

Mp3 Moth - Back From The Dead



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Chilled, laid back, yet intelligent acoustic statements and visceral electronica on the second CD by the man of a thousand instruments and his chameleon princess. 15 MP3 Songs in this album (54:20) !

Related styles: ELECTRONIC: Trip Hop, ROCK: Adult Alternative Pop/Rock People who are interested in Annie Lennox The Cranberries Moloko should consider this download. Details: Moth have been busy cooking up a feast of treats in this chilled out, laid back trip hop offering that lands somewhere between a healthy helping of acoustic alternative rock seasoned with a smattering of electronica on this, their second album entitled "Back from the Dead". In the same vein as "Songs for the Lost", this album boasts another mammoth selection of fifteen songs. Whereas "Songs for the Lost" was a series of portraits and perspectives on life, this follow up is a journey - and takes us once again on it's musical flight pattern through people and places, life and death on it's meandering path towards the light. Each song is unique and the glue that binds it together is the haunting female vocal provided once again by The Chameleon Princess. Tina's song writing on this album includes some incredibly thoughtful lyrics. Instruments and Production are provided by Ben Henderson (formerly composer and guitarist with Boa - the UK alternative/acoustic/rock band, not the Korean singer of the same name), and the style of each song seems to have different instrumentation on almost every song. Just like a moth, they have chosen never to settle, veering constantly towards the light that is the song. - - - - - "This CD shows the progression of Moth into a more self assured style, blending elements of acoustic alternative rock, trip hop and electronica as easily as if they were moulding a sandcastle. Moth have been operating quietly and do not promote their music heavily - one of the reasons that they choose to play many open mic nights in and around London, favouring small intimate venues. Their website showed their love of their art in the "working diary" they posted there. Although that information has been taken down now, I managed

to retrieve it and post it here for those that are interested in their songwriting process - it's a lengthy read, but gives a real insight into how the minds of these two deeply creative souls go about making their music." Moth. A working diary. Usually, Tina will start writing a song accidentally by using the vacuum cleaner. As its relentless drone fills the air, a melody will find its way into Tina's mind, and she will dash off to find her micro-cassette dictaphone, and quickly put the idea onto tape. Incidentally, the tiny electret microphone contained within the dictaphone is capable of imparting a unique flavour to vocals by using the headphone socket as the audio output - try it to record spoken vocals. Later, she will spend some time sifting through these ideas, it amazes me how she can hear a snippet of herself singing and then remember the entire melody! Unlike the melodies, which seem to just fall into her head, Tina's lyrics are a work of art in themselves...We rarely watch T.V. but when we do, Tina will have a notebook handy, in case any snippets of speech are inspiring. Tina will jot down references, themes, or ideas as they appeal to her. If an overheard conversation, or a chat with a friend turns up any unusual lines, they'll get jotted down on the back of an envelope, or a receipt, and are filed away when we get home. Tina normally has an idea in mind for a theme or subject for her songs. We still think songs should be about something, and most Moth songs are about people, or the situations or emotions that revolve around them. When we work together, Tina will usually have a melody and a lyric in mind. When I hear the melody line, I can "hear" full backing, drums, bass, orchestration...this isn't always what Tina has in mind, and sometimes the chord changes will have an impact on the way the melody takes shape. Sometimes, the way the music develops will alter the vocals Tina sings. At this stage, we are really kicking ideas around which are all to do with the song, and a structure begins to take shape. It's all pretty flexible musically, with the lyrics being the central focus. We don't really do any pre-production as such. I'll tend to start off with the drums, and either play, program or tap them in on the keyboard. I'll use MIDI to trigger Roland V-drums at this stage. If I played or tapped, I won't quantise at this point - if I did, it would destroy the "vibe", or feel that live playing imparts. I'll set up a little 4- bar loop within Logic and we'll overlay stuff from there. There is no set pattern - it just depends on what I think the song needs - it may be a synth bass, or midi triggering a keyboard or sound module, or I'll play bass guitar. It's vital to tune the bass guitar before recording, and before each successive recording. Got perfect pitch? No? Then get an accurate tuner! Bass guitar will either go through an amp emulator or D.I. Choose an emulation that is suited to bass guitar, or you may find the low frequencies suffer slightly as a result of the roll-off caused by inappropriate speaker emulation

- you wouldn't put a bass through your ordinary guitar amp (...or would you?). I'll add a little compression to control the volume a bit. I'll usually start off with a ratio of 3:1, and then bring the threshold down until the gain reduction meter is almost always lighting. That way, the loudest parts of the signal should always be attenuated. This ought to keep the essence of the performance: the dynamics, largely intact, whilst at the same time turning down the peaks of your playing, and not affecting the very quiet parts of the performance. Adjust the ratio until the gain reduction meter shows somewhere between -3 to -6dBs. The attack needs to be fast enough that it's attenuating the peaks, but don't set it too fast if you're using a plectrum! You'll lose the plectrum sound. Try somewhere around 10ms as a starting point. Set the release so that the compressor lets go of the signal before the next note crosses the threshold. If you can hear distortion, or the compression is apparent, then your release is probably too fast...ease up a bit. Try a 250ms release for a starting point. Obviously, the makeup gain should be the opposite of whatever the gain reduction meter says: if you've achieved -3dBs gain reduction, the makeup gain should be set to +3dBs. Any more than that, and you'll just be turning the whole signal up, along with the background noise! I'll play the whole song through rather than looping bits. If I need to edit, I'll use Logic to do it...for example, the perfect chorus might get repeated in logic and replace the others...or it might not!

Sometimes it's the guitar that is the most important element, whether acoustic or electric. Tune the guitar! I've got this Takamine electro-acoustic guitar that sounds great through the in-built pick-ups live, but it sounds better recorded with a couple of decent condenser mics. I tend to roll off the bass frequencies a bit, either on the mic, or using the desk (my Mackie 24-8 buss has a Low Cut Filter set at 75Hz, three pole on every channel). Nylon guitars sound rather nice when recorded through a large diaphragm condenser - experiment with mic placement, as it makes a huge difference to the recorded sound. Electric guitars come in two types: Untuned and tuned. Tune your guitar! Tuned guitars come in three main types: humbucking or single coil, or hybrid, which has both types of pickup. Humbuckers phase cancel noise...and yet they have unbalanced outputs. This is useful, as you can sit in front of the computer whilst you play, without picking up any interference. They give a very powerful, rich tone. I've got a Gibson Les Paul which does the humbucking thing really nicely. Single coil guitars cut through a mix well, they can really scream, but I think the sound is quite thin. I use a 1956 Vox Dominator for that single coil sound...I prefer it to the Fender Stratocasters I used on Songs for the Lost. It seems to have a more wholesome character somehow. I use a hybrid guitar when I need a specific tone. It has a Floyd Rose locking tremelo

system, great for diving bends and coming back in tune! Speaking of which, tune your guitar in between each take. Use the best quality lead you can - I use an active lead which requires power: it seems to let the high frequency content through much better than passive leads, and adds that bit of extra sparkle. I like to play the whole song, and edit later. Sometimes I'll record the electric guitar dry - direct into Logic, and send the output to a digital amp emulator, so I can hear an amp'd sound, which makes the performance better. Digital editing is so quick, and non destructive. Logic is a great tool for chopping out glitches, and building a structure. I might add time domain effects digitally at this point via plug-ins, or use an aux send to add an effect in the analogue domain. Once it has been edited and sounds the way I want it, I may send the guitar signal to a Marshall amplifier, and close mic it with perhaps a Shure SM57 or 58, or perhaps with a condenser mic at a bit of a distance to capture some of the room sound. Once again, experiment with the mic type and placement. Keep the headphones on whilst you move the mics...this is where the recorded tone is generated, it's important to get it right at this stage. Get the amp off the floor, otherwise you may get a boomy kind of sound due partially to phase reinforcement caused by floor reflections, particularly when close miking - oh, and turn the amp up! Don't be afraid to drive the amp quite hard, your recording will sound better for it! I'll record the amp'd sound, and possibly use the original signal and blend them together. Then, I might output the signal again, send a copy of the signals via an aux send to a reverb unit. I use Lexicon reverbs, although I also have a TC Electronics reverb, and various other units which do it quite well. The pre-delay is the amount of time between the direct sound and the first early reflection: it will directly influence how big the room space appears to be. The reverb time or decay, measured in RT60 is the amount of time needed for the reverb tail to attenuate by -60dBs. It's how long the reverb will take to die away. Density is how closely packed together the individual echoes are. Diffusion is how many echoes are being created by reflective surfaces within the environment, and the high frequency damping will be dependant on how much absorptive material is in the room. I tend to think of the type of space I'm trying to create in terms of suiting both the guitar sound and the emotional content of the song. By this time, I'll have possibly five signals: Dry guitar, Amp'd guitar (close mic), Amp (distant mic), and stereo reverb (you do bring your reverbs back in stereo, don't you? If God had meant us to listen to mono reverb, He'd have given us one ear, and then our headphones would keep slipping off). I tend not to send the Amp distant mic signal to the reverb unit. I can get it matching the reverberant sound by using a digital delay line to increase the pre-delay, if necessary. I'll insert the delay

into the return channel. Now it's quite nice to make a mix of these signals and record it to a valve reel to reel recorder, possibly saturating the tape, or driving the valves slightly. Then the signal goes back into Logic. I hope you have decent analogue to digital converters on your soundcard? 24 bit 96 kHz sampling rate? Good. Occasionally, I'll leave adding reverb until after this point. I leave the old guitar tracks on the arrange window, but colour them so I know which audio recording is to be used. I name everything in Logic! Each file is named and saved into a Song folder with the LSO and the audio files, all on the Audio hard disc in the Mac. Name it all! It will save you time later on in your life. Keyboards and synths, sound modules and samplers, old drum machines: I love 'em. Yes, I know they're all redundant technology now the software revolution has effectively wiped the floor with them...but consider this. Why did we relegate all this old kit to the junkyard? Because it didn't sound good? No. Because software is easier to program, easier to recall settings, easier to store, edit and maintain? Yes. The old kit sounds good. The new kit is easier to use. Call me a glutton for punishment, I like the old stuff. Plus, if I get a hardware synth, it comes with its own outputs. MIDI can edit a multitude of poorly played notes and make you sound like a robot. I used to like that. Now I figure sounding like a human is, in quite a lot of cases, better. Logic is a great MIDI editor. It all depends on what type of music you're trying to make how much you use it. How much control do you want? Do you just want to hard quantise the 1st crotchet of your drum pattern, or create tempo based panning gwirps and (-sweeping a resonant filter with a high regeneration setting from top to bottom as well as left to right)? Only you can decide. Of course, you could just play the keyboard and use MIDI as a virtual tape recorder... Thing is, MIDI sounds are never quite real sounding are they? Play a MIDI flute solo to a flautist and they'll cough politely, and smirk a bit. My theory is that you need some air or some distortion to get rid of the MIDI-ness of MIDI sounds. Try this. Record a little "Organ" solo via MIDI. Send the signal to a cheap guitar FX pedal...a Boss CE-2 or an MXR Phase 100 or whatever you've got. Now send it to an Amp, and mic it up in stereo. Overdrive the Amp very slightly. Record the sound as audio, and compare the MIDI recording to the audio recording. Air and distortion, see? Takes a bit of time and effort, but it sounds better, right? Pianos are pianos, and MIDI keyboards don't get close...each real piano note has three strings which resonate and create that amazing rich sound. Use a real piano if you can, or try setting up three different sound modules to play the same piano part. Distance mic the result in stereo. Go on, try it! I don't leave the little four-bar drum loop unless it's absolutely right for the track... I like to mix real drums with V-Drums when recording sometimes. Real cymbals and Hi-hat are hard to

physically model, and harder to make a multi-zoning pad for. Quite often I will mic up the real thing, and create a hybrid drum set of pads and drums. V-snare is great, because you can alter the size, shape, head type and damping, tuning etc. I love it. O.K. I know I said a minute ago that real instruments are better, and that the ease of digital software is pure laziness. That's true, but I don't have space for a thousand drum kits!!! I still use the real kit from time to time, because I like miking up a kit, I find it fun; but the great thing about V-drums is that because it is MIDI, you can change any part of the kit at any point in the mix down process. Even what is inside the bass drum - blanket, or gaffa tape, sir? Very cool. I might stereo mic the final drum sound as it comes out of the large speakers using a coincident pair, just to get a cohesive final ambience. Don't underestimate real percussion - it adds so much to a recording. I'll play live tambourine, shakers, etc. The best way to play percussion is to just enjoy doing it...if you are nervous about it, it will show in your timing. Dance a bit, and let the percussion be a part of the dance...er, man. Tina's vocals are the last the thing to be recorded...and we usually prepare a headphone mix and send it into the room we are going to record. I'll send the mix in mono, and ask Tina to keep one headphone off, which lessens the likelihood of picking up headphone spill, and improves tuning. Don't try to record someone while they've got both headphones on...they won't stay in tune too well! They'll say they can't hear themselves, so you send more of their own voice back to them, they still complain, so you apply reverb to the voice and send them that, you faff around getting the mix right, and then - guess what? Your mic is picking up loads of headphone spill, so what next? A noise gate? You mess around with the attack and the release times, until you think it is just right...and then you've lost the moment...the singer is getting bored or frustrated, and it will be apparent in the vocal performance. Just tell the singer that the song will only come out of one headphone, and to leave the other off...trust me. You know what happened the other day? I was recording a bit of a prima donna vocalist (not Tina!), and they said, " I can't hear my self." I went into the vocal room, and they had both headphones on, despite what I'd just told them, so I explained again and the vocalist took one off. I asked if they could hear the music at the right level, and they said the music was fine, but they just couldn't hear their own vocals. After singing a bit more, the vocalist complained again that they couldn't hear themselves. So, I went back in, and removed the headphones completely, and asked the vocalist to sing. I asked if they could hear themselves now. Looking perplexed, they asked me how on earth they were supposed to hear themselves without headphones on. I looked at them and asked if they could hear me. I was rewarded

with a lovely peel of laughter, and a few great takes after that. Studio psychology is really important. When a vocalist feels relaxed and comfortable, they generally perform better. It is worth a little time getting the performer into a suitable frame of mind to sing the song. Their vocals will reflect their mood and current state of mind. Most often, we'll use an environment with a lot of acoustic damping, to reduce room reflections which we don't want to record...we're just interested in recording the voice, unless it is a special treatment where the room reflections will form an integral part of the recording. A large diaphragm mic is used to capture vocals, usually a Octava MK319 or a Beyerdynamic MC740, which really seems to suit Tina's voice. We mount the mic in a custom suspension cradle with multi strand elastic, coated with woven fabric. This helps negate any effects of vibration transmitted through the feet and body of the mic stand. I usually apply the mics own high pass filter, or the mic pre's low cut filter when recording Tina's voice. The mic is connected to a Focusrite preamp, before going straight into the audio interface. We always use a plosive shield to guard the mic against any excessive blasting caused by the consonants B and P. We just run through the song a few times, I'll record as many takes as Tina wants to, listening carefully to each pass, and asking for Tina's comments on each one. I'll name each one in Logic, so I know which ones contain the most passion. We overdub backing vocals and harmonies the same day. We'll normally get one lead vocal take which is good most of the way through, we'll listen to each take and analyse each line carefully. We comp a vocal together in Logic. Once all the parts have been recorded, we'll just do something else for a while. We don't mix the same day as we record, although, if I have any ideas for production, I'll throw a rough idea of them down within Logic. I can always fine tune it later, but it serves as a kind of memory aid, or auditory notepad. Mixing really just involves fiddling until I'm happy! I'll usually start by soloing the drums, and concentrating on creating an appropriate bass drum. This used to involve a bit of EQ'ing, but I prefer physically modeling a suitable bass drum these days. I'll roughly create a snare sound with V-drums that is suitable, and make sure the toms cut through, and the cymbals have clarity. Next, I'll bring in the bassline, checking there are no frequency conflicts. Bass drum and bass need to be clearly separate and distinct. You can try boosting the BD at 80Hz, with a cut at around 200 Hz, whilst gently boosting bass at around 150 Hz. If that doesn't work out, experiment with different frequencies. Beware of boosting bass too much - these are huge wavelengths you are dealing with...too much amplitude and you'll lose energy in other areas of the frequency spectrum. Recently, I've started checking bass and BD on a tiny set of active speakers. If the bass parts aren't clear enough, I may

add some higher harmonics using valves, saturation, or psychoacoustics. The bass underpins the whole song, so it's really important to get it spot on. Next, I'll generally move on to the guitars. Rock guitar bite occurs somewhere around 1.5kHz-4kHz: boosting around this area will help the guitar have a punchy enough edge to cut through. (Don't you love the terminology we use to describe sound?) Avoid boxiness by cutting somewhere around 200Hz, and boost the low mid at about 400Hz to create warmth. Don't be afraid of sculpting the sound with EQ: the electric guitar is an unnatural sound anyway! I'll check there are no frequency conflicts between Tina's vocals and the cymbals, possibly adding a wide, gentle shelving boost somewhere between 8kHz - 15kHz. The intelligibility of speech occurs between 2kHz - 4kHz, and a gentle boost around here, or slightly higher can be useful. Time to check the bass with the guitars - occasionally the midrange of the bass will fight for space with the guitars. The bass midrange can be anywhere between 800Hz all the way up to 2kHz! Its punch will be way down at around 80Hz. The guitars fundamental should be between 400Hz and 800Hz. I'll check and EQ if it's a bit muddled. I'll check the vocals and guitars: sometimes the guitars are taking up too much sonic space, so I'll thin them accordingly. I tend to check piano against everything: the piano can take up a lot of frequency space, especially if the accompaniment is complex. I'll tend to reduce the amount of actual playing, if possible, rather than EQ the piano, or use a very gentle wide EQ cut, if necessary. Once everything has its own sonic space, I'll concentrate on individual sounds dynamics: compression to sort out any volume irregularities, and gating to attenuate noise in between tracks. I'm a fan of plug-in gating, as they can look ahead and you don't get that annoying clipped attack. I do like outboard compression, though: each of my different compressors has a slightly different character. If the mood takes me, I'll sort out dynamics using automation in Logic. You can view the muting and volume level of any track along the timeline, and...I just enjoy drawing the volume in - It takes a while, but I just like doing it, sometimes. Maybe I'll record the fader movements in - I have a weighted digital piano by Roland which allows MIDI volume messages to be sent via a couple of faders. I'll apply effects and reverb to the various elements as I feel they suit the instruments and the song. Sometimes I'll use several tracks in Logic and repeat a part by copying it and delaying it by moving the copies forwards along the timeline, and then possibly automate the EQ on the tracks to make the repeats become less bright over time. This is similar to tape delay, but you can see it, and edit it a lot easier! I usually use a mixture of reverbs: some plugins occasionally, but usually I prefer to use several outboard reverbs, which I'll set up with different ambiences to emulate small/

medium/large/extra large environments, and I'll send the different instruments to those environments as I feel the urge. I solo the reverb returns from time to time to check everything is properly balanced within the unit...the solo reverb should sound like a ghostly rendition of the instruments you've sent to the unit, but should give the feel and approximation of a realistic space. Make sure you don't distort the input stage of digital reverb units: if you solo your reverb return you'll notice it immediately if this is happening! I prefer to mixdown in the real world: analogue desk sending to outboard FX where possible. It's the sonic superiority issue. I want to warm it up a bit. I use a variety of different speakers to monitor on. Large passives, actives, mini PA speakers, little computer speakers, Monitors, Hi-Fi speakers. I'm a bit of a speaker freak! I'll monitor quite quietly, very quietly to check if anything is too loud in the mix, or sometimes quite loud to check if it is making me move, and on headphones (I'm using AKG K240 which I'm very fond of) for checking stereo positioning. When everything is sounding pleasing, it is usually just a question of knowing when the song is finished. I tend to reach a point when I am actually happy with a mix, and I know that that is it. I'll get a fresh DAT tape, and record on the mix onto it. Yes, I'd rather get the recording out of the computer at this stage, because it removes the temptation to think "if only I'd..." If you are happy with a mix, record it and move on. Otherwise you can spend forever dabbling about with fussy details that the listener won't even notice. I think they call it overworking a song. I record three takes to DAT: A mix, an instrumental and an accapella. If my ears have been lying to me, I can always add the accapella or the instrumental to the mix to make the vocal, or the backing louder. I record a mix and an instrumental to minidisk, for Tina to listen to and rehearse to. This is important, as I may have altered the structure slightly in the process of recording. Of course, minidisk compromises the audio quality by thinking about which frequencies will be masked by more prominent ones, when listened to by a human, and doesn't bother to record them. This is a cunning way of reducing the amount of data a MD recorder needs to record. Very intelligent, but a bit annoying. It's close enough for a singer to rehearse to, though. Using an analogue desk is great, however if you want to recall a mix...I write down all the settings on the desk, outboard, and patchbay before I abandon a mix. It takes time, I've designed my own song sheets to archive what went where and how it was set, which saves time. I'll try to listen to the mix on as many different sound systems as possible...cassette in a car, C.D. round at a friends, M.D. on headphones. I'll play the song to people, and watch for reactions. I listen to people's comments. I try not to defend my mix - I want to hear how people respond to the song. Tina is very good at this - she'll take a M.D. player, and

ask everyone and their granny what they think of the song. Then it's time to get the song mastered...but that's on a different page. If you've read this far you must be interested in the songwriting/recording process - I hope this little working diary has given you inspiration, and wish you all the best with your songs and recordings in the future. Love, Ben and Tina x (From Moth's website, 2005)

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