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54 THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOUND

Wherever you are now, stop and listen. Do you hear that? We're not hearing things; we neither have a sixth sense nor are losing the plot. What we do know is that even physical spaces have souls and soundtracks for storytelling – deep stuff huh? Musicity took seven homegrown talents for a geographical-meets-musical excursion and **JUICE** tagged along for this 'Made in Singapore' production. Ears to the wall, beats to the wind – aural pleasures await us.

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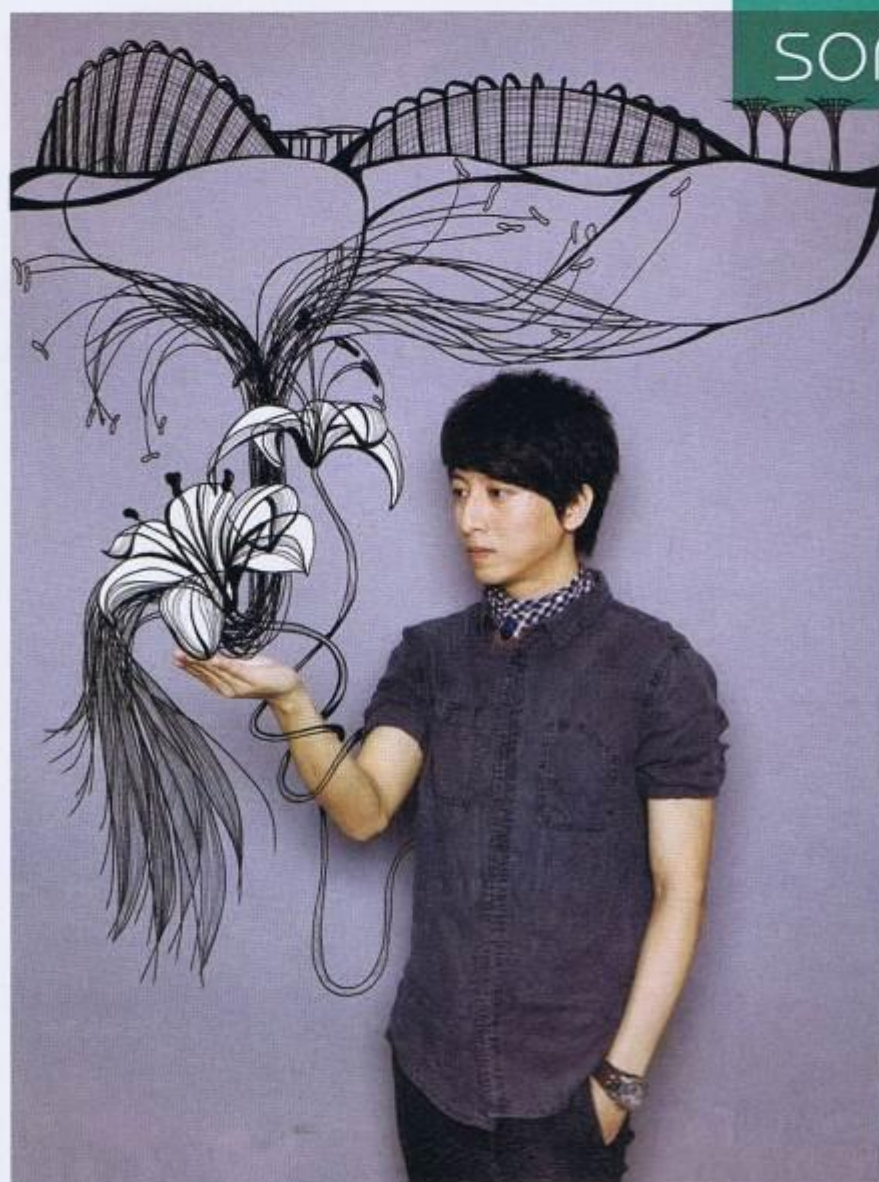
BRITISH COUNCIL X MUSICITY SINGAPORE

The Architecture of Sound

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CITIES ARE A LOT LIKE PEOPLE. EACH ONE HAS ITS OWN BEAT, ITS OWN STYLE, ITS OWN PERSONALITY, AND OF COURSE, ITS OWN SOUND. CITIES ALL SIGH, SPEAK, SING – ONE JUST NEEDS TO PAY ATTENTION. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT MUSICITY IS SO GOOD AT NOTICING. AFTER LENDING MUSIC CAPITALS LIKE LONDON AND TOKYO THEIR OWN UNIQUE SOUNDTRACKS, THE INITIATIVE, ALONGSIDE PARTNERS THE BRITISH COUNCIL, HAS SINCE SET ITS SIGHTS ON OUR URBAN ISLAND. WITH AN INVIGORATING GOULASH OF MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE AND TRADITIONAL LANDMARKS, THE LION CITY PRESENTS A WELCOME CHALLENGE – WHICH IS WHY THEY'VE SOUGHT THE HOMEGROWN EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE OF THESE SEVEN SONIC SPIRITS.

SINGAPOREAN MUSICIANS SONICBRAT, JASON TAN (OCTOVER), DJ KOFLOW, I AM DAVID SPARKLE, MUON, THE ANALOG GIRL AND COSA NOSTRA WERE ALL COMMISSIONED TO COMPOSE ORIGINAL MUSIC INSPIRED BY VARIOUS ICONIC SPACES, EACH VALUED FOR THEIR ARTISTIC, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THIS MERGING OF DESIGN, MUSIC AND MEMORY AIMS TO OPEN UP OUR EYES AND EARS BY ADDING INTANGIBLE DIMENSIONS TO OUR CITY'S TANGIBLE FABRIC. DIRECTOR NICK LUSCOMBE AND CREATIVE STRATEGIST SIMON JORDAN MAY HAVE CONCEPTUALISED THIS MULTI-SENSORY PLATFORM HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD, BUT THEIR IDEA HAS SPREAD FAR AND WIDE – AND OUR ECCENTRIC IDENTITY MIGHT BE MUSICITY'S MOST INTERESTING VENTURE YET.



sonicbrat

Eclectic composer Darren Ng aka Sonicbrat has crafted numerous pieces for local theatre, international film, contemporary dance performances and various arts installations. Well-known for his use of field recordings with electro-acoustic apparatus and his DIY improvisations on hand-made instruments, the sought after sound artist has been picked to showcase his multi-instrumentalist works in stages as varied as the Hanoi Sound Stuff Festival in 2009 and the Barcelona edition of Red Bull Music Academy in 2008. This time though, his art is firmly steeped on home soil as Sonicbrat shapes his music to the shape of Gardens by the Bay.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

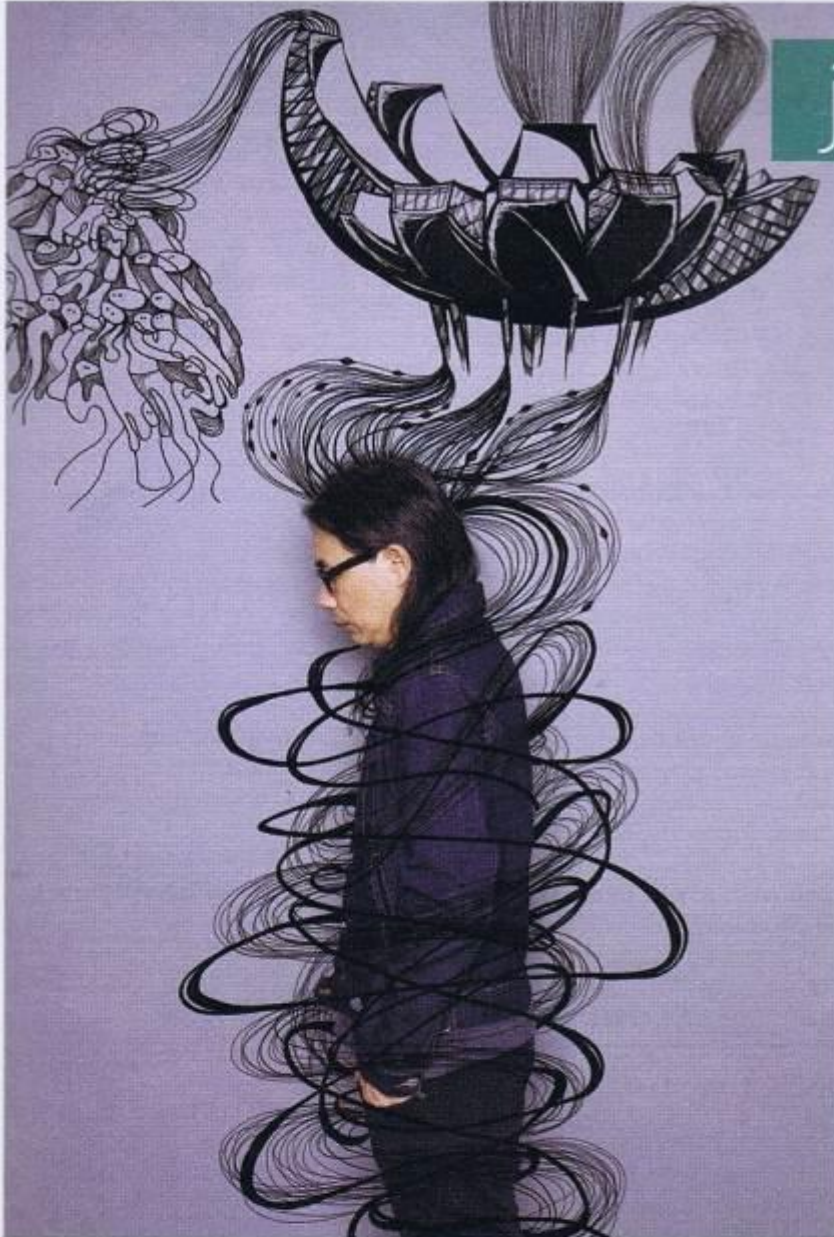
It was quite an interesting and humbling experience for me. I got to visit Gardens by the Bay as the source of inspiration for my track. After that, it was a rather contemplative process where I sat at the piano for hours with my eyes closed, meditating about the plants and their subtle movements in the wind. I hit the record button and started to improvise based on these thoughts and feelings, emulating the quiet plants, letting the music play on, on its own. Working with Mara Carlyle on this track was a really wonderful experience as well.

Tell us what your neighbourhood is like and how you're inspired by its surroundings...

One of my favourite spots in Singapore is Cairnhill Arts Centre at 126 Cairnhill Rise. It is a quiet little spot, with a preserved heritage building. The reason I'm attached to this place is because I've been working with The Finger Players, a theatre company, for the past nine years as an Associate Sound Artist and Music Composer. It is a place where I've grown up artistically. I do have a lot of nostalgic memories of the place – and nostalgia is inspirational as well.

If you were asked to create a playlist for this spot, what 10 tracks will you pick?

I'll play none and let the place speak for itself. It is very quiet as it is from the distant bustling Cairnhill Road and Scotts Road traffic. Instead of a playlist, I would say the place makes music on its own. It is cocooned by the rustling whispers of tree leaves laughing to the impish wind; curious birds singing to the shady afternoons, fluttering away with the occasional echoes of footsteps on concrete stairs. This is juxtaposed with the sounds of construction sites where new homes are being built, thus coming together like an aural canvas on modernity.



jason tan (octover)

Octover's been making waves lately, and you can count us amongst the many who are eagerly awaiting their forthcoming debut album via Syndicate's recording arm. The team-up between prolific crooner Vanessa Fernandez (Vandetta), and pioneering electronic producer Jason Tan, is an inspired one, managing to weave together bass-draped trip hop with beautiful vocals into one helluva hypnotic package. Jason Tan is the brilliant mind behind those beats, and now he's also using his talents to craft an electronic blueprint for The Art Science Museum.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

It was a great experience. Having met Jon Hopkins for the first time and making a track together was really nice. There were a lot of musical similarities between the two of us. Making the piece out of ambient recording from The Art Science Museum was really interesting. I don't think either of us knew how the piece would turn out, we had very little control over environmental sound and there were very little musical structure when you use an ambient recording. A lot of time was spent on transforming and re-synthesising the recorded sounds and putting them together as a singularity.

Name us your favourite place in Singapore that inspires you...

Queenstown!

If you were asked to create a playlist for this neighbourhood, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. Brian Eno (Daniel Lanois, Roger Eno) – "An Ending Ascent" (Virgin)
2. Harold Budd and Brian Eno – "First Light" (EG Records)
3. David Sylvian – "Answered Prayers" (Virgin)
4. Ryuichi Sakamoto, Alva Noto – "Naono" (Raster-Noton)
5. Future Sound Of London – "Lifeforms Part 1" (Virgin)
6. Nurse With Wound – "Soliloquy For Lilith" (Idle Hole)
7. Einsturzende Neubauten – "Insomnia" (Self-released)
8. Nine Inch Nails – "Ghosts I" (The Null Corporation)
9. Ryuichi Sakamoto + Various Artists – "Chain Music 1" (www.sitesakamoto.com)
10. Amorphous Androgynous – "The World Is Full Of Plankton"

koflow

Singapore's turntable throne has belonged to the imitable DJ Koflow, for dam near a decade, and to tell the truth, very few are even close to usurping the scratch wizard's crown. With a glittering trophy cabinet overflowing in accolades such as the DMC Singapore Championship and first runner-up at DMC Technics World DJ Championships, Koflow's credentials are impeccable. But far from simply being a battle DJ, his insane tricks and technical ability has laid waste to plenty of dancefloors and international festivals. Just for this special project, our turntablist king has spun together a track for School Of The Arts!

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

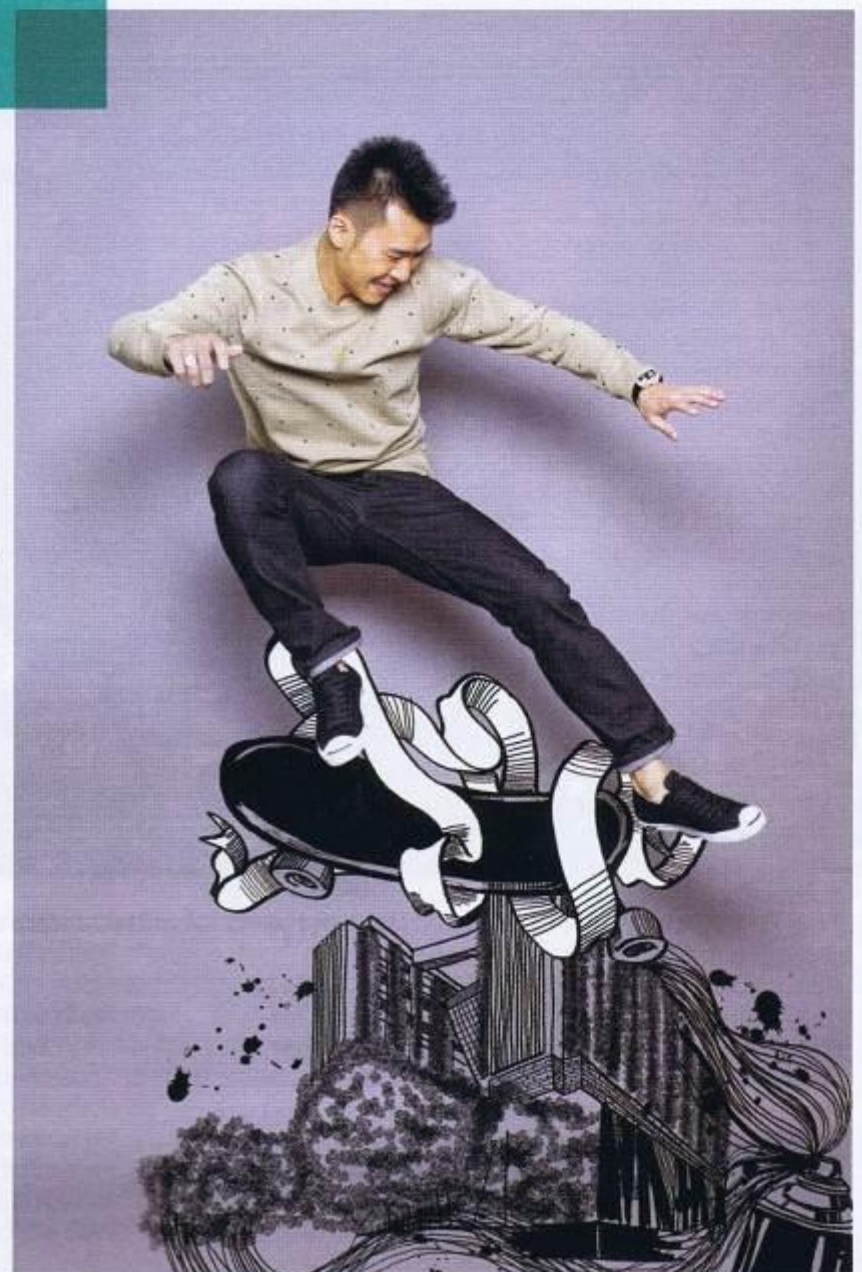
It has been great learning from my peers. I'm probably the least experienced in beat making, but being able to interact with the good musicians has helped to shape my views in music as well! Creating a track on SOTA has also been very inspiring as the students play full classical pieces without reading notes! It was a good experience to watch all the talented kids hone their skills in their respective art forms. They have influenced me a great deal and their passion seems to convey a message: Don't give up, don't waste talent on any other job you might not like.

Tell us what your neighbourhood is like and how you're inspired by its surroundings...

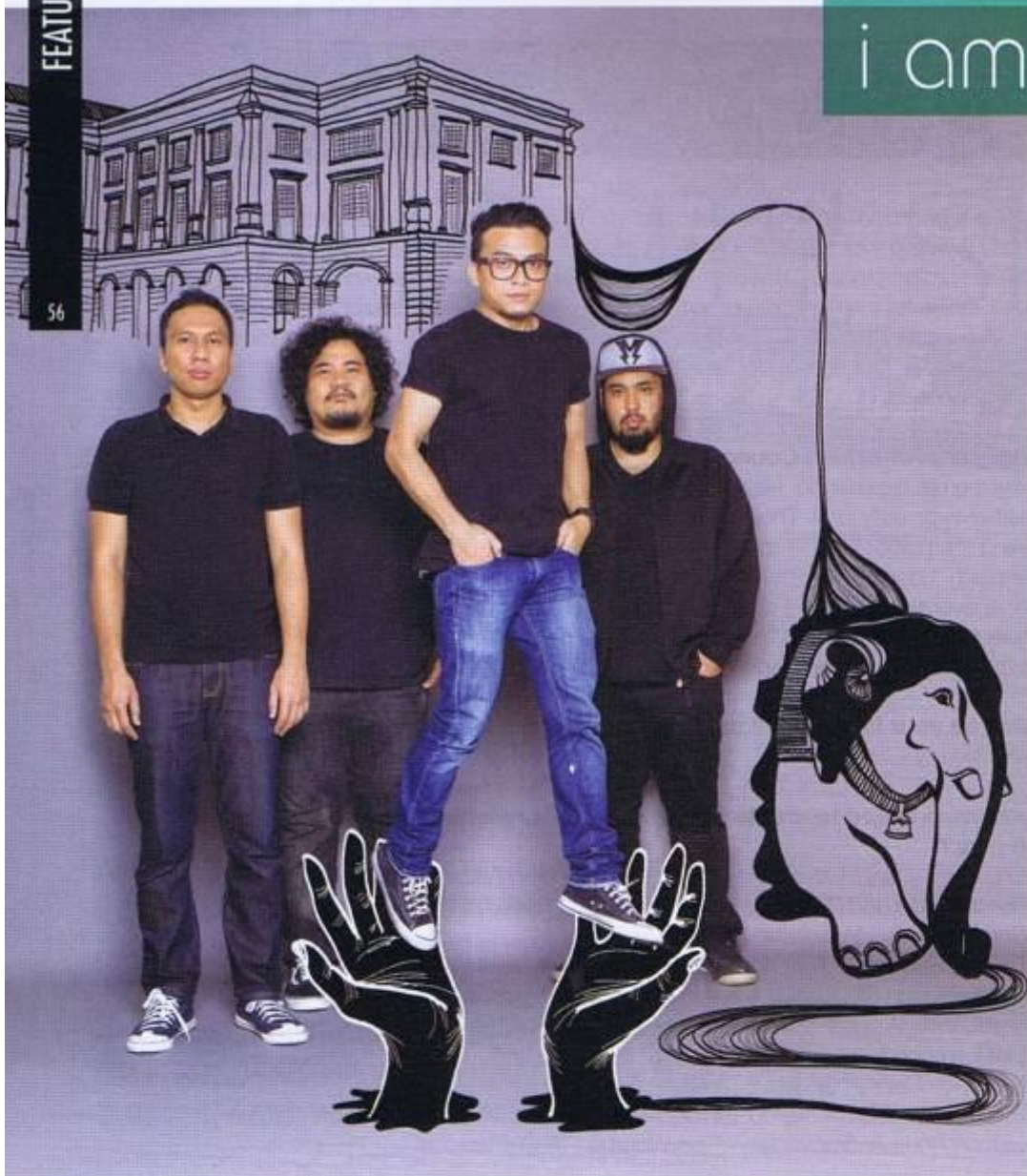
I lived in a tough neighbourhood through the '80s and '90s. Also known as the Red Light District, Geylang was not the main inspiration for my music though. My favourite spot would be Haji Lane and place would be Blu Jaz. Blu Jaz has inspired much of my work in recent years; especially the first album entitled *The Turntable Instrumentalist*.

If you were asked to create a playlist for these spots, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. Geylang: Kanye – "Flashing Lights" (Roc-A-Fella)
2. Geylang: Rick Ross – "Hustlin'" – (The Island Def Jam Music Group)
3. Geylang: Boris Gardiner – "Ghetto Funk" (Jazzman Records)
4. Haji Lane: Hottub – "4 Lokos Only" (Mochipet Remix)
5. Haji Lane: Kevin Lester – "Rockstar" (Bedsty Music)
6. Blu Jaz: Koflow – "Turntable Instrumentalist" (Self-released)
7. Blu Jaz: James Brown and Bobby Byrd – "I Know You Got Soul" (King)
8. Blu Jaz: John Coltrane – "Afro Blues"
9. Blu Jaz: Herbie Hancock – "Watermelon Man" (Blue Note Records)
10. Blu Jaz: Blacksheep – "This Or That" (Polygram)



i am david sparkle



After wowing gargantuan stages on both local (Good Vibrations, ZoukOut) and international (SXSW) scales, I Am David Sparkle can count themselves as one of Singapore's proudest musical offerings. But besides their live accomplishments, their instrumental intricacy and post-rock power can also be found on a pair of seminal Singaporean albums called *This Is The New* and *Swords*, both released via KittyWu. We recently got to know their story through a moving documentary (*Ignore All Detour Signs*) chronicling their struggles behind their US tour, but now it's time for them to tell a different tale through a sonic interpretation of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

It has been nice to be even considered in this project, let alone participate in it. We've always wanted to score music for projects and this project was the perfect opportunity. The people involved have been a pleasure to work with, the support and platforms provided for our peers and ourselves have been amazing, and it is a welcoming alternative to the 'paying you by exposure' mentality that has been plaguing our community for quite a while.

Name us your favourite spot in Singapore that inspires you...

We enjoy spending time at places which are tucked away from the Singaporean hustle and bustle, and some areas near Marine Parade or Siglap do seem like excellent escapes.

If you were asked to create a playlist for these places, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. P Ramlee - "Getaran Jiwa" (EMI)
2. Best Coast - "Our Deal" (Mexican Summer)
3. Twin Shadow - "Golden Light" (4AD)
4. American Analog Set - "Born In A Cusp" (Arts & Crafts Productions)
5. Junip - "To The Grain" (Mute Records)
6. Cults - "Go Outside" (Capitol Records)
7. Frank Ocean - "Thinkin Bout You" (Def Jam)
8. Peter Tosh & The Wailers - "Give Me A Ticket" (Tampa Records)
9. The Shins - "New Slang" (Sub Pop)
10. Favourite's Group - "Kasih Sayang"

muon

Drenched in moody soundscapes and immersive electronica, Muon's main manifesto is intelligent experimentation. And while that may infer abstraction, their music is so elemental and immediately emotive that anyone with ears can hear beauty within their off-kilter patterns. Showcases at Mosaic Music Festival and Syndicate Subsessions raised their profile considerably, but it was their latest album, a distinctive and magnetic masterpiece entitled *The Shape of Shapes To Come*, that really captured our imaginations. The newly settled outfit will now lend a bit of that shadowy magic to Musicity to compose a piece about the Esplanade.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

Nick: It's been an honour to be part of it and get the opportunity to contextualize our music within a different paradigm of relations than that which it usually functions with or as. Working alongside really talented local contemporaries and knowing that all this is not just operating within a local cultural context, but a global one as well, really is inspiring.

Jordan: Playing in Gardens By The Bay is definitely a landmark performance in the aesthetic department. I feel that the concept of composing music inspired by real physical places is a great vehicle to spark creativity.

Ren: It's been dope (lots of it).

Name us your favourite place in Singapore that inspires you...

The Void, a place at Dunlop Street, in Serangoon - it is a place where music, forms and permutations of all sorts are created and where memories of the future are propagated via various archaic techniques.



If you were asked to create a playlist for this spot, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. Telefon Tel Aviv - "When It Happens It Moves All By Itself" (Hefty Records)
2. Muon - "Oahu" (psymbiosis)
3. Amateur Takes Control - "Ghost Promise" (KittyWu)
4. I Am David Sparkle - "Ninja Death" (KittyWu)
5. Aphex Twin - "Xtal" (Apollo Records)
6. Phoenix - "Armistice" (V2)
7. Squarepusher - "Don't Go Plastic" (Warp Records)
8. Primal Scream - "Keep Your Dreams" (Creation Records)
9. Tame Impala - "Runway, Houses, Cities, Clouds" (Modular Recordings)
10. AIR - "Do The Joy" (Source)



the analog girl

Having been hailed by outlets like CNN and *TIME* Magazine as one of Asia's premiere artists, one could forgive The Analog Girl for taking it a little easier. But letting up simply isn't in her DNA. Hot off the best record yet, *Tonight Your Love*, the ethereal Analog Girl is still relentlessly perfecting and promoting her edgy craft. She's winning hearts and minds everywhere from Night Festival to New York City, all in the name of good music. And for Musicity, she's been tasked to infuse her dreamy and daring electronica into the historic Hong San See Temple.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

I was immediately drawn to the Hong San See Temple, which translates to the 'Temple on Phoenix Hill'. The sculpture of a carp swimming upstream and transforming into a dragon spoke volumes to me as it was a beautiful thing to see, and its perseverance was something I drew inspiration from. So, my track "Like Dragons" reminds us that we all have it in us to overcome all adversities and to accomplish whatever we set out to do. I also worked for the first time with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, and the juxtaposition of my synthesized beats with their classical organic sounds makes this a breakthrough.

Tell us what your neighbourhood is like and how you're inspired by its surroundings...

I grew up in East Coast, right next to the beach so I had palm trees and blue skies on most days. At night, it is perfect for a drive, to soak in the sea breeze and nightlights. Living by the coast gives me a sense of freedom, like I can travel beyond horizons, both literally and figuratively. This connection with space and exploration creates dreams and from there, music.

If you were asked to create a playlist for this place, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. Washed Out – "Feel It All Around" (Mexican Summer)
2. Blood Orange – "Champagne Coast" (Domino Records)
3. Kavinsky (featuring Lovefoxxx) – "Night Call" (Record Makers)
4. Chromatics – "Night Drive" (Italians Do It Better)
5. Beach House – "Walk In The Park" (Sub Pop)
6. High Places – "Sonora" (Thrill Jockey Records)
7. Depeche Mode – "Question of Lust" (Mute Records)
8. Little Joy – "Unattainable" (Rough Trade Records)
9. Cat Power – "Sea of Love" (Matador Records)
10. Lykke Li – "Silver Springs" (Hear Music / Concord)

cosa nostra

Made up of DJ Funk Bast*rd and saxophonist/producer Kaye, Cosa Nostra's been busy bringing the boogie to pretty much every dance floor ever built in Singapore. Their manifold style encompassing everything from hip-hop to house to dub to disco has allowed the duo to be immensely prolific, invoking smiles and smooth moves from heads of every genre. And besides holding down nights in venues like Zouk and Broadcast HQ, the pair also runs a forward-thinking music label called Darker Than Wax! Naturally, Musicity also asked them to produce a visionary statement about Singapore Art Museum.

Describe your British Council x Musicity Singapore experience...

It has been nothing short of fun – doing location sound recordings, making a nuisance out of ourselves in public spaces, and interpreting the link between architecture and music in our own way.

Name us your favourite spot in Singapore that inspires you...

We like grimy places. So anywhere that has been untouched by the nation's fixation on "upgrading" works for us. That means some parts of Little India and Chinatown, or Geylang. We feel that these neighbourhoods have more character, and it's 100% more real than Marina Bay. We have already lost Bugis and most of Arab Street in our opinion, and it's just a matter of time before other places fade away to make room for sparkling new buildings with giant LED facades.



If you were asked to create a playlist for these places, what 10 tracks will you pick?

1. Miles Davis – "Blue In Green" (Columbia)
2. Rick Holmes – "Remember To Remember" (Gold Mink)
3. John Coltrane – "Impressions" (Atlantic)
4. Weather Report – "Young And Fine" (Columbia)
5. Eric Dolphy – "Madrig Speaks, The Panther Walks" (Fontana)
6. Chris Are – "Lurk" (Cascade Records)
7. Lapti – "Phat" (Unreleased)
8. Jay Lotus – "The Love Movement" (Unreleased)
9. John Danser Octet – "Cool" (Think! reissue)
10. Weldon Irvine – "Walk That Walk; Talk That Talk" (RCA) J