

Unspoken Word – Steven Ball

<http://directobjective.blogspot.com/>

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Track info:

1. **Say Zero** (5:14, 2000)

This track came out of experiments with a CD containing demos of recordings of actors' produced by a voice-over agency. The actors' performances conformed to the conventions for advertisements, information films, radio announcements and so on. They were by turn upbeat, sing-songy, serious, conversational, exactly what you might expect. As this was Australia, they also had that informal casual Australian chumminess. I broke the voices down to phonemes, cut, pasted and created insistent, breathy, stammers of rhythm; some sounded disturbed, quietly obsessed or climactic. This is an extended version of the one minute piece made for Colin Fallows's Audio Research Editions CD *Zero*. [More about that here](#).

2. **I Was Bugging** (4:10, 1998)

Going around the internet at this time was an audio file that purported to be an answering machine message relating a first person account of an episode of casual sex with a stranger, in some detail. At that time such revelations were more rare than they have now become, at a time before people felt it necessary to regale the world with their most intimate thoughts on the web. What was most interesting about the recording though, was not so much the sordid details but the excited relish of the person divulging the event, apparently breathless with gossip about themselves! A slightly slowed down (to obfuscate the gender) and channel separated version of the recording starts the piece, followed by a squelchy spanking rhythmic track made entirely from samples of the recording.

3. **The Shape That Has Held Me** (5:21, 2000)

Australian visual poet and super 8 filmmaker Pete Spence sent me a copy of a poem, which surprised me for being a sort of gently surreal existential piece. Surprising because Pete's work is usually characterised by elegant cut-up [image-text visual poetry](#). But this is no straight forward nihilism of being that Spence has penned, there is great humour in word play in lines such as "I am a notion I search always to find, like a small lantern of fur sleeping at the foot of my bed, which I carefully avoid waking when I enter the immense collapse of my room". In retrospect my reading of it is rather earnest. Like *Say Zero* it is mostly rhythmic fractured fragments of the sound of my voice, which has a certain squelchy vivacity, occasionally it breaks into legibility.

4. **At Five in the Afternoon** - with Lee Smith (13:29, 1999)

This was a collaboration with Lee Smith and it is his very distinctive voice that introduces and sets the tone for this setting of a poem by Federico García Lorca. It was made for a film by Lee that took the poem's title and we experimented with a number of editing techniques to produce a musical cadence from his reading, and used recording techniques such as shouting from the other side of the room. There are long sections of the sound of traffic, recorded outside the front door of my house (Victoria Street in Footscray could get busy), and the voices from *Say Zero* make another appearance. I had started to work with Lee on a few sound/music pieces. As well as making wonderful experimental super 8 and 16mm films, Lee was also a guitarist and had a passion for all kinds of music. We were at one point working on a bizarre version of Donovan's song *Season of the Witch*, which is alas destined to remain unfinished as I left Australia in 2000 and Lee sadly died this time last year. This is for him.