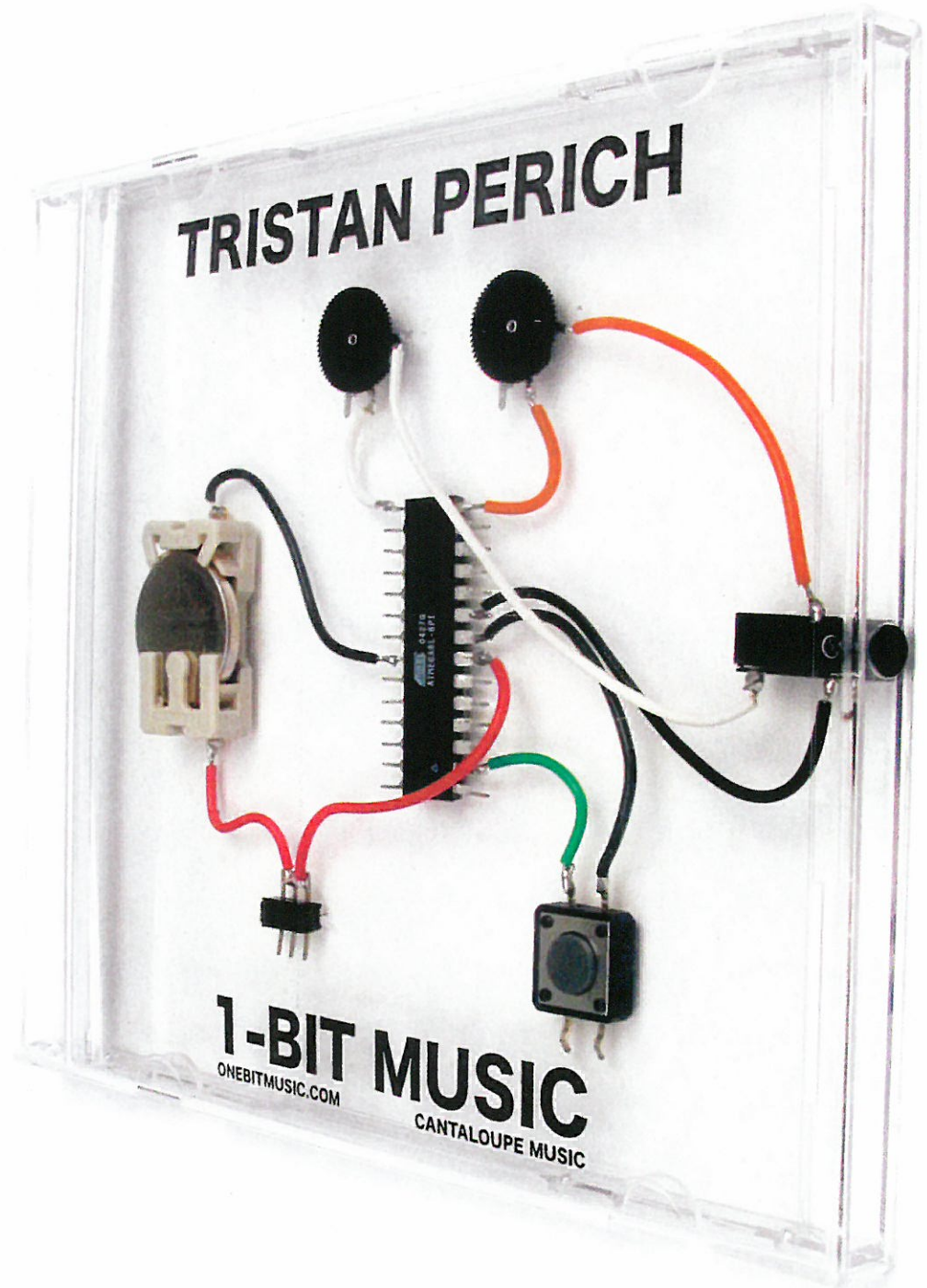


ONE BIT WONDER

Tristan Perich rewires the portable music player giving it a lively new twist

Story TIFFANY JOW



There is something undeniably euphoric about live music, feeling the reverberations course through your body as you witness different sonic elements coming together firsthand. This exact sensation spawned the idea for 1-Bit Music, an all-in-one low-fi music player complete with a data microchip, batteries, track manipulation controls and a headphone jack – all housed within a generic, transparent CD jewel case. Plugging in headphones triggers the 8KB microchip, which combines 11 pre-programmed audio tracks into original songs.

"There's something very different about having the chip synthesize the music live rather than listening to something that is prerecorded," says Tristan Perich, the visual artist and electronic musician who invented the device. The music is produced at one bit, the most basic representation of digital sound, creating beats pleasantly reminiscent of Gameboy soundtracks and electronic noise. "1-bit sound is the lowest bit rate you can achieve, so it's intrinsically raw and pure," says Perich, who builds the devices by hand in his New York apartment. "When you combine these pure digital tones they create wonderful, thick and lush textures."

The limited-edition albums – released by Cantaloupe Music in December – are profound throwbacks to the traditional album, a response to the intangibility of iTunes and mp3s in the form of hand-held artwork. "For me, what you're hearing is much closer to real music," says Perich. "It's a packaged performance." TJ