

Something You Should Hear: Simon Scott 14.02.11

Alvin Lucier *I am Sitting in a Room* (1970)

This is my favourite piece of electroacoustic music and I regard it as a masterpiece of process based music. The dissolving human voice eventually becomes a reverberating mass of sound that the architecture transforms with each tape loop. His voice reveals all of its personal characteristics, such as his stutter and the calm manner of the delivery of his words, and looping his voice to re-record is a process that is engaging and ultimately replaces the personal with the impersonal. His score is the process, he literally tells you what he is about to do, and these repetitive actions of playing back his voice into his room destroys and degrades these loops in a similar manner to William Basinski's *Disintegration Tapes*. There is human loss as the semantics disappear over the forty-five minutes and it feels like the aural equivalent of hearing someone age, decay and die. It is personal, poignant and is powerfully engaging.

My Bloody Valentine *Isn't Anything* (1988)

I could have chosen *Loveless*, but everyone knows just how influential that album has been on many generations of alternative music-makers, so instead I'll pick the one that changed my teenage mind forever. When you hear the track *All I Need*, the heartbeat-driven track that ends side one, you are listening to falling avalanches of sound that are violent and emotional. Kevin Shield's soft, tender voice, deep in the mix, is the perfect contrast to the guitar wall of sound cascading out of your speakers. The use of the tremolo bar and long reverbs on the multi tracked guitars has become something of a trademark that is often now copied but very rarely is equaled in terms of sheer sonic vastness. My Slowdive days were only a couple of years after this album was released and we all shared a deep passion for this band.

Essential guitar music.

Brian Eno *Music For Airports* (1978)

'Ambient music' is a term now often overused, but Eno's approaches to minimal textures, generative musical form and timbre are enduring trademarks, often cited as deeply influential by many musicians. I chose this album because it's a great place to discover Eno, but most of his work between 1975 and 1985 is excellent, and it all had a huge impact on me as a sound designer, musician and producer. I love the fact that he was inspired to create ambient music

by laying in a hospital bed trying to hear the sound of a record playing so quietly that he could barely discern the music on the disc. It opened his ears up to possibilities of creating new sound forms and compositional techniques that became legendary.

Not bad for an ex-postman from Norfolk!

Plus:

Chris Watson *Weather Report* (2003)

Arvo Pärt *Für Alina* (1976) and *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978)

Henryk Gorecki *Symphony No. 3* (1992)

Happy listening, and thanks to Simon.