

Story for performance #475
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There's this song by New Estate that I love. I found it on the web one night while spidering around nostalgically, searching for names of bands from my past. The singing is the opposite of Australian Idol—desperate, out of tune, full of emotion. I imagine the band playing in the tiny back room of a pub for a knot of gangly people, their guitars slung impossibly low or ironically high, sweaty drumsticks slipping out of the drummer's hands like fish. (That happened once, back at the Grosvenor in Perth, around Christmas time when it was so hot the guitarist's fingers were sliding off the strings, and the room was empty 'cause everyone had retreated to the beer garden). I remember listening to this song almost every day a couple of summers ago. I'd just come out of a long-term relationship and moved into a new house. I felt like the underside of a rock that had been left untouched in the garden for years, now upturned to the sun. When I was in the house alone I'd put the song on as loud as I could stand it and swoon and fall over furniture. The only lyric (apart from a few indecipherable squeals) was the epigram to my future life—'out of control / and I like it'.

The metronomic side-to-side sway of my public dancing style was forgotten in my bedroom. Dancing to music alone was learning about gravity and the hardness of floors and the way my limbs and body could move when they weren't connected to tools, when they didn't have to go anywhere or produce anything—tight and loose at the same time. Sometimes, when I listened to this song, it felt like I was all electricity. Or, I'd feel the density and realness of my body moving through oxygen, every square centimetre of my skin alive to the air around me. Now, still, when I put it on I'm instantly eighteen or twenty-three and someone is putting on eyeliner or doing their hair, or sculling booze, and there's this enormous bottled-up excitement about the possibilities of the night ahead. It's the best part of the night. Isn't that what being out of control is about—being open to possibility?

Then there's *Poems* by Tricky. I bought it on vinyl in 1998—a coin of clean-smelling wax from DaDa's in Perth. I used to say—as if I needed an excuse to like hip

hop—that I liked Tricky because he always sounded like he was going to die. Now, I think it's more true to say he always sounded like he was about to fall asleep. It was something about how slow and restrained, yet how intense, how thick, the music was—as thick and viscous as the vinyl the moment before it's pressed. It made the relationship, the point of contact, between the ultra-thin needle and the piece of turning vinyl come alive, spinning down into a spiral of an afternoon. Before this, I'd wasted too much time listening to faster and faster and more and more distorted punk music on the seven-inch records I'd order through the post, as if it was speed and indecipherability that equalled intensity. It might seem so for a while, but it doesn't last. Tricky said 'forget the punk / I pack the funk' and it convinced me instantly.

In the video—which, thanks to YouTube, I just watched for the first time in years—Tricky is rapping slowly through the viewfinder of some kind of early digital camera—this is 1996—and you see his lips mouthing one brilliant line after another—'everybody wants a piece of me / rinse the origin and cease to be.' The Dylanesque placard he holds up later in the video reads: 'Tricky—unusually sensitive and paranoid'. A few years later he would say the paranoia and darkness of his lyrics from this period were the result of an illness that he'd since recovered from. Of course I was happy he was feeling more positive about life, but I didn't like his new album as much.

Or, lastly, there's *Dum Dum* by El Duende. I used to see the singer of this band, Dan, jumping up and down at the front of Cannane's gigs, looking alarmingly like Peter Garrett. Then, some time later he was singing songs on a stage at the KB Hotel. Gorgeous, beautiful songs like I hadn't heard in years. The lyrics to this song are wise and heartfelt. And because he wrote it I'm now spinning on a desk chair listening to a CDR of the album, ribboning my arms upwards, pulling guitar strings, brushed cymbals and violins from the air.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Tim Wright.