

overdrive

Overdrive is an excess. **Overdrive**. But it's often used on purpose in music, making it not an excess, but an effect – a deliberate distortion.

A distortion is a deviation from verisimilitude or an expected, comfortable shape. This makes immediate sense in the context of a distorted image – when one can recognise the deviation from a 'natural' form – or in the case of a distorted sound that is equally 'natural'; a field recording or a note from a canonical instrument.

A voice, for instance.

The overdriven sound in garage punk has the effect of illusory amplification. The music always sounds loud, even when it's quiet. Giacometti sculpted his figures to always appear distant, eluding proximity – you can't get up close no matter how much you try. On the contrary, you can *only* be up close to this music. It's invasive, confrontational.

It's interesting when the sense of something *pushed beyond its limits* is applied to something that doesn't have established or intuitive limits. Such that we recognise the exertion and distortion, without knowing what it is that has been altered. Or, more accurately in this case, we sense distortion when there is no real distortion at all, but simply an original sound with morphological similarities to distorted ones.

Abstract, artificial sounds rendered tangible by association with the concrete.

I suppose it's a part of the lo-fi aesthetic that's appeared in various forms in recent decades, but Beau Wanzer, Container, Nick Klein and others don't appear to harbour the nostalgic yearning of lo-fi's indie pioneers, nor the overt political subversion that punk's DIY aesthetic symbolised.

Nevertheless, authenticity, anti-commercialisation, purity and directness are all impulses that a certain strand of the underground share.

These artists – although borrowing from vintage electronica – face forward, with a futurist low fidelity that's more like scratchy broadcasts from space than found tapes from the past. The brutish ugliness of their palette and electronic primitivism suggest a society rebuilt after dystopian end-times in contrast to the high-gloss futurism of Quantum Natives, Fatima Al Qadiri and James Ferraro.

The latter artists' dig at commercialism lies in a strange, disorientating appropriation that's equal parts satire and celebration. They recognise the inevitability of technological change (like the original Futurists) and play around with the glitchy, shiny, intangible quality of the contemporary digital landscape.

Maybe it's in opposition to the fragility and disposability embodied by software, digitalia and internet muzak that overdriven electronic distortion finds its rationale. Bulk, heft, overuse, degradation – dwindling characteristics.