

ALBUM REVIEW

Irresistible synth drift with a fitting dose of underground



ANOTHER BODY FOUND Scooterboys from the Pool

★★★★★

/ CITITRAX / MINIMAL WAVE
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Minimalist output from French multi-hyphenate hits the target, but not the bullseye.

BY **NICOLAJ ROOS** / PHOTO: COVER PHOTO

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Another Body Found is the latest project from French entrepreneur A//, also known by the less cryptic name Alexandre Gand. He's the man behind the label Invasion Planète Recordings as well as the long-running project Le Syndicat Électronique, active since 1996.

Debut album *Scooterboys from the Pool* splices dark electro, stripped-down industrial, and minimal synth/wave into a sound that is both abrasive and grudgingly melodic.

Although traces of the synthwave genre (also known as outrun) can be found prior to Y2K, there's no doubt it received a massive boost following the 2011 release of the feature film *Drive* (directed, incidentally, by Denmark's own Nicolas Winding Refn). The soundtrack became—or perhaps more accurately, was made into—a virtual who's who of the genre, with names like Desire, College, Electric Youth, and Chromatics, all associated with Johnny Jewel's tastemaking label Italians Do It Better. French producer Kavinsky, in particular, had a breakthrough moment with the film's opening track, "Nightcall."

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Just as audiences at Sex Pistols shows in 1976 reportedly left to form their own punk bands, many who saw *Drive* were likely inspired to launch their own synthwave projects. The movement helped define a new generation of acts like Purity Ring, FM-84, Gunship, and notably The Midnight (featuring Danish producer Tim McEwan, son of Tom).

Scooterboys from the Pool is released on the New York-based label Minimal Wave, founded in 2005 by Veronica Vasicka. She's made it her mission to unearth names from the original synth underground that began in the late '70s. Søren Fauli's debut (and only) album *Fauli Til Dauli* from 1983 has, for example, been revived/reissued (on green vinyl, naturally). Minimal Wave's sublabel Cititrax was later established to release newer artists—such as Another Body Found.

While Le Syndicat Électronique operates in a more menacing, gothic cave, Another Body Found embraces a more playful and animated aesthetic. The delightfully scruffy production justifies how much of it sounds like it was recorded on a Tascam four-track cassette recorder.

Despite a heavily quantized and sequenced sound, the album maintains a fundamentally human undertone—a looseness that makes the music feel wobblier, more imprecise, and therefore more intriguing. Gand's vocals, however, tend to carry a droning, chanting quality that's difficult to overlook—and, unfortunately, occasionally detracts.

On the track "Lost in the Northern Lights," we hear for the first time the Korg KR-55B drum machine, now practically the IKEA Billy bookcase of synthwave—ubiquitous, beloved, and borderline overused. Originally used by early Depeche Mode and Fad Gadget—and later by acts like Xeno & Oaklander, Linea Aspera, Figure Study, and Cosmetics—its presence is unmistakable. Add in Polysix synth chimes and matter-of-fact, monotone vocals, and we veer into spoken-word territory.

Things shift slightly on "Your Time," which raises the bar on machine-driven production and largely discards conventional song structure (which, to be fair, never seems to be this album's goal). Tonally, the track coasts in a kind of enchanting stasis—no verse/bridge/chorus to speak of—and leans into a D.A.F. (Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft) universe. And, heaven forbid, it ends with a fadeout!

"Murderous Earth" lives up to its title, opening with synth sounds as sharp as a dentist's drill (ouch!). Let this serve as a warning: this reviewer had to turn the volume down to endure it.

Fortunately, "The Lie" offers a sonic salve with a luscious groove, Kraftwerk-style ticking beat, and pitch-dropped vocals. Alexandre clearly has a soft spot for his 808 drum machine—it's generously slathered across the track with 16th-note hi-hats, crisp snares, and gated claps. It's a little nuts to get Whitney Houston vibes in the middle of all this, but that's the nature of the game when you bring in the 808.

Finally, the title track "Scooterboys from the Pool" is a lo-fi, bubbling reinterpretation of Bronski Beat's unmistakable "Smalltown Boy." Jimmy Somerville's signature falsetto has been replaced with a mumbly baritone ... and a healthy dose of underground.

I'm fully on board with the aesthetic and playful spirit Another Body Found is chasing. There's a terrific esprit de punk across every track. Alexandre Gand seems refreshingly indifferent to how one is "supposed" to build a pop song. The record is packed with quirky rhythmic turns and creative synth/drum machine ideas. Still, at times the music feels more successful in theory than in execution.

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