

MEDIA RELEASE: February 2007

# Now Hear This Marcus Coates, Zoë Irvine, People Like Us

**Artists' audio works in Middlesbrough Town Centre, 28 Feb – 8 Mar 2008**  
**Venues: The Mall, Central Library & Linthorpe Road**  
**Part of AV Festival 08: Broadcast**

Now Hear This is a series of audio works presented in various public spaces across Middlesbrough. The project features new sound works by artists selected for their various interests in the complex relationships between sound, space and location. Adopting diverse modes of broadcast and public address, Now Hear This offers a range of listening experiences and unexpected sonic interventions into our everyday urban environment, creating surprising and engaging encounters with broadcast material.

Commissions include a new sound work by British artist **Marcus Coates** who broadcasts local birdsong in the town's main shopping centre, whilst **Zoë Irvine** presents highlights of a world wide 24 hour telephonic singing project in the local library and **People Like Us** offer a series of 10 free tracks celebrating the humorous side to communication breakdowns via a Bluetooth download hotspot on Middlesbrough's main shopping street.

The project is curated and produced by Forma and is presented as part of AV Festival 08: Broadcast.

## **Marcus Coates with Geoff Sample – Grounded, The Mall Shopping Centre**

Marcus Coates, in collaboration with sound recordist Geoff Sample, broadcasts a series of birdsong recordings in Middlesbrough's main shopping centre, The Mall. Using the existing public address system, Coates audio works feature local bird species native to the Tees Estuary and North East England.

Busy shoppers will hear the sounds of large flocks of waders feeding on local mudflats at low tide, alongside the hubbub of species calling and probing each other to keep flocks together and to signal feeding and foraging times. Broadcast at close intervals throughout the day, Coates brings an unexpected soundtrack to this indoor urban environment, drawing some surprising parallels and contrasts between bird life and human behaviour.

## **Zoë Irvine – DIAL-A-DIVA, Central Library**

Zoë Irvine presents highlights from the audio archive of DIAL-A-DIVA, a 24 hour global, telephonic singing event celebrating one of the earliest broadcast technologies, the Theatrophone. The Theatrophone (or Electrophone as it was sometimes called) was the highlight of the World Exhibition in Paris in 1881 where it connected listeners via telephone to the Paris Opera house and theatres. The idea took off in various forms – transmitting theatre and opera performances around the world until the device died out in the 1920s with the spread of radio broadcasting.

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In 2005 and 2007, Zoë Irvine's DIAL–A–DIVA project recreated the theatrophone experience by allowing listeners to enjoy live musical performances from around the world via a call centre and phone lines for a 24 hour period.

Visitors to Middlesbrough Central Library can hear a selection of the recorded performances on listening posts, presented alongside an exhibition of postcards and ephemera reflecting the magical experiences early telecommunications offered.

### **People Like Us – Breaking Waves, Bluetooth hotspot, Linthorpe Road**

Vicki Bennett (aka People Like Us) will produce a series of short audio works to be broadcast via Bluetooth in Middlesbrough Town Centre. These brief musical compositions explore the humorous side to communication breakdowns in all their varied and surprising forms.

To experience Breaking Waves audiences are invited to take a Bluetooth enabled device (such as a mobile phone) within close proximity of the Bluetooth broadcaster - a poster site situated in front of BHS on Linthorpe Road, in Middlesbrough's central shopping area. The broadcaster will emit a notification that gives the option to download and listen.

**For press enquiries contact Hannah Barnes at Forma, E: [hb@forma.org.uk](mailto:hb@forma.org.uk) T: 07949 421 977**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **THE ARTISTS:**

#### **Marcus Coates**

Marcus Coates' practice encompasses film, audio work, and performance. He has established a reputation for producing fascinating explorations of the humorous and often dark similarities that exist between human and animal life. Expressing a direct concern with our relationship with nature and the symbolic resonance of animals in a contemporary urban environment, Coates' works present amusing, yet unexpectedly profound reflections upon human nature.

Recent presentations of work include solo exhibitions at Baltic, Gateshead, and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2007). His work is currently featured in the exhibition Laughing in a Foreign Language at the Hayward Gallery, London. Coates is also Co-artistic Director of Berwick International Film and Media Arts Festival, Berwick-upon-Tweed. He lives and works in London.

#### **Geoff Sample**

Sample is an internationally renowned sound recordist and a musician. An acknowledged expert on bird song, he has a particular interest in the ecology of acoustic communication, and is author of several publications on wildlife and sound. Sample runs his own label, Wildsong, on which he releases his bird song and natural soundscape recordings, and has contributed to projects with visual artists and musicians including Harriet McDougall, Clodagh Simonds and Evan Parker.

#### **Zoë Irvine**

Irvine's current practice includes sound pieces, broadcasts, participatory projects and publications. Her work ranges from carefully crafted individual pieces for radio and installation, to the creation of conceptual platforms, inviting others to participate. Her works often form playful narrative investigations into the industries and cultures of audio broadcast, inspired by early audio technology, broadcasting history and its historic figures. Irvine is currently Lecturer in Sound Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College, University of Dundee, and is based in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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### **People Like Us (Vicki Bennett)**

For sixteen years Vicki Bennett has been making CDs, radio, and audiovisual multimedia under the name People Like Us. Presented as pre-recorded material and as live performance, Bennett's works animate and recontextualise found footage collages, communicating a witty, dark and often surreal critique of popular culture.

Her work has been shown at, amongst others, Tate Modern, The National Film Theatre, Purcell Room, ICA (all London); Sydney Opera House; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Sonar, Barcelona; and The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. She has also performed radio sessions for BBC's John Peel, Mixing It, and also CBC, KPFA, and does a regular radio show on WFMU.

### **EVENTS: Guided tour, artists' talks and reception event, Monday 3 March 2008**

Join Forma for a guided tour of Now Hear This projects, followed by talks by the artists and project producers hosted by MAP (Middlesbrough Arts People). Tour begins at Blue Café on Albert Road Middlesbrough at 16:00. Talk and reception at Institute of Digital Innovation, Phoenix Building, University of Teesside begins at 17:00.

To book a place for these events contact the AV Festival box office on: +44 (0) 191 232 8289.

**THE PRODUCER & CURATORS: Forma Arts and Media Producers** are one of Europe's leading production agencies for high quality, interdisciplinary contemporary art. Collaborating with some of today's most interesting artists, it produces, tours and publishes groundbreaking new projects that seamlessly combine diverse media. Its programme pioneers new hybrid forms of music, visual art, film, new media, dance, theatre and live art.

Forma's international programme encompasses single concerts and large-scale tours for leading performing and visual arts venues and festivals; one-off exhibitions in established visual arts spaces; screenings at film and new media festivals; and major public realm projects that engage with particular places. Recent projects have included collaborations with artists Antony and the Johnsons, Charles Atlas, Juan Cruz, Graham Dolphin, Christian Fennesz, Doug Fishbone, Carsten Nicolai, Lone Twin, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Jane and Louise Wilson. The company also exclusively represents the work of Ryoji Ikeda, Lynette Wallworth and Gina Czarnecki to produce and tour their work worldwide. Forma is supported by Arts Council England. [www.forma.org.uk](http://www.forma.org.uk)

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**THE FESTIVAL: AV Festival 08** is an international festival of electronic arts, featuring visual art, music and moving image works. AV Festival 08 will run from 28 February - 8 March in venues across Newcastle, Gateshead, Middlesbrough and Sunderland, and will address the theme of broadcast through the work of sound artists, musicians, internationally renowned artists and filmmakers from across the globe. AV Festival 08 is supported by Arts Council England, North East, Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, ONE NorthEast, Middlesbrough Council, Sunderland City Council, Tyneside Cinema, Northern Film & Media, UK Film Council.

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