

By Mr. Greg Zobel

Since 1992 Robin Rimbaud has walked a unique artistic path: He uses surveillance technology to create intriguing art and entertainment. His most noted works consist of musical pieces built out of scanned snippets of telephone dialogue, hence his moniker "Scanner." Scanner listens to the airwaves and records the most interesting conversations, edits out any identifying information (like last names, addresses and phone numbers), and mutates the voice so that the original speaker is not identifiable. Thus while the speakers become anonymous, their passions, interests, sentiments and conversations become very public. Scanner has released albums every year since 1992: *Spore* (1995), *Sulpher* (1996) and *The Quick and the Dead* (2000) are some of the best known.

Most people regard their phone conversations as private and privileged. Given the powerful surveillance technology available on the market—and the proliferation of cellular phones and their use in public spaces—this is clearly an illusion. How private is an argument when it takes place in a restaurant? About as private as cell phone calls made in public. Fortunately for the public Rimbaud is

more interested in entertainment and education about sound and technology than he is about blackmail or invading our privacy.

Scanner is constantly exploring new ideas, media and approaches to technology. Unlike many artists who become fixated with a specific path or vision, he applies new developments as fast as they arise. A visit to one of his web sites does not reveal the average tedium of band gigs, news and boring pictures. Rather you can listen to samples, experience how he sees the Internet as a practical art form and learn about the mind that will gladly turn your phone calls into art. Check out [scanner dot.com](http://scanner.dot.com), scannertonne.co.uk and massobservation.co.uk.

Recently Scanner's been working on art installations and museum presentations. His most interesting piece was based on the

nursery rhyme "London Bridge's Falling Down." Following the route laid out by the rhyme, Scanner walked and recorded the conversations and sounds found along that path. He also took photographs. After recording many hours of sounds he created a soundtrack. The next step was to fill a double decker tour bus with tourists and play them the "sounds of London Bridge" while driving them along the route. Surveillance, sampling, interactive sculpture, nursery rhymes and a tour all combined into one experience.

Rimbaud's experiments and art are garnering international interest. In November 2000 he went on a seven-day tour of Europe, America and Australia that combined art installations, lectures and live performances. •

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Downloads of the Week

iMesh

Platform: PC

iMesh is a peer-to-peer file sharing service that helps you find audio, video and picture files on the Net. Search the computers of other iMeshers for files you want to download. It's a similar idea to Napster, except you get files directly from other users instead of through central servers. New version 2 beta features include chat mode, better skins and a Media Manager.

Download: imesh.com/index.cfm

Reckless Drivin'

Platform: Mac

The goal of this driving game is to leave destruction and disaster in your wake as you drive your car through different levels. A sequel to the Burning Rubber game, improvements include a new graphics engine and realistic skidding, tire tracks and reactions to different road surfaces—including highways, deserts and ice. You also get to ram into other cars!

Download: spaceports.com/~reckless (\$12 registration fee)