

# JUSTICE YELDHAM

**Justice Yeldham is the stage name of sound artist Lucas Abela. His stage show is really one of a kind, his instrument of choice is a large piece of glass!**

**As well as performing live Lucas has also created a number of installation art pieces, many of which are based around pinball and arcade games. His most ambitious piece is called Vinyl Arcade, a huge racetrack made out of vinyl records that you race remote control cars around.**

**I was really glad that Lucas was happy to be interviewed, hope you enjoy his answers as much as I did!**

**<STZ> It seems like you have always done things differently, initially you were described as a turntablist but not in the traditional sense. What was it about record players as a medium that originally attracted you to them?**

**<LJA>** As a teenager I came across a book called the industrial culture handbook, which included a bunch of interviews with bands I liked at the time. Some of these bands like say SPK I could easily find their records if I went to the right places in Brisbane but others were more elusive especially Boyd Rice and his project NON.

In the book he talked about a single called

pagan music which had more than one hole for the record player, so basically the record could be played off axis. This fascinated me but I could not track down this single so I got a drill and started drilling holes into my records at home to see what his single may have sounded like. After that my mind turned on and I started dismembering records, slicing them in half, turning one side over and sticking them back together, slicing a cake slice from one and placing it with another purposefully warping them in the oven, attaching obstructions etc etc etc.

All this was done in the privacy of my bedroom around 1989, and I didn't really consider myself a musician at the time just a bored teenager trying to emulate this Boyd Rice character in his bedroom.

It wasn't to a few years later that I took to these experiments again, after I moved to Sydney and found myself with a graveyard shift on radio skid row 88.9.

It started out in a similar vein fucking with records, but got more fucked up like playing them with soldering irons to take the information away and create textures rather than mere manipulation of what's on the disc. Then as this was the early 90's and everyone was taking up new technologies I began finding record players on the street and decided to start manipulating the players and not just the medium.

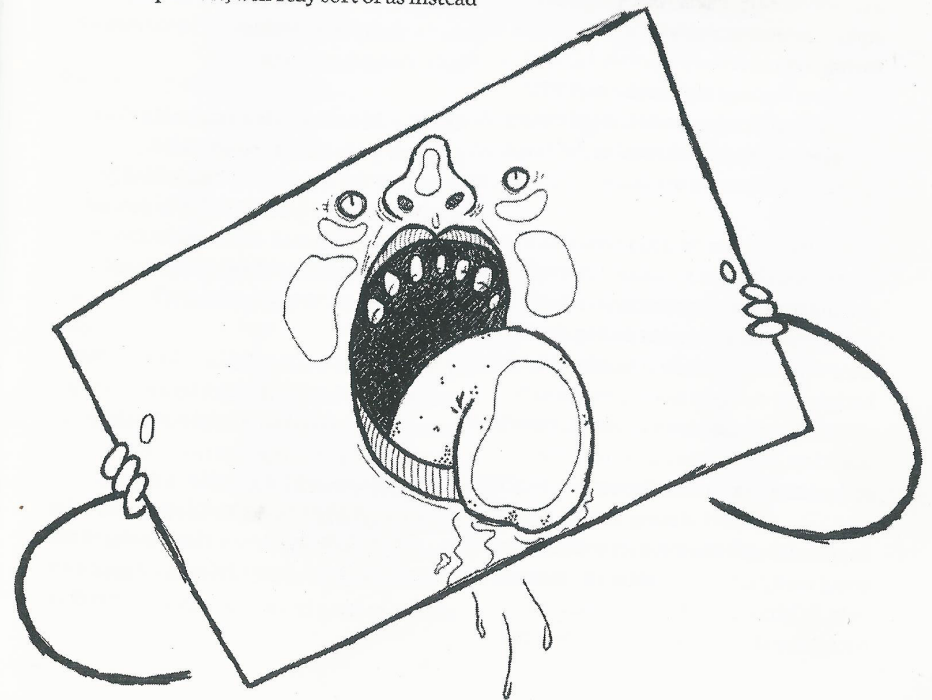
I removed the tone arms and attached the head carts to bendable wires so they could be placed on the record anywhere I liked for a sort of loop affect, well I say sort of as instead

of doing a singular loop the record would play a few rotations before the wire got tense enough to send it back to the start or further back so with six of these on a record you would get great random compositions that didn't sound like mere looping.

I would place these guys on the same groove and get a magnetic tape echo effect like you would with tape heads but better yet as they were on loose wires I could grab the wires and shimmer them whilst it played.

I made a glove with styluses on each finger and played records that way, used knives, swords, springs and all manner of things as styli and eventually got rid of the decks altogether favouring fan motors.

That's when I started playing live





**<STZ> It seems like turntables, or possibly more accurately, stylus' have been a recurring theme for you. The piece of glass that you play as Justice Yeldham is basically a giant stylus and Vinyl Rally uses records and stylus. You have been a performer for many years but more recently have started making sound art installation pieces. Was there a catalyst or inspiration behind this?**

<LJA> The vinyl rally was originally a performance idea where I'd have a stage covered in records and race a remote control car across it with a stylus underneath which I'd also process through some effects. This idea was way back in the mid 90's when I lived in my car and had no money and realistically wasn't possible, so I kept it on the backburner for years.

Then after I discovered the glass and started touring like a maniac I started getting some good invitations to festivals which enabled me to get a foot in the door with the Australia council - a place I originally thought would never touch an act like mine which was within a punk tradition, born organically from the street and not the universities.

I applied anyway as there was no way I could really afford to tour without some help. In hindsight I have to hand it to ozco, they simply reward good ideas full

stop, it doesn't matter where these ideas come from as long as they are interesting anyone has a chance for funding in Australia, which is a truly beautiful thing.

Anyway, long story short, after getting my foot in the door for some touring grants I thought I'd put pen to paper on this old idea of mine which whilst writing grew into this giant installation. Weirdly, one of the best things I've discovered about funding is that a one line idea of race car on records can be fleshed out into the installation we now know as vinyl rally.

So the act of writing grants became part of my artistic process literally helping me form my initial flashes of ideas into fully-fledged concepts.

**<STZ> Most of the installation pieces you have made are related to arcades, especially pinball. Did you spend a lot of time in arcades as a kid? Do you remember how you first fell in love with pinball?**

<LJA> My dad was a publican and I remember when we first got space invaders installed I would spend hours in the public bar playing that machine. I was pretty much obsessed with a lot of the first generation games like asteroid as a child but it wasn't until my teens when we moved to the Gold Coast that I started to hang in video arcades.

Bubble Bobble was the king machine at the time but I also loved Double Dragon and Shinobi and would spend most my time playing these games. This was when I was 12/13/14, before I became obsessed with music I was obsessed with these games.

Hanging at the arcade wasn't the best place to make friends and I soon found myself surrounded by proto-criminals. Together we would do stupid things like ram-raid Dominos Pizza just to steal the hats, plus more serious stuff. Some was fun like stealing the robots from the Wizard of Oz ride at the abandoned Magic Mountain theme park; they were these animatronic characters from the film which we set up at a friends garage, where we use to smoke bongs.

Seemed very cool at the time.

We also tried to steal the video games from the Magic Mountains arcade but the cops raided the place whilst I was wheeling out a console. I remember running like crazy and jumping from what must have been a two story high drop in nobbys beach park. I wanted to be a stuntman at the time and had practiced my shoulder rolls many times but to this day still cant believe I did that.

**<STZ> I've always associated pinball and arcades with outsider culture but did not realise it could lead to serious crime!**

<LJA> The Miami Beach video arcade and the surrounding area was nicknamed the Bronx by the locals. We're talking first generation Australian B-boys, and crime was part of the mix. For the fuck of it crime.

Run DMC  
Public Enemy  
Graffiti  
and ram raids.  
So fun.

The arcade was the center of this. If Campbell Newman was premiere then he would of banned video game arcades and anyone associated with them. Oh, actually Joh was premiere then, which was pretty much the same.

The crimes got more serious and some of the crew was violent which wasn't me so I ended up distancing myself from that lot and at the same time was expelled from Merrimac High and moved to Miami high where I met Maria, a hippy girl who introduce met to alternative music.

It was all downhill from there.

Good thing I found a new crowd or I would be in prison now, underground music saved me.

Wish my parents understood that.

**<STZ> I remember there was a short lived punk band from QLD called Joh Bjelke-Petersen Youth**



<LJA> Sounds about right. I remember the night he was voted out, it was Livid festival with Pop Will Eat Itself and TISM as headliners. Probably the best night of my life, as the atmosphere was one of revolution.

Even though it was just an election everyone was so happy! Euphoric even.

**<STZ> hopefully we get to feel the same way when Abbot gets voted out next election!**

<LJA> Yes please!

But Joh was in for decades. It was insane, I remember back then ZZZ market days would turn into riots

**<STZ> You have built 4 custom pinball machines so far, could you tell us a little about them and do you have further machines planned? Are your machines on display anywhere?**

<LJA> There are 3 complete machines. I'm too lazy to describe them again just visit the following if interested.

Pinball Pianola (an old Pianola converted into a pinball machine, every key on the keyboard controls a flipper, the ball gets knocked into the Pianola strings to create sound)  
<http://dualplover.com/pinball/>

Balls for Cthulu (a 5 player pentagram shaped machine with guitars as the arms

of the star)  
<http://dualplover.com/balls/>

Flip Off (a two player competitive pinball machine)  
<http://dualplover.com/flipoff/>

And a fourth that's complete but still needs a paint job

**<STZ> The tuning fork one right?**

<LJA> Yep, it's the most traditional of the 4 in shape and size but has a bunch of pitchforks mounted into the playfield. It's actually proven to be the most musical of all four.

**<STZ> Did you have any experience working on pinball machines before this, or did you work it out as you went along?**

<LJA> No experience at all, hadn't even seen the inside of one until I bought a wrecked Royal Rumble machine to dissect. It was pretty daunting inside with a crazy amount of wiring but I soon figured most of this was superficial to my cause as my games didn't require scoring or any computer controlled aspects and all I needed to do was wire up the solenoids like they would of been in some of the older electro-mechanical machines.

It did take some time working out the

wiring of the flippers and their end of stroke switches, I got it wrong a few times when I first built Pinball Pianola I had some small fires underneath the playfield as I experimented with it.

Even once I worked it out I discovered that having 20 flippers can be problematic. They are all controlled via a piano keyboard and each key worked fine on its own but instinctually everyone played the game palms down to use as many flippers at once, which spread the load and made each flipper weak, so weak the balls wouldn't reach the strings. I had an electrical engineer friend Dan Stocks help me out on this and he introduced a large capacitor to store the load for each flipper so that no matter how many are pressed at once the flipper gives its all.

My original playfield was way too steep on Pinball Pianola as well, which at first even with strong flippers made it very hard to get the balls all the way up to the strings and I had to completely remodel the cabinet's sides to elevate the playfield and I now know a 5% incline is desirable.

The pop bumpers were also a struggle, as without a computer interface they were only as good as the ball's contact with the switch. Basically in a high end machine the slightest contact signal will first go to a computer which will then tell the solenoid to do a full thrust downwards, but mine had no such intelligence and so when the balls hit the bumpers slightly they might only get a half pump from the coils as the switch connection was so

slight and extremely quick.

Fortunately I found a company that had invented boards for this very purpose so people with old Electro-Mechanical games could soup up there pop bumpers to be as good as the latest machines. I did find a lot of useful information online like wiring LEDs to be powered by the solenoid switches and other backyard pinball hacks like switching coils from 24v to 48v to make them more powerful. I'm still learning, its not as easy as it looks. Setting slingshot and bumper switches is a pain, too close and they go off all the time and even burn. Too far away and they sometimes don't connect so need to be perfectly placed to do their best work.

**<STZ> Are your custom pinball machines on display anywhere? Where can people find out more about them, Dual Plover or Justice Yeldham?**

<LJA> Not permanently, I try to show them off whenever I can but there is no permanent home for them yet.

For future shows like my new real world first person shooter pacman I'm currently working on just check out here.

<http://dualplover.com/tocome/>

and more info on everything else is at my website

<http://dualplover.com/abela/>