

Head Like a Kite's Goal: to make fun, playful party music

Organic Collages

BY GENE ARMSTRONG, garmstrong@tucsonweekly.com

Dave Einmo, the former guitarist for the Seattle rock band Sushirobo, has fully embraced his inner electronic musician with his recent project Head Like a Kite. His compositions aren't chilly synth-pop experiments, but rather warm, robust sound collages that Einmo likes to call "organic."

On the two Head Like a Kite albums so far, Einmo mixes analog and digital instruments, recording most of the material in his home studio, sampling his own parts and then recombining them like a hip-hop composition.

"At first, I do most of it by myself at home. Then I'll invite friends in to replace the parts I've recorded," said Einmo in a recent phone interview from his Puget Sound-area home.

"I don't play the cello, but I'll create the part through MIDI (musical instrument digital interface). Then I will invite a real cellist in to re-create that part, and I'll sample that onto the recording."

The result is a rich and always changing palette of sound, an infectious combination of hook-laden dance music, ambient textures, psychedelia, found recordings, trance, bubble-gum pop, glitchy beats, driving guitar rock, metal-machine music and the lush score from that secret movie unspooling in your mind.

Einmo likes to say that he is making indie rock that sounds as if it has been remixed by a dance producer.

But he can't do it all by himself when he's on the road, such as on the upcoming tour that brings Head Like a Kite to Tucson's Plush on Sunday, Aug. 24. When playing live, Einmo requires the assistance of drummer Trent Moorman, who does more than simply play the drums.

"When I first started doing Head Like a Kite, I asked myself, 'How do we do this live?' I had various attempts at different lineups, everything from a couple of DJs to a full band. But I think with Trent, we have the most flexibility. We both have samplers and synthesizers, but I am also playing guitar and singing and using various mixers. Trent is also playing traditional and electronic drums."

Einmo said his relationship with Moorman stays fresh because they are constantly challenging each other creatively.

"Even though there is only the two of us, we loop ourselves and play over that and are able to maintain a pretty rich and full sound. Also, because it is just the two of us, we're really able to move around a lot within the songs. If I start to loop something new, or if Trent does, the other one of us knows just how to follow and flow."

The art-punk act Sushirobo went on "indefinite hiatus" after its last album in 2003, which

is when Einmo started exploring the realms of Head Like a Kite. The songs on his 2006 debut, *Random Portraits of the Home Movie*, all were inspired by then-newly unearthed Super-8 home movies of Einmo's family.

The new Head Like a Kite album, *There Is Loud Laughter Everywhere*, which was released in June, also was created around a unifying theme, Einmo said.

"The concept behind the new one is that of field recordings. When we have been on tour, I have been recording sounds from all the different cities we have visited. It's like an aural road trip. When we get home, I put together a database of all these sounds and name everything, so that when I am writing, I can just go in and grab things"

Einmo feels using field recordings brings characters into his songs, connecting them via a narrative structure.

"Sometimes, I have an idea about kinds of sounds I am looking for. Other times, they just sound interesting, and I'll know I can use them later. Lots of times, when we're out there, I am hearing something that I have no idea what song I'll put it together with."

Einmo, who was born in Baltimore, moved with his parents at a young age to Seattle, where he grew up listening to the Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin records his teenage baby sitter played for him.

"I don't really listen to much classic rock anymore, but I think then, listening to (late Led Zeppelin drummer) John Bonham, I became fascinated with big drum beats."

Einmo started his own musical pursuits in an acoustic-guitar class in junior high school. His interest faltered for a time because of the lame old folk tunes he was taught to play. Hearing and seeing an electric guitar toward the end of the semester changed all that for him.

"This guy was playing these barre chords on a red Gibson SG guitar, like Angus Young (AC/DC) had. I was just blown away. I thought, 'Wow!' and went out and bought a cheap copy of the SG."

Later, Einmo became enamored of indie rock in the 1980s, including such acts as the Pixies, Sonic Youth and Stereolab, as well as hip-hop mixers/producers such as DJ Shadow, Four Tet and Prefuse 73.

But he remains equally inspired by the musicians around him, whether they are from Sushirobo or other acts. He especially enjoys collaborating with his musician friends.

"I've listened to a lot of solo records.



Head Like a Kite

Head Like a Kite with L Eye and 21 Pump Street

9 P.M., SUNDAY, AUG. 24

PLUSH
340 E. SIXTH ST.

\$6

798-1298

Sometimes, those records really suffer from the fact that it is the same person playing all the instruments all the time. That's why I try to change it up."

On *There Is Loud Laughter Everywhere*, Einmo's guests include members of the Long Winters, Radio 4, Crooked Fingers and Animals at Night.

Of special note is the appearance of Asya, the now-16-year-old singer from the teen sisters band Smoosh. Asya (surname confidential) takes lead vocals on the new album's "Daydream Vacation," as she did on "Noisy at the Circus" on *Random Portraits of the Home Movie*.

Her sweet, nimble singing brings a perky dynamic to Head Like a Kite's music, which is pretty much in keeping with Einmo's intention for the band.

"My criteria have always been that I want to make fun, playful party music that is really catchy and memorable, whether people want to play it in a dance club or on college radio." **Tw**