

Beard Radio – Best Specialist Music Programming (Subcity Radio)

Beard magazine has been covering underground and cult music from Glasgow and beyond since 2003. Beard won Best Music Fanzine at the 2005 EMAP fanzine awards. Since then we have continued to publish the zine, run a website and put on gigs and a small festival, Beardstock. It was as a result of Beardstock that we got involved with Subcity.

The name "Beard" was a daft drunken idea, arising from our love of such fuzzy faced musicians as Robert Wyatt and Dennis Wilson. It stuck. Beards are individual, eccentric, a bit rough around the edges, so we like to think it's an appropriate name. The radio show shares the principles of the magazine: pluralist, enthusiastic and anti-elitist. Inspired by John Peel, BBC 6 Music's The Freakzone, and alternative US station WMFU, we were never interested in doing a narrow, genre based show. Underground rock rubs up against free jazz, noise, world music, folk and experimental music. Cult gems from the past are juxtaposed with the latest cutting edge sounds. We love weird and noisy shit, but we love pop too: snobbery has no place. To add to the fun, we have some thoroughly ridiculous jingles, recorded with the help of musical conspirator and occasional co-host Matt Evans.

To find out about interesting new (and old) music we'll follow up reviews or features in magazines like Plan B, Arthur and The Wire, scour websites like Dusted and Pitchfork, follow myspace or lastfm links, and keep an eye on such blogs as Awesome Tapes From Africa, WMFU's Beware Of The Blog and Mutant Sounds. We also go to a lot of gigs, which has led to us playing tracks from exciting local acts and touring bands. And of course we draw on our existing record collections and recent second hand finds. Drawing on our own knowledge and the expertise of our guests, we do, however, occasionally devote part of the show to particular artists, labels and scenes. Neil has introduced music by Robert Wyatt and Jean Claude Vannier with excerpts from interviews he conducted with the artists. Our friend Reuben Kay has brought in some '60s British jazz sides one week and a selection of Joe Meek nuggets another.

There have also been themed shows, such as Halloween and Christmas, and the aim is to make these as varied as our regular shows. We regularly play underground music from Japan, but to tie in with the Boredoms' UK tour we decided to do a Japanese special, which our excerpt comes from. We drew on our own knowledge and that of Matt Evans, who has been a fan of Japanese music ever since hearing a radio session by psych heroes Acid Mothers Temple in the late '90s. That session was introduced by Glasgow based journalist David Keenan, whose experimental and underground record shop Volcanic Tongue is a great source of Japanese obscurities, and along with eBay, was where we found many of the records for this show. The first tune in the excerpt was chosen by Matt and makes the link between Glasgow and Japan's underground: an untitled collaboration between guitarist Kawabata Makoto (of Acid Mothers Temple) and local experimental folk artist Richard Youngs. It helps, of course, that the tune is unspeakably beautiful. Matt's other two choices in this selection also feature Makoto, this time in the far more cacophonous mode that first grabbed my attention. The Mainliner track is so furious and loud that it compelled one listener to e-mail in to warn us that our levels were peaking – but no, I can verify that it is supposed to sound like that. I was introduced by a friend to saxophonist Kaoru Abe and was absolutely blown away by his emotionally devastating free playing. The clip I chose came from youtube and while its sound quality is not ideal, it remains a stunning example of Abe's raw genius. The rest of the show features noise, prog, jazz, pop, punk and much unclassifiable oddness. So while the focus was on Japan, it is just as representative of our eclectic approach as a regular show.

The magazine and our existing websites <http://beardmag.blogspot.com> and www.myspace.com/beardmag have helped us promote the radio show. Playlists and links are posted after broadcast to the Subcity forum, our blog, myspace and Facebook group. We also promote the show on a number of music forums. The show has also had tie ins with Scottish experimental festivals Instal and Le Weekend, running competitions to win tickets and playing and discussing their acts. The radio show gives us a fantastic opportunity to promote the music we love and it's important that as many people as possible know about it.

Stewart Smith & Neil Jacques (Beard magazine editors and radio show presenters)