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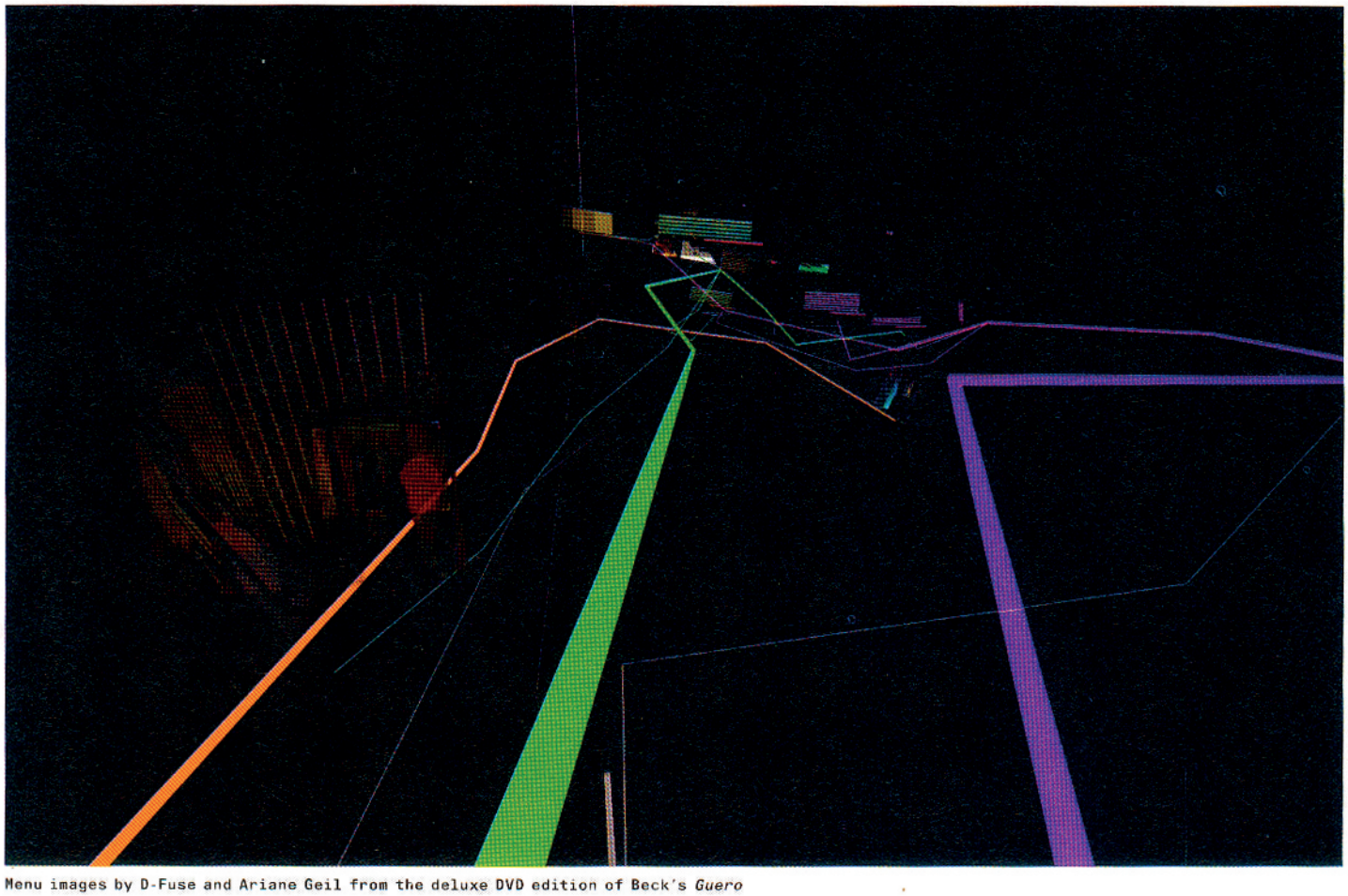

Menu images by D-Fuse and Ariane Geil from the deluxe DVD edition of Beck's *Guero*

VJ: Audio-Visual Art + VJ Culture
Michael Faulkner/D-Fuse (Editor)
LAURENCE KING PUBLISHING PBK £25

Any club habitué of recent years who as ever thought that the visual element of their night's entertainment lagged somewhat behind the audio component would do well to have a flick through D-Fuse founder Michael Faulkner's hefty DayGlo-covered intro to the subject of video jockeying. True, in the discussion of club culture the focus has been on music, in particular the ramifications that DJ editing skills – cutting, splicing, dragging, mixing – have for the idea of a musical narrative, to the neglect of what people might actually be seeing. This is because, in the short history of DJing and the even shorter one of VJing, recording – the ability to re-present – was easier in terms of music than for images. Quite simply, the technology wasn't available or affordable until recently.

It's often thought that VJing began in the mid-1980s on the early House scene. This book begs to differ, dating the invention of the term to a decade earlier at the Peppermint Lounge in New York, but whatever: House music, for all its utopian, futuristic yearnings, was illustrated by no more than an imaginative touch with fluorescent paint and video projections. Sometimes things got adventurous – Orbital, for instance, used a video backdrop that was like animated Bridget Riley. But not often.

That said, the ideas behind VJing are not such a recent development. In his introductory essay, Bram Crevits makes a compelling case for its origins in the experimental cinema of Malcolm LeGrice, Peter Gidal and Nam June Paik. Indeed, the narrative techniques of artist film making in general could be said to have anticipated the way that DJs, in their editing, collapse one type of time based medium into another. Already there's been some spillage: with Beryl Korot's video component to Steve Reich's music in their multimedia presentation *The Cave*, for example.

Faulkner, who founded the D-Fuse art and design studio in the mid-1990s to join the digital dots between sound and vision, is well placed to survey the territory – and *VJ*, with its emphasis on snazzy design, speaks from a high point. Doubting Thomases should check out the well-stuffed DVD that accompanies the book: works from the likes of D-Fuse, Kabaret and The Light Surgeons give the viewer the effect of being inside a Ryoji Ikeda installation. There is also an admirable can-do ethos at work, with an entire section devoted to the practicalities of VJing – programs, hardware and the like – with expert advice from old hands such as Sue C, Scanner and Coldcut.

But the main part of *VJ* is taken up by essays: Scanner, that is Robin Rimbaud, in writing about the audio-visual from his own perspective as a sound artist, writes on collage – from Brion Gysin and William Burroughs onwards – in illustrating music. Adrian Shaughnessy's range of reference – from Scriabin's colour sounds to the techniques of contemporary adverts – is similarly impressive.

The subtitle of this book – *Audio-Visual Art + VJ Culture* – suggests a large assumption: that VJ culture originates from the same fine art roots as modern audio-visual art. This is reminiscent of a debate that ran in dance music – were Techno musicians accidental minimalists or the real deal? – and one that ultimately yields no great truths. What is true is that VJing, like all performance, has entered the realms of live art – and that's a completely different kettle of fish.

LOUISE GRAY