



## UNDER THE RADAR - HOW AVANT GARDE ELECTRONIC MUSIC ENTERED THE MAINSTREAM IN THE 50's AND 60's

The 50's and 60's were a unique time; a time of rapid technological advancement that saw man and woman enter space, travel by jet aircraft and create massively destructive weapons that could wipe out the planet. Technology entered the home too, ushering in the consumer age. Labour saving and leisure devices such as washing machines and televisions became commonplace in the 'push button' home. Electronic music was the perfect soundtrack to this period of intense technological progress and also offered the burgeoning radio and TV advertising world a distinct new sound with which it could help its products stand out in an increasingly busy market.

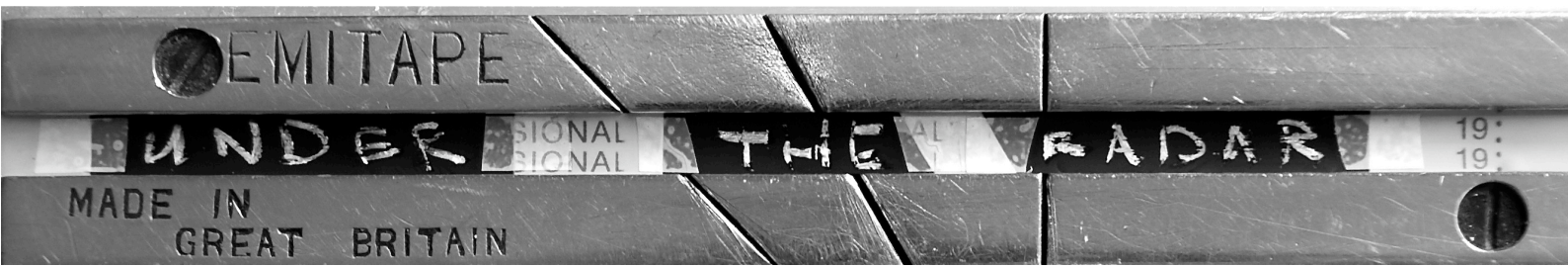
TV and radio producers were also quick to utilize the strange new palette of sound that tape manipulation and music concrete offered. Used as background music for drama and documentaries, theme tunes and station branding, strange other worldly sounds leaked into the home, finding their way in through peak time programmes like the daily news show on BBC 1 or in popular science fiction series' like *Dr. Who*. It wasn't just the visuals that had kids covering behind the sofa; much of the electronic music created for *Dr. Who* was truly frightening.

*Under the Radar* is a 2.5 hour multi media lecture that explores the history of electronic music focussing primarily on the period of the 50's and 60's where the experimental avant garde found its way into the mainstream through its use in TV, radio, advertising and film. Using audio and video clips and a practical exercise that gives participants the opportunity to create their own electronic tape loop using tape editing techniques, *Under the Radar* offers an excellent introduction to the electronic music and sound pioneers; their works, techniques, technology and legacy.

Today we take electronic music and sound for granted, as if its always been here filling our airwaves, Ipods, bars clubs and gadgets; but it hasn't always been this way. Presented by composer, sound designer and radio producer Simon James, *Under the Radar* explores the pioneers that introduced the world to this futuristic new sound.

Course relevance - Music History, Music Production, Media and Communication, Sound Art and design.

Contact : e. [simon@simonsound.co.uk](mailto:simon@simonsound.co.uk) t. +44 (0)7789 865105  
See attached sheet for Simon James' Bio.





## Simon James Biography

Simon James is a composer, sound designer and radio producer with over 15 years of experience. His work has been broadcast worldwide by the BBC, ABC (Australia), MTV, Discovery Networks, Turner Broadcasting and Resonance FM. He recently created the sonic branding for Turner Broadcasting's terrestrial TV channel TNT, broadcasting to 17 million homes in Turkey.

His work with writer Ken Hollings has included enhanced readings, BBC radio features, live performances and a 12 part series for Resonance FM entitled *Welcome to Mars* which focusses on science fact and science fiction in the 1950's. A book of the same name has just been published and includes a CD featuring original music composed by Simon for the radio series. *The Wire* recently said of the music that it '*...not only evokes the mood of the era, it also stands on its own as inventively conceptual electronic music.*

In 2008 Simon worked with composer Ian Helliwell to produce *The Tone Generation*, an ongoing radio series, now in its thirteenth episode, that explores the history of electronic music. The series also acts as a perfect audio companion to the *Under the Radar* lecture.

Simon's album *Reverse Engineering* is ready for release in 2009. Recorded using reel to reel tape, analogue synthesizers, tone generators and space echo, it features music heavily inspired by the pioneering composers of the 50s and 60's.

*Simon spoke confidently and passionately on a subject he is obviously extremely knowledgeable about. The students particularly enjoyed the tape editing practical. A great opportunity to learn about the early days of electronic music and sound design.*

**Lance Dann - Head of Media and Communication Dept. Ravensbourne College.**

*Just thought I'd say how good your lecture was, probably the best we've had since we've been here, so definitely come back if they ask you to... pretty sure most of class felt the same way.* **Student at Ravensbourne College, London.**

