned by melancholy violin wraiths and shimmering droplets of echoplex guitar. Layer-on-layer of guitar are deposited on top like silt as the track progresses before a return to the campfire ambience of the track's beginning. Silence is the code to 'Sunrise' as well, as several verses of Isobel's vocals leap out of the simple acoustic mix in a most alarming and unexpected fashion before the acoustic motif is turned into a flaming meteor of guitar abuse. This extremely confident start is built on as the album gets more intense. 'Inside' could be a FM radio hit if it wasn't for its 12 minute length. But, in Isobel's lucid words, this record is "Not for the faint of heart/For those who came/All this way/With the clouds in their eyes". 'Favorite Uncle' is another surprise - a Clint Takeda folk-song with vocals beamed in from Mars and a haunted Skip Spence feel. But the reasons that 'Dilate' is a masterpiece lie in the next three tracks. The astral-folk acoustic mantras 'Swig' and 'Despite the Roar', reveal that that the band has spent some productive time listening to the extraordinary work in this area being done by Japanese bands like Ghost and Floating Flower. The words 'Holy ghosts/Wrap you in their arms/Despite the roar', capture the vibe pretty well. 'Ib' is the kind of disorienting landslide of sound that My Bloody Valentine might have got near if they had taken the totally wasted spirit of the extraordinary 'You Made Me Realise' and fused it with the density of Fushitsusha. Electrocution of the senses. It's their best album.

We recently conducted the following chat with the band (primarily with Michael Gibbons but with crucial interjections by Clint, John and Isobel) to celebrate the release of 'Dilate' It is long-overdue. This is part one...

PT. How did the original members of the Bardo Pond know each other and what led to the decision to hook up and do something musically?

MG. John and I have been making a racket since we were wee lads, although oddly enough neither of us took up an instrument until we were into our 20s. John initially got hooked on percussion, and one summer we got into radio manipulation and percussion experiments as well as some percussion and vocal things with our sister, Kelly. We didn't take it to seriously, but there were moments. I was also in art school at this time, and through some weird twist of fate became interested in free jazz (mostly Ornette Coleman and his electric band Primetime), No Wave stuff, Material and shit like that. I was working at a record store in California - Morning Glory Records in Isla Vista - and this dude walks up to the counter to buy a Lester Bowie record that I had wanted to snag but had neglected to. I told him he couldn't have it, it was mine. He laughed in my face. We got to talking, and this guy turned out to be the coolest guy I had ever met. His name was Clint Takeda.

Towards the end of my college career I found myself in Chicago living at my girlfriend's house with her family - very cool folks. By this time I was fully immersed in the free jazz, free music world. My girlfriend's brother had a lot of instruments - guitars and keyboards, which he knew a bit how to play and would try to teach me. I wouldn't have it. My heroes were Arto Lindsay and Fred Frith, and my aesthetic was pure freedom - from knowing how to play! The girlfriend's family had kicked me out by the time graduation came, so I moved back east, eventually to Philadelphia to hook up with my brother while he attended the PA Academy. Despite her family's disgust, I had fallen in love with this free music making thing and brought back the fever to my brother. I also spread the word to Clint in California, espousing the joy one could only experience via creating a racket with electric instruments, and the seeds were sewn. Clint eventually made it east to join up with his din-absorbed friends (John and I) under the guise of going to graduate school. Once we purchased our FX boxes many nights of drunken distorted fun commenced.

John met a guy named Brian at art school. He would come over and hang out while we confused the air around us. Brian was a good guitar player and eventually, against his better judgment, joined us in our merriment. Once in a while he would try

to show us how to tune, or what a chord progression was, and we would have to explain to him again and again the virtue of our endeavor, the purity we were striving for. Isobel Sollenberger was also attending the academy and around this time she came over. We had started being described as the band that never looked at each other and she was intrigued. A drummer, Bob Sentz (again the academy) also became interested. For the neighbors this was a bad thing. Then I was laid off and began collecting unemployment. Somehow Brian's ideas of "song structure" and "playing in key" started to make sense. I had a lot of time to think about them. I learned some fundamentals and it only became more fun. At first, John and Clint were shocked and disgusted by these nascent conservative leanings, but I presented an argument stating that it would be good to be able to play something more than one time and our purity was forever compromised.

Joe Culver joined on drums when Bob couldn't hang anymore. Joe now finds himself restrained from full Bardo submersion by family obligations, and Ed Farnsworth has ably joined on as full time drummer. Joe now finds himself adding Farfisa touches when we're lucky.

CT. OK, I'm pitching in my two cents just to try and keep Michael's wanton appetite for manipulating history in check. I am the war-whore of Jeremahtika's puddle and we need to praise the gilded pool cleaner of our strangely ale-colored pond. Anyway, yeah, all that stuff he said is pretty true. Yes, I did purchase a Lester Bowie and Phillip Wilson record titled "Duets" from Mike at Morning Glory, and let me tell you - never in my life has a cashier of any kind, at any kind of store, try so hard not to sell me something. After ripping the album from his hands and throwing my seven-or-so dollars at him, I fled the store, fully expecting him to pursue at full gallop. Well there was no chase so I realized that he wasn't that kind of kook, but maybe the right kind of kook - one I could hang out with and borrow a lot of records from. And so we've been friends ever since. He's one of the good ones.

IS. I remember one of the first times I went over to John and Mike's place. It was exciting to be able to paint all day long surrounded by people - the energy of it was intense. Playing music was a natural progression. We were primed to rock. I went over with another curious friend from school, and we played these handmade cow bells that someone had left behind in the metal shop and pretty much anything else we could get our hands on. It was complete noise communion.

JG. Some of my earliest memories are of Michael trying to get me to record something or other. Our parents got us a little tape recorder and he was taping everything; music, comedy bits, covert

operations, mixed tapes and so on. Our motto was "lets see what it sounds like", and it still is in a way. When I visited him in Chicago, he got me upstairs playing primitive guitar and the fever started catching. A friend of Isobel's, Elliot aka "the tree guy" gave me an acoustic guitar to play around with. Hours would go by as I pounded away in the fire escape at the Academy.

Who came up with the name Bardo Pond, and what does it mean? Has the meaning changed now you've been around for a while?

MG. Bardo Pond was named at the end of 1991. We had been entirely a living room entity for about two years. John, Clint and I were the original perpetrators. We were the Switzle Twins for awhile – even though there were three of us. Clint had come up with the name long before. He had been reading the Book of the Dead and fell in love with the word "Bardo". The Bardo is the where a soul arrives upon its corporal body dying. It is in the Bardo that it is determined where the soul will proceed. The factors determining this are how it negotiates the different stages and visions it encounters. These themselves having been created from the soul's prior life experience (there will be a test on this later). The soul will either ascend to Nirvana or return to another corporal existence. Clint decided this would be a fine place for a pond, especially for fishing. Over time the name has acquired entity status, and we try to carefully attend to its needs.

JG. The Pond was Tuesdays and Fridays, a case of Yuengling Porter, hours of experimenting and listening, mysterious sounds coming from somewhere through us and around us and the Green Man and the sycamore trees. Nowadays, fortunately, its about the same.

Prior to formation of Bardo Pond, and other than what we just covered, had any of the members done anything musically?

MG. John, Isobel, Clint and I are fine art majors and have had no other band experience. Isobel studied piano and flute when she was a kid. Ed has been in quite a few Philly bands (most notably to your readers being Emma, Brother JT, Vibrolux) for a bit, and Ashtabula. Joe was in a few bands in Seattle for awhile, Sad and Lonelies, Big Tube Squeezers and others.

CT. I Just listened to a lot of records and made mix tapes - that's my training. Actually I did play in a Japanese drum troupe for a little while, in the late 80's. I learned the eight count without having to count to eight in my head.

IS. I studied flute and piano but I never really had the discipline to do all those scales, that homework. I was the 12th chair in the school band, sitting in the back. I kind of gave it up until I started jamming with these guys.

I'm interested in the parallels between the Bardo Pond's recordings and performances and free jazz. Arguably in the rock orbit, free music is most often associated with the unlearning or non-learning of instruments, whereas in the free jazz sphere, the launching point still seems to be from a position of instrumental virtuosity...

MG. Free music is about inventing sound. It's less about traditional formal facility or skill and more about sounds ability to connect with the human brain and body, regardless of how it was created. Free sound accesses a powerful playing and listening experience, if you're open to it. When I first became aware of these ideas, they blew my mind. Before this, music was an intimidating realm. Jamming was a mystical thing I could never know. All of the sudden anyone could try it. No wave was also an inspiration, it had close ties with free jazz and punk rock. Of course, this led to a couple of years of some horrendous racket, which some might say continues. But I think that there are more similarities between Free noise and free jazz than differences. Someone like Keiji Haino for instance - I mean that guy's a virtuoso, isn't he? I think that many of the free noise people are virtuosos, only their approach to their instrument is different than what one expects. Both practitioners take you to the same place - an ecstatic place, or peace.

CT. There's that jazz tradition definitely. I don't think there a similar tradition in rock, maybe because there isn't as long a lineage of that free-form style of playing. Someone can enter free rock as a player without having played their fingers or feet off for years and years, if that person has been listening, knows what sounds they want, and has the instrument to pump it out, whatever it is. It does seem necessary though, the time you spend working with that music, whether there's a tradition or not. I mean didn't Haino play with just two chairs and his voice in San Francisco once? How many years do you have to play before you have the nuts to play to an audience using just two chairs and your voice, or is that something that just happened because no one showed up with the Marshall stacks?

Initially you seemed to have strong empathies with what the NZ free noise artists like Dead C were doing, with touches of the sonic anarchy of the Sun City Girls and some textural connections with Sonic Youth, but these influences seem to have rapidly transcended with the creation of a kind of more Kraut-influenced kosmische soul-blues (with strong

improvisational leanings). Do you now see yourselves as closer to free-jazz and Guru Guru/Ash Ra Tempel, than bands like the Dead C?

MG. Well, we love all the bands you have mentioned. Bardo Pond is a strange shape shifting entity, always changing it's parameters. We really never know what it will present us with. It's getting more interesting as we keep at it. The Dead C/Sonic Youth/Sun City Girls are so great because they can do so many different things. Early on, the Dead C seemed more song-oriented and made some of the best rock tunes I know. Recently they have eschewed this and opted to more heavily explore their glorious freedom. Man that new one, what a monster, such a great record. We focus our shit in a more song structured direction and I guess have always been compared to them. Really, the Dead C, is there any other band? We both share a love for feedback, as of course does Sonic Youth. Sonic Youth is also at heart a song-oriented unit, although they seem to be evolving towards more free pastures lately. They were so beautiful at the All Tomorrow's Parties gig. I love the Sun City Girls and couldn't begin to understand them and their relation to us - they are amazing. And we listen the 70s German stuff so, it'd be hard not for it to come out! we also feel close to the Japanese scene. High Rise, Acid Mothers Temple, Incapacitants, Slapp Happy Humphrey...what a place.

CT. Yeah to all of that. I would only add Sabbath, 'Dark Magus' era Miles, Royal Trux, Spacemen 3, and that British noise rock axis of Skullflower, Total, Ramleh and Sunroof!, for all over the place good stuff that connect with us. Also, Fushitsusha, who I think at times can be the most dangerous power trio ever.

JG. Also some ethnic and folk music...we recently played a show with The Magic Carpathians Project from Poland - they play a kind of spaced out forest music with ethnic instruments, flutes, didgeridoo and tabla along with bass and guitar. I was really impressed with their combinations of sounds, beautiful music and people.

You had some cassettes and singles before the first album 'Bufo Alvarius'. Can you tell me what those early recording sessions were like?

MG. Ironically, at the time of our first recordings we were experiencing a bit of a shake up in the group. Clint moved to New York upon receiving his degree, so the band was evolving into a group without him. We hardly practiced as a band. I had taken up guitar in his absence at practices. When Clint finally split from us, it happened we had gotten some studio time booked at this small studio. We decided to record our new tunes without

him. The recording session was traumatic for all involved. We were in way over our heads. We had some real shit little amps and guitars at this time, but some serious pedals. The recording guys thought we were nuts - they were right. The funniest moments were when I asked to have the guitars sound more "monster", and he informed me "we don't have any monster guitar sound". When we were finished the same guy said that we had to do it again, re-record everything because "it sounded like a weird live recording of a band with...weird stuff going on". I told him that was exactly what we wanted, and he said "no - that is exactly what you don't want" and that it was "self indulgent shit". Well, Bob and Isobel, who was much more involved in the band by this time, thought John and I were wrong, and that we gave the recording engineers an unnecessarily hard time. Bob quit, stating a desire to pursue his painting, and Isobel was this close...and then Compulsiv liked it and decided to release some of it as our first 7 inch, "Die Easy/Apple Eye". Isobel was persuaded to remain in and we found Joe because he was the only guy to respond to our ad in the music store. Luckily we had included Half Japanese on the list of bands we liked...

How was your in-studio discomfort overcome so that the material on 'Bufo Alvarius' could actually be successful recorded?

MG. By this time, our method of working was to discover themes through improvisation, remember them, then practice them. Sometimes the tune mutates further, yet still retains the basic shape of its original conception. Many tunes have built in to them exploratory areas, so I guess you're right, they are always changing. A recording captures a snap shot of them growing. Sometimes the picture changes afterwards, other times it remains as it was captured. Not often, though.

How did the arrangement with Darren Mock and Drunken Fish come about?

MG. I sent a cassette to Your Flesh magazine. Peter Davis gave it to Mike Trouchon for possible review, which he did. That was great, he really dug it. I sent a letter to Mike through the zine and we hooked up. He knew Darren and suggested we send him a tape, so we did. Darren really dug it too! We were so freaked, so happy. We also gave a tape to the Khyber Pass here in Philadelphia, and were getting some shows. It was a fun time!

Listening back to 'Bufo Alvarius' now, how do you feel about it?

MG. It may still be a favorite for me. We were so psyched to be doing it, and the tunes were and still are so much fun to play. I feel it was a solid view of

what we were up to, and we had a great producer/engineer recording us in Art Difuria, known, I'm sure, to your readers as front-man for the great Photon Band. He was so cool with us. We were real rookies and he cut us a lot of slack. Those eagles, eh art?

JG. It was a great time for us. The timing was just right for those songs, and we were really grooving with Joe having been with us for awhile. We were all developing and he definitely took us to another level.

You mentioned getting shows at the Khyber Pass on the strength of early cassette stuff. What were these early shows like, and what kind of reaction did you get from the audience?

MG. We were getting opening slots. Mainly we played for our friends at the early Khyber shows. We were pretty green! When we got shows that had "strangers" in attendance, the room would usually clear a bit, but anyone who remained usually committed to us. It's still pretty much the same. As time went on our gigs got stronger. With Joe Culver in the line up shit took off fast and our gigs were getting intense. We were jamming a lot, and one show we had with Steel Pole Bathtub was really good. The crowd freaked on a version of 'Amen'. That version wound up on 'No Saki Saki', our third cassette release. That cassette got us really going out of town - that's the one I sent to Your Flesh and Drunken Fish.

The CD of 'Bufo Alvarius' had 'Amen 29:15' appended to the LP material, and that tracks seems to really show the evolution of Bardo Pond around this time. If I recall correctly, this marked the recorded debut of Clint on the Pond stuff. What do you think Clint brought on his return to the band?

MG. Clint wound up in Seattle and we kept in touch. I'd give him updates on our recording projects. We did a Drunken Fish single 'Trip Fuck/Hummingbird Mountain' and another Compulsiv single 'Dragonfly/Blues Tune' and then Drunken Fish wanted to do the first LP. I guess about a year went by and things were chugging along for us. The vinyl version came out, and then Clint started to want back in and before we knew it he moved back to Philly. I wasn't going back to the bass so he grabbed it. The CD version was about to come out and Drunken Fish asked us to put an extra track on it. We recorded 'Amen 29:15' at this time. That song was a perfect vehicle to reintroduce Clint to our sound. We had to simplify our whole situation because he didn't know any of the material and was new to the bass. It was hard but great fun, and definitely changed our course for a bit. On the plus side were the long workouts with Clint and Joe holding the bottom and the rest of us

going off. Those are always fun, and you can hear an example of this as the 'Harmony' tune.

JG. We really connected on that one. We all felt something powerful happened on 'Amen 29:15'. The depth of the full pond was revealed to us sonically. We could go places with Clint - strange and beautiful other places.

I think it was shortly after 'Bufo Alvarius' that 'Big Laughing Jym' was released. Was this one picking up some unreleased stuff from the same time as 'BA'?

MG. Yeah, it was that plus a tune from the four-track library - 'Dispersion'.

The leap from Drunken Fish to Matador seemed a fairly crucial one. How did you come to the attention of Matador, and how was the deal set up? Was there any reluctance to sign to such a (relatively) large label?

MG. Matador had been in contact with us from pretty early on. They called to ask us to play a show in NYC after the first two 7" singles came out. It was at CBGBs which was wild. It was actually a Homestead Records gig. We met Steve Joerg there, who does Aum Fidelity now - a great contemporary free jazz label. So we had some idea that something might be happening at some point. We knew that the big-shots there liked us a bit, which was great. We were having a great time with Drunken Fish, so it was a difficult decision to make when Matador formally asked us about signing. Luckily we have been able to remain associated with Drunken Fish, as Hash Jar Tempo. Bardo Pond owes much to the Drunken Fish and Compulsiv labels.

Matador is the perfect label for us because although they are a bit larger than most independent labels, they retain a small label's approach towards artist relationships. We have total control of our output. They are just real supportive and everyone there is really cool. They have a real love for the stuff they champion. We had no reluctance about signing with them, except for the bits about first born male children, but they later told us that was all a misunderstanding!

1996 saw the release of 'Amanita', which was a ground-breaking release at the time for the band. How was it different to record to previous stuff, or was it pretty much done the same way?

MG. We had more funds to work with, which opened us up in the studio. We really got to experiment on 'Amanita'. We were working with a guy here in Philadelphia named Jason Cox, who is incredible. We also worked with him on 'Lapsed'.

We had a lot of material and we practiced like crazy before we went in, so the band was really tight. It was a lot of fun spending time in Studio Red, they had tons of great gear as well as a piano, and we checked it all out.

Compared to all your other releases, except perhaps for the new one, there is a lot of space and transparency to the sound on 'Amanita'. 'Rumination', 'Be a Fish', 'Yellow Turban', and 'RM' are really tracks you can swim around in. What were you trying to achieve specifically with the sonics of this release?

MG. We were working on our sound intensely at this point. Every aspect of it that we could push we did. That is pretty much our credo - push it, push it again. If we walk away feeling like we did that, we're good to go. It's not a conscious thing, more like following a group intuition with us, as far as what we are up to at a given point. That material was formed that way at that time, so that is how it went down.

'Rumination' really established a great modus operandi, with Clint holding the central melody on bass so that Michael and John could howl their shit on top. What in particular influenced this approach?

MG. 'Rumination' was a riff I came up with that was really worked on and actually constructed as a song. Same with 'Tantric Porno' or most the record except for 'The High Frequency' and 'RM'. I can't think of anything that was influencing us, it just became what it is. Well maybe a little Crazy Horse action...

Does it bother you that many people still rate this as your finest moment, or are you just happy to have left an impression, whenever and however?

Is this how you feel?

Equal par with the new one 'Dilate' for me I guess...

MG. Actually 'Lapsed' is sited at least as often. We just do what we do, what people think about the records isn't what keeps us going, it's playing. Not to say that hearing praise isn't fantastic, it's just that everyone likes what they like, you really can't gauge anything from it. We're happy with a strong reaction in general, whatever's being expressed.

Is Isobel really singing "I want to smell like a fish" on 'Be a Fish'?

MG. Yup. I believe it's "I'd like to..."

IS. Yes. That was an off the cuff chant thing that I came up with early on in the song's creation. "Be a Fish" went through a lot of incarnations and I had

always drenched the vocals in delay. It never occurred to me that it would end up sounding so different on the record. When we mixed it, the guitars were drastically reduced on the verses, and there was only tad of reverb on the vocals so that my lyrics were naked and lay revealed. Jason Cox had a lot to do with how this song particularly came out. He had a great feel for this one and the rest of that album. 'Be a Fish' is our most requested song. It's about being in a joyful place, at peace with yourself and the world and digging on simple things, the sun and the air. That doesn't happen all the time, when it does it feels like I'm moving through water.

Around the time of "Amanita" you hooked up with Roy Montgomery, and that led to the Hash Jar Tempo project and the "Well-Oiled" CD on Drunken Fish. How did that all transpire?

MG. It began with Mike Trouchon. He became friends with Roy and turned him onto us. At one of our first shows in NYC, a gig at The Cooler, Roy came up and introduced himself. I think it was towards the end of his stay in NYC. It was great meeting him. Dadamah was such a great band, and that was mainly what we knew him from back then. It was a few months later that we got together for the Well-oiled session. That was quite a weekend! Roy was hooked up with Drunken Fish at this point and he blew into town with some Drunken Fish big shots. The occasion was our CD release party for 'Bufo Alvarius', which was at the mighty Firenze Tavern here in Philly.

With the HJT stuff, was there much pre-planning, or did you all just basically plug in and capture the moment in an even more "snapshot" way than the Bardo Stuff?

MG. Roy came up and jammed with us at the gig. That was the first time we ever jammed. Later that weekend we all wandered into the studio. Roy took out his guitar and started playing a bit, and it sounded good, so we each naturally grabbed our respective instruments and joined in. It was incredible. One of us would start going on something, and then each of us would join in. Listening to the tapes is wild, hearing the process in action. There will be a few moments of really untogether stuff that'll coalesce in a few seconds into something that sounds like a rehearsed tune. That quality is really strong with the Hash Jar Tempo stuff. It is heard as played - total improvisation. It's a kind of instant song creation - the tunes are complete in their arrangement upon conception, kind of reptilian. It's a weird thing. He has a style of playing like our old friend Brian had, so it was real comfortable from the start. There is a wild conjuring going on. I don't know if we thought it was any good after we finished. You never know

what to feel after those things, and are kind of scared to listen back to them because it'll sound bad or worse. Then we listened to the tapes and it sounded cool, so we sent them to Roy and he dug them too.

JG. The sounds were flowing free, we would pick a key and everyone would find a zone and nestle in. Sometimes the first reaction to a sound will come out without you consciously knowing what you're playing. You are in the pocket trying to stay with that purity and let it happen. Those sessions we did just fly with it and to jam with Roy was extraordinary.

Would you have liked to tour the HJT stuff with Roy? I'd say that would have been wicked to see, but assume it may not have suited the Roy lifestyle!

Yeah, that would really be something to do/have done. He has settled down a bit. It's a hard proposition with all the oceans and continents involved between us. We jammed at the second Terrastock, but only briefly. I wish we could hook up more with Roy in general. It's a stone gas!

It's now 1997 and the band is firmly ensconced on Matador Records, and is benefiting from the label's considerable clout. The years 1997 to 1999 produced two albums from the outer extremities of rock. 'Lapsed' and 'Set and Setting' were bruising, chaotic encounters full of giant, slowly churning acid blues improvisations. They weren't for the faint-hearted, even when compared with the work that gone before them. Any thought that 'Amanita' represented a small step towards the mainstream was scattered like wisps of stellar matter after a supernova. Like a recording of page being torn in half and played back very slowly and at great volume, 'Lapsed' and 'Set and Setting' shred the mind, paving the way for euphoria. In the two-year gap between them, the members of Bardo Pond ruminated, toured occasionally, changed drummers from Joe Culver to Ed Farnsworth, and constructed the Lemur House recording studio, the playpen that would allow them to fulfill their recording ambitions without the time, cost and aesthetic constraints of conventional recording studios. We continue by talking to the band about this period.

PT: Between 'Amanita' and 'Lapsed', was the band's time taken up mainly with touring, or did you stay local to Philly and work on material for 'Lapsed'?

Michael Gibbons (MG). We toured for a couple months - probably not enough - and then eased into the 'Lapsed' phase of operations.

The title of 'Lapsed' breaks from the hallucinogen-referencing mould of the Bardo discs up to this point. What did you mean to convey by the title?

MG. I was interested in a few different things with that title. It's a loaded word - at first we were going to continue the tradition of the previous LPs, but I was going through the dictionary and the word jumped out. For me there is a sense of "falling" connected with the word. In both the physical/literal connotations of falling, and the more metaphorical context of falling from grace. Sometimes with our music we try to produce mental states of exhilaration that are similar to the sensation of rising and falling. There is also the act of lapsing into a coma or some other kind of unconscious state. Some people have told me that they have sworn off listening to our music while driving because of its ability to cause them to drift off into unconsciousness. I know it can put me right out. There's also the "lapsed catholic" thing, which could be considered to apply to some of us.

Clint Takeda (CT). Maybe it's because we hadn't been to church in so long, or because I had not opened the Tibetan Book of the Dead in years. Or because we had lapsed into some dream state. Or just because it sounds good coming out your mouth.

What did you think of being described as the logical successors to the Jefferson Airplane in this journal's review of 'Lapsed', or should Phil really watch his chemical intake?

MG. Not sure about Phil's chemical intake, but we definitely weren't disturbed by what he described about Jefferson Airplane and us in that review. It was an honour for us to have him say that. They were a definitive American acid rock band - good company.

CT. It was a first to be connected to that band and a funny thing to read. We didn't mind it at all, and I'm sure Phil has long ago mastered the aesthetics of chemicals.

'Lapsed' seemed to be the point where you had pushed your instruments so far that they broke up into clouds of abstract stellar matter, back-scatter radio transmissions of pure-fuzz. In fact the record sounds like it was picked up by a radio telescope and recorded onto giant slow-moving reel to reels for later analysis and yet it's inherently melodic. Was this instrumental disintegration the aim?

MG. Yes it was. The songs started to become heavier and the sound was really being pushed towards the point that you so aptly describe. It was an intense time. In the months after we settled down from 'Amanita', heavy distortion and density were what we were digging. I remember we really threw a curve ball here in Philly when we started playing that material out. Our friends were into it and that propelled us deeper into our research. In a way, I guess we were reacting to 'Amanita'. I was a

little uncomfortable with some of the elements of that record. It seems weird to really acknowledge this now, but some of the more pop aspects of the record wore thin for me right afterward. I felt like we had inadvertently presented ourselves in a "selling out" kind of way with some of that material. Some of the criticism of it I felt reflected this. We hadn't "sold out" and had pursued the work on the album (as with all the others) with our usual devotion to the fucked, yet somehow for me 'Amanita' didn't turn out as sick as I would have liked it to be. We also wanted to make 'Lapsed' a more succinct statement than 'Amanita', which we felt to be a bit of a sprawling effort - we didn't want another double album. These were our goals by the time we began recording 'Lapsed'. So it was great to hear our engineer/producer/ colleague Jason Cox repeatedly tell us how "sick" we sounded during recordings of the basic tracks. 'Lapsed' was recorded at Cycle Sound here in Philadelphia, which was a great setting for the sessions. It is half recording studio and half motorcycle repair shop - perfect for the state of mind we're in. The tape machine and the board we used there had a lot to do with the sound. Really good and warm, but with a hard, dirty edge to it. That was a fun time. Jason was once again integral to that sound and always had a suggestion for ways to make the sound sicker. Actually, there are some radio transmissions on 'Aldrin' that were coming in through John's amp...

CT. I remember a feeling of wanting more - a need for excess – an excess of fuzz, dirt, density, frying, moaning, tongue-speaking, burnt motor oil, white particles, rough mixes, and amnesia. There was a desire for those kinds of things, but maybe not necessarily a direct seeking of them.

Is there a story to that creepy bone-cart on the front cover?

CT. I used to work a lot at flea markets and swap meets back in California. The one I used to sell my goods at was in Victorville, an hour and a half out in the desert from LA. Before I would set up the merchandise I would wander around and occasionally buy interesting stuff that I found. That photo in particular I bought at the Victorville swap meet, with a handful of other equally haunted old photographs. I drove out to that dust devil parking lot for three years, every weekend, found a lot of weird shit out there.

'Tommy Gun Angel' seems to have become a bit of a classic Bardo track. It is monumental in its extremity but, paradoxically perhaps, still has the groove and accessibility of 70s rock along with its Magellan Cloud storm of drones. Is there a story to that one?

MG. The riff for 'Tommy Gun Angel' was discovered at the end of a recording of a different song, by me

and our friend Tristin Ford Lowe. As the song that we were listening to trailed off, I had started this heavy strumming chord and was playing the beginnings of something. It was some very dense sonic action. We both were listening and I remember him saying he liked that stuff. I went back later, listened to it and recreated it as best I could, and that became 'Tommy Gun Angel'. It is a live favourite - a real intense tune and I like the simplicity of its form. It's a very emotional type of song, and Isobel's singing is very urgent and powerful. There are many overtones that are created as we play it and a great momentum is gathered.

CT. It's one of those songs we refer to as a "sonic song". We seem to always have one or two around. They don't get names for a while usually. Someone will say "hey, let's play the sonic song". And the answer will be, "the new sonic song, or the old sonic song"? And the answer to that can be "the new, new sonic song, or the way old sonic song". So there is a tradition of that type of tune for us. The name came from an image I thought was funny - an angel floating above the ground a few feet, packing a Tommy gun style machine gun, firing rapid fire into some unseen scenario. All in slow motion, smoke and sparks blazing, obscuring the peaceful smile on the beautiful angel's face. I thought the song sounded like that scene.

Tracks like 'Pick My Brain' and 'Flux' definitely illustrate that this is a more densely packed and claustrophobic work than 'Amanita'. 'Flux' sounds like it was recorded on a planet with twice the gravity of Earth or something. Were you striving to illustrate a more troubled state of consciousness than you were with 'Amanita'?

MG. No, not really. I think we were approaching it with the idea of making it as powerful a listen as we could make it, and something that was not and could not be background music. I'm not exactly sure why, but it was the goal for this album to be kind of severe, not for the faint of heart. At the same time, we were interested in a kind of beauty that can be experienced with listening to something dense and dark. I read an article once about the Japanese band C.C.C.C. where they talked about listeners to their music having endorphins triggered into release by their brains because of the intense experience of listening to the music. Endorphins bind with opiate receptors and when released produce a sort of opiate state. A soothing calmness is produced in the listener who can brave the initial dissonance. I think we wanted our listeners to feel this when they listened to 'Lapsed'.

CT. Like I said earlier, I think we really wanted to feel that kind of density. Something with a greater specific density than what the recording medium

was able to handle. And I don't think we were looking for trouble, or a more troubled state. It was just one of those itches you have to scratch. That tune is one of my favourite Bardo things. I get to play high squealing bass feedback while the brothers Gibbons lay down the heaviest slabs of guitar spewage. Good one I think.

There was an interval of a couple of years between 'Lapsed' and 'Set and Setting'. What was going on in Camp Bardo at this time?

MG. That's an interesting question. We sometimes talk about the album's worth of material that somehow never came out after the first year went by and nothing came together. We didn't tour for a while after 'Lapsed' came out, so that set us back. Then we were trying to get a recording situation going here. We were getting familiar with equipment and what-not. People were also moving about. Ed was becoming our drummer yet Joe was still heavily involved. That was a long transition that was strange to go through. These things contributed to the album that never came to be.

CT. Sitting around the pond staring at fish. I really don't remember. More amnesia. We toured a bit. I think half that time we were at the Canadian/US border waiting for US customs to finish searching the van and gutting our gear. Eons it felt like - definitely years off our biological life span. By the time they let us out of there it was time to record 'Set and Setting'. Actually I think I was trying to get my sculpture activity back into gear. I also worked for money and watched Saturday morning cartoons.

Could you talk a little about what different aims (if any) were pursued for 'Set and Setting', or did you see it as very much a sister record to 'Lapsed', despite the gap between the two?

CT. Yeah, I definitely think of the two records as connected. The difference is in the method of recording. 'Set and Setting' was the first album recorded at the Lemur House, which would be our home studio in North Philadelphia. Being able to record at home allowed us to record over a period of time without the pressures of paying for that time. There's a more relaxed and looser approach to the tunes as well as a wider array of choices because of the lack of time constraints.

MG. For myself, 'Set and Setting' was a bit different. It was more organic. With the Lemur House recording set-up, it could be pushed much farther. Recording ourselves has always been the centre of what we do. It is the process of jamming, recording, listening, editing, jamming, recording, listening, editing, jamming, recording, that has helped us find whatever there is in our music. So

'Set and Setting' was the first record to truly reflect what is going on inside the Bardo Pond. They are all sisters.

John Gibbons: Usually we were aiming straight into the sky hoping for a busted cloud.

"Walking Stick Man" is another one of those great tracks that is like a map or statement of intent for the Bardo universe. Can you tell me a little about the how that one was done?

CT. I guess we were feeling a lanky blues thing coming on. It brings to mind for me that underlying blues feeling that anchors some of my favorite heavy rock tunes...

MG. Yeah, that track is similar to 'Ib' on 'Dilate', but not as old. It went through a few arrangements before we felt cool about it. The parts are minimal, but when we fit them together just right, they get really satisfying to play. The track really benefits from the home taping ethos. We barely had a handle on it when we did the take on the record, and also hadn't jammed in a month before we recorded it. 'Again' was recorded that same jam. So a combination of things made that song. John started playing that riff one day and it really knocked me out. I was like, "perfect man, keep it up...how delicious".

One of things I liked about "Set and Setting" was the move to use violin more. This definitely gives an extra dimension to the music on this record to my mind, and almost a Middle Eastern feel in parts. Were you happy with the way that violin worked out on this record?

CT. Yes, I think the violin was a great addition for Isobel. It gives her even more territory to roam and opens up wider fields for the rest of us to play in. I remember a real fun show we played with Tony Conrad at the Cooler in NYC. We came on right after him and played 'Amen' for 20 to 30 minutes. It was one of my favourite versions of that tune and I think it had a lot to do with his violin, tuning the stage to this wide-open frequency. Isobel has this great ability to be able to envelope the whole sound of the band with that violin.

MG. Right! John found that fiddle at a local flea market and bought it for Isobel for Xmas. She got ta playin' that thang and it was glorious indeed. She was, and is, a natural. It definitely motivated a tweak East for us, and is really a welcome addition to our drone - like it was always there.

For some reason, I find this record to be the most soulful of the Bardos. I'm not sure why that is, but it's probably a combination of established and

transitory/new style elements like the two drummers, violin/vocal parts.

MG. Thanks. The things that wound up on it were the ones that affected us the most during playbacks over a two-year period – a very intense two-year period.

The new album “Dilate” has some real surprises on it. One thing that struck me was that it contains some of your heaviest stuff on it, right alongside acoustic material. What led to this polarisation (which works so well) and specifically was there any psych-folk stuff you were listening to that inspired the acoustic stuff?

CT. The polarisation that you talk of came about in a very natural way. Of course we have our heavy tunes of the moment, and this time we had more than a couple of sweeter tunes. In putting the album together the quieter songs sounded great together at the beginning of the record and so they were arranged that way. Of course the heavier tunes had to go on and they fit real snug at the back end of the album. Yeah, it's actually a heavy-assed album. Fat on the rear end. For this material it all just fit like that. About the psych-folk angle I can't think of anything specific that was heard. Love that Slapp Happy Humphry record. Makoto Kawabata's side projects like 'Floating Flower' and 'Uchu'. Sandy Bull. I've always loved Beefheart's short guitar instrumental things like 'Flavor Bud Living', that one just kills me. I don't know if that's anywhere evident on our album but I can make believe that it is. 'One Rose That I Mean', we love that stuff.

MG. Acoustic guitar is the backbone of Bardo Pond. Three-quarters of our songs begin their trip on it. However, electricity is an intoxicating love. Somehow, the stuff always winds up heading into the fuzz, leaving the acoustic behind, probably because we love that dang Flying Saucer Attack, Dead C, Spacemen 3 and Skullflower kind of stuff so much. On 'Set and Setting' we got into a little acoustic over dubbing and it was fun. We also started to record some acoustic jams, so that led into the beginnings of 'Dilate'. We'd record a lot like that and listen back and pull the band down and listen to just acoustic guitar and voice and we'd dig it. We started to embrace a more studio-oriented representation of the tunes. Six Organs of Admittance is a big favourite around here as are Floating Flower, Fursaxa, Popul Vuh, Sandy Bull, Pelt, Pentangle, Incredible String Band, Ry Cooder and what's his name; Neil something...

The track ‘lb’ seems destined for the Bardo honour roll both on the album and in the live setting. I assume it was intended as some kind of climatic moment for the album?

MG. As I was explaining earlier, 'lb', like 'Walking Stick Man', is an example of a tune that's been around for a while, gone through a few arrangements and then finally been realized. 'lb' was always a climax through all the changes, it just was more and more purified. Another home taping reward - I just can't say enough about the benefits of the process for us.

CT. That track would be the beginning of the fat ass on this album. It's a tune we've been playing live for a while. One of our show closers where Ed plays as hard as he can and we end whenever Ed can't go on anymore. That tune was inverted at one point having the middle part as the intro and the beginning somewhere else. It's like one of those souped-up engines that you take apart and put back together in a way that allows you to be able to really burn some rubber. On the last part I get to do a bass freak out with my Q-tron screaming and then me and Ed drop into a high speed romp, then the rest of the kids come in freakin'. It's really fun to play. I like watching Ed pound his drum kit till he gets literally blue in the face. That's how I can tell when we're going to the end, when his face turns blue.

“Favorite Uncle” is a classic example of the more acoustic side of the album...

CT. Yeah, that one starts with voice and two acoustic guitars and then it all comes together. I don't even play bass. Well ok, I do, but I just make warbling sounds using a can opener. We were pretty happy with the way that one turned out.

MG. It's also an example of a tune that is the complete opposite of 'lb' and 'Walking Stick Man'. It just grew like a psylcibe after a thunderstorm. One night John and I came up with the basic form. The next practice we started jamming it. Ed jumped in, and Clint grabbed the aforementioned can-opener as well as a viola. This is the basic recording that is heard on the record. We dubbed acoustics later, and wound up letting them introduce the song. It starts off really easy instead of a long intense search.

I think “Dilate” is the first Bardo Pond album to have published lyrics. What was the intent there?

CT. I don't know. Initially the idea didn't make any sense to me. A Bardo Pond album with lyric sheet seemed bizarre. Generally I am anti-lyric sheet on any album, unless it's like Don Van Vliet lyrics or something. From a graphic design point-of-view I think it's hard to make a bunch of lyrics look good. I'd rather see a picture of clouds, or a monkey, or whatever. But after seeing how it was going to look on the inner sleeve of our album, I thought it was cool. Mark-O and Frank at Matador did a great job.



It was good to see Isobel's words really for the first time with such clarity; it adds a depth to my view of the tunes. On one of the tunes the lyrics are credited to myself, which is something that I'm not sure I'm comfortable with. They tell me those were words I mumbled on the initial version of "Favorite Uncle". I don't remember because it was one of those drunken 'make um up' songs that happen occasionally. What really amazes me is that Isobel transcribed the words, and hell if I can make anything of them, but she sings them, bless her heart.

You have always made great efforts to support the Terrastock festivals. What do they mean to you?

CT. It's like this moment when this village of like-minded music lovers suddenly appears in some city and we can all do what we love to do. We support them and Phil let's us play at this great party. It's been a great privilege to be able to do that. A couple of those times that we've played Terrastock have been real high points in this band's playing history. They have taken us on some real nice trips.

MG. It's like coming home...

How did the recent tour go? Any paranormal things happen on the way round?

MG. The first night of the tour was a night off in Amsterdam. We were at our favourite place to be, in Amsterdam, and actually the entire universe, the ROKERY, enjoying this time, so good...I'm trying to piece it all back together...I remember watching a guy that for some reason looked very familiar walking up to the "bar" and then walking back past me and as he passed I was saying to myself (and apparently out loud) "that's Johnny". And Clint finished my sentence..."Knoxville...jackass."

We love watching golf here at Camera Obscura HQ, and a little bird tells me that you guys do too. What's up with that?

MG. I love the way time goes by while watching. So many things can happen, and it never fails for drama as a tournament unfolds. It's a tough game.

Some northern lights, a three-hole play off, and some Acid Mothers...

CT. Yeah, what's up with the golf? Personally I remember watching golf on TV when I was in junior high school by default because football was on so late at night in Japan that I would have to watch golf for an hour before the NFL came on. So I ended up watching people like Tom Watson, Gary Player, and some how found myself mesmerized by the greens, the slowness of the game, the long puts. It was meditative, with the periodic rush of watching a ball sinking into a hole from 20 feet out – a real bizarre activity. Anyway, today there is Tiger Woods. He is kicking ass. Because of him golf is really rocking right now. Anytime this kind of thing happens you have to take notice, whether it's golf or curling, or whatever. When a human being can master his or her own abilities to the extent that he has it's just a incredible thing to watch. It's like watching MG Jordan, or Jimi Hendrix. Anyway, yea, we watch golf, when were not making records with big asses.

The members of Bardo Pond are presently recovering from North American and European tours with Mogwai, and planning, as they style it "the next phase of world domination". Another North American tour is on the cards, this time with them headlining, and including the October All Tomorrow's Parties festival in Los Angeles, which may or may not have happened by the time you read this. A headlining European tour in early 2002 is also possible. They have also started making a spiffing series of limited edition CD releases (titled Vol. 1 to Vol. n), generally with a small handmade quantity of around 50 CD-Rs followed by a regular edition of 500 CDs. These will no doubt be highly sought after in the future, so grab them while you can. Side-projects seem to be a favourite pastime around the Lemur household. You already know about Hash Jar Tempo. An incarnation of the Pond known as Prairie Dog Flesh exists to indulge various Dead C urges, and has been described by the band as "the primitive lizard brain behind Bardo". A mighty CD blast titled "Take the Green Over the Red", is available from the band's web site for your self-flagellation. Another intriguing project is Third Troll, which comprises Michael Gibbons, John Gibbons, Isobel Sollenberger, Kevin Moist and Aaron Igler. A jungle-dense entanglement of "effect-drenched guitars, violins squeals, flutes, crazy keyboard action and drums" awaits you on their debut CD "Phlebotomy", also available from the band's web site. The Bardo Pond are the psychedelic underground incarnate, and should be treasured and nurtured while we have the chance.

Written and directed by Tony Dale, © Ptolemaic Terrascope, September 2001