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**Interviewer:** *"Papua New Guinea" made the charts and a Hollywood soundtrack. After that, Future Sound of London signed to Virgin Records for £200,000, so you might think the pressure is on. No chance. These two are determinedly staying out on the edge. This ain't just the future sound of London, but the future sound of music. And it starts with a 31 minute, instrumental head tune. David Davies tunes in. TWO people make up Future Sound of London. Their names are Gary Cobain and Brian Dougans, they're 26 and 28 and they come not from London but from Bedford and Glasgow. If their plans come off, it's a lot more than the future sound of London we're talking about. Not probably even just the future sound of electronic music. What's up for grabs here is music's very place in the modern world. For these boys are planning projects that envisage music as just one part of increasingly incredible audio-visual experiences. Some futuristic combination of Terminator 2's morphing special effects and Lawnmower Man's virtual reality sequences, united with electronic music deep enough to move the strongest emotions. Ambitious. But they are already well on their way. "Papua New Guinea" made their name. And their bank balance. Not only did it lead to them signing to Virgin after a bidding war that included Sony, Arista and London Records, but Hollywood also got involved. Cool World is a part-animated thriller that never made theatrical release in Britain, going straight on to video earlier this year, but its inclusion of "Papua New Guinea" on its soundtrack has led to some very well-padded royalty cheques for FSOL. Enough to top up their profits, they reckon, to give them the business freedom to do whatever they want to artistically. So they say. And they have their new single on their side.*

**Brian Dougans:** *"We could have done another "Papua New Guinea", we've got several tracks lying around with big ethnic vocals but that's too easy. It would be so easy to do that and do a dance track because we're very good at it but we want to question ourselves."*

**Garry Cobain:** *"It's about discovering ourselves, I'm finding out about me. We're experimentalists."*

**Interviewer:** *And so we have "Cascade"; 31 minutes and 50 seconds of vocal-less, life-affirming music and about as radio-friendly as the big new tune on Detroit's Underground Resistance label. It is though f\*\*king brilliant. Intergalactic head music that strips it right down to the cranium, pours in the molten acid and sends you out the door with a suitcase and a one-way ticket to Saturn. Not though that this is any kind of hippie drivel. There are incredible breathing, sucking sounds in here that doesn't require an eighth of weed and a blowback to really appreciate. WALK into FSOL's Earthbeat studio and it's easy to see where Virgin's investment has gone. Stripped, wooden floorboards; monster flash mixing desk; banks of gadgetry; top of the range Apple Mac for sleeve graphics; black leather sofa and more space than some dance producers actually live in. It is sleek and powerful. But somewhat strangely, the focal point of all this is a TV monitor. In front of the mixing desk and set dead centre between the speakers it sits, playing, repeatedly, Koyaanisqatsi - a film without dialogue that (like the recent Baraka film) just screens shot after beautiful shot of life. From escalator riders to sausages coming through a machine, from speeded up clouds to shamanic dancing. Head TV. It's just after one in the afternoon, Brian is rolling a spliff and this Head TV runs on. In quick, simplistic pop terms, Brian is the studio whiz. Dressed blankly in T-shirt, skate trousers and Converse*

*trainers, he's quiet and almost shy, pacing nervously back and forth across the studio while we wait for Gary. Maybe it's just the dope.*

**Brian Dougans:** *"I'm totally stoned"*

**Interviewer:** *Garry is almost the opposite. Flash, thrusting and garrulous. He sits, swiveling in the studio's only executive chair, the good-looking one with no shirt under his unbuttoned leather waistcoat and the words just spilling out of him.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"Electronic music, is the most genuine music you can do because you have to go to hell and back to get something good enough. But I don't want to give the impression we're boffins in a studio 'cos we're not..."*

**Brian Dougans:** *"I don't know, We're always here."*

**Interviewer:** *And they go on to debate whether they're getting their personal lives back in balance or whether the music still dominates.*

**Brian Dougans:** *"Even at home, you're still feverishly trying to tape the radio and TV."*

**Interviewer:** *19 months ago, when we first really mentioned FSOL in Mixmag, they were scavengers in the underground. Gary had junked his electronics career and they were zooming around in the house and techno undergrowth, throwing up increasingly brilliant singles on the otherwise unremarkable Jumpin' And Pumpin' label. Rushing onwards and upwards, they had dumped their more politically ambitious Stakker project (responsible for the aching brilliance of the "Humanoid" hard techno anthem) **and were recording under a whole slew of titles:** FSOL, Smart Systems, Mental Cube, Indotribe and Yage. Only the first and last now survive: Yage being the creator of the recent and delicious Amorphous Androgynous album. Electronic and deep. It was Brian who turned Gary on to the depth of electronic music.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"Brian changed my whole course, I was f\*\*king around with tin pots and guitars and Brian was f\*\*king around with extreme ambience. Realism. Realism that can reflect life and all its horrors."*

**Interviewer:** *Gary was hooked. He realised how disturbing electronic music could be.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"I think electronic music is the most life-changing music I've ever heard. It's a completely new form of music. With the new technology there are possibilities to make music that it's not been possible to make before. We're able to put emotions into electronics and that's what we need; depth in music."*

**Interviewer:** *As a man who used to wear overcoats in summer and pour over his Joy Division and Dead Can Dance albums, it's not necessarily positive emotions he's talking about.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"The new electronic music is a realism, it's not zippy music. It's quite a harsh thing."*

**Interviewer:** *THEY may try to fight it but Future Sound Of London are a pretty obsessive, even nerdy, pair. Their recent guest show on London's Kiss FM featured not only all the latest sounds and pulses but also another signal. Computer code. They were simultaneously broadcasting machine code for tripped out Apple Mac computer graphics to go along with the music. Nor were they able to unwind on holiday, collecting samples on DAT to use on the forthcoming album. They can't help enthusing about the sonic distortions they managed to pick up while recording an Italian tour guide in some massive cave. They even take nerdish pride in their PO Box. "It's essential," reckons Gary and it's clear they read everything that comes through to them at EBV Organization, PO Box 1871, London W10 5ZL. They're not complete robots though. Hearing Gary ripping off about people lying on the floor in space suits would put a smile on anyone's face. And they clearly loved the bitter sweetness of Steve Wright playing "Papua New Guinea".*

**Garry Cobain:** *"We want to release extreme music and go Top 40 with it."*

**Interviewer:** *It's not going to be their "pop faces" that get them there though. As they say, they're no real part of any scene. They've not really been faces around MIDI Circus and they no longer feel so comfortable within the confines of the dancefloor's 4/4 beat.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"I tried to go clubbing, but it didn't really interest me. I ended up one of those poseurs watching everyone else. The stuff I found had me throwing myself around my front room was weird beats, not a metronome."*

**Interviewer:** *REALLY they're experimentalists. "Papua New Guinea" may have been one of the best dance tracks, perhaps, ever but in the great vastness of what they're trying to do, it was only one aspect of electronic music. And Future Sound Of London have definitely got big plans. And almost impossible standards.*

**Garry Cobain:** *"We're experimentalists, and we close a field as soon as we open it. It's very dangerous and very experimental. We take risks."*

**Interviewer:** *Risks like a five part single that is over half an hour long. Like the album they're promising for January. An album that is "extreme realism." That is "total, confrontational ambient space music - like an extreme case of percussion after 15 hot knives." Like their audio-visual plans for mini-documentaries to make them look "weird f\*\*kers." Like their plans for a television revolution. And, they sort of jest, "The Great Audio-Visual Swindle."*

**Garry Cobain:** *"Future Sound Of London, is in deep."*