

The Things We Play

Being a pair of fat old dykes who are unable to play instruments or keep a beat has not stopped Kay and I from being in a band together (our band is called Homosexual Death Drive and we played at the first Scumbag in May last year). Proficiency and craftsmanship begone! Mostly we just use our voices to sing songs, but here's a little show and tell of the main things we use to make music without being musicians.

Auto Bass Generator and Monatron

My boyfriend Simon makes pedals and strange instruments for fun. His stuff was displayed in an exhibition at Stratford Station a couple of years ago, and he made a zine about fuzz pedals which you can get via www.musical-den.blogspot.com. We use a couple of the things he made. The Auto Bass Generator is a thing the size of a couple of matchboxes that looks like a robot-brain and makes a series of seemingly randomly generated bass bleeps. The Monatron is a stringed plank type thing that you can either pluck to make drawn-out ambient notes, or plug into a fuzzbox to make intense and unbearable screechy-scratchy noise (our current preferred mode). It's called the Monatron and painted pink because Simon's drag name is Mona and he played the instrument in his old band, Six Inch Killaz.

Child's accordion

A real one would be good but they're ever so pricey and have millions of buttons on them. This one is still somewhat involved, but neither of us feels bad about writing the notes on the keys in felt-tip, or just pumping it in and out like an overexcited chimpanzee. Feel sorry for our poor neighbours, eh?

Delay pedal

This thing has a lot of intimidating settings, and it took us ages to work out how the leads to a microphone and an amp are supposed to plug in. There's probably an instruction manual somewhere but who can be bothered to read those things? I realise as I write this that I have fully bought into the myth that people in bands are just supposed to know about things like this without ever having to learn. Anyway, it is a lot of fun to play with. Our mini-song 'I heart satan' happened because we were pretending to do occult backmasking.

Minipod

I don't know why I have come to call an iPod or any kind of .mp3 player a minipod, but there it is. We have a backing track we generated and then stole off a low-rent 'make your own beats' type website, and play through my minipod when we perform. The backing track makes me laugh a lot, it's all pompous yet anodyne fake organ, the stupidest instrument they had listed, and we keyed in notes that spelled out DADDA or something, which made us laugh like hyenas at the time.

Mouth harp

I haven't worked out the knack of twanging my mouth harp and wrangling a microphone at the same time, so this hasn't happened as much as I'd like it to. Also,

my technique is a bit too crappy. Sometimes I can get it to hum like a 1960s synthesiser though, no joke.

Recorder

This is the only instrument I can play with any conviction. It's the least rock n roll instrument in the world and is annoying because I can't play and sing at the same time. I have a whole load of recorders, from a giant bass, which could double as a walking stick, to a teeny-weeny garklein, which brings all the neighbourhood dogs rushing to my door when I have a tootle on it.

Swanee whistle

Kay got her original swanee from a shop at Dollywood. She often accompanies her playing with a comedy walk. I think it is the sound of her soul.

Charlotte Cooper

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