

Mystery Disc **EN** PRODUCT

Managing to appear both ethereal and clinical, the double CD *ae³o & b³ae* eschews the usual credits and explanations. This much we do know: The album is a limited-edition release created by experimental-music outfit The Hafler Trio in collaboration with electronica mixmasters Autechre. The Hafler Trio, in fact, is rarely more than British soundscape pioneer Andrew McKenzie, a compositional mastermind who also designs the packaging of the band's releases. The custom housing of toothy-white stock, held in check with a silver band and an embossed red paper seal, unfolds to reveal an inner casing that holds additional layers of white, silver, and transparency.

"The package encourages a less 'instant' way of handling the product, simply by virtue of the lengths one has to go through to open it without damaging it," says McKenzie, who lives in Iceland. "Hopefully, this encourages listening to it with more attention as well." (The abstract, spare, and slowly evolving music conjures something like locusts swarming across a glacial plain.) "The whole operation," he adds, "is the result of applying the same principles not just to the sound but to the entire package."—*Angela Voulangas*

Colourplan paper, carried by U.K. supplier G.F. Smith, comes in 42 colors, 16 embossings, and six weights. McKenzie used Ice White Linen in the equivalent of a 130-lb. cover for the outer and inner housings.

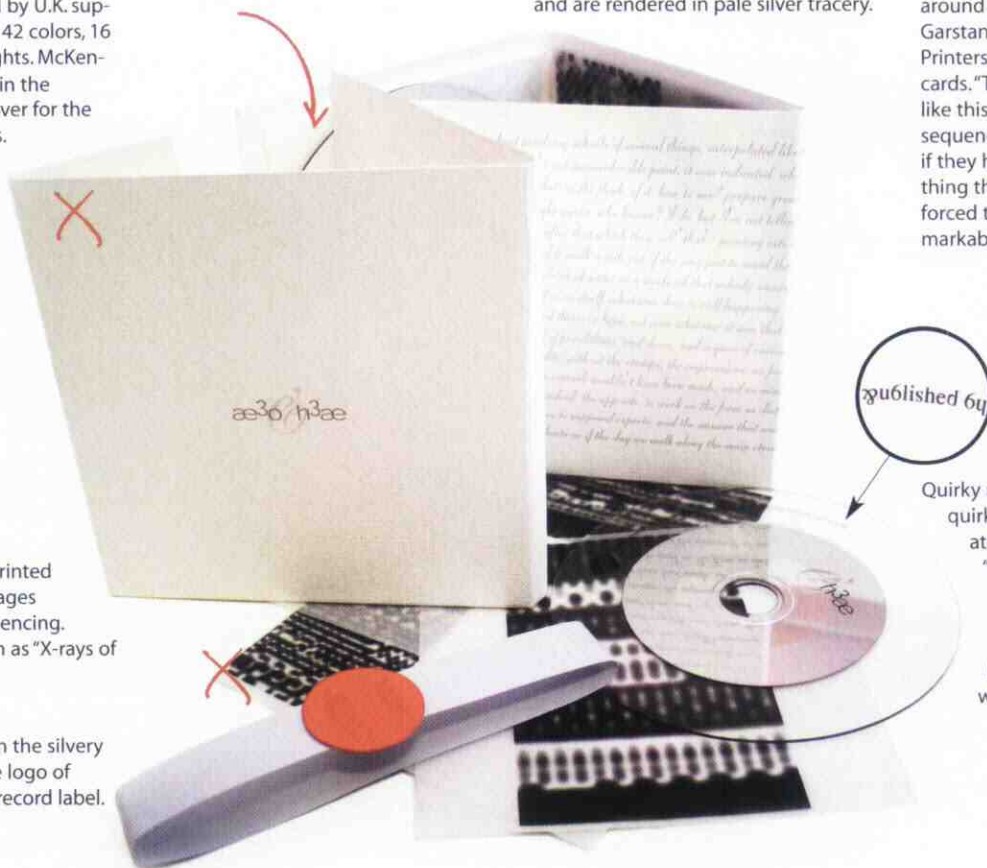
Tyvek sleeves house two striking CDs in an unusual 3" format embedded within a see-through 5" disc.

Arcane ramblings ("interpolated like some sort of string of paper dolls") stretch across the inner pocket folder and are rendered in pale silver tracery.

The independent record label Phonometrography hired the printer around the corner from its offices in Garstang, Lancashire. Colin Cross Printers normally produces greeting cards. "They had never done anything like this," says McKenzie, and as a consequence, "they did a better job than if they had been 'ordered' to do something they already knew. If a person is forced to cast aside old habits, remarkable things can happen."

Ten vellum squares are printed with black-and-white images reminiscent of DNA sequencing. McKenzie describes them as "X-rays of the sounds."

A blind embossed seal on the silvery bellyband showcases the logo of Phonometrography, the record label.



published by

Quirky marginalia run in an even quirkier customized typeface (created by McKenzie and named "wrong font") along the edge of the CD. A mixture of upside-down characters and numbers substituted for letters, the font makes readers work for the information.

Phonometrography, phonometrography.net

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