'Hard Islands' is the assured and confident new installment from 25 year old Nathan Fake, the Norfolk born and bred precocious young heir to the UK electronica throne who has kept fans of fuzzy-edged synths and maximal acidic techno beats alike guessing ever since his debut release at the tender age of 19.

A six track long serious contender in the loudness wars, 'Hard Islands' sets up camp in that fuzzy middle ground between mini-album and EP that so many of our alt-dance heroes are choosing to occupy in this post-physical format era, where each track in the complementary collection can also stand alone as a hedonist's anthem in its own right. Easily as melodic and musically ambitious as any of his previous works, the 'Hard Islands' selection nonetheless edges towards the tougher end of electronica that is the usual domain of Warp and Rephlex stalwarts like Clark and Aphex Twin, whilst all the time never losing sight of that acute awareness of what will work on the dancefloor that had already enabled young Mr Fake tick off many of the world's best clubs on his touring itinerary by the time he had reached his mid-twenties.

"Playing live a lot over the last couple of years has had a profound influence on the way I make music now," says Nathan of his latest offering, and the unique loose-feeling, dynamic and finely-tuned sound that we hear on 'Hard Islands' is the product of that direct experience on the dancefloors of Europe. The tracks that make up this EP were absorbed into Nathan's club set at an early stage, where they were able to gradually evolve in the context of his live performance before finally being pinned down to this fixed recorded form for their official release. A Nathan Fake laptop live show is a much more intense and visual experience than one has traditionally come to expect from the genre, wherein Fake fits and jerks his way through an unstoppable hour long industrial assault with incredible focus, elbows flailing and body contorted to impossible angles as he goes, pushing the Ableton Live software to its limits, maxing out his CPU, and constantly teetering on the brink of computer meltdown. Recent support slots for Squarepusher and Kieran Hebden & Steve Reid have placed Nathan centre stage in the live arena, but ultimately the immediacy of the interaction with the crowd that you get in a club environment remains of the utmost importance to him.

This new harder-edged Nathan Fake sound may seem like a rather dramatic departure to fans who know him only for the junior Casio keyboard riffs, soaring fake guitars and lighters-in-the-air moments of his 2006 debut album, the treasure trove of synth-rock gems that is 'Drowning In A Sea Of Love' and preceding psychedelic epic single 'The Sky Was Pink' (prior to that infamous radical dancefloor makeover care of main fan James Holden, of course!). But the evolution of Nathan's sound has been a smooth and natural process: following an extended album tour based around the melody-rich sweep of shoegazey rocktronica that he had assembled during his college-based exploration of the influence of electronic music on rock and pop production, various 'Drowning In A Sea Of Love' era tracks were then gradually beefed up to complement his emerging new material (a process that can be heard on the B-sides to follow-up single 'You Are Here'). Fake's swift side-step back into the techno clubs where he first made his name formed the logical next move.

Fans of Fake's earliest releases meanwhile - like the Boards-of-Canada-do-techno of Border Community debut and modern classic 'Outhouse', the thumping man's music of the 'Watlington St EP' for New York's Saw, or the wide-ranging melodic intensity of his 'Dinamo EP' for Cologne's influential Traum label – would do well to note that Fake's recent decision to resume his shirts-off exertions is underscored with the firm intention of pushing the European techno blueprint ever forward. Normal service has not so much

been resumed, but rather infused with an increasingly musically ambitious cerebral edge and furnished with a reactive response loop mechanism that leaves it even more optimised for maximum dancefloor impact than before.

Nathan left his Norfolk village of Necton at the age of 18 to study for an HND in Music Technology at Reading College of Art & Design (only to drop out before completion after his musical career suddenly took off of its own accord), but his musical talent is very much a natural, innate gift. Early piano lessons foundered when it came to learning to read music: deciding that this level of abstraction was a step too far for him, the young Nathan then focused his efforts on instead memorising by ear with the aim of recalling it during his practice sessions at home, with considerable success. And in spite of the limitations of his formal classical training, the adult Nathan possesses an almost pitch-perfect ability to deduce the key of a piece of music and provide a detailed musical analysis from ear alone, where many a more qualified musician would have to resort to some form of trial-and-error keyboard assistance. Enquiries as to the identity of new tracks played in his musical soulmate James Holden's DJ sets at a previous weekend's festivities meanwhile may come accompanied by a detailed note-perfect cover version mp3 knocked out once Fake is back home, having committed the single hearing to memory whilst lost out on the dancefloor. And this almost autistic attention to detail extends into Nathan's production methods today, wringing his astounding results out of the limited palette of a PC and millenium-era Cubase 5 software thanks to his encyclopaedic knowledge of every little detail – be it bug, quirk, malfunction or bonafide built-in feature - that lurks inside his chosen tools, demonstrating the truth in the old adage that it is not what you have got, but what you do with it that counts.

Now based at the centre of the action in London town, from his bedroom studio base in Hackney Nathan currently divides his time between writing new music, touring, and remixing (previous lucky recipients of the Nathan Fake computer edit funk treatment include DFA's Shocking Pinks, Tiefschwarz, Annie, Avus, Vincent Oliver, Steve Lawler and DJ Remy). He has also recently developed a new line in playing his favourite records at people, otherwise known as that recently democratised pursuit of "DJing" that now bases itself around the possession of great taste and charisma rather than the robotic beatmatching skills that were so important to the trainspotters of yore. And whatever string he decides to add to his bow next, Nathan's constant dialogue with the notion of other people's expectations of him is sure to keep him moving on, even if that does make his life more difficult along the way. 'Hard Islands' provides the latest snapshot on Nathan Fake's road to musical maturity, but far be it from me to suggest where this special character might be headed next: he will only do his best to confound me anyway!

Gemma Sheppard

http://www.bordercommunity.com

http://www.nathanfake.co.uk

http://www.myspace.com/nathancake

nathan fake :
discography

border community

original productions

nathan fake :	"hard islands"	border community
	"drowning in a sea of love"	
	"you are here"	
	"drowning in a sea of remixes"	
	"the sky was pink"	
	"outhouse"	
	"silent night"	
	"dinamo ep"	traum schallplatten

"numb chance"
elektronische musik – interkontinental 5

	"watlington street ep"	saw recordings

remixes

shocking pinks :	"dressed to please"	dfa
vincent oliver :	"cluods in the head"	lo recordings
annie :	"my best friend"	679 recordings
tiefschwarz :	"issst"	fine
steve lawler :	"out at night"	subversive
avus :	"real"	border community
perc :	"closer"	perc trax
dj remy :	"scrambled"	additive
jack addict :	"stalker"	dirty blue