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By James Flint

James Flint explores the connection between environmentalism and techno

January's been about three things for me: whale song, the new mall that's nearing completion about ten minutes walk away, and the music of the late-1980s. No, wait – there's a fourth thing too: sitting swathed in strobing fairy lights in my concrete eyrie in King's Cross, gazing out across the iridescent network of the city, I've been contemplating the purchase of a car. I mentioned this to a friend of mine and she said I mustn't do it – think of the planet. Laugh? I nearly cried. See, I thought we gave up all that personal responsibility stuff back in 1989, when we all donned smiley badges and started leaping around to Lil Louis and Black Box [*Pump up the Volume: Classic Club Sounds from the Late '80s and Early '90s* // Universal]. Richard Sen knows what it was like; he was DJ-ing at the Limelight and the Astoria at the time [*Richard Sen presents Powercuts* // Obsessive]. He saw us all gaily trading the future integrity of our brain chemistry for a six-hour dose of electro-funk; he must have known that we'd all long given up any hope of saving the environment from total collapse, even if we didn't know it yet.

Even techno's decided it's not worth the biscuit. After trying to bully everyone into actually doing something with all that doubt and angst by pounding out the same tune for seven years, its purveyors have accepted the inevitability of mall culture and climate change and moved on to a greener, fresher and more rhythmic place. Oliver Ho has set the tone by mousing up the World Music slider on his copy of Cubase; the result [*Universal* // Meta] is strangely listenable. Drexciya's solution [*Harnessed the Storm* // Tresor] has been to drive a minisub out into the North Atlantic, sample a bunch of whale song, and pound it into a 4/4 shape suitable for consumption by the ancestors of the hairless mammals who, a couple of billennia back, decided to stick with land after one of their number had a vision of Ikea outlets, polluted sunsets and tablet-form ecstasy and convinced them all it was something worth striving for.

So, in the spirit of 'what do I know, I'm fucked anyway,' I *am* going to buy a car. Something reassuring and yet ironic, something that will transport me in air-con comfort to and from my new local mall. I'm thinking either a 1998 white BMW five series or a Seat Ibiza Chill. Either would go well with all the nuevo-retro electro-trash currently coming out of Europe, large quantities of which I plan to be loading into my boot-mounted CD cartridge: stuff like Crossover's *Fantasma* [International DJ Gigolos]. Along with the labels B. Pitch Control and Sonic360 (to be reviewed next issue) International DJ Gigolos seem to be intent on unleashing upon the world a new brand of electronic pop. Which is some consolation for the imminent loss of Holland and Bangladesh.

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