

Nothing at the ends of the rainbow: a fan's interpretation of the evolving Anachronisms' *oeuvre*

by Fardreeb McQuanga

*Life seemed so rosy in the cradle
I'll be your friend, I'll tell you what's in store
There's nothing at the end of the rainbow
There's nothing to grow up for any more*

Richard Thompson, *End of the rainbow*

Fans of metamusic are no less obsessive than other fans. Every detail of the Anachronisms' output and commentary thereon are examined scrupulously for signs of revelation. Witness the periodic "Duke is dead" rumour. With this caveat, let me put forward my theory of the current status of the defining *oeuvre* of metamusic and of its likely evolution.

To begin, the appearance of the masterful album **Next** causes a puzzle. The Anachronisms have been careful from the beginning to select album titles that reflect their relationship to the zeitgeist. In doing so, they almost always have chosen titles with some sort of play on words. (Some say always.) Even monosyllables, witness the **Beef** series and possibly, **AI** since it implies AI Leluya. In this context **Next** sticks out like a sore thumb. What is its meaning?

In his landmark commentary on the Anachronisms, Hardwick Herpes pointed out long ago that the question that is always posed by the Anachs is "What will they do next?" The album, **Next**, therefore, represents a definitive statement about the entire *oeuvre*. To understand that statement requires delving into the most advanced reaches of current metamusical theory.

One way to understand metamusic is as a spectrum lying from "non-music" to "music". The Anachs have explored the full length of this spectrum, from ultra-violet to infra-red, as it were, to pick up on the rainbow analogy from the epigram. Is Higgenbotham non-music? Only the Anachs would ask. Is Building trade singing non-music? Ditto. What about Snows of Kilimanjaro?

Next announces, I believe, a new phase of the Anachro explorations. What's "next" is – the juncture of metamusic and music – while not abandoning the other end of the spectrum. The signs are subtle, yet unmistakable. The lads have been consistently disdainful of the conventions of tempo and key. In **Next**, and now **Dead Sexy**, there is a clear progression towards embrace of these conventions. Here, DS provides another clue. The play on words is only apparent in relation to the album's artwork. This signals a move to another dimension.

Further evidence is provided by one of the consistent features of the *Anachro*—*oeuvre*, the frankenfiddle. The rumour amongst aficionados, admittedly not supported by any public statements from the group itself but the group is notably parsimonious on such statements, preferring to let the *oeuvre* speak for itself – is that, from a certain point (which itself is hotly contentious) as strings broke, even as the bridge of the instrument broke, no replacements were made. Taking the instrument to the limit. With *Dead Sexy*, word has it that the instrument has been restored.

Well, that's the theory. While there are those "hardcore" fans who will decry this exploration of the musical as a sellout, I am not among them. To go back to the opening epigram, the *Anachros* have always been about the removal of illusion. Accept the world as it is; accept art as it is. The ends of the music-to-non-music rainbow are both illusions. Their assault on the conventions of art appreciation have played against the acceptance of "music" as a defined domain; hence their emphasis on pointing up the illusion of non-music. Now its time to treat music itself to the same remorseless stripping-down. There's nothing at either end of the rainbow. There's only the rainbow itself. And that's a gratifying thought as we await the next "color" in the *Anachro* palette.