

# LOCAL NOISE

## **Crytearia**

17/04/07, Hobart, Tasmania.  
Crytearia, Tony Mitchell.

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### **Summary:**

“I like the fact that I’m from Hobart and Tasmania, but I’m not going to put on a track and say ‘Hobart, Hobart, Hobart’, that kind of thing. I feel that it’s a universal music, so I don’t want it to be pigeonholed. I want someone to listen to it and say, ‘Hey, this is great instrumental hip-hop’; I don’t want them to say, ‘Oh, this is Hobart hip-hop’.”

Crytearia is a producer and sample-based, instrumental hip-hop and electronic music artist who lives in Hobart, Tasmania. He has made two albums, *Create* (2003), and *LandScape* (due to be released in late 2007). *LandScape* features rhymes from Tasmanian MCs Tempest, Crixus and Thorts. In this interview, conducted by Tony Mitchell at Crytearia’s house in Hobart, Crytearia talks about getting into hip-hop via breakdancing at high school, the Hobart scene, crate-digging and beatmaking, his time in Italy and Italian hip-hop, and his love of the French language and French hip-hop.

### **About:**

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Local Noise is an ARC-funded research project from the University of Technology, Sydney. Its focus is on Australian hip-hop, and the localisation of hip-hop in different cultural, societal and educational contexts.

**C:** Crytearia

**TM:** Tony Mitchell

**TM:** Can you talk a bit about how you got started?

**C:** Hmm, that's a hard one... When I was in grade six, so when I was 12 or so. I've got a couple of older brothers, and they were kind of exploring music, and they were listening to the Beastie Boys' *Licensed to Ill*, and I think that kind of got me started. I kind of got the bug, and I just loved it, basically. And I started getting into breakdancing a bit, that's what I first did, I guess.

**TM:** Was there much of a scene here [Hobart] for breakdancing?

**C:** Not really. At a certain point, in about 2001, sort of when I was finishing high school, there were some Japanese guys that were on exchange, a bunch of them, and they were really great breakers, and they would practice down at the uni gym regularly. And I met up with them and a couple of my friends and I went and trained with them and it was really fun, you know, and then obviously they had to go, and it all just died, I guess. That was a temporary little breaking scene.

**TM:** So you went to uni here, at U Tas?

**C:** Yeah, I'm there now; I'm still there.

**TM:** What are you studying?

**C:** French. I'm doing an Arts degree, and I'm doing French and a bit of media studies and English. But majoring in French. I enjoy languages a lot.

**TM:** Have you got into French hip-hop much?

**C:** A little bit, yeah. I've found some stuff that I've enjoyed. More so Italian hip-hop, I've listened to a lot, in fact, about fifty percent of the stuff that I listen to is Italian, I really like it.

**TM:** What sort of people are you into, is it people like 99 Posse, and Almamegretta, and those sorts of people?

**C:** No...

**TM:** They're probably very nineties, aren't they!

**C:** Yeah, probably. All the northern stuff, like, there's a record label and shop called Vibra Records, and that would be like the equivalent of Obese here, and the stuff that they put out like Bassi Maestro...

**TM:** And they're based in Milan, are they?

**C:** Verona. Which is kind of weird, considering it's a pretty small town, but there's a lot of stuff happening around there. And also, there's a group in Milan I really like, A.T.P.C., they're really good.

**TM:** You speak Italian, do you?

**C:** Yeah. I did an exchange there for ten months in 2004. My grandfather was Italian, but my dad never learned Italian off him because they moved straight here, so I never picked it up, so that was my chance to go and learn it, and it was a really great experience.

**TM:** So when you were on exchange you were based mainly in the north?

**C:** It was Mantova [Mantua], which is a bit south of Verona, basically. So it's sort of in the northern-

central area.

**TM:** So do you think you've been influenced at all, by Italian hip-hop or French hip-hop?

**C:** A little bit, I'd almost say more on the production side. There's a producer/DJ called DJ Shocca from Verona, and he put out an album [that was] sort of basically all his beats and different groups and MCs around Italy. There's also a French group on there. And that inspired me heaps, because they're just really amazing, really nice beats, and it just blew me away. I didn't expect it because I hadn't heard anything quite that good come out of Italy.

**TM:** Is that 'Shocka'?

**C:** It's 'Shocca'. [The album] is called *60 HZ*, I've got the vinyl. I ordered it off the Vibra Records site, and they sent it in a pizza box! It was awesome. It didn't cost much, really, it was about ten euro for the vinyl and ten euro for the shipping, so it was what you pay, really, 30-odd dollars.

**TM:** So you've kind of kept in touch with what was happening [in Italy]?

**C:** Yeah, more or less, I like to keep up, see what's happening.

**TM:** It's amazing, a lot of people I've talked to have actually got connections with other hip-hop scenes in other languages, or in other parts of the world. So you got into breakdancing, and then what happened after that?

**C:** I guess high school started, and I met this guy called Caddy, who's an MC, and he was in grade seven, and he had this tape of A Tribe Called Quest's *Midnight Marauders*. And he would play it me and be like, 'Check this out, this is awesome', and I was like, 'Yeah, this is great'. Because I had never heard any of that undergroundy-sounding hip-hop before, what I had heard was Beastie Boys, and also stuff like Ice T and N.W.A and that sort of thing, that was still big around then. So I really liked that [A Tribe Called Quest], and got a copy off him, and started hanging out with him, and he would rap, and I started rapping a bit, and I guess one day I kind of thought, 'We need some beats'. So I started venturing into that, just seeing what I could do, playing around on my computer. I got a record player and started getting old records from up at the tip shop here, and [started] sampling and making beats.

**TM:** The tip shop?

**C:** Yeah, like, there's the tip and then there's a shop where they sell stuff they salvage from there.

**TM:** Where's that?

**C:** McRobies Gully, it's sort of parallel with Water Works, it's over in South Hobart.

**TM:** So has that been a major resource for a lot of beat producers and DJs in Hobart?

**C:** Probably, yeah.

**TM:** So what kind of stuff did you find there?

**C:** Just trash. I would just pick up silly stuff, like the Disney records and that kind of thing, because I thought it would be kind of quirky and different, and I guess, I'd just pick up anything. And I wasn't for a while until I started getting a better taste for music and actually knowing what I was looking for and what I wanted to find, and that kind of thing. I guess it's one of those things; over time you grow that taste for stuff to sample, you can sort of look at a record and say 'That's going to be crap'.

**TM:** So you basically started collecting records and using samples and that kind of thing?

- C:** I got the program Acid on my computer, and I had no idea what I was doing, honestly. I didn't even know what 4/4 [time signature] was, I was just putting a kick here and a snare there, and looping it. Really, I just started from scratch. I didn't have anyone telling me how to do anything, I just eventually worked it after all, after listening to some recorded hip-hop and going, 'Oh, is that what you do? That makes sense, it's in time!' *[Laughs]* Just [with] continuous playing around, messing around with sounds and stuff, I got the hang of it, and I used that program Acid for a long time, up until about 2004.
- TM:** And you were still working with this MC?
- C:** Yeah, it's funny, because we never really recorded anything. We did maybe once or twice. I still hang out with him, just last week I sent some beats to him and his mate, who have a crew called Secluded Minds. And they're going to hopefully use a couple of my beats, because they've been wanting to get something off me for ages.
- TM:** Do they perform?
- C:** Yeah, occasionally. They played at the thing on Saturday night at d'Art Factory.
- TM:** So it was them and Tempest and you?
- C:** Yes.
- TM:** Can you tell me a little bit about Tempest?
- C:** It's funny, because he's the first person I ever actually worked with – the first MC I ever worked with. We did this song in 2002, it was probably the first recorded song I did, actually. And I sort of met him through the internet, somehow, and we met up and did this song, and then we worked out later that we went to kindy together! It was really weird. And basically we've been mates ever since. Nowadays, we play shows together. He's my MC, basically. And he has his own solo EP, which he did some production on, and a couple of his friends did as well, and I mastered it. And it's really good; he's a great lyricist. He's on two tracks on my new CD, so we have about three or four tracks that we actually play together, and then I'll do some instrumental stuff, and then he'll do some of his solo stuff – so that's our show, we sort of do it together. So it works really well, I think it's kind of dynamic.
- TM:** And was there just a bunch of people who were working independently, or was there a Hobart scene where people would hang out and exchange beats and information, and stuff like that?
- C:** I suppose. I guess in general, everyone's always been pretty independent, as far as anything in Hobart goes. It's always sort of like that. I remember when I was up at Hobart College, there was a lot of people into hip-hop up there, and we'd hang out in the recording studio and make tracks and that sort of thing.
- TM:** And when did Ruffcut [Records] start up?
- C:** August 2001, I think it was.
- TM:** And they've been the main distribution centre [in Tasmania]?
- C:** Yeah. And that definitely made the scene come together. 'Cause it's sort of a focal point. So it's been good.
- TM:** It looks like events, like this Block Party, are good way of bringing the scene together.
- C:** Definitely, yeah. It's great, that sort of stuff, and I think they're getting local supports now. They used

to bring people down, and they wouldn't have a local support because there wouldn't *be* a local support, that sort of thing. And now there are, there are groups that are capable of doing it.

**TM:** I know that earlier this year, Moses [Itan, of Uber Lingua in Melbourne] was down here with Curse ov Dialect.

**C:** Yeah, that was at Republic, we played with them. It was a really good gig.

**TM:** So you tend to rely on things like that to get a bit of exposure?

**C:** Yeah.

**TM:** It's good that that's happening, because Hobart's a bit off the map, in terms of national tours and stuff.

**C:** Yeah, it is. I was quite surprised, I was looking at the Block Party thing and it's coming here, but it's not going to Perth. I was like, 'Hmm'. I guess it's easier access from Melbourne.

**TM:** Have you played in Melbourne?

**C:** No. I've been planning to, but with uni and work it's hard to get away. I think that when I get my album out I want to do a launch over there, 'cause I think there'll be a lot of people there who'll like it.

**TM:** I think the Melbourne hip-hop scene is the biggest in the country; it's fairly intense, actually! And Revolver is one of the main venues, and of course Obese Records... Now, your last album was called *LandScrape*, do you see your music as somehow expressing the landscape here? Do you there's anything particularly local about what you're doing?

**C:** Yes and no. Not so much...

**TM:** Because it's instrumental hip-hop, there's a bit of an opportunity, sometimes, to express the landscape.

**C:** Yeah, sometimes, kind of trying to recreate and image or a landscape with sound.

**TM:** That seems to be a common thing in a lot of hip-hop, that you're representing where you're from, your locality.

**C:** Yeah, that's sort of what it's always been about, I suppose. I don't know, I'm not really big on that kind of thing. I like the fact that I'm from Hobart and Tasmania, but I'm not going to put on a track and say 'Hobart, Hobart, Hobart', that kind of thing. I feel that it's a universal music, so I don't want it to be pigeonholed. I want someone to listen to it and say, 'Hey, this is great instrumental hip-hop'; I don't want them to say, 'Oh, this is Hobart hip-hop'.

**TM:** But at the same time you're kind of acknowledging that instrumental hip-hop does have a certain connection to the visual, and to cityscapes, country, and that sort of thing.

**C:** I guess with this album, I didn't want any clichés. All the songs with lyrics, they don't have any of that... I'm trying to say that they're kind of... indifferent? I don't know, they're just universal sounding, there's nothing to make them sound like this or the other.

**TM:** Have you worked at all with visual artists? You mentioned a graphic designer who was doing your cover. That aspect of it is pretty important too, in a sense; it creates visual images which correspond to what you're doing.

**C:** I talked a lot with Rob, the guy who designed it, about how I wanted it to be, and he seemed to have

a really good understanding of what I wanted and how to express it in an image.

**TM:** And what's with 'Mother Tongue' [one of the tracks on the album]? What's the theme of that?

**C:** It doesn't really have a theme. It's just called that because I sampled the Mothers. *[Laughs]*

**TM:** The Mothers of Invention?

**C:** Yeah. It was off their live record. So it doesn't have a particular theme, so to say!

**TM:** Are there any of these tracks which you would say were particularly rooted in local things?

**C:** Probably the last track. A couple of them. 'Penny for a Dance' and 'Moving House', they're both electronic-y sort of songs, and they're both about moving and travelling. 'Moving House' is more about moving house here, in Tasmania, whereas the other one's probably more about going to Italy.

**TM:** Where did 'Penny for a Dance' come from?

**C:** I don't know about that! I guess a play on 'a penny for your thoughts'. But then, it kind of changed a bit into a song about flying – I think that came because I went to Melbourne with a friend of mine, and she was just scared shitless on the plane on the way back, and I guess it's about that, because there are samples in there saying 'Don't look so scared', and stuff like that.

**TM:** I gather that there's a difference between the Hobart hip-hop scene and the Launceston hip-hop scene... If you were asked to describe the Hobart scene, is there anything particular that would define it? Things like remoteness and isolation?

**C:** I guess that, and individuality. There's a lot of individuality, and people wanting to be slightly different from the next person. I sort of get that vibe a lot. And there's a lot of that expression of people wanting to get away, there's always that sort of thing... I like it here.

**TM:** So you're not obsessed with moving, or going to Melbourne?

**C:** Totally. I reckon I will move to Melbourne some time soon, just because it's kind of inevitable...

**TM:** ...The infrastructure's there, the support.

**C:** I guess there's only so much I can do – everything is done through the internet, all my exposure and that kind of thing.

**TM:** I had a look at your MySpace site, which is pretty extensive.

**C:** I suppose that's my main point where anyone gets anything about me.

**TM:** Which is increasingly the case, most people have a MySpace site. It means that you can hook up with the rest of the world, people from all over [can be] listening to your stuff.

**C:** It is good. I mean, I could never have that amount of exposure just from my normal website. No one goes there...

**TM:** ...Well they could through the MySpace site.

**C:** Yeah, that does happen quite often. It's just a great way to expose yourself, and listen to your stuff.

**TM:** Is there anyone in the Australian hip-hop scene which you think have been particularly influential? That you feel an affinity with?

**C:** Personally? Yeah. I guess sort of earlier on, stuff like Bias B and Brothers Stoney. And generally, just

the Melbourne underground scene: Jase and Prowla and Brad Strut and all those guys I was really inspired by. And definitely production-wise, people like Plutonic Lab. There are so many great artists here. Pasobionic – I really like his beats.

**TM:** Have you ever had any of your stuff on the triple j *Hip-hop Show*?

**C:** Yeah, I think once Reason once brought in my *Create* album and played a song off that, and also three or four times Maya's [Jupiter] played some stuff off my seven inch. I put 'Mother Tongue' on there and I noticed they played it on *Home and Hosed*, which got a bit of interest, which was good.

**TM:** Things are looking a lot better for hip-hop here, certainly more than they were five years ago.

**C:** It's grown really dramatically, it's great.

**TM:** And it's not going to go away, like a lot of people hoped originally. Do you have any thoughts about the Australian accent issue?

**C:** I probably used to be one of the people saying 'No, you can't rap in an American accent'. I still don't like hearing an Australian putting on an American accent, you know, like Weapon X or something like that. But on the other hand, when I hear people like the Lyrical Commission dudes, like how they just put on the Australian accent [*affects an exaggerated Australian drawl*]. And that pisses me off more, almost, than an American accent. That just sounds terrible. I'd prefer just a natural accent, that's all you need.

**TM:** There are a lot of people who exaggerate and caricature the whole ocker thing.

**C:** A lot of whatever I hear coming out lately, it's all just a bit repetitious, it's all the beer and barbeque rap. And I think that's kind of passed ten odd years ago, but people are still doing it because they think that's what's going to get them played on radio or whatever.

**TM:** What about people like Def Wish Cast? Have you ever had any time for them? The old school people?

**C:** Yeah, I really like them, and their new album too. I found that really good. Because I like a lot of that electro, b-boy-style stuff.

**TM:** The beats on that new album sounded very retro, almost like 80s stuff.

**C:** Yeah, they were using the 808 drum machine, which I think is awesome!

**TM:** Another other Australian albums that you particularly like?

**C:** I'm very fond of the Puah Hedz album. I think that was probably some of the first Australian hip-hop I got into, actually, Muphin and that. I've always been really inspired by them.

**TM:** And so just to back to the Italian thing, you very much identify with being Italian, being Italian-Australian? It seems like something that you're exploring, whereas your father's generation in a way, didn't do that. They seemed to be more concerned with being Australian than being Italian. It seems to be swinging back the other way, now.

**C:** I guess I'm interested in exploring my heritage and that sort of thing. There is a bunch of Italian things happening on this CD, some samples of when I was in Italy that I recorded of my friends. I guess 'cause when I began that album I was over there – late 2004 was when I started this – so a lot of the inspiration is from being there. There's a track on here actually, 'Brick Walls', that has drums that I recorded – my host brother is a drummer – and I recorded him just practicing under this church. They had a little band room that they let them rehearse in, and I recorded him under there

and used the drums.

**TM:** I like the mixed landscape, the montage of different places in the world. It's nice; it's kind of global and local at the same time.

**C:** I think that's kind of, I guess, what I'm aiming for, something like that. It's local and it's also global.