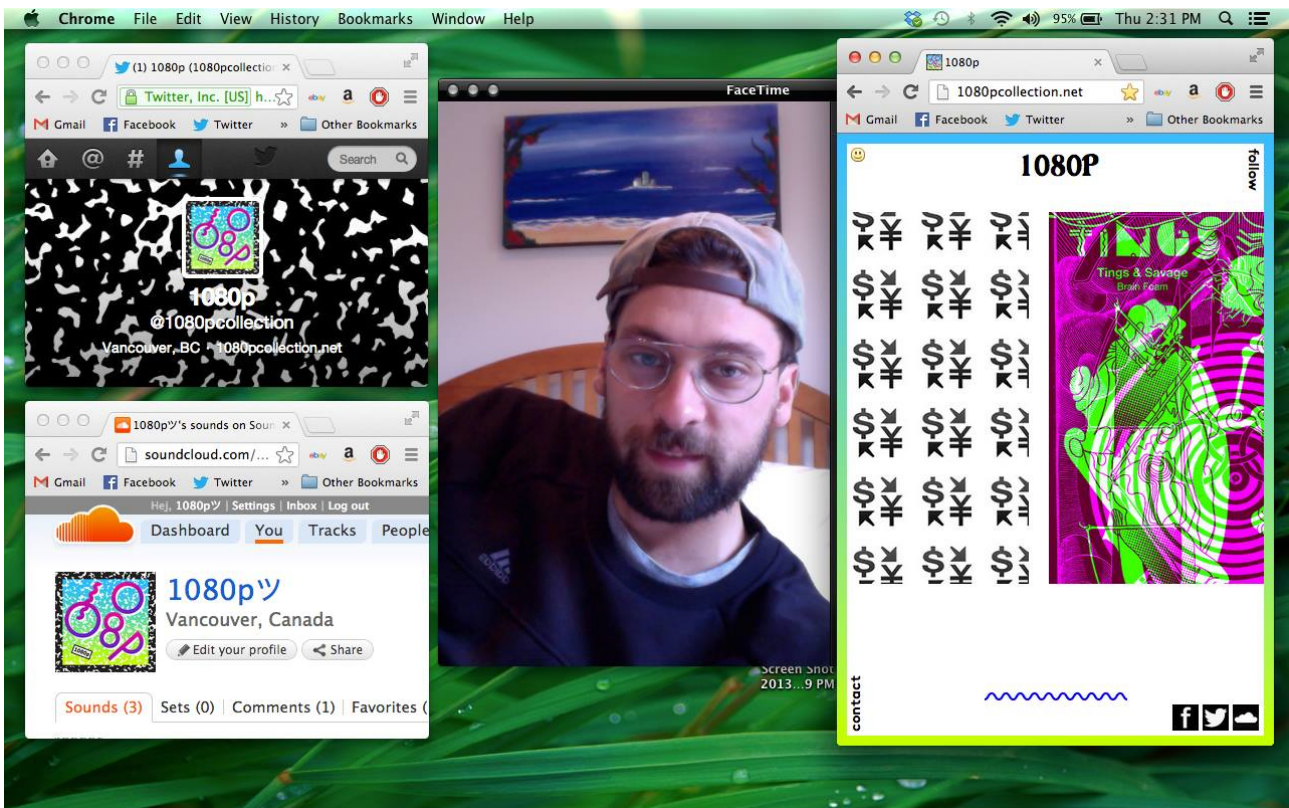


Richard MacFarlane (1080p Label) - interview with Chris Cudby

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Originally from Christchurch, writer and curator Richard MacFarlane has been making waves contributing to such internationally influential music blogs as Rose Quartz, Altered Zones and Ad Hoc. His latest project is the new cassette-based 1080p label, garnering attention with a flurry of releases including Heatbeats, Tings & Savage and M/M, with more releases around the corner. Back home for a couple of months before returning to his present base in Canada, MacFarlane took time out to share his thoughts on 1080p and more.

Tell us about 1080p!

1080p is a record label I started at the start of June. I'm doing releases on tape and digitally (on iTunes, Spotify, Boomkat etc) and I've put out three releases so far: Heartbeat(s) – Home Remedies, Tings & Savage – Brain Foam and M/M – Midtown Direct. Is there a specific genre/music style that 1080p supports? What artists are / will be involved?

The best way to describe what I wanted to focus on with 1080p was “peripheral dance music”, meaning either producers who typically make dance tracks or experimental producers who are starting to work with more dance/club ideas, generally in a more oblique or deconstructed way than as “dance records” themselves. That's the main thing I wanted to focus on, but the general scope is more about an overarching aesthetic than strictly genre.

There'll be four more releases in August and September: this blown out house tape from Bobby Draino & Xophie Xweetland, late night computer dance tracks by Abstract Mutation, (hopefully) a new agey/smooth ambient house from Melbourne's Andras, a rap tape coming from Young Braised and a collaborative thing a bit further down the line from //Ama. Most of these are IRL friends but a couple I've just come across online.

What was your motivation for starting a label? Do you see it as some kind of follow-on from / in relation to your writing work (with Rose Quartz / Ad Hoc / Altered Zones etc)?

Yeah, for sure. It really doesn't feel too different from running a blog. I had been wanting to start one up for a few years but never really focused on it properly with work and life stuff, but I also didn't really see the point of just starting a label at that moment or was worried it might just end up having a vague aesthetic of Rose Quartz-y or Altered Zones-age kind of stuff because it seemed important to have a super clear approach or M.O. so hopefully that's the case with it being a space for the outlying kind of dance stuff.

I always just looked at Rose Quartz as a kind of catalogue of cool music, and it was always real casual which is also the vibe with 1080p; something that I can do as a part-time thing on the side of jobs or school or whatever. That's always the case for people that I'm putting out too, so it works well.

The cassette covers are really great – what designers do you work with? What look are you 'going for'?

In terms of art the idea I had was to leave it basically in the hands of whoever made the music. I'm not really into the idea of labels that have a template design for each release; I think that's cool for the actual LP or tape stickers but sometimes tying each release together like that can impose too much on the individual releases, which doesn't make sense as where they're obviously coming from is super different. So hopefully every release's art will look totally different to the next, though it's inevitable that the visual interests will converge a lot of the time. Sometimes it makes more sense for me to seek out artists to do the cover and work with the tape producers on that.

You produce limited runs of 200 cassettes for each release – what was your thinking re: physical vs. virtual media for 1080p (I'm thinking in relation to labels like Dungeon Taxis that only make physical media)? Do you upload full albums to Soundcloud? How many different forms of media must a label operate on these days (including different forms of social media)?

I guess it's kind of complicated in a way because it's obviously going to sound far different (and better generally) on tape than on digital formats. So far it's only been individual tracks on Soundcloud, but I'm about to put full album streams up on Bandcamp and get some sites to post them up too. I really wanted a duality between the physical and digital and I think the warmth of tapes really brings out the types of production generally found on the 1080p releases (scuffed, textural), but it's better to have it online so that thousands of people can hear it rather than a limited tape run. It. The first MP3 from the Heartbeat(s) tape had around 15,000 combined listens on Soundcloud. It's just too good a platform to not use. I love the internet and it obviously opens things up a lot.

I'm not specifically into "cassette culture" or anything like that, the main reasons I wanted to use tapes was they're super cheap and the perfect size/feel as a physical object. I

wouldn't really look at the majority of cassette labels as fetishizing cassettes or whatever "cassette culture" is, it's just a really viable medium and sounds super nice and warm. Saying that, though, I wish MP3s would degrade gradually over time, that would be cool. 1080p only recently launched - how's support been for the label?

I've been pretty happy so far; there's so much good stuff going on out there so it's hard to get noticed as a new label with mostly artists who aren't too well known. I was kind of surprised that lots of friends were like "I want to buy a tape off you!". And people I know from the net have been very supportive in terms of helping with exposure etc.

There's been three releases in quick succession - what's the release schedule like?

Yeah, it sort of worked out that first ones were all ready around the start and all came out a week after one another, which is actually a fun way to do it I think. I should really space them out more but it often takes a lot longer than expected to get all the parts together (art, masters etc.) and I always get overexcited and take on too much at once.

What are your thoughts on famously being quoted in Simon Reynolds' book Retromania?

I was pretty stoked, but at the same time it's embarrassing to think some stoned blog post written at 2am could turn up in a book like that. That's a great book though. I'm really glad him and Adam Harper are collating a lot of newer movements as they're happening. I was thinking a bit about a comment I think Simon Reynolds made at some point (I think to Britt of Not Not Fun Records in LA?) about tape/7" labels just being ultimately boutique-y kind of thing and how that's a valid issue to engage with or avoid.

What's inspiring Richard MacFarlane right now?

I've been back at my parent's house back in Christchurch for all of July so watching a lot of Sky TV – a lot of Finding Bigfoot and National Geographic shows, real into Gold Rush: Alaska. Also OD'ing on a lot of Family Guy which is always good and whatever sitcoms come on TV. I can't stop listening to this old DJ Sprinkles record, Midtown 120 Blues, and the new Lords of Midnite – Drown In Ur Love EP is amazing. Huerco S. is probably one of the best things around at the moment too, he has a new LP on Software that's kind of ridiculously good. Gerry Read's new 12" is also incredible. Mostly dance music I guess, though the new Julianna Barwick album is super beautiful and this older Steve Roach one Structures from Silence is real serene.

You've recently returned to NZ after some time spent in Canada, any thoughts since you've been back? What's up with this GCSB thing huh?

It's pretty alarming coming back and seeing just how much further John Key's arrogance (which astoundingly he doesn't even attempt to hide) has progressed and overridden any (remaining) iota of humanity in the past year. Obviously the GCSB stuff is part of a way bigger issue but I think that New Zealand could be very progressive in how it handles the bill and what changes it decides to make in terms of public privacy. It looks like the issue is getting a lot more exposure since they first it was almost rushed through which will hopefully get some wider discourse going.

What does the name 1080p refer to again?

It refers to the resolution of HDTV sets, 1080 is a pretty common one I just thought it was kind of goofy because it also reminded me of 1080 Snowboarding on N64 and general digital culture. I did this kind of weird job over Christmas in Vancouver for Nintendo, out at this massive suburban mall called Metrotown doing demos for the Nintendo Wii U and showing kids how to play etc., basically it amounted to standing around playing Mario a lot. They also had this big promo truck that would stop at malls etc. and had all these Nintendo Wii's in the back, the supervisor was this real nice guy who wore a fedora and was very hyped on the 1080 capabilities of the console. We the thing where you all put your hands in on top of each other and yell "Wii U" or something. But yeah, I was just thinking about that and also YouTube / torrent culture.

What video games are you playing at the moment?

I'm pretty deep into a few games at the moment. I've always found, especially recently, the crossover between music, movies and games is just so sick too; I was playing Skyrim (real amazing, tender strings on the soundtrack), re-watched Terrence Malick's The New World and listened to Sean McCann's new record the following morning and it all tied up so nicely, just this real gentle grandiosity. I just finished Far Cry 3 which was pretty immersive too, just a cracked Pirate Bay version for my MacBook though so it crashed every 15 minutes. I spend a lot of time on my computer, for better or worse.

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