DAILY NOTE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2013

9 OF 22

BEYOND HIGHLIFE

THE AFRICAN MUSIC SCENE OF NEW YORK

PRINCE PAUL / N.A.S.A. RAVES / CULTURE CLASH NYC 2013

Red Bull Music Academy 2013 Term One participants come from Germany, France, Portugal, Austria, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Italy, Pakistan, Ireland, Sweden, Argentina, Romania, Brazil, Turkey, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Peru, Australia, the UK, and the US. In homage to this truly extraordinary mix of humans, today's feature takes a decidedly intercontinental approach: Brooklyn-based writer Boima Tucker (whose own roots trace back to Sierra Leone) explores the music and nightlife scenes of the African diaspora throughout New York City. It's a five-borough tour with an excellent soundtrack of highlife, *kuduro*, *coupe decale*, and more. Events-wise, let's stick to a similarly varied theme: don't miss Thursday, May 9th's genre-busting Culture Clash, where four New York DJ crews (representing the worlds of dancehall, hip-hop, Latin rhythms, and heavy bass) battle for sound-system supremacy. And because technology makes the world that much smaller (and since our *Daily Note* paperboys can't stand on street corners in Miami, Mumbai, or Manchester) know that every issue of the paper is archived forevermore at redbullmusicacademy.com/dailynotenyc.

Brian Eno after his lecture at the Academy on May 3. Photo by Christelle De Castro

MASTHEAD

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ABOUT RED BULL MUSIC ACADEMY

The Red Bull Music Academy celebrates creative pioneers and presents fearless new talent. Now we're in New York City.

The Red Bull Music Academy is a world-traveling series of music workshops and festivals: a platform for those who make a difference in today's musical landscape. This year we're bringing together two groups of selected participants – producers, vocalists, DJs, instrumentalists and musical mavericks from around the world – in New York City. For two weeks, each group will hear lectures by musical luminaries, work together on tracks, and perform in the city's best clubs and music halls. Imagine a place that's equal parts science lab, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and Kraftwerk's home studio. Throw in a touch of downtown New York circa 1981, a sprinkle of Prince Jammy's mixing board, and Bob Moog's synthesizer collection all in a 22nd-century remix and you're halfway there.

The Academy began back in 1998 and has been traversing the globe since, traveling to Berlin, Cape Town, São Paulo, Barcelona, London, Toronto, and many other places.

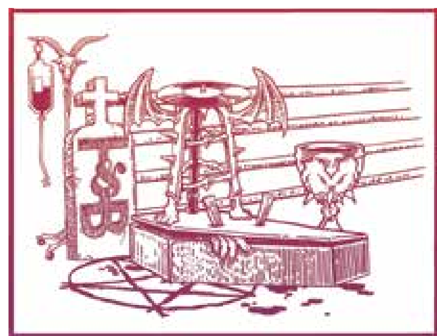
Interested? Applications for the 2014 Red Bull Music Academy open early next year.

UPFRONT

> There's no logic in music: there are tracks I do that I think [are] great and don't do anything and the other way around. The thing is to have a thick skin.
> —Todd Edwards, May 7, 2013

CLASH OF THE TITANS

BREAKING DOWN THE COMPETITION AT THE RED BULL MUSIC ACADEMY CULTURE CLASH.



	TROUBLE & BASS	FEDERATION SOUND	JUST BLAZE & YOUNG GURU	QUE BAJO?!
	Trouble & Bass is a party, a record label, a DJ crew, and a way of life. For the last seven years, this black-clad squad has celebrated the raw, gritty side of electronic music under the banner of "heavy bass."	For nearly 15 years, this sound system has been keeping the dancehall fires stoked by way of parties, radio shows, VIP dubplates, and all-star collaborations.	Two of hip-hop's best-known producers and Roc-A-Fella affiliates. Guru is Jay-Z's right hand in the studio, while Blaze is the man behind a ridiculous number of radio rap anthems.	Since 2008, Que Bajo?! has been taking Latin, African, and Caribbean music into the future with a party that mixes up traditional sounds with modern production and a bass-heavy aesthetic.
MEMBERS	Drop the Lime, Star Eyes, AC Slater, Strange VIP	Max Glazer, Kenny Meez, Alric & Boyd	Just Blaze & Young Guru	Uproot Andy & Geko Jones
STRENGTHS	Arguably the most versatile crew. Dubstep, house, rap, goth—it's all on the table.	Experienced DJs with strong ties to Jamaica's biggest artists.	Home-court advantage. Plus: So. Many. Hits.	These two can put a tropical spin on nearly every style of music.
WEAKNESSES	Will Drop the Lime insist on playing rockabilly?	Many of reggae/dancehall's greatest hits aren't especially current.	Will they play anything other than hip-hop?	Americans don't do well with songs that aren't in English.
SURPRISE GUESTS WE'D LIKE TO SEE	Skream & Benga, Iggy Pop, Aphex Twin, Wiley	Vybz Kartel live feed from jail, Bounty Killer, Rihanna (Glazer was her tour DJ)	Jay-Z (duh)	Daddy Yankee, Ivy Queen, hologram Tito Puente, an animatronic rooster
CLAIM TO FAME	Brought down 'n' dirty bass music back to New York.	NYC's top dancehall crew for the past decade.	Between the two of them, they've worked with Cam'ron, Kendrick Lamar, Baauer... the list goes on.	Updated Latin and global rhythms for a new generation of New York clubbers.
ODDS OF VICTORY	Total wild card.	Pretty good. They've got some experience with this whole soundclash thing.	If they bring out Jiggaman, game over.	A dark horse... albeit a brightly colored dark horse.
	troubleandbass.com	federationsound.com	djyoungguru.com, twitter.com/JustBlaze	quebajo.com

Red Bull Music Academy Culture Clash
Thursday, May 9 at Roseland Ballroom, 329 W. 52nd St. 8 PM to 1 AM
For more info go to redbullmusicacademy.com

WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?

We rounded up four Red Bull Music Academy 2013 participants from both sessions to discuss "future bass," a vague sub-genre that they've all been lumped into at various points in their careers. We spoke to Distal (Atlanta), Sinjin Hawke (Barcelona), Benjamin Damage (London), and Throwing Snow (London) about the pitfalls and positives of genre titles. Spoiler alert: putting the word "future" in anything is usually not the best idea. Stay tuned for part two of the discussion, coming soon.

How do you feel about the genre tag "future bass"?

THROWING SNOW

The genre thing is necessary to group a scene of people together. People get annoyed because that label is attached to the sonics of music whereas actually it's attached to the people and the place and the group mentality of something. To be honest, the worst term is "electronic music." It's the most redundant term of them all. If you're going to go and criticize genres, go back to electronica and electronic music. The term "future" is odd because, well, it's happening now. You're talking about records that were probably produced six months to a year ago!

DISTAL

It's really human to try and classify everything, and put everything into its own little corner. Humans just naturally do that. But at the same time, people ask me what I sound like, and I'm like, "I have no idea." I make everything from Baltimore club to house to juke to gabber. I was on the *Future Bass* compilation on Soul Jazz. If I say "I do Distal," I sound like a dick. It's so esoteric… it's like when Native Americans saw the ships, but couldn't really see them because they were so beyond their comprehension. People can't comprehend what is going on right now, which is an esoteric movement of people doing everything. We'll sort it out later.

SINJIN HAWKE

I've been trying not to pay attention to new sub-genres and categorizations because it seems they aren't being created with much insight into the reference points. I realize it's done to make the music more digestible and give people a sense of comprehension, but I personally like the mystery of guessing at inner dialogues and not knowing exactly where a producer is drawing from.

BENJAMIN DAMAGE

I'd say you could call [what I do] techno. Some of the stuff I make is probably not techno, but people can [call it] whatever they like. It's not for me to define it. I think "future bass" is a terrible term. Anything that's called future at the time is going to be bad. And "bass music"? A lot of music has bass. What does it mean? What are you supposed to say? "Ten years ago I was making future bass music?" What would you call it now: retro bass music?

MAD MAN

KEN SCOTT'S TALE OF THE BIGGEST JINGLE IN ADVERTISING HISTORY.

Some men are born to make bad commercials—others help make great ones accidentally. To wit: while lecturing at the Academy this week, the great British engineer Ken Scott regaled listeners with tales of recording the Beatles, producing David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust, *and the part he played in creating some of the best classic rock of the mid-'70s (Elton John, T-Rex, Supertramp, Mahavishnu Orchestra—the list goes on and on.) But what* Daily Note *wanted to ask him about was a session he engineered at London's Trident Studio in February 1971, for the advertising agency McCann Erickson, one that produced a little jingle for a tiny brand called Coca-Cola, entitled "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing (in Perfect Harmony)." The advert, and the subsequent hit single that it spawned, won Scott a Clio (the Oscars of advertising), and just might be the most recognizable of all his work.*

Ken Scott: It was just one of *those* gigs. For whatever reason, [McCann Erickson] used Trident Studios where I was an engineer, and I was put on it. It may have been because the guys who co-wrote it, Roger Cook and Roger Greenaway, I had worked with a lot while at Abbey Road. [The song] was all together when they arrived, with all the parts written out. It was quick, it was easy, and it was fun, because all the people who were involved I knew from before.

You always hear stories about the guys from the ad agency. I was expecting the worst. But the guy that came was Billy Davis. That didn't mean anything to me at that time, but later I learned he was pretty big in the black music community—he was A&R [for Chess Records]. He was a complete Anglophile. I have this recollection of him coming into the studio in complete English riding gear one day.

When we recorded it, we had no idea it would turn out quite the way it did. I've done one ad in my life; it was that ad and I got a Clio for it. It boosted Coke's sales by 25%. They took the recording we did for the ad, recut the vocals—because they obviously couldn't have [the word] Coke in it—and it became a hit single. It was just amazing!

Did you do any jingles or commercial work after that?

Nope. Nobody asked.

Red Bull Music Academy
New York 2013

TONIGHT

WEBSTER HALL
FOUR TET & SPECIAL GUESTS — MAY 08

MARLIN ROOM @ WEBSTER HALL
FOUR TET AFTER PARTY — DISTAL, THROWING SNOW — MAY 08

UPCOMING EVENTS

ROSELAND BALLROOM
CULTURE CLASH — FOUR NEW YORK SOUNDS. ONE WINNER. — MAY 09

DARK DISCO @ 88 PALACE
METRO AREA, GERD JANSON, BOK BOK, L-VIS 1990 — MAY 10

INVITE ONLY
MISTER SATURDAY NIGHT VS. DOPE JAMS — MAY 19

DEEP SPACE @ CIELO
GIORGIO MORODER — FIRST EVER LIVE DJ SET — MAY 20

TAMMANY HALL
BRENMAR, NICK HOOK, SINJIN HAWKE, MORE — MAY 21

KNITTING FACTORY
DRUM MAJORS, MANNIE FRESH, BOI-1DA, YOUNG CHOP, DJ MUSTARD, MORE — MAY 22

ON AIR — RECORDED LIVE FOR RED BULL MUSIC ACADEMY RADIO — TUNE IN AT RBMARADIO.COM

Q&A

PRINCE PAUL

The noted sample-excavator recollects hip-hop's Golden Age.

PHOTO DAVID BLOOMER

How did you get your name? Prince Paul was given to me because they said my regular name—DJ Paul—was boring. You don't want to say, "DJ Paul on the microphone," you know? I'm a humble dude, but I was forced into that whole hip-hop ego thing.

When did you start DJing? I've been DJing since I was my son's age—actually, a little younger than him. I was like ten years old. People might know me as a producer for the most part, but DJing was always my first passion. I am a lover of music, not just hip-hop music. Some get into it like, "Hip-hop this, hip-hop forever." I don't take hip-hop seriously. You can hear it in my records. But I take the music very, very seriously. As much creativity as I'm trying to put in my production, I tried to do the same thing with being a DJ back then.

When I was ten years old, I've heard, I was the fake Grandmaster Flash of my day. And when you're ten or 11 years old, that's pretty traumatizing. That's why I'm here today; it's to prove to the world that I'm not the fake Grandmaster Flash.

The fake Grandmaster Flash… Who came up with that name? That was back in school. My first DJ set was really makeshift because my family didn't have a lot of money, so what I did was I took a component set that somebody threw out and used its turntable. And I took this cheap turntable and used the balance knob as a mixer to go between one component and the other. For those technical heads: I put everything mono, so the balance was going left and right for each turntable. It went through the center and that was how I mixed. I had no cue, but it was pretty ingenious for a little kid! I amazed myself *and* my friends! That's how I became the fake Grandmaster Flash.

Once the crossfader came out, it was like, "Oh my god, he's got a crossfader!" You'd run to the guy's house and take pictures of it… Things were such a big deal back then because everything was like a mystery. I think the cool thing back in the day was that [to learn] everything you had to go and search for it. You had to invent your own stuff. I think that made a lot of things crafty as far as the equipment.

Hip-hop for me is a lot different from what people see out here now, especially the commercialized side of it. When I was coming up it was more or less DJing in the park. MCs rarely had any substance. The DJ was the primary focus. That's why you had Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Grandwizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five, Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince. It was a lot different back then; it was about having fun, you battled people, and you did your thing. But it was basically going out to see people dance. Now, it's just a little bit different. Well, it's *a lot* different! I think once the money got involved, it changed a lot. The first time I heard hip-hop was in Brooklyn, and that's when it was actually filtering out from the Bronx down to all the boroughs. What I learned in Brooklyn, I brought to Long Island.

When you talk of this age of mystery when not everything was at your fingertips… I mean, covering up your records was a big deal back then. It was incredible. Now you have breakbeat records and compilations out there and everybody can buy a ton of records. Back in the day, you had to research and really look for your records. So if you found something that was so sacred, you wanted nobody else playing that record. You wanted everybody that came to your parties to hear those records. Immediately you got home and you erased all the labels. But the thing that messed a lot of DJs up—and how I got a lot of breakbeats back then—is they would erase the labels, but they would be stupid enough to keep the jackets. So me, as a kid, I went to the block parties and I'd watch 'em. And I looked for the records in the back and you'd see the record [sleeve sticking] up. And I took a little pad [and began to write the names down]. Not that I could afford to have those records, but I knew what they were. It was me and Biz Markie, actually. We were going to these parties and started to write down [the names and titles].

You just mentioned Biz Markie. Can you tell us a little about the people coming from Long Island around that time? You know what is amazing? We all played together with no idea of ever making records together. For example, I used to DJ for Biz Markie; he came up as Busy Bee back in the days when I was in the eighth grade, like 14 years old. I used to run into Chuck D and Flavor Flav, who were a little further out from me. Erick and Parrish, who were EPMD, I used to see them a lot. Rakim, his name was Love Kid Wiz then, he had a group called the Love Brothers; him and Freddie Foxx, whose name was Freddie C. A group called the JVC Force… There were a lot of us back then. We battled each other in little parks. Records were really so farfetched—like, who makes records except Fat Boys and Sugarhill Gang? We weren't really into that, we were just there for the competition and for the love of music. And then later on, when you saw people that you grew up with doing tours and making records, that was totally amazing, like, "Wow, you make records too?" I remember one time Flavor Flav had me in his show called the MC/DJ Flavor Flav Show. He was doing a little bit of everything. I think it was him and Bill Stephney and Hank Shocklee—the whole Bomb Squad—they had their little show. I had just joined Stetsasonic and Flav said, "Maybe one day we'll go on tour [together]. How farfetched is that?" Next thing you know, we were on the Def Jam tour in 1987 with LL Cool J headlining, Public Enemy and Stetsasonic opening up, and Eric B and Rakim, Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, Whodini. And in some cases it was Kool Moe Dee, Run-DMC, and KRS One on a few shows.

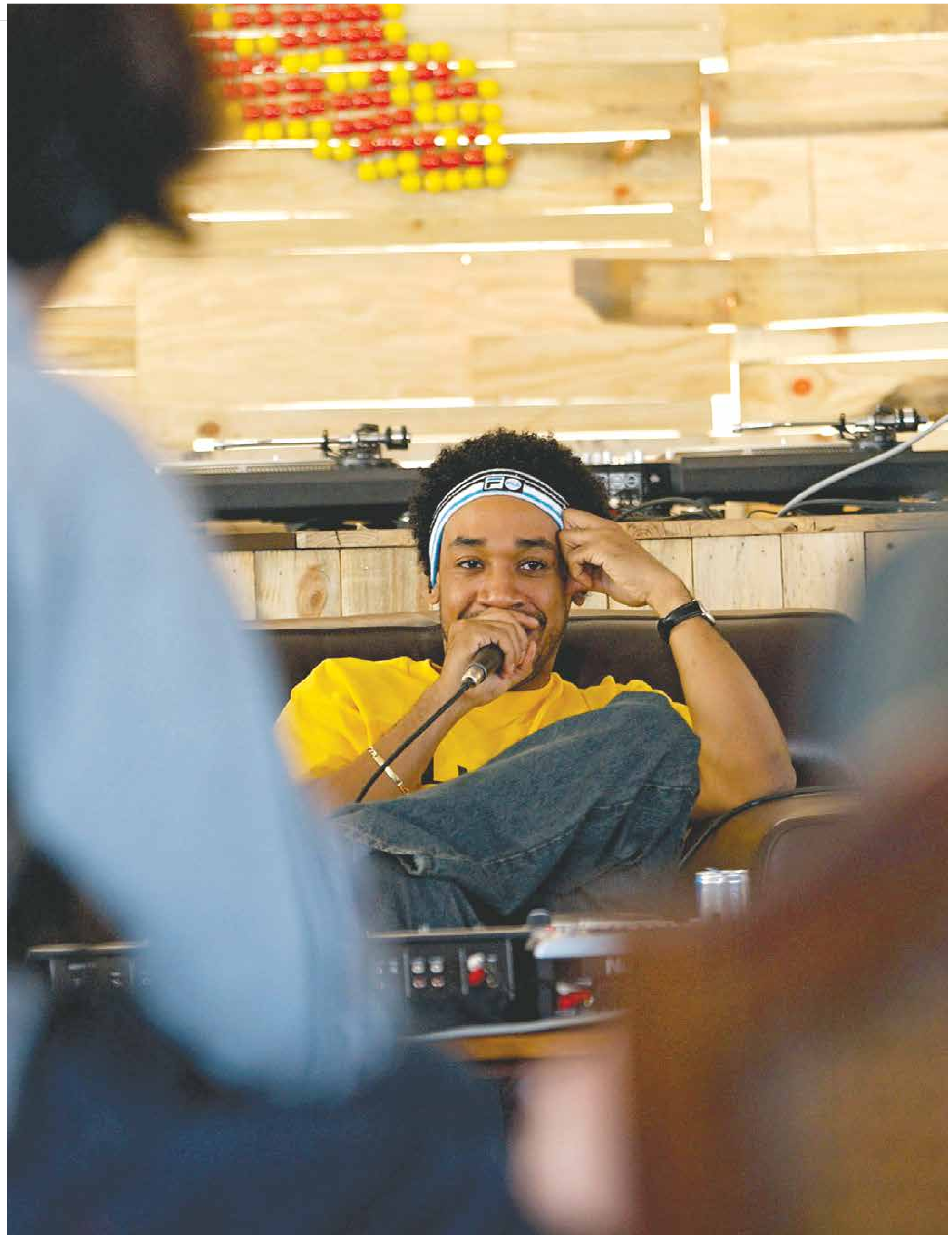
That's what they still call the Golden Age of hip-hop. Why? I think a lot of times when people refer to that era as the Golden Age it's just because there was less marketing put into it. Rap wasn't proven back then. A lot of times you played to crowds that didn't know your records, so everything was based on your performance. Nobody knew really what it took to make a gold record. Okay, Kurtis Blow came out with "The Breaks," Sugarhill, and so on. Once in a while [a hit] came out. But your whole intent was to show a new style or something different that you have to offer to the music. Even before we made records, it was like, "Okay, a crowd comes in and everybody wants to be entertained." And you don't have the power of the hit record to make it happen for you. So you had to go out there and you had to show the people something. You had to show them that you are talented or you had a rhyme skill or you could DJ in a certain way. And I think that was really the whole gusto of what the performances were. That's why a lot of times you hear people, when they refer to the early '80s—or even the late '70s to the late '80s—they say, "Oh, the shows were so incredible." Everybody had to prove themselves.

I think a lot of creativity came out [of that time] because you were trying to differentiate yourself from everybody else. It was just organic, as opposed to now, [when it's] like, "Okay, this is a marketing scheme. This is how you're going to dress, this is how you're going to look. This hip-hop appeals to down south, this hip-hop appeals to up north, this appeals overseas, this appeals to whatever." As far as the golden era, diversity was the whole thing.

Can you talk about the actual production process of [De La Soul's] *3 Feet High and Rising*? People at that time were not really into layering samples. They usually had one main loop, maybe some scratches. When we produced, we used pitch shifting and we made samples fit through that technique. When we heard a certain bassline, we pitch shifted it to make it fit with some horns. That enabled us to layer a whole lot of sounds on top of each other and make it sound like they belonged together. That gave us a little edge.

I didn't know too much about equipment or technique in production, and we asked questions. I think that's the best thing in production, when you ask yourself questions. "Can I make this go backwards but only the snares go forward?" And then you start to find out the answers to those questions and that, I think, enables greater productions. You see a lot of people say, "No, that's impossible." But when you constantly work on those questions, it can make your productions far better. So that's what we did when we worked on that album. We asked the engineer how to do things and learned about the pitch shift and filtering. We also brought a lot of different records together to sample from. It was a competition almost. Everybody came up with really great source material and we combined it, and you hear that all our influences were different.

Interviewed by Torsten Schmidt at Red Bull Music Academy Cape Town 2003. For the full Q&A, head to redbullmusicacademy.com/lectures.



FEATURE

INDESTRUCTIBLE BEAT OF NEW YORK

One DJ's borough-by-borough guide to the music of the African diaspora.

WORDS BOIMA TUCKER
PHOTOGRAPHY ANTHONY BLASKO

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF the transatlantic slave trade, Africa has had a central place in the formation of New World culture. A continual exchange throughout the centuries, facilitated by the emergence of recorded mediums, has allowed developments in popular music on the African continent to remain in step with those in America. The club culture that emerged out of New York in the 1970s was not exempt from this influence, and popular African artists continued to make their mark on American music through the emergence of hip-hop and house music. However, it wasn't until around the turn of the millennium—in the wake of advances in production and communications technology—that African artists began to step out of the shadows of their American contemporaries. This change has been aided by a recent increase in African migration to former African immigrant strongholds like Paris and London, and the emergence of new African immigrant communities in places like Minneapolis, Toronto, and New York.

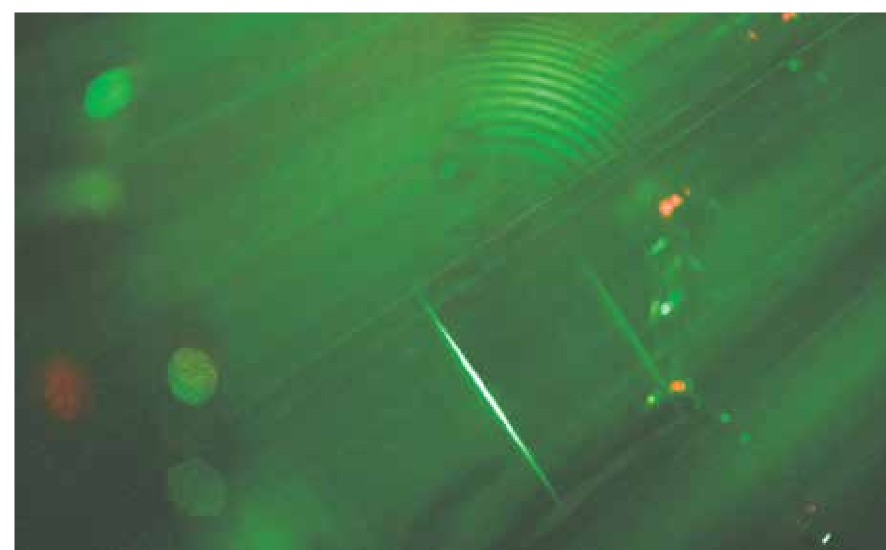
Three years ago I moved to New York, the city with the largest population of African-born immigrants in the US, with the thought that first- and second-generation African immigrant artists and cultural producers were spurring a new black American movement akin to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. This impression was bolstered by the growing profiles of several contemporary African-culture-oriented media outlets in the city. As a DJ who specializes in African club music, I was excited to jump into the scene that I imagined was here; though upon arrival I noticed a lack of regular African club nights in downtown Manhattan. In an attempt to rectify that, I started a monthly party with some friends, but my dreams of a pan-African renaissance in the heart of the city were not so easily realized.

After a couple years of exploring, I came to know neighborhoods far removed from the well-known clubs of lower Manhattan, and realized that it was in these areas where most of the African immigrant cultural production was located. I found that the unified pan-African community I had imagined before arriving in New York is actually a collection of unique communities that have little motivation to mix with one another. However, this doesn't mean that there aren't exchanges happening between groups with distinct linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds. After getting to know New York's various African neighborhoods better, I've come to realize that although the New York African renaissance that I had imagined may not be immediately evident on the surface, it may not be too far off.

Contemporary African pop music is a diverse mix of dance and folk styles that have been channeled through an electronic and hip-hop lens. It is cutting-edge, up-to-date, and globally participatory. Warm synths and 808 beats pulse out of continental capitals from Cape Town to Cairo. South Africans have transformed their country into the house capital of the world. The Afro-Portuguese heartlands of Angola and Mozambique are also experimenting with their own electronic sounds, influencing the world with *kuduro*, their own version of house, deep bass zouk-dub stylings called *tarrachina*, and a neo-Semba style called *kizomba* that's capable of heating up any cold night. The Congolese are still pumping out their own rumba sound that was innovated almost a century ago in colonial Brazzaville and Kinshasa, but today they're doing it with an updated digital aesthetic. East Africa has fervently taken up with hip-hop and dancehall. In Egypt, digital street-party music is helping carve out a cultural space and new identity for working-class youth, gaining them an important visibility in the midst of a society going through political and social upheaval.

However, it's the West African region that seems to dominate pop music across the continent. In every West African capital, it seems that a new disparate style pops up, borrowing everything from traditional rhythms to European electronic music and American rap, spitting it back out to the world with an array of infectious beats with names like *coupe decale*, *balani*, *gbema*, and *azonto*. Many of these local genres come from older styles, but incorporate new, globally influenced ways of engaging with the music. For example, coupe decale is a fast 130 to 140bpm electronic dance music that has its root in the clave-driven *sebene* of Congolese *soukous*. At the same time, the feel of the DJ's style isn't too far from a Jamaican sound system, as he stays on the mic giving shout outs and yelling instructions to the crowd while mixing quickly in and out of songs. The revelers at coupe decale nightclubs arrive dressed in the latest global fashions, and the bottle-service culture of American hip-hop is just another element that signals a music that is both locally rooted and globally participatory.

I've come across many microcosms of these disparate local scenes in New York. I've seen Zimbabwean student parties in Greenwich Village, Malian community events uptown, Ivorian club nights in the Bronx, Cape Verdean and Angolan electronic music producers in Newark, and a host of DJs hailing from Ethiopia, Botswana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and beyond. With New York being a necessary stop for any artist seeking international stardom, you can come across a touring performer at the smallest venue in a remote neighborhood alongside local DJs, or ride the subway next to artists who are superstars in their home countries but are now simply trying to eke out a new life in a new land.



MANHATTAN

SHARED LANGUAGE IS AN important reason for immigrants to congregate in different neighborhoods. It's probably the biggest determining factor in settlement patterns, with religion coming in a close second. In Harlem, led by the settling of a large Senegalese community, there are many French-speaking West Africans. However, information about the many African music events that happen uptown often remains contained within that community.

Probably the most well known and publicized African-owned venue in New York is Harlem's the Shrine (2271 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd, at W. 134th St.). Here you can get a diverse selection of music and join an audience that represents the changing neighborhood. Recent immigrants, old residents, and new arrivals alike jam into this tight space to get a taste of the musical flavor of contemporary Harlem, an integral neighborhood in the history of black music in America. Besides being a venue for local performers and neighborhood folks to enjoy each other's culture and create community, it's inevitable that most of the African acts that come through New York are going to stop there. Today in the US, the African live-music scene functions much like the Chitlin' Circuit once did in the American South and Midwest. I was at the Shrine when Malian singer Khaira Arby performed there a few years ago. People were so jammed into the small space that at times you couldn't figure out who was in the audience and who was in the band. At one point in the show, Arby even invited an audience member onstage to join her in a freestyle duet.

Harlem is also my favorite place to go shopping for African music. Hit the corner of 116th and Frederick Douglas to find the latest and greatest West African movies and tunes. While the shops in the quickly gentrifying area seem to open and close fairly regularly, a shop (at one time called Oustaz Sacko) on the southeast corner of the intersection remains open today. It sits next to the famous Senegalese restaurant Africa Kine, and serves the surrounding community in several ways: besides functioning as an amazingly up-to-date portal into the world of West African entertainment, with racks of hundreds of CDs and West African movies, it's a convenient storefront from which to make cheap international calls home.

THE BRONX

THE BRONX IS STILL a haven for recent immigrants, as it's an affordable place to live or open a small business. For that reason, and because of its high-density population, there is a relatively high rate of mixing amongst various immigrant groups. In the Bronx I've seen my Sierra Leonean niece and nephew swapping stories of immigrant parents who "just don't understand" with Jamaicans and Dominicans, sharing their food, music, language, and culture. The Bronx is filled with so many small African grocery stores, eateries, lounges, and nightclubs that it would be a daunting task to get a true sense of all the different nationalities and ethnic groups represented there. Still, some groups make their mark in important ways.

Every year Boogie Down Nima Productions throws the biggest African event in New York, the Ghanian Independence Day bash. With high-priced tickets and a dress-to-impress policy, this event is not meant for the casual observer. The location moves from year to year, but what you're sure to see at this event is an all-out, no-expenses-spared production with a light show, a full backing band for the guest artists, and elder Ghanians decked out in dyed African cloths, staggering head wraps, and delicately embroidered African suits. Enthusiastic young women in tight dresses and high heels fill up the front rows to snap pictures of their favorite hiplife heartthrobs, and slick young men in slacks and button-down shirts wait for a chance to snap up one of the young women.

QUEENS

QUEENS IS THE HEADQUARTERS of the biggest Nollywood (Nigeria's Hollywood) tabloid outside of Nigeria, *The Diasporan Star*, and the newspaper's readership is boosted in New York by Nollywood's many Caribbean fans. Jamaica, Queens hosts a significant African population, enough to constitute a visible community living alongside the African-American and West Indian populations that settled there previously.

The basement of the Mataheko restaurant and lounge (14407 Jamaica Ave.) has a DJ booth and dancefloor with an elegant clientele, but the atmosphere in the room is intimate and oriented toward facilitating interaction between locals. Downstairs at Mataheko reminds me of the house parties that my parents used to throw when I was a kid, but with a significant difference: instead of the very closed and private way I experienced African culture, today my contemporaries and I socialize visibly, celebrating our culture just as openly and publicly as our non-African peers. This ability to represent an explicitly African identity in the US is the first step toward the cultural renaissance that I had envisioned before arriving in the city. As this openness and pride in one's cultural identity grows and spreads to younger generations, the potential for contemporary African culture to make an impact in the United States also expands.

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POP MUSIC IS A DIVERSE MIX OF DANCE AND FOLK STYLES THAT ARE CHANNELED THROUGH AN ELECTRONIC AND HIP-HOP LENS.

BROOKLYN

WHILE THE AFRICAN COMMUNITIES in the Bronx, Queens, and Harlem may be a little harder to access, Brooklyn has become a multicultural playground for a generation of middle- and upper-class suburbanites moving back to the city. Here you can find bars owned by Africans of many different backgrounds who cater to new and open-minded audiences.

One place is Buka (946 Fulton St.), a Nigerian restaurant located in the Clinton Hill neighborhood. Buka sometimes hosts live music and DJ nights, although its sound system leaves a little something to be desired. However, on any particular night there you can really see the multicultural vibe of contemporary Brooklyn. In a single night there, I've seen young Nigerians out on dates, elder Nigerians drinking palm wine and beer in their house clothes, and Brooklyn bohemians of all races sharing a pile of fufu and goat-pepper soup. Buka is an important node in the local Nigerian communication network, and posters advertising upcoming shows by Nigerian artists at other venues are sometimes plastered on the walls.

However, all this warmhearted inclusiveness doesn't mean that Brooklyn isn't still filled with the strong New York ethnic enclaves that once defined the borough. Festac (263 Hendrix St.) is a popular Nigerian restaurant and nightclub in East New York which takes its name from the neighborhood and defunct arts festival in Lagos.

STATEN ISLAND

BEING SIERRA LEONEAN, I have long been aware of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean communities in Staten Island. Upon returning from Monrovia in 2011, where I was putting together a compilation of Liberian music, I was invited to meet some Liberian rappers in the Park Hill Homes on Staten Island, also known as Little Liberia. It was a disorienting experience walking through the building and hearing people switch seamlessly between American slang and Liberian English. A photographer friend invited me on top of the roof of the large housing complex for a photo shoot with several of the community's most popular local rappers. It was surreal to experience Liberia high above Staten Island on top of a New York public housing complex, with downtown Manhattan looming in the background.

EXPLORING DIFFERENT AFRICAN COMMUNITIES and cultural scenes in New York has made me realize that I am part of a frontline of African diaspora artists, pushing in advance of an army of young second-generation Africans in America. Like many New York scenes that have inspired genre innovations before, new styles of music, dance, fashion, and socializing are starting to form in African communities amongst first- and second-generation immigrants in the city. Having grown up in a more isolated, close-knit African community in the 1980s, it is a welcome experience to be able to connect with teenagers in Harlem today, ones who openly talk about artists like D'Banj and genres such as azonto in the same breath as Rihanna and Rick Ross.

All the islands of inspiration dispersed around the city are helping facilitate the emergence of a new African-American moment. This moment will also perhaps allow all people of African descent in the Americas to connect to ancestral homelands cut off by time, distance, and systematic oppression. After three years exploring the new African contributions to contemporary New York, I can finally picture a future in which the global African diaspora is able to realize the previous generations' dreams of a unified whole.

LOGOS

The origins of iconic images from NYC's musical history explained.

THE MUSCULAR MAN WITH the tattooed bicep, downward glance, and raised-up tambourine symbolizes a particular time and place that lasted only a decade, yet it remains permanently fixed in dance-music legend and gay culture. Housed inside a parking facility at King and Varick Streets from 1976 to 1987, Paradise Garage was the perfect name for the concrete space that became a haven for music lovers, and especially for gay men who could feel safe as their true selves. On Fridays and Saturdays, DJ Larry Levan threw epic parties that centered around acceptance and community, in contrast to the more decadent focus of competing clubs. "In New York there were two logos that stood out: Studio 54's giant 54 and Paradise Garage's garage man," says former Garage DJ David DePino.

Nearly everyone who attended describes the Paradise Garage in sacred terms. "It was church," says DePino. "People went to dance, to worship the music, to release all their frustrations of the week." DePino helped Levan and Michael Brody find the space and held many roles, including being one of the few besides Levan to spin records there. He's also one of the last survivors—Brody died of complications from AIDS in 1987, Levan from drug-related heart failure in 1992.

DePino doesn't know who first drew the logo, but he clearly remembers its model: Willie Gonzales, head of security during the Garage's first couple of years and a professional body builder. The tambourine wasn't part of his persona, but the curly hair and ripped muscles were. The logo is perhaps best remembered in neon, in the form of an illuminated sign at the top of the ramp that led to the club's entrance.

Merchandising helped seal its destiny, too. DePino recalls how people started drawing the logo on their own t-shirts—and some dancers would go through several on any given night: "People would come to the Garage in their regular clothes and they would change to dance. And you would sweat—there was no air conditioning there. That's when Michael started saying, 'I should sell t-shirts and people will buy them.' The second he did, they sold out in one night."

DePino also remembers what happened when Brody tried to break with tradition. "Five years into the club there was a second logo made, with a dancer in the forefront and in back of him was a rainbow pyramid. There was an uprising against it." -SUE APFELBAUM

Work Flow

A column on the gear and processes that inform the music we make.

SLAVA BALASANOV, WHO PERFORMS as **Slava**, might as well be this column's poster child. So much of the house and footwork producer's raw, stuttering music—and the uniqueness of his ideas—is born from a careful selection of limitations. He uses a single Korg Electribe ESX-1, both for recording and performing. Slava's new album *Raw Solutions* is out now on Software.

RBMA: How did you decide on the Electribe?

Slava Balasanov: I have been using Electribes since I first started performing live electronic music around 2003. The ESX is super flexible and does everything that I need. It provides fluid access to the control of each individual sound/sample—something that takes digging through menus on the MPC. It also has enough parts to easily make a self-sustained track—something many of the other grooveboxes lack. I did try using a computer and other gear at points, but it was always too cumbersome and didn't have the feeling of playing a single instrument.

RBMA: What is one feature of the machine that, when you figured it out, became integral to your workflow?

SB: It's hard to isolate one feature, but [it's] probably the way I set up and chain effects. The Electribe has three effects and you can chain one and two, two and three, or all of them together and can send any sample into any point in the chain. Figuring out the optimal way to set this up took some time, but now I pretty much use the same setup for all tracks.

RBMA: What are some limitations of the Electribe that you've embraced?

SB: Despite having the capability to have stereo samples, because of limited sample time and number of tracks, pretty much every sample is mono. The longest loop is eight bars of 16ths, which isn't so bad, but it does set limits. You can't really do triplets in a 4/4 beat, although you can have swing. There aren't many options and by now I know them all, so once I have an idea, I can materialize it on the machine within a few hours. With the computer it's so easy to get lost in a myriad of options and lose track of the essence of the track.

RBMA: You seem to use vocals in a very interesting, almost aggressively functional way—not as hooks but as a way to glue or fill holes in the mix.

SB: For me the vocal is just another instrument and I treat it as such. But I wouldn't say they are there to fill holes. The Electribe doesn't allow for very fancy sample manipulation so most of the time I just leave them as they are.

-NICK SYLVESTER

157 HUDSON STREET

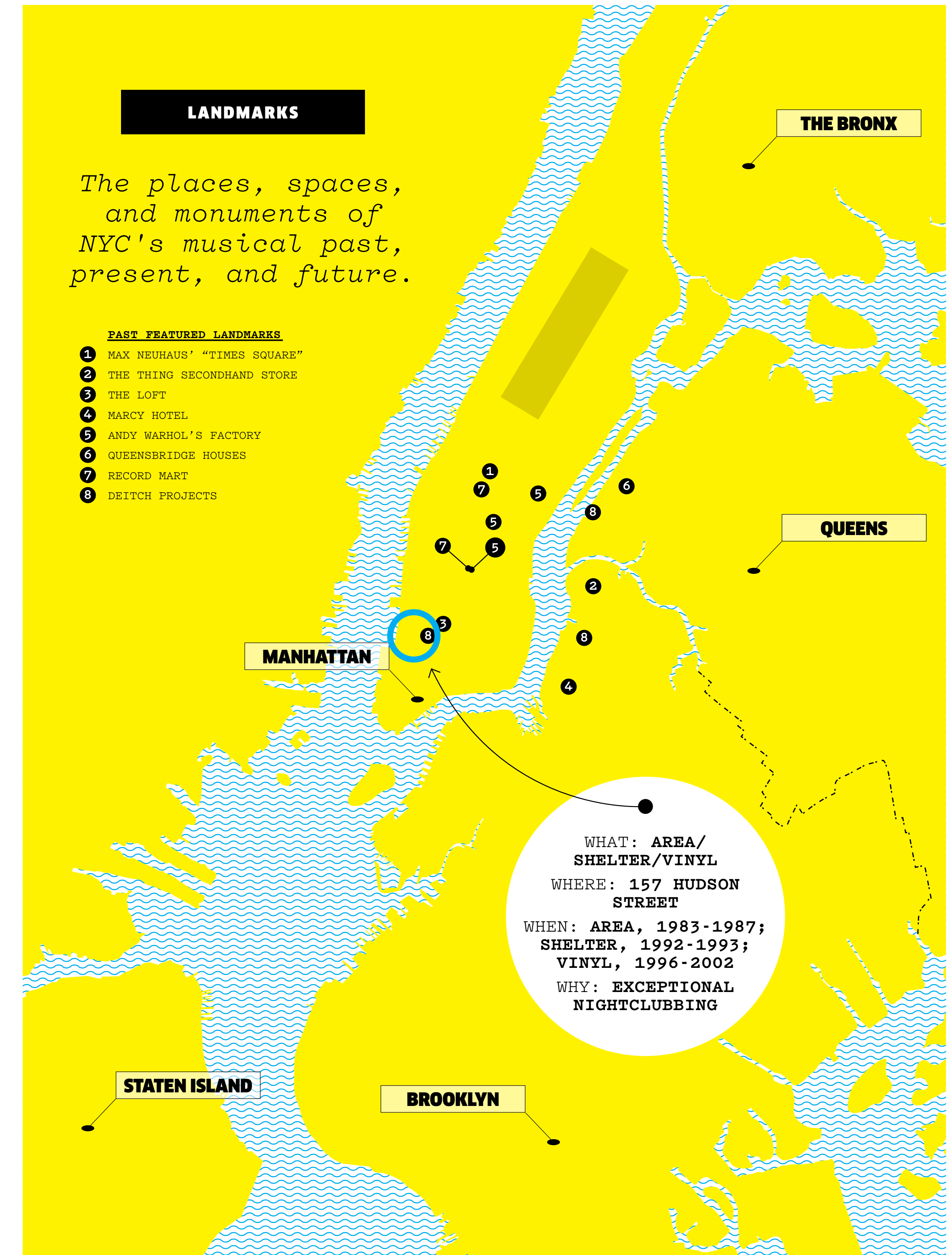
TO PREPARE FOR THIS column, I exhumed a dusty cardboard box from the depths of my closet. Inside was a collection of rave flyers from the early to mid-'90s, when I used to frequent clubs like the Tunnel, Roxy, and Shelter, where DJs like Moby, Richie Hawtin, Frankie Bones, Mark Kamins, Scott Hardkiss, and others played Hi-NRG, acid house, early jungle, and assorted ambient weirdness for kids who would soon become *Kids* (Chloë Sevigny was a Shelter coat-check girl).

You didn't need to be raver royalty for admission into N.A.S.A. Knowing what it was about was enough and that spirit of inclusion lingered, even after Shelter closed and reopened in 1996 as Vinyl, which for six years hosted Body & Soul, a joyous Sunday daytime party.

I ended up at my first N.A.S.A. party by accident. One summer evening in '92, I ran into an old friend in Washington Square Park who was headed there. I tagged along, and it was as if I had crossed some invisible threshold to a brighter, completely bonkers parallel universe; it was the inverse of the uptight Wall Street scene in neighboring Tribeca. N.A.S.A. was one of the first regular electronic-music dance events of its kind in the city, siphoning off a little of the vibe rolling in from the other side of the Atlantic. It was molded in part on David Mancuso's Loft—there was no alcohol, but free juice and breakfast were provided, along with a sound system so fierce it might bend your ears backwards.

In the mid-'80s, prior to its techno-colored N.A.S.A. days, the space was called Area—news articles at the time reported that the 13,000 square-foot club housed three bars, a swimming pool, and a tank full of live sharks, not to mention a crowd filled with art stars like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Laurie Anderson, and Andy Warhol.

It's hard to believe that over 20 years have passed since my first N.A.S.A. night. There's still one flyer in particular that catches my eye. It reads: "TIME CAPSULE: Bring along items that reflect our culture." Does anyone know where this capsule is buried? I'd trade a pair of Liquid Sky phat pants to find out. -ADRIENNE DAY



TOP 5... SHOWS OF 2003-2004

PRESENTED BY OH MY ROCKNESS

I'm Patrick McNamara. And Claire says to tell you hi. Claire and I met in early 2003. In late 2004 we started Oh My Rockness. During that year we went to a lot of good shows together. We thought it would be interesting to look back on five of the best. These are the sounds that inspired us as we tried to flesh out this online concert-listing site idea. Nine years later, we're still fleshing.

1

THE WALKMEN @ BOWERY BALLROOM (APRIL 4, 2003)

I remember Hamilton introduced "We've Been Had" by saying, "This song sells cars." You remember that car commercial, right? It was the Nick Drake auto ad of its day.

2

POSTAL SERVICE @ NORTH SIX (APRIL 19, 2003)

Lights and laptops and people were curious to see the Death Cab for Cutie guy. And oh yeah, that guy Cex opened. He thrashed around on the floor and got up in everyone's mug. Good stuff.

3

MOGWAI @ WARSAW (SEPTEMBER 7, 2003)

This was right when Mogwai's album *Happy Songs for Happy People* came out. They opened the show with "Killing All the Flies." You could hear a pin drop… until everything exploded into a cacophony of joyously noisy guitars. And I remember Warsaw's pierogis. They were delicious.

4

YEAH YEAH YEAHS / LIARS / TV ON THE RADIO @ WARSAW (FEBRUARY 24, 2004)

Not a bad lineup, huh? I remember all three Brooklyn bands seemed to be part of the same team—it felt very cooperative. I also remember Nick Zinner took the crowd's picture. The pierogis were really good this time too.

5

ARCADE FIRE @ ARLENE'S GROCERY (OCTOBER 16, 2004)

It was a day show for CMJ. I think they played around 1pm. I remember Richard Reed Parry wearing a helmet, lots of banging on things like rafters, and thinking this band just might have something here.

NEW YORK STORY

PRINT DRUNK

Indie-punk wishes and Xeroxed dreams.

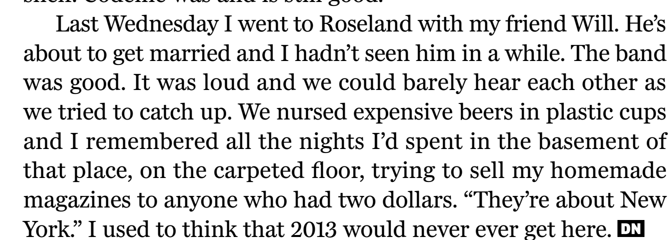
WORDS AND ILLUSTRATION ANDREW KUO

WE USED TO GET drunk in the parking lot on the corner of Houston and Chrystie, where there's a supermarket now. Around where the soup station is, we would sit in between cars and take turns sipping whatever we could get our hands on. We had all just started drinking and it felt like we would never get tired. Everything was newer than it was before. The moisture from the bottles sweated inside our backpacks and onto the cassettes we'd made of the best records we owned.

This was just a few blocks away from the Knitting Factory back when it was on Houston. We had friends in bands, who we wrote letters to but had never met, who would play there every couple of days. There was that group from Portland that almost broke up after the show, the guys from Bethesda who taught me how to make my own records, the three-piece from Olympia who never talked to each other, and a singer who'd I'd meet again seven years later through a mutual friend. We paraphrased the letters we'd sent each other.

Rodan, the Swirlies, Chavez, Polvo, Helium, KARP, Built to Spill, Lync, the Raymond Brake, Ida, Tiger Trap, the Make-Up, Don Caballero, Six Cents and Natalie, Superchunk, Seam, the New Bad Things, the Mountain Goats, Bikini Kill, Velocity Girl, Slant 6, Fugazi.

I think I learned everything I know now from collecting. On St. Mark's it'd take most of the day to find the one place with *Daydream Nation* for $15. (It was out of print and in the wrong section.) I swear I saw a used copy of *Nowhere* at Sounds. Was that Operation Ivy VHS bootleg any good? The guys at Kim's Underground were saving a Cupid Car Club single for us. I found an old copy of *Cometbus* at Adult Crash. We tried finding as many good things as possible.



Some of my favorite people now, I knew then, and I have the proof. There's a picture of you taking pictures off to the right side during the godheadSilo show. One time I saw you toward the back, trying to find enough money to buy the shirt you still wear when you're hungover. In 1994 we sat on Bowery, outside the Sunny Day Real Estate show at CB's, and talked about West Coast cities we'd never been to.

At first my zine was about records and concerts, but eventually it became more about drinking beers in parking lots and sitting in Tompkins Square Park after shows at Brownies. The words were written out on a typewriter and glued next to grainy black-and-white pictures of people drinking, like most zines at the time. I'd trade them for 7-inch records or anything that was Xeroxed. Every few days I'd check on them in the three stores that would let me leave some next to the used bins. Had someone bought one? Did they like it? Did they stay up late at night worrying about things? Did they want to leave the city just so they could eventually come back? Did they like Spacemen 3 too? It was all I cared about until I finally left for Providence a few years later.

A lot and nothing has happened since. I still curse the fact that I bought a CD of Superchunk's *On the Mouth* and not the red vinyl version. I passed on the first Pavement 10-inch for some reason. I'm glad I got the Egg Hunt single and I'm not letting go of my Meta-Matics/Make-Up split. Seeing Unrest again recently was the same as it was the first time at Wetlands. The Chisel shirt that was too thick to actually wear is still on my shelf. Codeine was and is still good.

Last Wednesday I went to Roseland with my friend Will. He's about to get married and I hadn't seen him in a while. The band was good. It was loud and we could barely hear each other as we tried to catch up. We nursed expensive beers in plastic cups and I remembered all the nights I'd spent in the basement of that place, on the carpeted floor, trying to sell my homemade magazines to anyone who had two dollars. "They're about New York." I used to think that 2013 would never ever get here. DN

Andrew Kuo is an artist living in New York. He's a regular contributor to *The New York Times*.

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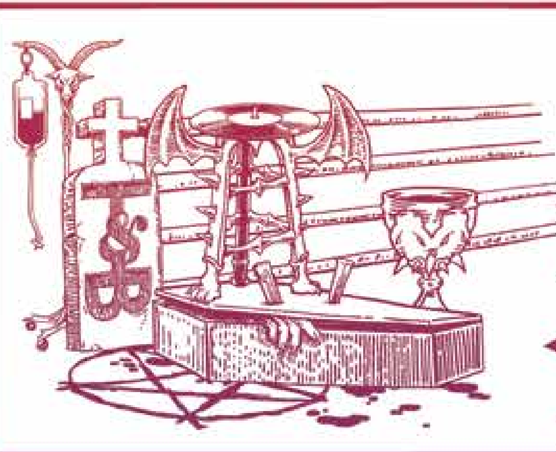

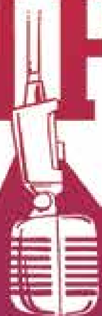

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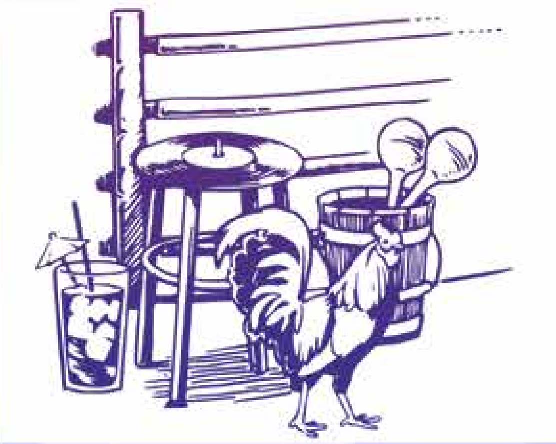

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