

seismic wavesWords: **Melissa Bradshaw**Pinch Photography: **Georgina Cook**

London's dubstep soldiers make a move on the US West Coast

We turn off the road and into what, under cover of darkness, looks like fields. There is a big steel gate. A man in black comes and opens it for us. About 200 yards down, we turn left between two warehouses and find The Compound. It's small inside. It can probably fit around 150 people, and the walls are draped with black. The booth is in the middle and people stand around and behind. New York dub musician **Badawi** is making a live soundtrack to Jan Svankmajer's *Faust*. There are giant bunnies and men stealing severed legs from the wreckage of car crashes, and Badawi is setting loose vaguely rhythmic growls of bass. There are a couple of samples – something about 'amnesty' and something about grannies. The crowd are contemplative, like they're at an art gallery.

Kode9 comes on and something happens. There's an itching pulse now. I find the best bass spot is just behind the booth under a speaker hung from the ceiling, so I stand there. The sound is crystal. The projection screen just says 'Hyperdub' in big white light and the desks illuminates 9's face from beneath. The bass is a refracting, gravelly pulse, and things start moving faster. MCs hit the stage: **Juakali**, a Brooklyn vocalist, his wobbling dreads silhouetted against the screen; and **MC Child**, a British expat, bouncing the stage, skanking off a knee injury. About half an hour in we're jumping and swirling it goes off when 9 drops in the unmistakable intro from the RZA/GZA's '9th Chamber', one of the greatest bits of hip hop ever. Then he backs off – accepting bathos but not release, letting lines skitter and purr. Kode9 is masterful.

One night later, we're at Jelly's on San Francisco bay, and we're surrounded by hippies. Compared to grime, dubstep always was kind of hippie, but here it's more than just an undercurrent. **Ripple**, who runs the night, is all muscular, while **Juju**, who plays after him, wears a Mohican and has tattoos all over his. They're playing the standard tunes, well; but the dancing is different – there's all that circling hands in the air trance shit. There's some guy dressed as a leprechaun but with his eyes painted with red and he's hopping like a Morris dancer.

Pinch comes on and starts of what I think of as his underwater stuff; all the sounds move in a slow, liquid suspension. Juakali is on fire, hands in the air, dreads in the air, dub style talking like no one else I've heard on dubstep. Pinch is clever and has energy loose and I've been so immersed I've barely noticed how far and carefully he's switched the mood. Finally, **Distance** comes on and plays mean bangers, tension up and down, and keeps it crunked, his tunes are still big. And we bundle off, achy-legged, in cars that disperse all around the bay.

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**Shadowed Spaces**

Outdoors, Edinburgh

Pink is bringing the party to Edinburgh Castle tonight. Hordes of fake tattoos totter up the Royal Mile towards one of the most famous skylines in the world, eager for the hits.

But where we are feels very far away. Waiting outside the gates of Old Calton Cemetery, once the resting place of Edinburgh's great and good and now a notorious cruising spot, a gathering of 50 are at their designated meeting point to take a little journey.

Organised by Arika, this year's tour takes as its theme the sheltered zones of our everyday urban environments:

abandoned, officially disused areas which have been left to degrade and rot with the passage of time, and consequently become hidden places, or those used for secret or nefarious ends.

We find ourselves following a long neglected railway line, dense undergrowth near concealing the rusted tracks. As we approach a tunnel, a high-pitched whine shifts towards us, and on entering the underpass, we're submerged in the sine waves. Moving further down the track, we find ourselves in a clearing where NYC drummer Sean Meehan is crouched in the bracken and thorns, coaxing the most delicate of percussive sounds from a cymbal and snare.

And standing on a hillock in the near distance, Tamio Shiraishi brandishes his saxophone and proceeds to unleash a torrent of stop-start phrases, screeches, cries and caws.

Swiftly, the gulls appear overhead, diving and soaring and swooping up and over and around Tamio, the gulls seemingly mimicking and replying to his exhortations.

A fleet of taxis hurry us across to the backside of the West End. On scrubland behind the city's Sheraton Hotel, with needles and broken bottles crunching underfoot, Ikuro and Sean perform a delicate duet of drum patterns, Sean scraping manipulated kitchen

forks across the pulled-tight fabric of the snare.

Scurrying back along the carriageway, Tamio is waiting for us at the roadside as buses and lorries and cars all scream and thunder heedlessly past. He is once again looking to the skies, blasting out wave after wave, constantly changing needs so as to reach ever higher velocities.

The gulls come again once more, clamouring and screeching and circling overhead. Perhaps it is more their city than ours. The world will look and sound different now.

I wish every night was like this.

Euan Andrews