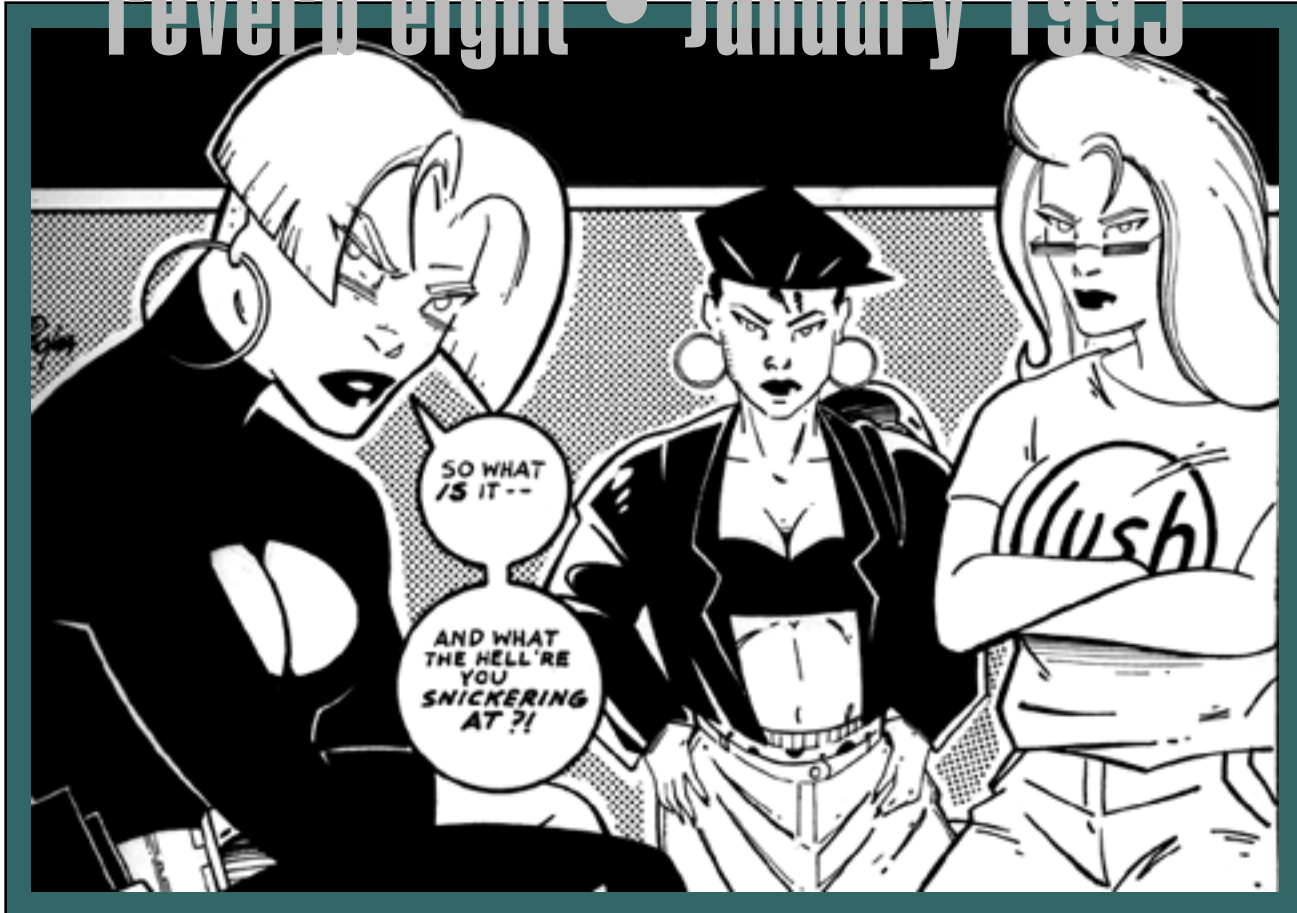


reverb eight • january 1995



reverb

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Dan Sicko



*Colin McDonald
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Jamie Hodge
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Manual

Designed by Rodney Sheldon Fehsenfeld ©1994

flavor of the month
hoisin sauce



retinal damage
FIFA Soccer '95 (Genesis)

reverb is
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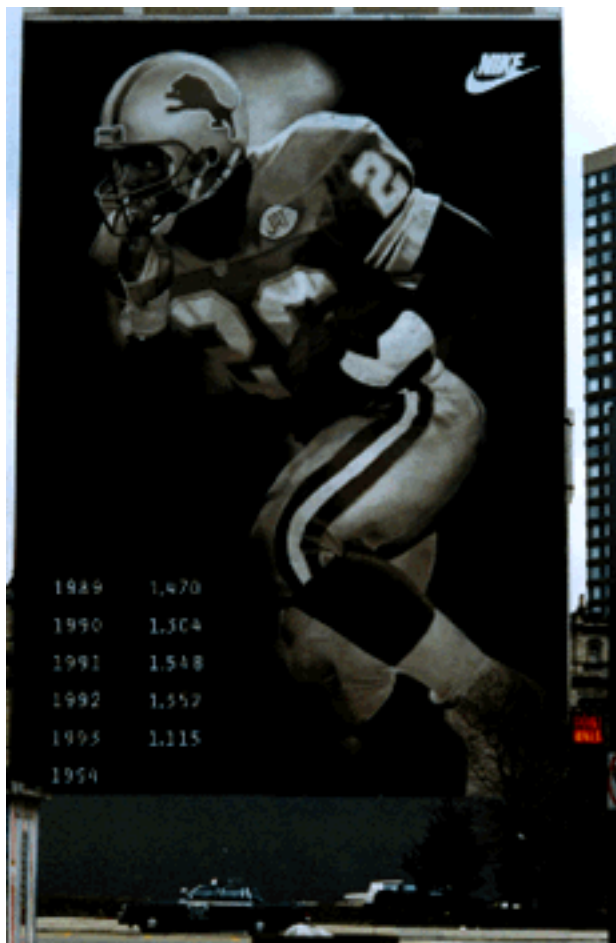
All sound clips are pasted in at 11 Khz sampling rate. Sound is much more memory-intensive than images are, so this rate was chosen as an acceptable standard. I won't include lengthy samples, as the file size will be unbearable, and some artists may object.

Props

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The Gas Face

America Online



dag nab it!

I'm late again!! Well, at least I have a few things to show for it this time! I finally have full Internet access through PSINet, so I can check out and develop a WWW page for Reverb on Hyperreal. Look for some older issues to show up loose (so IBM and workstation peoples can check it out) there soon. Also, I've been tinkering with Director as of late, so expect some more cross-platform access (if I can get around the huge size of Projector files!).

Since I mentioned Internet access, I should also mention that I dropped America Online like a bad transmission after they rejected issue 7 because of the language content (two separate writers each used 'fuck' once). I don't edit for these kinds of things, unless they are used superfluously. It actually caught me by surprise when I actually went back and found the offending words in the text --- I guess I'm not as easily fazed as the average AOLer.

At any rate, the language business is all part of AOL's terms of service, and they have every right to do what they please when they hide behind it. I just won't edit out two words for anyone's sake -- Reverb's editorial policy is very loose: I check for spelling and grammar and not much else. So don't bother sending mail to reverbmag@aol.com: love don't live there anymore

I should also point out that through the graces of Aidin Vaziri, we have another story about an artist from Hyde Park: Common Sense. I just missed having two in one issue, having run Born Under a Rhyming Planet in issue 6. Oh well, maybe you'll run into Jamie or Common on the corner of 55th and Woodlawn.

Cheers from the multimedia ghetto,

December 31, 1994



by Dan Sicko

As I was commenting to Alan Oldham during our interview at his apartment in the Palmer Park section of Detroit, this won't be the first interview I've conducted with him, or the most "sans bias" one, for that matter. Alan is one of the people responsible for my interest in techno, and more specifically, my interest in writing about it. I was already fully charged with excitement in 1988, having connected the faceless (and often nameless) music of my youth with its incarnation as the "New Dance Sound of Detroit." But 1988 was also the year I would hear Oldham's Fast Forward radio show.

Our paths crossed several times thereafter and eventually we became friends and later business associates. When we weren't exchanging the most recent speech affectations of David Letterman or movie miscastings in the madness of Thursday nights at The Comics Cafe in Ferndale, we were scheming to carve our own niches in the global expanse of techno music. Our first collaboration was the Fast Forward Newsletter, a zine ahead of its time, dying out before techno penetrated the huge U.S. market. This zine gave way to Dan Bell and Sean Deason's Matrix, Rob Hood's Global Techno Power and more recently, this digitized breed you've got running on your system.

Later, when Alan finally made the jump to DJing and recording, I was enlisted to help him with some graphic design. Anyone who has seen Alan's artwork (most commonly on original Transmat pressings, DJAX records and of course, comics) knows full well that he could have easily "generated" his own label designs, but as Alan says, "It would be too much for me to do and I wanted Gen to have a slick, polished graphic look."

Generator Records began with the concept of being more polished than the average native Detroit label, and Alan Oldham has always known the formula for realizing it. A graduate of Wayne State University with a degree in Television and Radio production, he always seems to put a different spin on things, right down to the "camera" angles in the panels of his artwork, to the name of his first recording incarnation, Signal to Noise Ratio. Top-of-the-line production and larger-than-life, digital effects may seem to be at odds with the DIY/basement/bedroom/garage ethic of Detroit techno, but Oldham seems to fuse the two as well as can be imagined. Consider his (until recently) lack of recording equipment:

"I'm very mercenary when it comes to studio time and making tracks," says Oldham, "What you see is what you get." "I was in Europe doing some interview and they were trying to paint the picture of me being some kind of tortured perfectionist ... and I'm like 'Look man I've got a couple hours: cut a track and move on.'" Although he had limited access to the tools of the trade, part of Oldham's and Generator's success came from the studio belonging in part to his former partner, Pen Jackson (part of the now-defunct industrial troupe Code Industry). Jackson & Co. had the set-up to record major label quality albums, and that's part of what you got with Generator releases -- guerrilla techno with the gloss of a newly purchased firearm. <continued>

Alan had also worked with Code Industry back when they were known as Code Assault back on the Technika label, another project gone by and another reason why up until his stint as DJ for Underground Resistance, he was one of the Detroit scene's chief skeptics. So what made him get into the techno fray again?

"It was foisted on me actually. When (Mad Mike) Banks called to go to Australia ... that was the profound moment when everything shifted. It's been two years since that, and before that I was frustrated and becoming embittered with Detroit as a whole. The (Detroit) scene is still a nowhere scene ... the very fact that Detroit was the only stop on the Lollapalooza tour to have four dates pretty much tells you where the kids' heads are. A lot of it has to do with the fact that I'm pretty much over going to parties. You have to seek them out now; You really have to know and I choose not to most of the time ... unless I'm DJing."

Despite his view on Detroit as a visible scene for the consumer end of the techno industry, Oldham has plenty of good things to say about his distributors:

"Submerge has to be the most intelligent, most ambitious young men and women in the city right now. People are getting paid and the machine is actually working. They're the best Detroit has to offer. It's a thing where I'd look at their deduction (cut) and say 'that's kind of a bite,' but the situation is as such that where you need that sage wisdom of Banks and Christa knows what to do to move your product. That support system is invaluable."

Generator's association with Submerge is typical of the business ethic and indeed "aesthetic" of the current wave of Detroit labels. If you want to become a presence in the world market for dance music, perhaps it's best to put the megalomania aside and focus on quality output, especially if you want to venture into video, T-shirts or even comic books. Says Oldham, "Most of us don't have that capacity to be vertically integrated."

Another way in which Generator has been successful is its crop of worldwide Techno talent, in which they are matched only by +8 locally. Just as the motto states on many Generator products, the goal is "World Sonik Domination." So far we have seen Japan's Mind Design, Woody McBride from Minneapolis (Oldham's favorite place to spin, incidentally) and of course, Marco Passarani and Matteo Monteduro from Rome. Alan says to expect some more new talent, but would only leak the fact that he's "talking to a famous NY Techno artist."

Yet, even with a global presence and Submerge's infrastructure, Alan sees a geographical move in store for Generator. Could it be to Europe?

"I'm kind of over going to Europe now ... The older I get the more I believe in the fundamental power of being an American. This is the place to get paid. You can work the European aspect to get respect here in the states. That's basically how music works anyway. There's no reason to run to Europe, although the acceptance that we get there is cool."

I'm waiting for that big break. If I can come into some of that 'Kenny Larkin Money' (he says as if there were a Congressional bill by that name), I'm out of here. I'll start Generator LA and do battle with the Hardkiss boys and Exist Dance: Start cutting in on their territory and all that fake Techno they make."

LA may be the logical choice for Generator's future, considering the relatively stable base club-and-rave-attendees and the proximity to the film industry, towards which Oldham seems to be veering. Heck, if *The Crow* and *The Mask* can have feature films made about them, why not *Danger Girl* and *Johnny Gambit*?

The only question is whether Generator is willing to pull itself away from its roots in search of the larger audience and other media, to which Oldham answers quickly, as if he's made up his mind several times over: "Being from Detroit is cool if you're getting the interview in DJ magazine or in Mixmag, but I'm looking to take Generator out ... to be something bigger. I think I have more to trade than the average cat."



by Aidin Vaziri

“I just went through a lot of growing up in life. I realized you gotta sit down and say these are my goals, this is what I’m going to do with my life and pursue it.”

Common Sense, Chicago-born rapper and this month’s brightest ascending star, is deep in contemplation. Having just completed work on his second album, the aptly-titled *Resurrection*, and coming off the afterglow of a debut that spawned nothing short of three hit singles, he’s on his way out of a tunnel that tapped many intense emotions and brought about certain uncomfortable realizations. As his warm drawl creeps down the phone from his parents’ home, his voice still betrays some strains of remaining quandary.

“This is a crazy game,” Mr. Sense offers. “And not just the rap game—life in general, in trying to become a success, you got a lot of obstacles in your way. You gotta go for yours and discipline yourself and assert yourself. The changes came about me saying, ‘Okay, I’m going to do this and work really hard and do the best at what I can do.’ I just learned how people function. I don’t trust nobody in the industry. If you say ‘Yeah, we’re gonna do this.’ Then once I see it then it’s cool. But until I see it, it ain’t nothing to me. That’s what it all comes down to.”

Those familiar with Common Sense’s debut album *Can I Borrow A Dollar?* and its subsequent chart-topping tunes—“Breaker 1/9,” “Soul By The Pound” and “Take It EZ”—will be rattled by the signs of new maturity on *Resurrection*. It is an honest album. Not bitter. Not sober. Not angry. Just honest.

Where the last album kept its finger firmly placed on the pulse of contemporary hip hop with gutsy beats and blissful melodies, its core rang hollow, scented with vague, abstract gestures. *Resurrection* is a return to form for the 22-year-old MC and his main producer No I.D. It cuts through the clichés that persecute modern rap, with diligence and conviction. Tracks like “I Used To Love H.E.R.” and “This Is Me” ripple with exaggerated momentum. The beats here weren’t custom-made for jeeps or clubs (although they would fit-in quite nicely), they were designed to resonate inside your head.

<continued>

“When I was doing my first album it was all fun and games,” Common Sense allows. “I think my music represents the times right now and what I’ve experienced. Times are stressful. A lot of people are talking about stress; listen to how many albums you hear talking about it.”

Naturally this stress rubbed the rapper as it would any respectable artist.

“It made me have to search within myself,” he says. “I became real introspective. I was looking at myself at seeing which way I wanted to go. It made me want to sit down and read more about my people. I just became more in-tune with my people and their struggles. It made me look to reality and realize a lot of people ain’t going to help you with this stuff.”

In the process, Common Sense also discovered that success isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. He still hasn’t really regained his confidence in the mechanisms that make the record industry tick, and talks wearily of its implications before insisting he’s going back to school for a business degree just to deal with all the jive.

“I was thinking before I started making records, you just get out there and blow up,” he reasons. “You think everybody on TV is doing well. But that ain’t true. I learned there’s so much politics and business and hard work in it, that I’ve been doing more work after I got signed than I was when I was trying to shop my demo.

“I wasn’t dealing with all these record company executives before. They’re businessmen, that’s all they think about—the product. To them, any artist is a product. They’re thinking business, that’s all they’re thinking. They don’t care about you personally. That’s just for real.

“And it just made me know that your career depends on so many other things besides your music. It depends on the record company, the radio stations, the video stations and if the public wants to accept it at the time. It’s a whole different world. Reality smacked me in the face.”

Reality also dealt the rapper with some philosophical truths.

“You gotta work hard for whatever you want, and if you work hard and it pays off then it’s all right,” Common Sense says. “It ain’t nothing to a man. That’s all part of becoming a man. I think that’s what happened between my first album to this album—I started becoming a man. It’s almost like a second puberty.”

Hence, the Resurrection.

“That’s how I tried to approach it—to make it different,” he says. “But not too far out there. I just picked out some beats and said this is where I’m from, instead of trying to be like everything else that’s going down. I guess that just made it different.

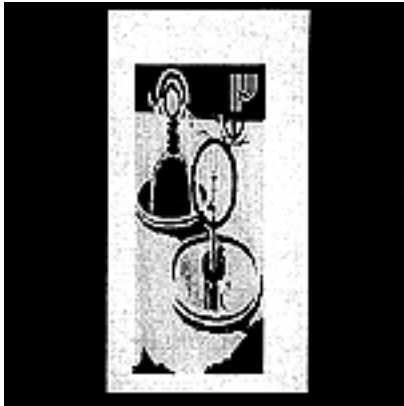
“It’s a maturity, a growth. Experience taught me a lot. I can just hear that I got better and the music got better. One thing that describes it is growth. That’s my whole goal in life, growth—to progressively expand and stuff. I started being more myself. I wasn’t trying to please anyone any more or trying to get my way into the industry. I wasn’t trying too hard to overdo nothing. I was just being me.”

There’s a brief pause at the end of the line.

“I don’t let the art influence me,” Common Sense contends. “I try to be an influence the art.”

The second coming.

REVIEWS



Bluff Limbo

μ-ziq

Rephlex

Still in relative scarcity at the local dance music shop, μ-ziq's *Bluff Limbo* was a welcome sight in the old Reverb p.o. box. I have yet to be disappointed in one of their releases, and I'm happy to say after many repeated listenings and countless Kenwood "road tests," the same is true with the new product. Again, Paradinas gives us four sides of vinyl packed with amped symphonies and portamento lullabies.

The first track is a creeping hip-hop jam (though I've seen uploads that have recorded it at 45 rpm) accompanied by the usual μ-ziqisms: that is, the sweeps, pierces and other assorted twitters that would be clutter on any other techno album. On *Bluff Limbo* they're a part of the ecosystem.

Track 3 reminds one of the DX-100 charged days of Derrick May, and the classic Detroit arrangement. Of course, Paradinas' take involves rhythms and drum rolls that were nowhere to be heard in the mid-to-late '80s. A brilliant and cleverly constructed cut that makes no apologies for its dancefloor compatibility (or all those bell sounds!!). Even the slower, moodier bits on this album remain consistent with album as a whole -- chalk that up to μ-ziq's development and seriousness as artists.

Bluff Limbo is also one of the best fusions of jazz and techno, a trend that seems to be slowly building up steam. With the exception of *Born Under a Rhyming Planet* and *Galaxy to Galaxy*, μ-ziq seems to be leading the hep cat revolution over at Rephlex. Just listen to the loopy technodixieland cut on side two (sounds like I left the Sonic & Knuckles cartridge in too long ...) or the "trumpet solo" on the cut after -- Paradinas is slicker this year indeed.

With a little breakbeat tease here and a vocal (?) track there, this'un's full of surprises, yet remains as good or better than *Tango n' Vectif*.

-- Dan Sicko



Primordia

Brainbox

Nettwerk

Those of you who weren't fortunate to meet up with the compositions of Tom Third in his *Brothers and Systems* incarnation (or for you trainspotters, his work on Meryn Cadell's "The Sweater"), you'll be pleasantly surprised, if not flat-out amazed by his *Brainbox* project. Whereas B&S for the most part were densely-packed grooves to support diva or hip-hop vocals, this record takes the low road, focusing on Third's masterful compositions and inking for the hum of a nicely tuned bass.

Of these compositions, "Lovemotor" is my favorite: extremely funky and somewhere between LFO and Herb Alpert. John Korstrud and Peter Stufano go to work respectively on trumpet and flute, amidst the marsh of deep electronic sounds that take over about halfway through. However, the biggest "hook" in this track is a warm bassline that permeates this track and indeed the entire album: perhaps the easiest connecting thread to latch onto.

Other goodies include "Nashira," combining Middle Eastern samples with breakbeats, but bears no relation to the lame Enigma formula, switching to a pseudo-jungle overdrive instead. "Alterindigo" is a continuation of the earlier track "Indigo," but much more subdued ... allowing strings to wash over the clanging and pistoning percussion like a big mug of NyQuil.

This album goes off in a lot of directions, but ultimately represents the strange beauty of the familiar in a different light. *Primordia* is a refreshing change from just about anything on my shelves, and "Brainbox" is a nice nebulous project that could represent just about any kind of sound. Lucky for us Tom Third is capable of producing them all.

Top notch. -- Dan Sicko



Alternative Fluid Monomorph Disturbance/Minus Habens

We have here a very serious and intense collection of protean Techno, the Aphex formula applied within the constraints of Italian futurism. The end result is a ultimately listenable and danceable brand of servo-funk, coming to you from Fabrizio and Marco D'Arcangelo.

Making good on the borrowed pages from the AFX library, "Lonx" is a truly inspired piece of Techno, if a bit on the fierce side. It punches wet gaping holes in its ambient texture with crisp beats and changes into pseudo breaks as it attempts to wrestle its way free of syncopation.

"Exiled Ambient" lets 808 sounds roll nicely behind some oscillations and simple piano patterns, while "Minimalia" is a Flash Gordon organ drama, but kills the kitsch aesthetic with more metallic chops and whines.

"Battletech" puts the final stomp of approval on this disc, taking the old school Front 242 spin on techno. The combination of stuttering military rhythms and sci-fi bell sounds make for a brilliant listening experience.

Bravo! - Dan Sicko



Dark Energy Dark Energy UR

Once again the cross-town gateway has unfurled, bringing us the latest transmission from James Pennington, AKA the Suburban Knight. Lately, it seems, SK has taken a more Afrocentric spin (no pun intended) on things, as is obvious from the packaging. This is a good things, and to be expected: Detroit's innovators, especially ones with output as sporadic as Pennington's, tend to be among the more faceless bunch, and are often lost deep in the backs of record bins. I suppose the Dark Energy project is yet another way of bringing things back to basics, and back to its roots.

There are few similarities between this double 12" pack and previous Pennington material, except of course for the brash R8 drum hits like the handclap (?) in "Midnite Sunshine" or the loops in "Mau Mau" that evoke the historic "Techno City" by Model 500. The latter, for all its cyber-pretense, just might end up in some house sets, or at least as a transitional track.

Things get most interesting when Mad Mike contributes an acid solo to "Stargate," which then ends up approaching the eerie expanse of "The Rings of Saturn" effort by X-102. "Acid Africa" provides a brilliant electro/acid meltdown, though the best track may be the last one. In "Atomic Witchdoctor" you get a very funky and surprisingly complex companion to the old "Amazon" track by "World 2 World."

This isn't a masterpiece by any means, but a glimpse of what is yet to come, and I applaud James Pennington for knocking things back a few pegs and getting back to pure experimentation. Techno needs its pioneers to remain active. -- Dan Sicko

REVIEWS

Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America

Tricia Rose

Wesleyan University Press, 1994

(Book Review)



I can still recall the first “real” hip-hop song I ever heard: A Tribe Called Quest’s “Can I Kick it?” I had heard the simplistically-worded rhymes of Run-DMC and the asinine shouting of the Beastie Boys before, but the opening of this song, with its lilting sample of Lou Reed’s “Walk on the Wild Side” over a building beat accentuated with scratches of vinyl grabbed my ears and never let them go. There was something so vibrant, so smooth, so *important*, in its rhythms and rhymes that I should have realized at that moment I heard it booming out of someone’s box that hip-hop would become the dominant musical and cultural form of the late twentieth century. I still feel a certain rapture when I hear Q-Tip ask, “Can I kick it?”

I experienced a similar feeling while reading Tricia Rose’s brilliant book *Black Noise*. Ms. Rose, a professor of Africana Studies at New York University, has finally written the definitive book on hip-hop music and culture. But don’t go assuming that the book is rooted in the staunch, stuffy (and sometimes condescending) halls of the academy; this book pulses in your hand with the wisdom of a well-informed insider and an observer who has been able to apply both critical academic prose and the love of a true hip-hop fan into accessible, interesting writing. As Rose herself says, “I have not relied solely on [academic] theoretical tools; I have merged multiple ways of knowing, of understanding, of interpreting culture and practice in *Black Noise*.” And indeed, she has.

Black Noise, and also Tricia Rose herself, is panoramic in its vision, taking in the production (from turntables to DAT), styles (jazz-hop, gangsta rap, etc.), origins (block parties in Brooklyn and the Boogie Down, aka The Bronx), meaning (“Rap’s distinctive bass-heavy...sound does not rest outside of its musical and social power”), politics (from “The Message” to “Fuck tha Police”), and future (strong women MCs) of hip-hop. Most notable hip-hop luminaries make appearances in *Black Noise*: Chuck D, Roxanne Shante, LL Cool J, Ice T, The Furious Five, N.W.A., Big Daddy Kane, and others.

One of Rose’s theses is that hip-hop music is built upon a foundation of “Flow, Layering, and Rupture” which is visible in the sonic pyrotechnics of the DJ at the wheels of steel to the lyrical flow of MCs to the breakdancers spinning windmills on linoleum mats on the floor.

“What is the significance of flow, layering, and rupture as demonstrated on the body and in hip hop’s lyrical, musical, and visual works?” Rose asks rhetorically. Her answer is as follows: “[T]hey create and sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow; accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering...However, be also prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact *plan on social rupture*. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways...”

Rose’s is a cogent and refreshing voice which is part music critic and part social historian. Her views on hip-hop are interesting and informed which makes *Black Noise* a must read for any serious fan of the music and culture, or anyone interested in understanding where it came from and how it arrived at the place where it now resides. Reading *Black Noise*, one hopes that hip-hop continues to flow, layer, and rupture as it must to evolve from those early impromptu block parties to downtown dance clubs, world-wide tours, to the top of the charts to the brave new world of the near hip-hop future. -- Matt Haber



***Tox Uthat Volume 2:
A Trance Ambient Compilation
Silent***

1990 was the year of acid house; '93, techno; '94's flav' of the moment is trance/ambient. Like any good form of music, it's the latest genre of "dance" music to be milked by the industry and Tox Uthat Vol. 2 is no exception. Just as the '80s New Romantic period consisted of few good works (Ultravox, Fad Gadget) and loads of crap (Visage, Dead or Alive, Chris & Cosey--want more?), trance/ambient has already passed that point. For every SeeFeel, Time Warp or Cosmic Baby, there are hundreds of would be hacks passing their shit off on an unsuspecting public. At best, Tox Uthat shows the Germans (who else?!) taking trance/ambient to new levels besides the Eno/Terry Riley school of "less is more." At worst, it's filled with tedious Euro trash DJ's recycling Vangelis' score for Blade Runner.

Tox Uthat makes the mistake of not being too selective with its material. Most tracks drag on endlessly sounding like a sixth rate Kraftwerk score for Babylon 5. The best material is by two "groups" calling themselves Drome and Tapeworm. Drome, who've made a rep for themselves in England with their delicate balance of tension and atmosphere, craft a kaleidoscope odyssey of surreal sound and fury on "Machine Killing Parasites." Ditto for Tapeworm, whose "Chemical" and "Soul" are a mixture of unforgettable beats, sequencers, and samples, sounding like the hybrid child of Tony Conrad and the Halfler Trio. Indeed, if the rest of Tox Uthat were as original as Tapeworm and Drome, then we'd be in luck. Still, it's light years ahead of Virgin's *History of Ambient* collections and that's saying a lot. --Colin C. McDonald

***Tikal
Method Man
Def Jam***

When Snoop Doggy Dogg issued his million-dollar challenge for any MC to beat him in a freestyle battle, I bet The Method Man sat back (probably with a buddha sack) and laughed at the poor sucker. Sweet melodies open Method's solo album *Tikal*, tailgating closely behind his stellar debut last year as a part of Staten Island's eight-MC crew Wu-Tang Clan on their *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers of Death)*.

Filled with the crazy MC stylings he is legendary for and some creepy, ominous music, The Method Man doesn't quite break clean from his Wu-Tang style and image but really, he doesn't show any signs of wanting to. The cover of the album features Wu-Tang's "W" insignia inverted into an 'M' while in the songs he still drops tons of references to the Wu-Tang, even passing the mic on "Meth vs. Chef," to his old partner and offers up a much grittier (if that's at all possible) remix of his big hit "M.E.T.H.O.D. Man" from *Enter*.

With his dips and peaks, Method has one of the most unique MC styles to emerge in years. With other new kids on the block such as Jeru the Damaja and Nas, Method is truly a pride of the much-beleaguered (at least on the Billboard charts) East Coast rap scene. With *Tikal* he just may emerge as the solo king of the entire scene. -- Matt Haber

REVIEWS



Metatron **Praxis** **Subharmonic**

Metatron starts with a nice warm folksy guitar song (“Wake the Dead”), supported by an electric melody and is probably the last sane exit on Bill Laswell’s crazy freeway. The next one is a dimly-lit fuzz-guitar rest stop sarcastically titled “Skull Crack (We Are Not Sick Men).” “Skull Crack” sets the tone for the rest of the album, as the lumbering guitar riff is the dominant gene this time around. Praxis’s latest is more on the hairy, ominous side, as opposed to the annihilo-funk that is usually present.

Nevertheless, Laswell, Buckethead and Brain provide some incredible listening in the funky metal of “Meta-Matic,” the ambient dub of “Cannibal,” and the fragmented epics of “Inferno/Heatseeker/Exploded Heart” and “Warm Time Machine/Low End Transmission/Over the Foaming Deep.” What levity there is can be found in “Warcraft (Bruce Lee’s Black Hour of Chaos),” a full-form metal track with a small subtle bass solo, and some silly kung fu flick banter among the session players. Top all of this off with “Armed,” a bizarre Art of Noise carnival march and you’ve got yourself one dangerous car-eating pothole to drive over. -- Dan Sicko



It's All Over EP **Tom & Jerry** **Reinforced Records**

Without explaining much in the way of Jungle’s development or construction methods, *Reverb* dives into its first review (look ma, no life preserver!). I’m glad to say that my first purchase was not for naught. Reinforced records seems to be one of the labels at the forefront of this important movement, and owner Deigo’s Tom & Jerry projects seem to highlight the experimental.

My assumptions were just about right. “It’s All Over” and “Say Goodbye” provide the hyperkinetic combination of fast breaks and steady bass vibrations, most of the other flavor is provided courtesy soul and toasting samples. Two brilliant jungle tracks, but not as adventurous as “Who Kan Draw,” which shakes up the drum patterns, making the sparse sections sound quite surreal in the 180-bpm range. The closing track, “Maxi(mum) Booty Style Part III” is very intriguing as well, combining lengthy old 80s R&B samples (the name of the exact cut escapes me) with the regular reverb and drum flair, making for a much more interesting combination than any of Shabba’s love songs.

If there is more jungle of this calibre on the market (and judging from the lengthy Reinforced discography on www.xmission.com, there is), the scene will most certainly exceed anyone’s expectations. They’ve already got me hooked. -- Dan Sicko



Esperanto
Elektric Music
Atlantic

At first, it seems ridiculous. Karl Bartos, the legendary ex-percussionist of Kraftwerk, releasing his own album under the name Elektric Music. And on initial listen, it's all a bit laughable: beats akin to the *Computer World/Electric Cafe* period; string sections that would be more at home on a Love Unlimited Orchestra LP; melodies that are distant cousins of 808 State. Shocking, annoying, and laughable that one of Kraftwerk would create something this silly. Yet, I was drawn back to Bartos' Elektric Music purely for my own refusal to write it off as another failed solo attempt. Despite the silliness, Bartos has composed a batch of truly innocent and beautiful songs on *Esperanto*. One could do without Bartos take on mass media and entertainment ("TV," "Show Business") and the inclusion of OMD's Andy McCluskey "Kissing the Machine" makes you want to take a razor to Bartos' throat. But these are minor quips considering that the music ("Kissing the Machine" ranks up there with '77's "Franz Schubert") beats anything off of Mute's insulting Kraftwerk "tribute" collection *Trans Slovenia Express*. *Esperanto* should tide over Kraftwerk junkies until Ralf and Florian emerge again from ihren hause Kling Klang. And who knows how long that'll be. --Colin C. McDonald

Pomme Fritz
The Orb
Island Red Label

Wherein the Orb alienate their remaining fan by ditching the ambient/trance label that has followed them around since their inception and create a work that's as experimental as you're gonna get this year. First Thrash quits "performing" live and now this. That said, *Pomme Fritz* is not your atypical Orb album. Dubbed "the Orb's little album," it is anything but. Rather, *Pomme Fritz* is a colossal, resonating, droning 42 minutes harkening back to the era of Morton Subotnik while still leaving it's own distinguishing mark. Indeed, there's little to dance or mellow out to here except "Alles Ist Schoen." "We're Pastie to be Grill You" is repeated in a Dave Seville/Chipmunk-like voice for 7 minutes as a collage of sounds jump in and out of the speaker. On the other hand, "His Immortal Logness" is quite the opposite; a keyboard ditty lost somewhere in a world where Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer," Super Mario Brothers, Madness, and Monty Python are the entertainment of choice. *Pomme Fritz* just verifies that the Orb are in no danger of becoming the British Grateful Dead. That's the Ozric Tentacles job. --Colin C. McDonald

REVIEWS



God (remixes)

Tori Amos
east west/Atlantic

Tori Amos? In *Reverb*? Well, yes. For those of who didn't hear the buzz on the Internet a month or two ago, we have here three great mixes, two of which are constructed by Carl Craig. Those of you who aren't fortunate enough to tap into the over-abundance of information on the 'Net: use this review wisely and inform all the Craig completists you know.

First, however, is the "The Dharma Kaya Mix," as produced by The Joy. They turn the whole thing into an ambient dub adventure, with a piano fragment being the only musical strand that remains familiar. The only problem is that there are so many layered ambient sounds the funky bassline gets left behind at times.

The second two mixes are basically the same, with Craig pitching down Tori's voice, presumably to fit the fully customized track he unveils. What is unique is the arrangement of samples: Tori singing "Don't come through" in two different keys on top of sparse drum programming is quite eerie. The second mix is a tad more atmospheric, and will give more of the full Craig experience.

-- Dan Sicko



Tied Up

LFO
Warp

Bell and Varley are back again, but this time without the accompanying synthesized proclamation. Instead, they have presented their new work in a series of 5 mixes (and one excellent reworking of "Nurture").

"Tied Up" is a dark invertebrate that basks in the electronic fog instead of running headlong into it. Despite its industrial aura, "Tied Up" manages to remain a cool laid-back affair complete with a neat bendy-straw bassline. Next up, and sure to be a favorite, the "electro mix" kicks the 808 to good effect, letting the aforementioned bassline mesh perfectly.

The "Sweep Mix" strikes me as if it might be the original cut, as the ambience is very clear and distinct, unlike the murkiness of what's labeled as the "Original Mix." Trailing in are the "Acid Mix" and "Spiritualized Mix," from which you get respectively what you would expect.

Smacking somewhat of The Art of Noise and the pre-crash Wax Trax, there's still an official Low Frequency™ groove about "Tied Up" that you should definitely seek out. -- Dan Sicko



Spike • Live at Jimmy's
Octaves/Tremellos •
Born Under a Rhyming Planet
+8 Records

Jamie Hodge is present on both sides of this release from +8, first in a collaboration with John Selaway (of Industrial Strength's Disintegrator and Spy fame) and in his traditional guise as Born Under a Rhyming Planet.

The Hodge/Selaway team-up provides us with "Spike," a high-powered bit that oscillates between techno and electro. The interconnections come in a large assortment of tones, ranging from the large-than-life sweeps to the familiar rambling sounds commonly associated with Basic Channel. Jumpier than a room full of coffee achievers.

"Live at Jimmy's" (named for a Hyde Park bar/jazz joint) bolsters Jamie Hodge's stance as +8's reigning fusion god. Okay, maybe that's stretching it a bit, but the way he uses traditional Detroit techno sensibilities in making lengthy, flowing jam sessions is simply amazing.

"Live" starts with crazy staccato percussion that's anything but clean, at an inhuman pace, and then introduces its wafer-thin bassline. Hodge's rhythm section then provides the conduit for the soloists, namely another bass (I'm assuming of the stand-up variety), a warm electric piano, a variation on the xylophone, and what I can only describe as "reverse whistling." All of these "players" do a brilliant job of evoking emotive responses from the listener -- tip them on your way out. -- Dan Sicko

Innerspace
Freq
Matrix

Sean Deason's latest excursion is a bit more than that -- more akin to an abduction by aliens, or so the song titles on *Innerspace* seem to suggest. In his first real "album" length project, Deason does a great job of making a consistent thematic "go" at it. Most tracks on *Innerspace* are in the trance category, not necessarily borrowing at all from the Detroit formula. "Trancey" chord progressions create a very nervous and melancholy environment, almost like a downtrodden Seefeel.

"Spontaneous Combustion" on the second side picks up the tempo a bit, making for an interesting introduction of funky high note melodies. Also of note are "Metal's" slow blend of trance and '80s electro, and "5th Dimension's" galloping beat and regal composition. What is great about these tracks is the way Deason manages to tie them all together with the chords laid down on the first cut. Very cinematic.

The only aberration is a pleasant one in and of itself. "Descent," which doesn't necessarily "fit in" with the other songs, uses an Art of Noise sample together with piano and strings -- maybe an indication of what to expect on the next Freq project. In the meantime, I'm going to lobby for a CD version of this one! -- Dan Sicko

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