

# Slow Thoughts

Welcome to the third issue of Slow Thoughts! Recently I visited the UK, my home country, for the first time in two years. A lot of people seem to dread going back to their home country but I don't. It's nice to slip back into the comfort of familiarity. Although I didn't love how expensive things have gotten...

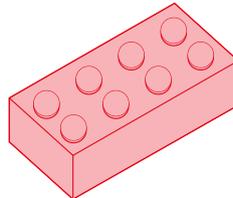
This is the first issue which features guest writers. Something that was common place in Scuff Zine, my previous project. Please enjoy the slightly different flavour of the articles.

- S.T.



"Rocket Bar" St. Louis, Missouri, USA. 2004.

## Karate - 'The Bed Is In the Ocean' Revisited



I can't remember how I learned about 'Karate'. I was listening to a lot of Midwest emo and math rock at the time. I think they were recommended in an article I read or something and inspired by the unique album cover, adorned with a yellow Lego block. I clicked a YouTube link for their album 'The Bed Is In The Ocean', and unknowingly it would become one of my all-time favourite albums.

This was about seven years ago now. Before Numero reissued their albums; before Pitchfork gave it a glowing 8.6 rating. There was a strange lack of information about the band. A couple of articles. A few YouTube rips and not much else. They had been considered somewhat of a hidden gem. At least for a teenager in the UK.

Undoubtedly DIY and indie. Karate shared an ethos with bands like Minutemen and Fugazi. The latter of which they shared a stage with a few times. On the first couple of albums, you can definitely hear some of those influences. 'The Bed Is In The Ocean' is where Karate began to veer away from the punk sound and into something that almost felt like a deliberate stance against what was becoming the punk sound.

I was just one year old when this album first came out. So I'm not going to claim to understand what was going on at this time. To me, the late nineties and early noughties always felt like when the boom of punks second wind was finally packaged up and sold for corporate profit. Not the fault of the bands, but Green Day, blink 182 and others marked a definite popification of

the punk world.

I think a part of me is projecting. When I found this album I was becoming disillusioned with what I thought punk was. I was bored of the macho posturing. The three chord, two minute formula.

'The Bed Is In The Ocean' had all the things I loved about punk, but something new. It had the rawness and simplicity. Things that made punk so great. Yet it was also soft, personal. Noodling, jazzy gutters slipped between a considered rhythm section. Lyrics often spoken plainly. When the band wanted to make an impact Geoff Farina (vocalist/guitarist) would go from spoken to shouted. The instrumentation followed.

It's those clean, klon-y guitars\* that make Karate instantly recognisable. Versatile drumming from Gavin McCarthy and smooth bass from Jeff Goddard somehow manage to remain understated while straddling the album's melting pot nature.

It became a mainstay for me, walking the suburbs of York with this playing. Catharsis from my daily anxieties. It wasn't the only album I listened to. Yet it's the only one that has stayed in my rotation permanently. It had been a while since I listened to it until I saw the vinyl reissue, released by the aforementioned Numero, I had to pick up a copy.

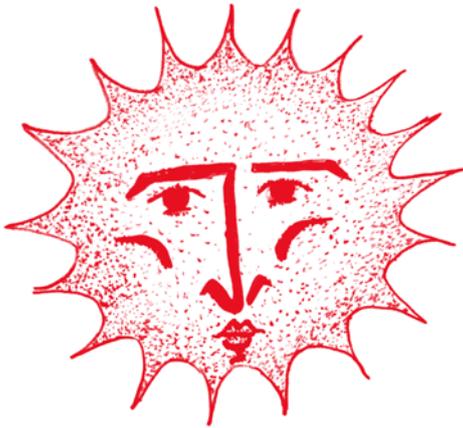
I've been busy lately. Too busy. The number of projects I have half finished are adding up and I've been getting stressed. I'm far away from home, and that means a little extra effort is needed for everything. The circumstances are different. The location is thousands of miles away. Yet the catharsis I get when I listen to this album is still there.

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# What Unacknowledged Suns Could You Climb Towards?

by Ioan Hazell



There are a few things that I ought to be doing at this moment. Preparing a packed lunch for tomorrow, booking my car in for an MOT, searching for a different job, practicing parts for a musical commitment (which I'd rather remains anonymous), and emailing my landlord about a suspected rat infestation in my flat, to name but a few. Yet, inexplicably, I find myself here; just over sixty words into a piece of writing for which I have no particular use in mind. Somewhere within, however, I get the distinct impression that this is what should be happening at this moment. I can give no clear justification for that instinct, and I am fairly certain that if I tried to, it would come off (at best) as a convoluted excuse for mismanaged time, but here we are, now having amassed twice the wordcount that we had upon last checking in.

I suspect that heeding that senseless instinct is something which we are given fewer and fewer opportunities to do as time goes on and we age. As children, with everything (more or less, and if circumstantially fortunate) taken care of, we allocate most of our time to whatever feels right. Naturally, at that sort of age, our preoccupations are largely inconsequential. But something about destroying Lego towers, or generally running around and making a great deal of noise,

simply feels right. Those are not things that children do with any particular outcome in mind, and I think that's part of what makes them so essential to cognitive development. Play, seen through a particularly dour lens of adulthood, is totally pointless, yet it has been proven, near ubiquitously, to be of great educational benefit.

Many of us though, after a certain age, cease to play. After all, we have cars to MOT, and rats to kill. Bigger fish to fry, in other words. But what psychological nourishment do we deprive ourselves of in that process of neglect? Could it not be possible that our ability to learn through play is something that subsists through age?

Recently, while visiting my parents' house in the Malvern hills, I found myself watching the flowers of a Japanese Anemone swaying gently in the early morning sun. As I watched the plants, their little bright heads bobbing in the wind, I got to thinking about their experience of life. Don't worry, I am not about to launch into some pseudoscientific hypothesis on the consciousness of flora here, but rather I was struck by the way in which the fragile petals faced upwards into the sunlight. The tendency of plants to grow towards the sun is something which, given their lack of a consciousness, they do unknowingly, and yet it is absolutely essential to their survival, and in turn to the beauty of their flowers. To my mind, a parallel could be drawn between the unconscious adoration of plants to grow sunward and the unjustifiable creative desires of human beings.

Who is to say that in our senseless impulses, we are not, in some spiritual or emotional sense, heeding a kind of pursuit of light? Perhaps the magnetism of activities without immediate outcome tells of a deeper human need for the inconsequential. In the western world, there seems to be little time for such things. We are often driven by outcome and attainment, and we see with increasing vividness the detrimental effects of those pursuits on the wider world. What a nice thing it would be, then, to follow the example of a flower in one's own small rebellion against the modern cyclone, and to take a little time to do something simple and unnecessary. To allow ourselves, even if briefly, to stretch towards our own private suns.

## Arm

by utsugi

On a heavy, humid afternoon in the passenger seat, I desperately pried open my eyes, which were too bright to open, and watched the activity outside.

The greenery was lush, accentuated by the concrete.

The sky was unmistakably grey, and the passage of time was sensed as cars passed by.

The air conditioning was useless and it was so bright it was hard to breath, so I gave up and reached out to put on some cheap sunglasses.

An unnecessary piece of paper slipped out of the car pocket, as if to get in the way.

It was unmistakably summer. Sometimes things went well. It just made the things that didn't go well stand out.

I looked up and the sky had turned orange.

This is how today would end.

Someday it would end like this.

Obediently wrapping my bruised arms around myself, I closed my eyes tightly.



Somewhere on a Sado Ferry

thank you for reading  
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