

## Abstract:

This statement discusses the role of 'crocodile' or 'alligator' clips in my work in particular and in circuit-bending / hardware hacking in general. Their role in various stages of a work's development is examined from prototyping, planning and developing circuits through to live performance. The ramifications of the qualities of flexibility and impermanence inherent in connections made in this way are considered in and of themselves as well as in relation to the character of the work produced.

## Artist's Statement:

### 'Clip Art'

I was initially unsure as to whether these glorified strips of wire were worthy of the title 'gizmo', but my reliance on them in my work outweighed any doubts in the end. The 'crocodile clip' or 'alligator clip' is possibly one of the most useful and elemental pieces of equipment in my toolbox, being employed in various ways during the creation of a work.

My practice is heavily centred around circuit-bending and hardware hacking – the creative modification and appropriation of existing objects to entice the unexpected from the familiar. In this kind of 'hands-on' electronics the ability to make and break connections between components quickly and easily is key, something crocodile clips are very good at.

When building (admittedly very simple) circuits from scratch, I instinctively prefer to employ a Peter Vogel style approach in which components are soldered together directly, bypassing any breadboard or circuit-board. Moving all the necessary components from breadboard to circuit-board always seemed too much like hard work, and I worry that my euphoria at creating a working circuit will cause a lapse in concentration as I attempt to rebuild it.

Instead, in the prototyping and testing stage of construction crocodile clips hold all the elements in place, often gripping multiple components in their maw. Elements can be exchanged, points can be bridged and even other entire circuits integrated in a snap. These works-in-progress are fragile and ephemeral constructions, relying on the strength of springs rather than copper tracks to save them from collapse.

It is always with a slight sense of sadness (and trepidation) that the clips are removed one by one and the connections soldered. Even at this stage a set of crocodile clips has its uses. Need to hold a connection in place while you solder it? Crocodile clips. Components getting too hot for your fingers? Crocodile clips. And when it's time to record your new creation for posterity and you can't lay your hands on that minijack to XLR converter? Break out the crocodile clips and connect them directly.

Circuit-bending requires a similar flexibility – whether exploring the circuit-board in a live performance or searching for bends to permanently build into the device, a crocodile clip or two make useful hunting companions. Once one set of jaws has clamped itself around the leg of a chip the other head is free to roam (clasping a resistor between its teeth if you're not feeling too reckless), tracking down other interesting points to bridge.

As inter-relationships are formed between homemade circuitry, modified consumer electronics and end users, these qualities of flexibility, ephemerality and fragility also permeate the work produced. A hardware-hacking, circuit-bending approach to music brings with it the realisation that no connection, circuit or object is monolithic; nothing is ever 'finished' or too sacred to be reworked or incorporated into another system. Any component could just as easily be connected to any other component, any circuit to another circuit – everything becomes a potential element in a network of new configurations and relationships.