MIKE CLARK

AUDIO RESCUE TEAM

DRAKE PHIFER

TODD MODES

GUSTAV BROVOLD

THE VALLEY and THE MOUNTAIN

GARY MARTIN

QUINTON McRAE

JOEL DUNN

deq

DETROIT ELECTRONIC QUARTERLY

VOLUME 7 ::: SPRING EDITION

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Jonathan Nance and those we lost much to soon.
Your light shines brightly R.I.P

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C O N T E N T

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Over the last few years, a new brand of techno has been taking over the global underground dance music scene. At the forefront of the next generation's techno revolution is "sludge", a blend of industrial, acid house, techno and ghettotech. This music is slowed down to around 110bpm, enabling the producer to make a groovy techno/house beat with acidic leads and random eerie vocal samples that all collide to give sludge its own identity.

Some of the artists involved with this distinguishing sound are Marshall Applewhite, The Friend, Shady P, and Adultsupervision. In only a few years these artists have put out tunes on YoSucka!, Local Heat, How to Kill, Detroit Underground, and Breed. They have toured all over the country as well as Europe.

Marshall Applewhite (real name Joel Dunn) has dropped several vinyl and endless digital releases in the sludge genre. He has already toured Europe, played Movement and almost every venue in Detroit you can think of. It's one thing to play all these places, but I have never seen nor heard of him drop a set where the dance floor wasn't completely losing their minds. All of his sets involve music he or someone in this small group of producers has written. Knowing that, it makes his sets that much better.

CS: You're not originally from Michigan. Where are you originally from?

JD: I was born in Denver, but moved here before I reached my second year on this planet. My whole family is from the area, and I was raised in a very musical household.

CS: You have multiple aliases, but your focus seems to be solely on Marshall Applewhite. What spawned the idea of taking the infamous cult leader's persona and creating a signature sound from it?

JD: Having done a ton of releases under OktoRed and Cocky Balboa, I was already kind of establishing a format of sounds under those aliases. When The Friend and I had come up with an idea to start working on this new sound, I originally didn't know whether I was going to put in under an already sound-packed OktoRed. I took a sample from one of the real, actual Applewhite indoctrination videos, and just put up a song under that namesake. It kind of just stuck after the first few songs went up.

CS: Can you talk about the development of the sludge sound and who else was involved with creating the blueprint for the genre?

JD: I was already making techno/house-based music with a more Latin feel in the 106-115bpm range when I had originally met The Friend. He posted a tune "Lonfe" and it garnered some really good attention. That song was the original sludge tune. From there we just talked a bit about further exploring this rough, blown out sound. We were both rabid fans of ghettotech and industrial, we both had made countless different styles of music over the years, live and electronic, and this seemed like a logical next step. We wanted to take our bass music knowhow and combine it with the sounds we knew like the back of our hand.

CS: You just put out three 7-inch releases with Acid Witch, debuting on YoSucka! How did you guys come up with the idea for this release and should we expect more physical sludge/acid releases on YoSucka! in 2016?

JD: It just felt like a fun step to push new music. More than just music, this is an art project for me. When Brian and I were discussing options for our fall/winter release schedule, the chance to do a 3 part series came up and we ran with it.

CS: Where can people get your newest releases in and around Detroit?

JD: Detroit Threads carries everything we put out. Other than that we have limited stuff at Peoples Records as well. The best bet is to contact Brian Gillespie or myself directly via our YoSucka! Bandcamp.

CS: You recently spent a month in Europe with The Friend playing shows and traveling. How was that experience and how was your music received in the different countries you performed in?

JD: The experience was amazing. Playing mainly original music always presents an element of surprise for both artist and audience, so it was a bit unnerving waiting to see how our sound would be taken. But when it came time, the crowds took to us instantly. The booking agent at one club told us he had not seen more people on the floor dancing and observing than there were at the bar drinking in quite some time.

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CS: Why do you think this style is getting such a great response, both here and abroad?

JD: It seems to me like a natural progression. We are not the only people making this style at this tempo. There are more and more releases popping up from around the world. It's part collective conscience and part natural evolution of music. We aren't just making your run of the mill anything, and we really take our time preparing the

music we release. I personally feel like our sound is very appealing to listeners across the board because we cover so much musical ground from song to song.

CS: At this year's Movement Festival, you were hands down my favorite set all weekend. For me it was just a really wild experience seeing sludge played at 5:30PM on Memorial Day. How was that experience for you?

JD: I think the fact that they made an all-new stage this year to focus on all Detroit sounds was an amazing concept. When I was first asked, I was excited, but I didn't know how our sound would be received. When all was said and done, I couldn't have asked for a better crowd to play for.

CS: How much time, in say a week, do you spend working on tunes?

JD: Pretty much all of my time is spent on making music. I sit from 7pm until at least 4-5AM every day. I wake up with my computer next to me, start up some warm up sounds, take a break to make/eat dinner, then I get to work.

CS: How many sludge tunes have you written so far?

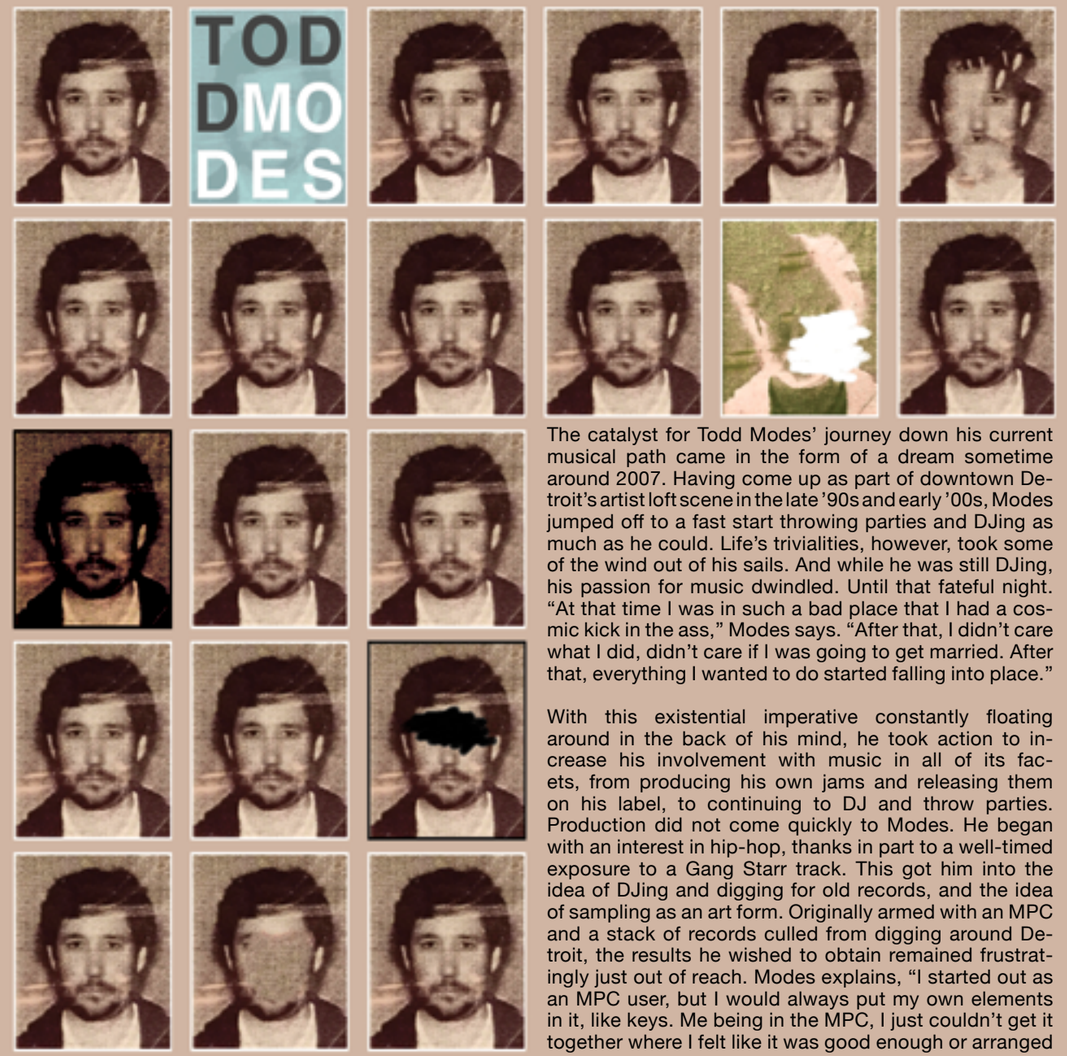
JD: Upwards of 500 originals and edits in the past few years. It's not all releasable, but I have played most of them out. I started making vocoder covers a while ago, and that moved on to remaking some of my favorite songs from scratch at a more reasonable tempo range for me personally.

CS: What are your favorite pieces of hardware you use for production?

JD: The only thing I constantly use is a shitty microphone. I don't have a full setup, functioning beast studio. So I will sporadically introduce pieces to run into Ableton. Lately I've been really digging back into the DR-202 for drum sounds and a DX-200 for some weird noises. Mainly, my stuff is made in Ableton with the addition of Reaktor and a few other VST's.

CS: Techno or House? **JD**: Techno.

CS: Acid or Electro? **JD**: Electro.



The catalyst for Todd Modes' journey down his current musical path came in the form of a dream sometime around 2007. Having come up as part of downtown Detroit's artist loft scene in the late '90s and early '00s, Modes jumped off to a fast start throwing parties and DJing as much as he could. Life's trivialities, however, took some of the wind out of his sails. And while he was still DJing, his passion for music dwindled. Until that fateful night. "At that time I was in such a bad place that I had a cosmic kick in the ass," Modes says. "After that, I didn't care what I did, didn't care if I was going to get married. After that, everything I wanted to do started falling into place."

With this existential imperative constantly floating around in the back of his mind, he took action to increase his involvement with music in all of its facets, from producing his own jams and releasing them on his label, to continuing to DJ and throw parties. Production did not come quickly to Modes. He began with an interest in hip-hop, thanks in part to a well-timed exposure to a Gang Starr track. This got him into the idea of DJing and digging for old records, and the idea of sampling as an art form. Originally armed with an MPC and a stack of records culled from digging around Detroit, the results he wished to obtain remained frustratingly just out of reach. Modes explains, "I started out as an MPC user, but I would always put my own elements in it, like keys. Me being in the MPC, I just couldn't get it together where I felt like it was good enough or arranged enough." The help of Brad Erlandson, aka 8.Bliss, ended up being a true revelation as it opened the door to using the computer. It was a better fit for him to achieve the detail he was looking for in his own music. "I got in the computer and it changed everything," Modes says. "I was able to now put my ideas down, arrange them the way I wanted to and make them more elaborate."

Hearing the music of artists like Theo Parrish and Kenny Dixon Jr. was a gateway to house for this hip-hop head. He then felt he could "like house music because it's not just average house music. It was dirty, abstract and it took you somewhere," Modes says. "It was deeper than a lot of stuff coming out that I had heard. I feel like that shaped my sound and what I was going for, and then I took it my own way." Falling out of love with hip-hop and increasingly in love with the electronic dance floor, his desire to keep his artistic vision pure and represent only what he wanted to hear on the dance floor is what pushed him forward. His introduction to Blair French also marked a turning point. "I was still messing with hip-hop, and I felt like I could work on tracks with him other than hip-hop, I just felt it," Modes says. "We both balance each other out." His collaboration with French called Cosmic Handshakes is another outlet for Modes' varied tastes, and seems to be the project that goes the most far out sonically.

As Modes becomes more solid in his footing, he is increasing his output. December 2015 saw the release of a single by his Modes & Severson project with Mike Severson on the New York City label Golf Channel. Titled "Midnight Exotics," this guitar driven disco track explores the Balearic side of Modes' tastes. Coming soon is a record for Aaron Siegel's FIT Sound called "Native Visions" that will utilize lots of live playing, as well as a full album from his Cosmic Handshakes project with French. Modes is also working on a project with Ryan Spencer of Jamaican Queens that he promises will be dirty and sexy.

Following his dream, Modes also began working with his friend Mason Mirek on his Detroit-centric label, M1 Sessions. The label operated under the assumption that good music would be appreciated by an audience regardless of its genre, and this led to releases containing hip-hop, house, disco and even more abstract vibes, sometimes even on the same record. "We keep a common core of a Detroit sound because we are all influenced by Detroit artists who came before us, but with an experimental twist. Giving it a little more of an abstract flavor," he explains. A love for vinyl records kept the focus of the label on releasing that sweet black wax out to the world. M1 was responsible for a few underground classics, especially the "Things U Like" EP by Dez Andres which has necessitated multiple represses over the years. Detroit's own Paul Randolph also released a stellar vocal house album entitled "Chips N Chitlins' Vol. 1", that has perhaps been unfairly slept on. The first releases from Cosmic Handshakes also appeared on M1 Sessions, as well as other works by Blair French. As of now, M1 Sessions is on hiatus, but Modes leaves open the possibility of coming back to it.

All the while, Modes has continued to work at his original passion of DJing and throwing parties. His origins in the loft scene gave him connections to artists running the gamut of dance styles, from Tony Ollivierra to Scott Zacharias to Recloose. The eclecticism of that era was an influence that remains with him to this day, hosting nights like Chophouse Thursdays with Jeremy Kallio at the Town Pump Tavern, allowing guest DJs to play sets as if they were listening to music in their own living room, disregarding dance floor pressures. His party on Fridays, also at Town Pump, allows him to play anything from rock to funk, while Saturdays see him dropping a more dance oriented selection of house and disco related music at Centaur.

Todd remains inspired by Detroit's music scene noting, "If you know where to go, there's never a lack of a party. It's not too watered down. When there's good stuff, there's good stuff. It's not overwhelming which allows people to focus on productions." The atmosphere and people also contribute to his own personal sound. "The struggle here, not making money off music keeps me pushing," Modes says. "The people here really hold dear to it, and want to keep it rough and rugged. If anybody's stepping out of line or falls off, you're gonna get called out. It seems like Detroit keeps you in check. Around here it's serious business. It makes me just wanna work harder being from here." His future is bright, but still rooted in that now long ago dream. "There's not a day I don't think about it. It definitely changed me. I didn't have any more expectations. I just do what I do and whatever happens, happens," Modes says. "I became engrossed in my work. It's all I want to do. If you do your thing and it's super true, that's gonna shine through. I'm more worried about longevity than what's hot right now."

Written By Thomas Cox // Photo By Todd Modes

GUSTAV BROVOLD

KR: How were you exposed to Electronic Music?

GB: It wasn't a quantized event, it was kind of a thing that grew on me. I had always been listening to music. When I was a kid, my parents would always play music around the house, some of it had synths, but none of it was truly electronic, at least in the way you're probably thinking of it. The music, a la the stuff I make, only took seat in my gaze when I noticed my friends were starting to make stuff like it. When I was 20 I started to play with Deastro using synths and drum machines, but that was really synth poppy and not quite techno, still yet a step closer to what I do now. I didn't really start to really get into it until I had been running Adult Contemporary — along with my roommates, girlfriend and brother — and had experienced what techno is like live. Then I experienced a DEMF weekend in Detroit and it hit home. I thought for a long time it was all too nuanced and clichéd before I realized how to sift through that stuff and realize the great stuff is pretty bizarre and enticing.

KR: You are in your early 20s. How old are you and where did you grow up? Are you spending time between Detroit and Santa Fe?

GB: I am 24. I was born in rural Washington state, in the town of Enumclaw. I moved to Royal Oak when I was a toddler, where I grew up. After my parents split up when I was 15, my mom moved to New Mexico and I moved with my dad out to Kingston, N.Y. When I was 18 I moved back to Detroit, and I've pretty much been here since. I do go to New Mexico a lot, my mom lives there and it's nice to visit her. But I think what you're talking about is when I had a 9-month stint in Santa Fe, N.M. I had originally planned to go out there for only a week to visit my mom, but I had this unusual persistent illness of being nauseated all the time. By the coercion of my mom, I stayed for another week. That week became a month. I decided to enroll and took some classes at a community college out there, and that became seven more months. It ended up being the length of a gestation period. It was real lonely, but that might have been a saving grace because it was an opportunity to start studying. I also had a lot of time to work on music, and some great gear to borrow and use, and cranked out a lot of music of which I am pretty proud. Music I can't say I would have made if I had been in Detroit. But I am back in Detroit now with some permanence and hesitate to go back to NM, because I fear it might happen again.

KR: How influential was the Internet to you finding out about music? Or was it more in a physical real-world way? It feels your generation seems to be more interested in vinyl digging and using hardware machines to create music. Is this a backlash to growing up in the information age and virtual life?

GB: The Internet was astoundingly helpful. To say that I wouldn't be as entranced by it without it isn't necessarily true, although, what it did do for me is give me a medium to find and listen to music that I wouldn't be able to find if I had gone to record stores. Finding people's mixes on the WWW and listening to them is great, and hard to do off the Internet. It was hard for me to use before I learned about record culture. And even once I started getting into the records, I had, and still do have, a really hard time at record stores. I just get really overwhelmed and never know what to get, or have enough money to get it all. Yeah, we do tend to use a lot of hardware and spin records. I can only speak for myself, but a lot of the music I'm influenced by is made on hardware. My generation is young, we take after our idols that did their thing before computers were a feasible option. Not that digital things are bad, but records and analog/hardware stuff just sounds so much better and is more fun. You can't hold an MP3 in your hand.

KR: Do you always perform live or do you DJ as well? In these times the line between a DJ and live performer seem to blur. How do you define DJ and then a live performance?

GB: I often do live sets when I play out, but I DJ as well, usually with CDJs. Or in the past a computer, especially when schlepping all the gear I use isn't worth it. And once I get enough records I'll start doing vinyl sets. Great DJ sets and great live sets always have a layer of both improvisation and crowd observation in it. When one has a prefab Ableton set, where all that is done is muting the kick drum and adding a filter sweep here or there, that's really boring. You gotta watch the crowd, you have to listen to your track, you have to feel it, they have to feel it and you have to be able to change with it. You have to bring it up and bring it down as it needs to be done. The crowd is like a weird delayed VU meter for how good you're doing. It's great when they're combined too, play some live stuff, play some tracks, repeat.

KR: What do you use?

GB: It's hard to just jump into hardware production, unless you have a set up to work with. I lucked out that I didn't have to build my set up from the very beginning, because I had a few important things given to me. For people who don't know what they're doing, it's hard to know where to start, what to get and how to use it. I prefer making my music with real synths. It's to say that one shouldn't prohibit themselves from going back and forth between the two. Sometimes I'll doodle on Ableton when I'm not around my gear. For instance, the track I made that got on the "Don't Be Afraid" VA compilation (DBA 019.5) I actually made using Ableton at an airport. But for my hardware setup:

- I control everything and do all my drums with a slightly disassembled/broken MPC 1000.
- For synths I have a MS2000, Oberheim Matrix1000 (which sounds SOO good, but it's heartbreaking because it's only god damn presets), Roland D110, Univox Mini-Korg K2, Arp Omni2, Siel DK600 and I have a Roland V-synth XT being lent to me.
- I use an MMT8 for sequencing synths when I want a different time signature or loop length
- I use a Mackie 1604 as a mixer.
- I use an Alesis midi verb, a Yamaha FX900 as aux sends and sometimes use this Boss distortion pedal also.
- I use a VLA pro compressor.
- I record onto a Sony cassette player.

I have some broken shit laying around that I always think about fixing and putting back into the rotation, like a Super JX and a 505, but I haven't done that yet.

KR: The first time I saw you was at 1217 Griswold (a heralded spot used in the mid-'90s by Detroit's underground scene). You were playing on the shittiest laptop I've ever seen in my life. I mean the keyboard was half gone, screen cracked, motherboard trying to escape to a timely death. But I learned something that night in that hotbox. You may have the worst gear, but as long as the party was jumping and the music was good it didn't matter. How important is the actual equipment you use? Do you need the latest and greatest or is it more of making do with what you got?

GB: Oh jeez, I forgot about that computer. It actually didn't have a keyboard, or top plate, all the guts were just out in the open. I had to turn it on by jumping it with a screwdriver. It was great though, I loved that thing. And I played some great sets with it. RIP lil' computer buddy! That PA that we had was a mess too. It was all pieced together from shit we found on Craigslist, I'm surprised it worked at all. But I had what I had, and I didn't really have the opportunity to have anything better, so I did the best I could. I remember I was playing "Speak and Spell" by Dopplereffekt when you came up and introduced yourself.
What gear you use is important in some senses. It's important that the equipment you use works, so that your jam doesn't stop when you're halfway through your set. It's very important that you know how to use it, but it's not necessary that you have spic-and-span, brand-new gear per se; a good set is a good set regardless. Lots of new gear has too many bells and whistles that are too easy to over use. And lots of people have nice new shit and don't know how to have fun with it. It sucks when every drop is preceded by a phaser/high-pass filter. At some point you have to think to yourself, "I got it dude, do something else," and it becomes too predictable and boring. Then there are people who tear shit up like it's nobody's business with two 1200s and a simple mixer with no filter, auxs, or a nasty broken computer. But when you're talking about production, it's a different topic entirely. Every piece of gear is designed so wildly different. They all do their own thing, and in many cases can't even be compared to each other. It's too deep of a subject to delve into for this.

KR: What was your first piece of gear? I remember you telling me about a sampler (Ensoniq if I remember right?) that your mother's boyfriend gave you, and it had all these National Geographic World sounds with it. Was your dad involved in music? If so, how influential was it?

GB: My first piece of electronic gear was the Korg MS2000 I mentioned earlier, along with an Alesis MMT8. I still use the MS2000 in almost all of my tracks. But my first real instrument

Interview by Kevin Reynolds. Photo by Torrence Allison

was an alto saxophone I got in fifth grade.
My mom's boyfriend gave me a lot of awesome gear. The Oberheim Matrix1000 I still have, the Alesis MMT8 that I use now, and yeah, that Ensoniq EPS along with all the floppy disks of his samples from when he used it. I still haven't gone through them all, but there are some gems in there.

My dad, Bill Brovold, was really involved in music when I was young, and still is. I think it was really important in forming mine. He just gave me a good environment to start this music thing. Let me get a lot of embarrassing kid stuff out the way early. Like I remember waking up to go to second or third grade, and Godspeed You! Black Emperor was sleeping on our floor. When I was 13 or so he brought me in to play sax in his band, Larval. I didn't appreciate it enough it at the time, but it was really important in finding my tastes, learning how to play with other people and that most musicians are weeeeiiirrrddd people. I was doing hokey-pokey, cringe-worthy high school band shit and at the same time playing sax in this avant-garde rock band. I have to credit him with hooking up the most insane performance I've ever been a part of. He got me into a gig with Rhys Chatam's "A Crimson Grail" where I played guitar in a 200 guitar orchestra at Lincoln Center in NYC. That was an insane experience.
I play the saxophone, that's always been my jam. I have a beautiful Martin Baritone that I've had for years. It needs some work, though, it's not far from being 100 years old. I played the drums for a long time in a punk band, The Lobotomys, which was a helluva lot of fun — getting out all that teenage angst. And I drummed in a weird metal band in NY. And a lot of a little stuff here and there. I just picked up a flute that I'm trying to learn.
My godfather, Bill Ylitalo, was a huge influence on my music too. He's made so much awesome music for a long time. I think just by proximity to him, I learned a lot about humbleness and objectivity in the music one makes. As a kid I remember thinking he just kinda made music and played the horns as a hobby. When I moved out to NY he began to introduce me to the music he did, and let me sit in on some of his gamelan classes he instructed. I remember having an apotheosis when, a while back, he gave me a kick drum, and said "See that stain on it there? That's from when I played with G.G. Allin."

KR: You sent me a demo of over 20 finished songs. Do you have any releases planned?

GB: I'm going to have a cassette come out on Möks LTD out of Los Angeles that I'm finishing up. I wanna put some things out on wax too, but labels are always so hard to rope in. I don't think I know how to sell my music to labels yet. I feel like I put a lot of effort into my tracks to make it good, but it always needs just one more thing. I usually put out music in the way I do because I think it's as it should be. It feels a bit defeating when every track needs to be changed, but that seems to be the grind.

KR: There seems to be a new battalion of producers and DJs in the ever-giving fountain of Detroit. Can you expound on some of your crew? It also seems that you guys tend to work together a lot, be it parties or productions.

GB: Yeah, my crew has the guise "Adult Contemporary." It began as a venue in Capitol Park when we were evicted, it evolved to be just a crew. Now it's myself and my good friends/old roommates Drew Roberts and Bryan Dulaney, who play as Interfaith (weird, dark, up-till-sunrise tech), and BLK_OUT (entrancing and psychedelic analog house-y tracks.) We do our thing and throw our shows around town. That, I'd say, is the core of it. Then I break off into the friends and cohorts we jam and play with, like ConMan, Taylor Hawkins (Community Corporation), Abdallah Siblani (Rawaat), Julian Kendall, Isaac Delongchamp (North Lake), Ben Christensen and more.

KR: Name three of your favorite artists right now.

GB: North Lake (he also makes amazing homemade drum samples) Ben Christensen, MGUN.
There's so much I'm learning about. When I hear something new I'm like, "This is amaaziinnng!" and put it on repeat for a day. Then I find the next and say, "Wait, no, this is better," and the cycle continues ...

DRAKE PHIFER

Drake Phifer is the proprietor of the storied and successful production company Urban Organic. We recently sat down over brunch at Brooklyn Local in Corktown for a conversation about his history, the story of Urban Organic and what's next for Detroit and beyond...

LW: Let's start from the beginning, when did you start Urban Organic?

DP: November 2001, it was right after 9/11. It just happened to be by accident, I was planning prior to that event...but there was something about that particular year that made it a very special and significant time because no one wanted to travel and my event was met with resounding success. It was at the Johanson Charles Art Gallery, which is now Signal-Return in Eastern Market. I knew at that moment that I had something that people wanted and would enjoy. Since then I've had the pleasure of being able to be a producer for various shows and events from concerts to art gallery openings.

LW: Do you know the number of events that you've been involved with?

DP: I don't, but in the last fifteen years I bet it would be around 75 to 80 shows.

LW: That is impressive. Very few people can say that, and still mean that quality was produced.

DP: Thank you. It has been a labor of love, but as you know it's not always profitable. So you have to have something else that drives you. It has to be driven by passion.

LW: Being a lover of the music is important, not just looking at it as financial gain. Looking at it from a production standpoint, how do you feel the sponsorship situation is now from when you began?

DP: I think initially when I began, sponsorship was relatively easy. I had Designer Shoe Warehouse, they would give me $1000.00 here or there. (Not much at all, but at that time the DSW association was important) I would also get small business sponsorships, lots of small businesses would help underwrite the cost of the events. That's still a good avenue. I think now there's a lot more capability. First of all the economy is better now than I have seen it in my lifetime. I don't know if it's been this good, particularly in Detroit. The local economy is great, the national economy is great. So sponsorship is easier, and I know how to speak the language of sponsorship more. (When we talk about sponsorship now, we're talking about 'grown up' money. When I started no one knew who many of these acts were. I think I have proven myself, and they have proven theirs.)

LW: Because there is a language.

DP: Yes there is a language, and I think that although I'm locally based, I have something that has national implications. It's a matter of activating that. It's something that right now I'm poised to do, but my emphasis and my home is in Detroit.

LW: Are you from Detroit originally?

DP: Yes.

LW: I know you lived in Atlanta, but how long were you there?

DP: Almost 10 years from 87 to 96. You know I always tell this story, that I used to go to this funk-jazz café started by a buddy of mine named Jason Oar. He was getting at it's peak 3000, 4000 people out to his events without ever announcing the talent (4 Times a year).

LW: (Laughing) That is unheard of in Detroit.

DP: Unheard of, I couldn't duplicate it if I tried. I think it was just a different environment down there. The number of Black colleges (HBCUs), and the number of schools in general down there, just created a hungrier and more curious music audience. The closest I've seen to that is maybe Funk Night.

LW: What was your last show?

DP: My last produced show was Bilal at the N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art. Excellent show, good turn out and two sets. For those who don't go to church, it was church. For those who do, they probably missed it because they were in church. I don't mean that he was preachy, but it was just a spiritually moving experience for everybody in attendance. I was then asked to promote three shows with artists that I had worked with before with the exception of one...Eric Roberson and Chrisette Michele, Leela James and Raheem Devaughn, and then Hiatus Kaiyote. I was asked to promote all three shows---but you can imagine how difficult that can be with all of them occurring the same night?

LW: Your history gives it weight.

DP: Yes, I'm happy for that. I'm happy about this interview because it's kind of a reset or a reintroduction. There's a younger audience out there, and they don't know about @Last or Family Funktion, they don't know about Urban Organic.

LW: They basically know about Funk Night and anything involving Paxahau. Not saying anything against those entities, but that's their point of reference.

DP: So I'm very happy about that, and I always have conversations with my friends about intellectual property and that we all have it. We all have a personal brand, also what I have recently realized is that I can't escape Urban Organic, it is who I am.

LW: You shouldn't, because no one here has managed to do what you've done, and no one is trying. And so another question would be, do you think the type of music you're bringing is important anymore because music has changed? Especially in relation to dance and neo soul. When it comes to soul, it got pushed to the side. For a lot of people it's passé or cheesy. What do you think about that?

the artists I work with fall into that genre. I just looked at it as good music. I work with many different artists but my goal has always been to promote good timeless music. They want to call it neo soul, that's fine. I mean a lot of it is cheesy. There are a ton of artists that if they follow the genre, they're going to be cheesy anyway. I like to work with artists that transcend whatever genre they're supposed to be in, like the artist Charity that I worked with. I would tell her all the time not to put herself in that box.

LW: I feel like a lot of artists feel like they have to come down on one side or the other, because if they don't, people won't know where to put them. What we do as a people is try to find a box to put you in. So do you think that's a big part of it?

DP: Yes, I think it's a double edged sword. Unlike Hip Hop which seems to have exploded, the term neo soul seems like a curse.

LW: True, no one uses it right now. The respect is kind of lost for it. So do you think there's still enough of an audience to keep Urban Organic solid?

DP: I do, I think the audience is there but the artists have to be in alignment with those audiences. I have tapped into some of the younger artists, and their base is also some of the traditional Urban Organic followers. They are very motivated. They are loving some of these new artists like Collective Peace, Ideeyah, and Britney Stoney. You know I always say that I built Urban Organic so that it would appeal to someone whether they were 17 or 70.

LW: It's about being as diverse as you can be.

DP: And in addition to the live things, I'm into DJ culture too. DJing, in addition to listening to my parents music, WJZZ, Mojo, and Rosetta Hines, was probably the thing that opened my mind and allowed me to gravitate towards wanting to see people live. I could have easily taken the DJ route. I started DJing with Norm Talley back in 1984. Norm was my DJ mentor. When were kids, one of my best friends lived two doors down from Norm, and we would go over his house all the time. That's where I learned to DJ. Norm was the most precise blender (blending is what we called beat-matching then) that I knew. So now I'm embracing all these things. Moving forward I would (love the experience of traveling across world and playing music for folks. I think about Eric Roberson, who's oldest YouTube clip of him is in Detroit. When I booked him he was being booked in only two other cities, Washington D.C. where he went to college, and Atlanta. Now he's traveling the world. (I am no Eric Roberson, but I am just saying, I have seen it happen).

LW: So do you want to take Urban Organic on the road?

DP: Yes I've done it before and found that people are hungry. So many of these tertiary markets are alive and hungrier than a place like Detroit or Cleveland.

LW: I feel like we're a little jaded here, but there are a lot of things that just never make it here. Are there new people that you are excited about?

DP: I really like Hiatus Kaiyote, Jerrard Lawson, Moonchild, and Kyle Hall. I don't think Kyle is getting the local love he deserves. I've really been drawn to what's going on in the DJ world because these guys are impacting people all around the world, and they are a band of one. I've really been checking out Alton Miller, Reggie Dokes, Kai Alce and Delano Smith. These guys have been on the grind for years and now they're traveling regularly.

LW: Do you think that's in part because of the recent love that people are showing for Detroit?

DP: Yes.

LW: What's next for you?
DP: There are things I want to do in terms of merchandising and promoting the brand so that people really feel that it's something that they are invested in. I have put in a bid for the Knight Foundation grants and I've been approached by some different foundations to do some programming. My ideal goal is to do a micro festival in Lafayette Park or Chene Park to celebrate the 15 year anniversary or something like that.

LW: I hope this all works out. You deserve it. On a total side note, what do you think about music coming out of the UK? That's where I seem to be finding most of the new things I like.

DP: You know about seven, eight years ago I brought Roy Ayers here, and after the show he came to me and said,

"I felt like I was over in London." My wife and I went over to London about five years ago and we were able to catch him at the Jazz Café. It was interesting because I didn't feel like what we had done here (in Detroit) reflected what was going on in London because most of the people there were Caucasian. It was mostly Europeans there to see him. I feel like it was instructive to the American artist. You can't just cast your net over the United States and think that's going to do it. You have to cast it globally, wide and far.

LW: One thing I really want to ask is do you think that the music world is really paying attention to Detroit artists?

DP: Yes and no. You know, I had an interview with BLAC Magazine and writer Nadir Omowale. He asked what is the big difference between Detroit music now and Detroit music fifty years ago? I said fifty years ago it was more iconic, now it's elemental. Meaning, you know, minus Big Sean, Kem, Eminem and four or five majors. It's not like Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles or Chicago. There's not, like, people looking for this pipeline coming out of here. Maybe on the electronic side.

LW: I wonder how we make that happen again?

DP: I feel like there's an opportunity that's starting to gravitate towards people like me and people that we know. DIME is here. They're doing a great job, but they can't do it all, they're too small. I think the purpose of DIME is to awaken others to the fact that there is still talent here. We need to mine our talent. There's no shortage of talent.

LW: How important do you think music is to the future of Detroit.

DP: I think it is essential to the authentic telling of Detroit's story. You cannot talk about a resurgence of this city, a revitalization of this town without music being front and center. To me up to this point it has been a paltry effort to really make music the centerpiece of the discussion of the revitalization of Detroit. And so I think, but I knew, I understood why, it's like Detroit music, you're there. There's no doubt about that. We need to promote the food and culture here. We need this explosion of restaurants, art and social entrepreneurship. And it'll come back to music cause the music is intertwined in all of that. I think the focus is about to come back on Detroit music in a way it

hasn't in the last five years.
DP: You know you asked about artists earlier and I wanted to mention some to be on the lookout for from Detroit. There's (Ideeyah), Collective Peace, Suai I think is about to make a huge comeback. Ren Cen Cool Beanz is the sleeper. He's a producer, performer and DJ. The guy is magnificent. I envision a city where the collective music community is in unison and is aware of who is coming through. I envision a city where we're excavating the music history that is all around us, and providing these really rich tours where Dilla grew up, or Aretha Franklin, Amp Fiddler or Anita Baker. We've got so much. You know you can go to Los Angeles and get a music tour easily. You can go to Atlanta and Nashville and get a music tour easily. You know we are just as much a part of the music ecosystem as any of those places are, and we need to start living like it. Living up to our role.

LW: That's the perfect way to end this. Thank you.

DP: Thank you man. I would love to interview you one day.

QUINTON MCRAE

“How would you sing ‘can you feel it’” vocalist, producer Quinton McRae (a.k.a QMC) happily recalled Chez Damier asking him at the legendary KMS music studios back in the early 90’s. McRae was on a break from recording Inner City’s “Pennies From Heaven” when Damier asked him. So he belted out “Can you feeeeeel it! Can you feeeel the looooove.” Although it was sung by another vocalist, the melody inspired one of Damier’s signature tracks. “I didn’t receive any credit for the inspiration or anything like that,” he chuckled.

But he was there. Absorbing. Learning. Singing. Contributing. With fresh, hot sounds from the belly of the rusty giant attracting global attention, studios in the D attracted musical talent like miners to the gold rush. It was an all out creative, D.I.Y., sonic assault with no boundaries. The community soil bringing out friends and friends of friends who could sing and play instruments mixed with this new, electronic dance sound.

“Detroit has music in our spirit, our souls. We heard music. My mother (Antoinette McRae) held me in her arms and rocked me. Sung to me. Loved me. Danced with me. It’s rooted in us. In the soil. I’ve been a lot of places and I’ll put our talent up against anybody. We are on sacred territory. Ancient Indian burial grounds. If you step in the dirt, you can get it. You have to be here to be a part of it.”

And he is. Not only because of McRae’s Native American heritage, his family and community roots are planted deep in Detroit’s Jazz and Motown scenes. It’s a story he is writing his book about, but was kind enough to share a small slice of it with me.

His father Quinton E McRae, aside from playing vibes, was the business manager of the famous Flame Show Bar, which lit up the corner of John R at Canfield with lights and the world’s best music talent in the early 1950’s (Jackie Wilson, Billie Holiday, Joe Turner just to name a few that played there). He also managed the club’s travelling softball team. Naturally, growing up for young McRae, an abundance of star musicians (both family and friends) were always within an arm’s reach. His mother, who attended high school at Northeastern High School with the likes of Aretha Franklin and Smokey Robinson, was friends with musicians and singers from what became the Motown label and beyond.

“Oh, and his dad gave Donald Byrd his first trumpet”.

Always progressive in his musical style, with his wealth of music knowledge and influences it is no surprise that he fell in love with electronic music. It was all around him. The Scene, New Dance Show, Cybotron, The Electrifying Mojo, the parties... he was there absorbing it like a sponge. The feeling was so strong that he turned down the opportunity to tour with rhythm and blues star Alexander O’ Neal to make a compilation album for Members of the House, Underground Resistance’s soul wing.

“That tour (with O’Neal) wasn’t the future”, McRae recalled. “I identify with gospel music, but electronic music was still new and I felt that I could add something extra (soul) that was not there.”He liked a song they produced called “Share This House” and his interest was piqued. He saw the potential in Hassan Watkins and Bill Beaver and envisioned a three piece male harmony vocal “Motown style” group which could be fused with soulful electronic music.

He sang on “Reach Out For The Love” and “These Are My People” which came out in 1991 and performed the group’s previous songs on a successful, 30+ show U.S/European tour. There was never a second tour. With the business end going awry during his time with Members of the House, he left the group. From the experience, he learned that he wanted control of his own music and to concentrate on his singing, writing and playing piano. In his spare time then, McRae worked extensively with hip hop fashion designer Maurice Malone. He managed Malone’s UN Coffee House on Woodward near Baltimore Street often open after hours with famous musicians, artists and more coming by after shows. The UN would host shows with some of Detroit’s emerging artists like Proof and Mark and Scott Kinchen.

In 1993 Malone opened the Hip Hop Shop in Detroit to world acclaim, merging independent fashion artists with music, hosting regular dance parties. McRae managed the shop. When they relocated to Brooklyn, N.Y. he was asked to manage the showroom and work the major trade shows there. He dressed Dr. Dre, Proof, and many other superstars in the genre and pushed the brand name forward. In 1999, he styled the 7th Avenue Men’s show for Malone. “I had to dress them like they were walking down 7 Mile. They had to look like they represented”, McRae said.

In the years that followed, McRae talked about some of the songs he worked on. Shazz’s “Innerside” (Ron Trent’s Remix), Model 500’s “Be Brave” (Francois Kervokian’s Mix), Naomi Daniel’s “Feel the Fire” and Members of the House’s “Party of the Year”on KMS Records.

But this leads us to now, 2016. Where has he been? On a different trip. It’s a harder driving, melodic techno sound with minimal, soulful vocals. “Soul and hardness are the same thing to me. It’s a matter of the blend. I was doing it back then and they [producers] would say to me ‘Q those soulful vocals won’t go with that slamming track’. I argued with Mike [Banks] about putting slow, melodic lines through ‘Reach Out For The Love’ and had this beat on top of it. It blended to me. Eventually he did it. I think it needs to be gritty. From the heart. From Detroit. The way people want it.” He feels he can do it better and his new tracks are catching ears.
McRae gave me the song “The Way of the Warrior” to premiere in this issue of DEQ magazine. “I do production every night. The night I heard my uncle died, he became the theme of this track. He was Native American. I heard him. I looked for ethnic drums. The native feel. The spiritual cry. Going with the flow of nature.”

Everyday experiences, coupled with inspiration from his daughter Ashley, drive his production. Riding his bike through his west side neighborhood brings clarity. Look out for a track called “Nightspeaks”, a deep house thumper with a minimal techno feel, a groovy bass line and a looped field recording of crickets from his backyard. “Probe” combines an old school techno feel with jazz influences and native, spiritual vocals. I’m sure there are thousands of other tracks, complete and incomplete in his studio. But be sure that those that see the light of day are going to be good.

“I build around the drums and the bass. The rest comes from that. I learned from playing with musicians over the years. I learned from Jeff Mills, from Norm (Talley), from the all DJs when to take elements out and put them in. I had to know how to do it. Not too many people are going to teach you. You have to want to learn. I learned and I watched. If you don’t you are just going through the motions and won’t even catch it. I grew up in this business. It chose me. I’m figuring this thing out!”

Indeed he is figuring it out. It is a challenge he takes on every day and it takes a lot of time. The bar he set for himself is a high one, but considering his depth and extensive history in music, from Motown to electronic, there is really no limit to what he can accomplish.

He was there. He is here.
Thank God.

Interview & Photo by Vince Patricola

MIKE CLARK

It's funny how you think you know someone. You talk with them, party and laugh with them — and you think you know them. Sometimes, if you're really lucky, you'll discover that you don't know a thing. Knowing what makes them laugh, what things or people you have in common, barely gets you over the threshold of really knowing someone. Why am I saying this? Because I thought I knew Mike Clark. In real life I knew nothing.

Like many others of African-American descent, Clark's family moved to Detroit from the Southern states. Although they came for the promise of a comfortable life in the booming Northern industries, they had entrepreneurial blood pumping through their veins. His maternal grandfather opened and managed a boxing gym on the North End/Black Bottom area of the city. He was very well-known in the community where he lived and conducted business. Knowing his grandfather had managed and ran a boxing gym helped to instill the importance of discipline in Clark at a very early age. It also further sparked a love for contact sports and martial arts. One of Clark's other relatives was an accomplished musician who was involved in the recording of Elvis Presley's last album. His paternal grandfather was a jazz fanatic.

He frequented the clubs where live music was played and kept his home stocked with the latest albums. His father loved and listened to R&B and funk. Surrounded with music, contact sports and discipline, Clark's life path was basically predetermined.

But nothing worthwhile ever comes easy. Clark had some treacherous times during his childhood. Growing up in an area plagued with rival gangs as a young African-American male, it was virtually impossible to steer completely clear of trouble. But when you're "a straight-up troublemaker" as Clark admits he was, it's easy to find yourself in the center of the storm. After being transferred from one school to another due to a gang fight, he found himself in the middle of enemy territory.

"At that time I was involved in a gang which was 7 Mile RHKs," Clark said. "They had beef or rivalry with the gang here (Coffey), which was called the KKs or the Killer Ks, which became the 8 Miles. There was a fight that took place at my original junior high school, Coffey, that involved me and several other people. One of my friends actually got killed in the incident. That fight led to the suspension and expulsion of a lot of people. They sent me to the school that the rival gang went to — Beaubien." Once he began attending Beaubien, life changed for Clark. He went from feeling supported by his gang family to feeling like a fish out of water, constantly flipping here and there to avoid being caught in the net of the rival gang members. He went from knowing everyone to knowing no one in school, but because of the notoriety of the gang fight, everyone knew who Clark was. He recalled a time that a classmate gave him safe passage from a place where numerous gang members were waiting to even the score with Clark to her house where her mother gave him a ride home. "She saved my life," he said.

Unfortunately, you can only run from trouble for so long, and eventually Clark found himself cornered by the gang members who were eager to settle the score and let him know that he was indeed out of his element. "All of these guys circled me while I was waiting at the bus stop. I just remember there were so many of them," Clark said. "I just knew they were on their way to another school to start another gang fight with somebody. I mean, there were about 20 of them. They surrounded me and the leader came up to me like 'What's up, man?'. I looked around and then put my head down as if to say 'here we go', and as soon as I did, the leader cold-cocked me so hard that he actually knocked me out while I was standing up. The only thing I remember was waking up, standing up, and I could feel my body going like this," he said, mimicking the way his body was being jerked in all directions from the blows with which he was being pummeled.

That's when he realized that he was being jumped. He tried defending himself, but he was outnumbered and unable to stop the inevitable. His next memory is waking up and realizing that he was on the sidewalk near Seven Mile and Wyoming. As if in a daze, Clark pulled himself up and began to walk toward a nearby drugstore. It was not until he recognized how people reacted to seeing him that he knew how badly he was hurt. He caught a glimpse of his swollen and bloody face in the store window and the whole incident flooded back into his memory. Unsure of what to do next, he made his way home to where he knew he was safe. A police report was filed and all. But what impacted Clark the most was the fact that his actions had involved his whole family. His gang activity was no longer just his business; many of his loved ones were now being impacted.

"For me, that was a pinnacle in my life because I never had my family get involved in my dumb shit," Clark said. It had been just little gang shit, just me and my boys. But now I got my mother talking about killing somebody for jumping her baby and my brothers involved and stuff. There were too many people involved. It was too much attention. But here's where the blessing kicks in. "I'm at a family reunion that summer and my grandfather introduces me to one of my first cousins. I told him I went to Beaubien and how I had gotten jumped by this gang and the whole spiel. He gets this weird look on his face while I'm telling the story. I'm like 'it's all about this guy named Dollbaby. The leader of the 8 Miles.' He looks at me and says, 'I'm Dollbaby.' So I'm at my reunion looking at the person who was trying to kill me: my own cousin. I mean, we never met personally. And now we find out that we are first cousins." From that point forward the last thing Clark had to fear was a gang. Word spread like wildfire that Clark was indeed Dollbaby's cousin and that made him untouchable.

The conclusion of that chapter in Clark's life marked a turning point for him. He changed his path and instead of getting into trouble he got into sports. It wasn't until this violent encounter that Clark's parents allowed him to take martial arts lessons. In high school he played football, was on the swimming and cross country teams, and was involved in gymnastics. He also got into pop locking and, of course, music.

His brother had been throwing parties with a group of his friends who called themselves Gentlemen of the 80s and then Courtier, which eventually came to be known as Chari-

vari. Clark helped them with setting up speakers and other equipment for their parties. Al Ester, who belonged to a dance group called the TNT Dancers while Clark belonged to the 4th Encounters. He recalled watching Ester dance and then go behind the turntables to DJ. Both Clark and Ester seamlessly made the transition from dancer to DJ in part because of the neighborhood parties of the time. After suffering a major injury to his leg playing football, Clark dropped sports and landed full force into the music. He began playing basement, high school and backyard parties, earning a reputation for himself. Initially he played funk music like Cameo and One Way and what he called "that out there stuff," which was more disco or progressive styled music. But with his leg injury, Clark said, "I knew I couldn't be Bruce Lee like I wanted to, so I said I want to be the baddest DJ in the world."

So he went to the parties and he listened and studied. He watched the DJs and paid attention to their style and what made them successful. One of the people he followed the most was the legendary Electrifying Mojo. He tuned in to each one of Mojo's shows and loved his selection of cutting edge music. Mojo came to speak at an event at his school and Clark had the chance to meet him. They forged a friendship of sorts and spoke by phone from time to time. Once Clark finally felt confident enough in his DJ skills to share his mixtape with Mojo, who promised to play it on the air — and he did. However, due to FCC regulations, Clark was not able to say anything during the mix to confirm that it was indeed his mix. He had to let the music speak for itself. And it did.

Mentored by Ken Collier and following in the footsteps of DJs like Delano Smith and Darryl Shannon, Clark felt like he was ready to move toward the front of the pack and make his presence known. Still determined to learn all that he could and better his skills, Clark became intrigued by the Hot Mix 5 DJ collective from Chicago. This innovative collective of DJs (Mickey "Mixin" Oliver, Farley "Jackmaster Funk," Ralphi "Rockin" Rosario, Kenny "Jammin" Jason and Scott "Smokin" Silz) revolutionized the airwaves in Chicago and eventually the world by introducing house music. And Clark took notice of it early on.

Clark traveled between Chicago and Detroit, introducing the sounds of each city to each other while melding both worlds in his own DJ sets. As he continues his eagerness to study and earn different DJing techniques, he became intrigued with the styles of New York DJs Tony Humphries and Larry Levan. Using all of his knowledge to propel his skills toward perfection, Clark continued to play and impress established DJs in

Detroit, Chicago, New York and beyond. Many of his Detroit peers did in fact take notice. Clark was a part of Direct Drive, a popular collection of DJs who were in demand to play at clubs and parties alike. He also teamed up with Mike Banks when he became a part of Members of the House. "He (Banks) had a lot of musicians in the group," Clark said. "And they didn't really like me because I was not a musician. At that time it was a sensitive subject for a DJ to be in a group full of musicians. Because the musicians felt that the DJ was somehow taking the musician's job. There was a lot of that going on. I found that out late in the game. Here I was, happy to be a part of the program and they're looking at me like the enemy. There was a lot of animosity toward me. Not because of who I was as a person, but just because I was not a musician. I mean I could see it. You have the musicians make the music and the DJ adds the beat and mixes it to be dance floor-friendly. I saw (the vision), Mike (Banks) saw it, and those who didn't see it," Clark said, making a motion toward the door, they had to go," he said, laughing. "With Members of the House our goal was to be like the new Motown. Mike had all these singers and musicians. We had a bunch of male and female artists that we were recording. And we were making all of these tracks. Mike had talked about bringing Jeff (Mills) into the group. And when the opportunity came for Jeff to join the group it was a done deal." Eventually this conglomerate of singers, musicians and producers morphed into the mega-power Underground Resistance. This is when Clark picked up the alter ego of Agent X.

While UR was immensely successful and traveled overseas, Clark missed out on many of the early gigs because of his commitment to his clients. Somewhere between martial arts,

DJing and producing, Clark had established himself as one of the more in demand hairstylists in the city. "Eventually, I had to make a decision. And my customers did not like it. Not one bit," he said, laughing. It's an understatement to say that Clark made the right decision. But the sweetness of that success soon turned sour. Eventually Clark left UR and he says a big reason for him leaving was reflection. As he looked back on his many years of DJing and producing, he realized that in many situations he had been taken advantage of in various ways. The final straw for him was his equipment been stolen after loaning it to people he felt "had his back." They had used some of his studio equipment for a workshop and it was nowhere to be found afterward. "Basically when I went to see what I was going to do about getting my stuff back, there was no one batting an eye or even looking at me like they're really concerned. And that brought to the forefront what I was dealing with. Regardless of all of the music we made and everything, -at the end of the day no one had my back. And when I recognized that I felt so used I just quit everything and everybody," Clark said.

So Clark went back to hair and martial arts. For years he wanted nothing else to do with DJing or the party scene. And then a realization: "Why am I allowing other people to affect how I feel about my music? I always loved music. I never stopped," Clark said. "But then I fuck with a couple of people and they fuck me over and now I just quit the music? Just don't deal with them. So I had to exclude a few people from life for a while so I could get my head back into what I love, which is the music."

After that epiphany, Clark decided to go back to the grind and work as hard as ever — solo. He began making beats again, but this time using computer software. As hard as he tried to keep his music to himself, another music-lover in the lofts where he lived one day inquired about the music Clark was making. Just like that his cover was blown, and he was considering getting back into the game. While many people asked him to join various groups of DJs Clark remained adamant about doing things by himself and his way.

Clark maintained his residency at Motor (In Hamtramck) all the while reaching back to show appreciation to those who influenced him when he was an up-and-coming DJ. He would often ask Delano Smith or Norm Talley to play a guest spot or to fill in for him at the club. He carried these friends along with him once the Motor residency faded and he secured a DJ slot at Club OneX. Shortly thereafter, during the Detroit Electronic Music Festival one year, a friend from Switzerland continued to ask about what Clark, Talley and Smith meant when they spoke about giving people a "beatdown" at a recent party. Clark found it difficult to explain this slang term to a non-English speaker, but then it dawned on him. "This would be a good name for our style of playing!" And that was the birth of Beatdown Sounds. The term's original purpose was to speak about Detroit's urban electronic musical sound without pigeonholing the music as either house or techno.
The team — Clark, Smith and Talley — prided themselves on giving Detroit partygoers a figurative beatdown with music every time they played at Club OneX to their extended legendary stint at the now defunct Agave in Midtown Detroit.

In the early 2000s, Beatdown Sounds let their sound lead them around the globe leaving each crowd understanding what was hard for Clark to articulate initially. Each attendee at a Beatdown Sounds event could tell you in no uncertain terms what Beatdown meant. The trio travelled extensively and also released two wildly successful Beatdown Sounds compilations via Third Ear Recordings. Each volume of music contained productions from the members of Beatdown and other established producers and artists. While the three gentlemen rarely play under the name Beatdown Sounds now, the name remains synonymous with impeccable selections and DJ skills.

Clark has clearly experienced many peaks and valleys during his lifetime, but he is clear that there are several goals he has in his sights. He wants to complete an album with live musicians in the future. He has worked with other bands, but he is looking forward to producing his own live project. And what else? "Well after being in the business 35 or 40 years I'm just trying to stay in it and on it. I'm back to making tracks again. I'm trying to get back on a regular production schedule," he said.

Clark has learned several lessons from the life experiences he's had. "The (main) lesson I learned is that you cannot allow other people to step on who you are or what you are. You can't allow them to dictate your outcome," he said. "I wasted eight years being bitter about what some people did to me. But it wasn't about what they did. It was about the way I handled it." With that lesson in mind, coupled with the fact that Clark describes himself as innovative, artistic, left-brained and open-minded there is no telling where the musical tides will guide him in the future. But one thing is certain: He is not willing to let anyone or anything stand in the way of his success ever again.

The Teknotika Label Art Story by founder Gary Martin

"Interview With an Alien" features a human making contact with an alien by use of a tower. The choice of artwork here is quite obvious. This release has become my most valuable collector's item. Time did this release very well; it's now worth about $100.

For the hypnotic/exotic sound of "Ritual Fire Dance," I used the picture from a vintage burlesque photo collection card. A buxom woman and a man playing a bongo wearing a Turkish hat. 'Persuasive Percussion EP" is the name stolen from an album first released in 1959 by Terry Snyder. The type of record you find in a thrift store. These records were inspirational to me.

"Pimping People in High Places" had a much slicker sound that was not tribal or exotic at all, and required a much different look. It features a more professional graphic artist, two pictures of me in a suit and red vinyl. And it was mastered at the Exchange in London. I went all out for this one and it was my highest selling release at 5,000 copies.

The original "Tiger Trance," a track Buzz Goree of Underground Resistance prefers to call "Tiger Dance," is a heavy percussion driven tribal house track. The snare and the sped up tiger roar, which sounds like a monkey, dance back and forth rhythmically and melodically, and at the same time. This eye with stars artwork was an original done by my sister Tracy Martin, and the Teknotika letters were handmade by my friend Anthony Drake; it was not a computer font.

Now it's time to talk about the logo, the face. It's another original artwork handmade by my sister Tracy Martin. The original was only a pen doodling on a napkin. Graphic artist and past promoter of the East Theater raves Tony Smith went to town with the logo on both sides of this 12" with "Black Forest" on it. It's stretched on one side and cut into pieces on the other. This record is the one I was most known for during the tribal techno period, and the one I signed the most autographs on.

AUDIO RESCUE TEAM

"The party was so amazing that the paint peeled off the walls," Alan Bogl triumphantly recalls of the first party he and Michael Fotias did together, along with Michael's younger brother Sam, now Director of Operations for Paxahau. It was 1993 and Bogl had just split off from the Voom crew to pursue his own endeavors.

"I told Sam [his] job was to get Michael to do this. We were both a lot more fiery back then; Sam was the go-between. I had this vision of how it should be and I really needed to work with Michael to make it happen," he explains. Fotias, who had been running a mobile DJ company out of his parent's house, goes on, "Sam totally lied to me. He said, 'We do this cool thing. It's a late-night party, there's a shitload of girls there. You can do whatever you want.' He [told me] it was a DJ gig, just to play club music. 'Put all your stuff together and make a big system because we really don't like our sound guy anymore. We'd rather deal with you.'" Although a bunch of his gear blew up that night, it was a turning point. "I was completely hooked," he admits. For Bogl, appreciation for electronic music—and exceptional acoustics—came a few years earlier, in 1990. He was home for Easter from CMU, where he held down a radio show, when he attended a party called The Holy Rave at the Majestic Theatre with Sam. The two had been friends since they were freshmen in high school. "The music really affected me that night," Bogl expresses. When he got home from the party he grabbed his copy of "Rock to the Beat" out of the closet and listened to it on repeat. His radio show went from rock to dance music that semester, and the following summer he started throwing the legendary Voom parties with Steven Reaume and Marke Bieschke. He first encountered a superb sound system at a jungle party during a trip to Toronto. "After you hear a system like that you can't go back," he says. With Voom set on sticking with their sound guy, Bogl turned his attention to Fotias' superior auditory abilities.

"We were all after a certain feeling. That was really the only thing that we were sure about," Fotias tells me of this earliest incarnation. To capture the desired feeling they were dialed into such details as the lighting, temperature and, of course, the sound in the room. They were out to up the ante. Essential to this was curating the DJ's experience. "I understood what it was like to stand in there and not be able to hear, or to have a component not working properly," says Fotias, who was the first to put a subwoofer in the DJ booth, as well as other major upgrades.

The next big break for the group came when Richie Hawtin approached Bogl and Sam about doing a party together—known as Hard—set to take place at the Bankle Building. It was the venue's debut of the Butterfly rig Michael had recently gained access to. To their absolute delight, "people freaked out." "That was the best feeling ever," Bogl tells me. From that point on they were able to rent the gear they needed each weekend from Larry Palmer of LCP Audio, steadily growing the amount they were able to access, and their reputation along with it. Palmer, who was heavily involved with the production of festivals, from Montreux Jazz Festival to Detroit Festival of the Arts, hired Bogl to work with him. This brought Bogl "to a whole other level of awareness." Meanwhile, Fotias had started Burst Sound and Lighting with Brian Johnson.

"As DJ culture and electronic music was growing rapidly in Detroit at that point, we were doing that, but we were also out discovering this whole new world in production," Bogl explains. "We did most of the sweet shit that happened in this city during that time period. And we did a lot of it right, and we made mistakes and did some of it wrong. But in the end we were doing it together and sort of striking our path," Michael says. "One thing that we never did [wrong] was not bring enough speakers," Alan asserts. "In fact, some people would tell us we brought too many," Michael affirms. To this day they call it "preposterous" to show up to a gig without at least one subwoofer. Michael reminisces further, "When it comes to being responsible for the tech portion of producing electronic music we sort of had a head start on everybody. We were involved and honing [our] craft while the genre was building itself, in the place that is one of its cornerstones... I forget about the sheer volume of talent that there is in this town in the production business, and not just on the technical side but on the operational and management sides, as well. Just like we have all of our musical talents that are here, people forget that there are also all of us, and I say this very humbly, that held them up so they could get into that position, and vice versa. We wouldn't be here if all this amazing music wasn't coming out of Detroit at that time. There wouldn't be a need for what we were doing."

Following a rough split from Johnson at Burst, Michael left for Florida, where he spent four winters as a manager in the trade show electric department at the Florida State Fairgrounds. "I was done. I didn't want to look at sound gear. I didn't want to touch it. I didn't want to deal with any of those fucking people anymore. Half of the year I was in Florida. I swore I would never own any equipment again."

Inextricably tied to the Motor City's music scene, he was lured back, kicking and screaming. "I had all these people in my sphere going, 'We need your help.'" He came up with the name Audio Rescue Team in the middle of the night in Florida, initially forming it as a consulting firm and a way to maintain his freelance clients. "I told myself I would just have a little rig so all my friends don't have to suffer and have bullshit anymore, or deal with somebody who doesn't care." He ran it out of his garage in Oak Park. With the help of his friends at Audio Integration Services and Tactical Audio in Chicago, he got over the hump and started buying equipment again.

During the years Fotias flew the coop to Florida, Bogl had accepted a position with The Guild of Artists and Artisans. While working at the Ann Arbor Art Fair together in 2011—the first one Michael didn't need to sub-rent gear for on account of how much he had now amassed—Bogl approached Michael with an offer. "I got some money saved up if you want to really do this," he remembers saying. Although hesitant at first, citing the possibility of returning to Florida, Fotias phoned Alan the following day. He resigned from his post at the Fairgrounds and remained in Motown indefinitely.

"It wouldn't matter what type of speakers we had, it's all of this experience that's come together. It's the culmination of all those experiences that really makes Audio Rescue Team what it is," Michael reveals. "Occasionally I get emotional about it...When it comes down to it we're not millionaires, but we get to go and do things every day that fulfill us. That's what everybody strives for." Well, that and more stereos.

Written By Reisa Shanaman // Photo by David Shanaman

THE VALLEY AND THE MOUNTAIN

There is something in the picture of a solitary figure in the Detroit winter rain that perfectly illustrates what the artist (or is it artists?) known as The Valley and the Mountain (TVTM) is all about.

Here a member of TVTM stands in the shadow of downtown light, reflected off cold, wet pavement. No one else is around. It could be 4 a.m. but, no, no it isn't. It's dinner hour during the holiday season and people are out after work, just not anywhere near where we are. He seems comfortable in this environment, the kind of secretive and timeless Detroit meeting that might have taken place in the '90s or the early '00s. There is more than a hint of historical techno mystery and imagination about this scene.

He's not cloaking his identity as a way to identify as edgy or cool. However, TVTM is not about that, he says, or about personal identity, saying that's a distraction that the music can do without.

"Music is out front for TVTM, the persona is not important at all," he tells me when we first meet and sit for a few minutes at Checker Bar on that rainy night. "Music is the focus. This is an attempt to create an absence of character, so that all that's left to the project is the music. And to be honest, we don't do the other stuff, the hype, the party promoter thing very well. TVTM isn't making Saturday night techno. It doesn't need all that stuff: We've done that before and we don't really need it anymore. But we do need music to be a part of our life."

The shadowy figure that calls his project The Valley and the Mountain is soft-spoken, unpretentious and sincere about putting music above all the games he says people play to become electronic music artists. He's also careful with his pronouns, using "we" instead of "I" when talking about the work TVTM is doing.

Indeed, he has produced before, under different project names, and has been part of the Detroit party scene for some time. He won't say definitively whether his new project is an individual or a group of collaborators. In a late 2015 interview for London-based online zine Inverted Audio, questions are directed to the "collective." The writer also remarks that he felt "privileged" to "peer through the shroud with the (TVTM) team who, fittingly, managed to maintain their enigma (throughout the interview)."

So, enigmatic solitary figure in the rain, tell us how many of you are there?

"Next question," he says, with a wink and a smile.

A better answer comes with a disc he gives me. It contains 13 tracks, including "Song for 4B4A44," which is on the EP that comes with this issue of Detroit Electronic Quarterly. It's a soaring, mid-tempo track with crispy beats, swelling with melodies atop patient rhythms, conjuring images of summer love on this cold winter's day. To be sure, it's not a "Saturday night" club track — it's far more subtle and emotive, a song to be played at all hours, any day of the week.

The other tracks expose the range of TVTM's game, influences that include Chicago acid —while listening, I find myself transported to the '80s, when house and techno had a warmth and innocence too often missing from too perfect production standards of today— and the vast catalogs of Underground Resistance, DrexciyaBasic Channel and Deepchord.

TVTM has released music on the equally mysterious Detroit Record Company (the Assembly Required EP, with the Woodbridge-referenced "Down on Commonwealth" track, is the only listed release, and there is no address or website for the label), for the Belgian WéMè Records and on Shipwrec, a label based in the Netherlands. TVTM's most recent issue, the Outer Reaches EP, was released on Shipwrec in May 2015, the same month TVTM performed at the Movement Festival in Detroit.

How did you pull that off and stay anonymous? Did people know who was performing?

"Some did, I'm sure. Most probably didn't," he says.

TVTM tells me more studio work and perhaps more live appearances are coming in 2016. Just don't expect the people behind the project to put character above music. That'll never happen, he says.

"If people can identify anything, I hope it's the honesty in the music that TVTM makes," he says. "Everything else gets in the way. Electronic music is a big, wide open ocean. If it's good, don't worry about who makes it. Just jump in and enjoy it."

Written by Walter Wasacz // Photo by Walter Wasacz

One of the freshest pairings to come out of Detroit's techno tradition, neither Trent Abbe nor Andy Toth are newcomers to the scene, or the sound. Each were producing by the end of the '90s, Abbe after co-founding his first label, and Toth as a founding member of Detroit Grand Pubahs. Utilizing technology both old and new the two achieve an acid-influenced sound that transitions smoothly from one theme to the next. Subsisting in a dimension that is experimental yet polished, Abbe and Toth produce and play vintage sounds in a uniquely revitalized way.

ABBE & TOTH

Live Act / DJ Performance
Audio Mastering, Engineering & Remixing

abbe.toth@gmail.com soundcloud.com/abbetoth

DETROIT ELECTRONIC QUARTERLY

No. 7 Track Listen

SIDE A

Mike Clark – "Just Can't Wait"
Music written and produced by Mike Clark & Thabo
Written and sung by Jackie Green

Todd Modes – "Serenity"
Music written and produced by by Todd Modes
Additional production by Craig Huckaby (congas and vocals), Karen Vesprini (vocals), Mike Severson (guitar), Topher Horn (additional recording).

Quinton McRae – "Way of the Warrior"
Music written and produced by Quinton McRae

Marshall Applewhite - "My Satellites"
Music written and produced by Joel Dunn

SIDE B

The Valley and The Mountain – "Song for 4B4A44"
Music written and produced by TVTM

Gustav Brovold – "Nomo"
Music written and produced by Gustav Brovold

Gary Martin – "Charlotte"
Music written and produced by Gary Martin

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