

DETROIT ELECTRONIC QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

ISSUE #17



JON DIXON

JOHN BRIGGS • THE BASSMENT • GREY AREA • KAKU
DETROIT TECHNO MILITIA • PETER CROCE • TWO ROOMS



MIKE HUCKABY

“Dance Room line 1” (*insert audible sigh over the Roseville Record Time store intercom system*) you heard often as the phone rang off the hook with Mike Huckaby at the helm. As much as he was in his own head, he generously gave his time to mentor hundreds of people and got hundreds of thousands to dance to his groove. He was a true Deep House Soldier and one of the best representatives a city could have. He had the letter D for Detroit on everything he wore. Teacher, DJ, producer, friend, jumper of rope. The very best. We lost a titan of the dance world. RIP.



DEDICATIONS

I met Steve at DJ Supply in Warren around 2002ish. He always gave solid advice on gear to the customers on a regular basis regardless of experience levels. As we became friends, he asked me to be on New Detroit Radio to do a DJ set. It was always intimidating with the "Don't F**k UP" sign right behind the decks, but that was all a part of his raw sense of humor. He was a great producer, DJ, community man and a dear friend. He left us much to soon.

RIP - Vince Patricola



Much Love to you, Jim Stone.

You left your mark on the world by sharing your passion for music, culture, and people. You were a dynamic force of nature and for all of us that knew you or attended one of your events, we all had a rare opportunity to enjoy so many amazing live shows & DJ sets presented by you, your crew & friends.

I know that when you looked around the many spaces where your events took place, you took in all the smiling faces there. I remember the look on your face during Family Funktion nights, Tortured Soul, Little Dragon, Mark Farina, Mark De Clive-Lowe, and LDV with DJ powdrblu to name a few. Sharing joy was truly your intention. Sharing your love for good music was your gift. It was so plain to see.

You were taken away from us much too soon. Your love for life was contagious, just like your laughter. You were a kind soul and always had time for your friends. You were a master conversationalist. You were charming & hilarious. You lived life to the fullest and savored every moment. You were always planning, always moving forward. You were a true maestro.

Thank you for sharing with us all, Jim. Your spirit has touched us all.

- Linda Robbins



Looking back on my friendship with Mark David (aka MD), music was definitely the catalyst. Due to our shared love of techno, I frequented the website he founded Detroitluv.com. I didn't actually meet Mark until some chill night at Carbon Lounge (Hamtramck) some 17-18 years ago. We played pool and became immediate friends. Throughout the years we went to sooo many music events. We traveled to New Orleans for jazz/blues, Governors Ball in New York, Coachella, and both our favorite...Portishead in Toronto. He loved his Smashing Pumpkins. I saw them twice with him. I refused to go the 3rd (would have been my 4th) last summer...kicking myself now.

He was the most laid back, caring person I ever met. He would help so many people without taking regard to himself. Since he has passed, I've met many others that he helped that I wasn't aware of. He was so gifted, passionate, endearing, loyal, dependable, stubborn, secretive and the biggest sweetheart. He was a true humanitarian. I am so extremely humbled to call him my best friend and I will miss him every day.

- Heather Whitman

PEOPLES



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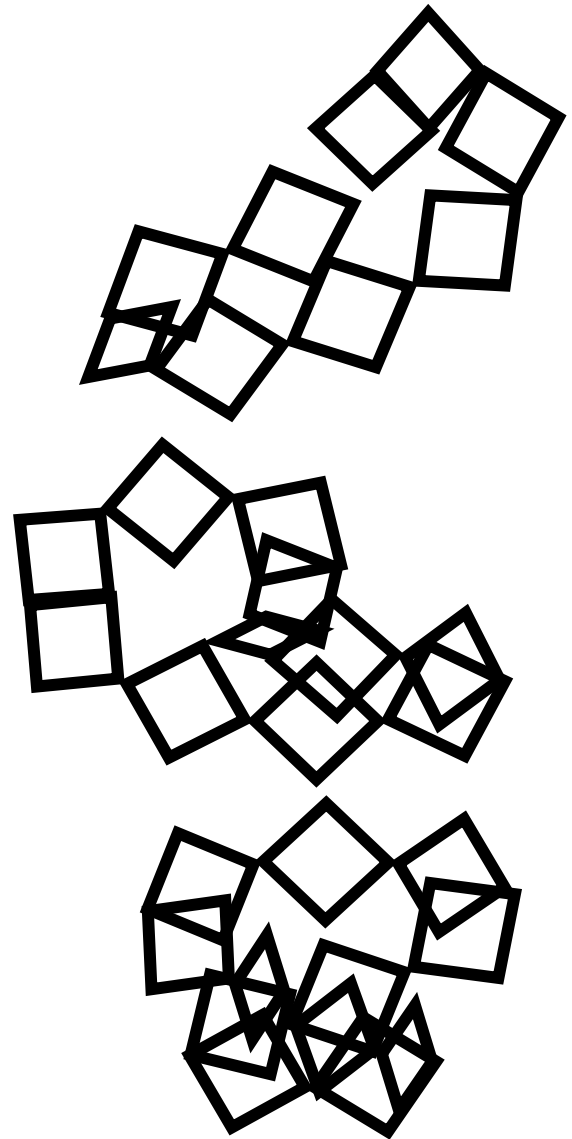
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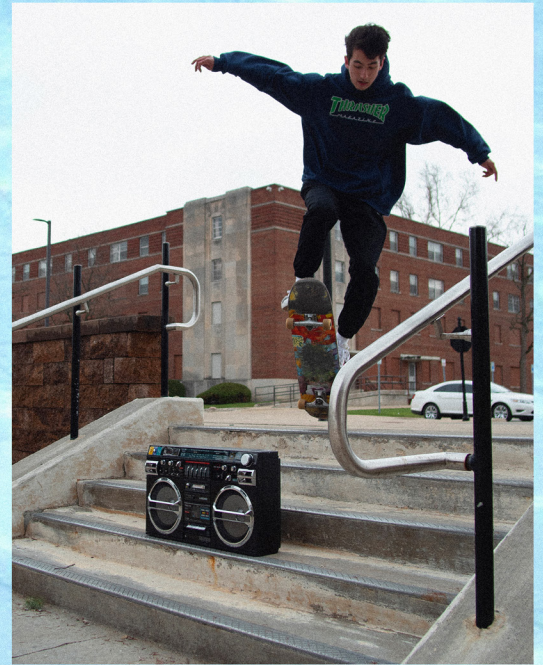
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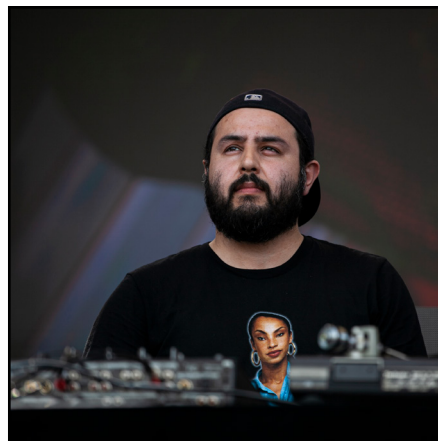
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JOHN BRIGGS



It was a happy ping. My computer is normally set to silent, but ding! A new track from John Briggs aka Zoetic arrived called “Tomography” in May of 2018. The track sketch was the best I’ve heard from him in many years.

After the release of “Secrets of Ancestry” and “Reach” on Yoruba Soul (2006), “My Magic” featuring Paul Randolph on Sonar Kollektiv (2007), and several Zoetic remixes for other artists around that time including Alton Miller’s “Possibilities” on R2 (2007), production output from Briggs’ studio came to a virtual standstill from 2010-2017. Albeit his silence was self-imposed, depression was running rampant in Detroit from 2006-2012 and Briggs acknowledges that he was not immune.

People were leaving Michigan by the thousands, automotive plants and suppliers were closing or going overseas, the foreclosure crisis was in full swing, more war in the Middle East, economy was tanking, city services were failing, and former Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick (who was seen as a young savior for the city) went off to jail. And Briggs struggled financially and emotionally after losing his day job during those times. “Very few were making money from music and the artists made even less. I was certainly at the bottom of that food chain,” he reflects. “Living a Bohemian lifestyle in a house we (Briggs and his life-partner) bought from the city in the North End, I was at least able to save some money before it all went to shit. I had very little to say artistically during that time. So outside a few things here and there, I withdrew.”

It was time, healing, reflection, and economics that allowed him to place his focus squarely on music again in 2018. However, it wasn’t just stability. Briggs spoke of two main motivating factors: two relatively young friends passing away and a challenge posed by a co-worker who was in a similar artistic lull. She (his co-worker) is a visual artist who was not pushing herself either and they challenged each other to get their work to the public eyes and ears. “I spent a lot of time depressed playing video games and watching movies before I found a new day-gig. After getting a new job, buying a new house, and specifically after those deaths, I began to realize I needed to seriously create again. This (clarity and grounding) was exactly what I needed.”

Embracing his newfound inspiration, Briggs began contributing mixes to Jason Hogans (Planet E, Third Ear, Re-

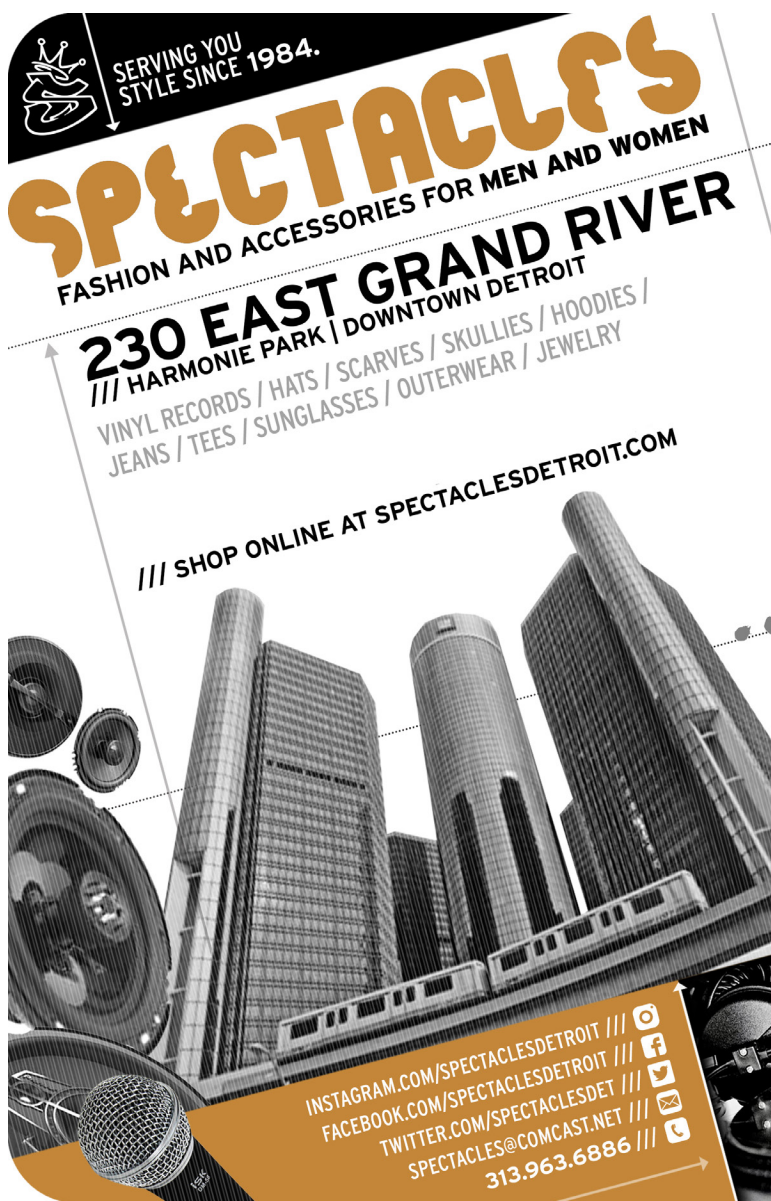
ally Nice Recordings) eclectic “Really Nice Trips” internet radio podcast (<https://www.rewindit.fm/artist/Jason-Hogans>). Following the investments in updating his studio, six months later the pings started going out to a carefully selected list of people. This included the likes of Martin Iveson (Atjazz) who eventually released both “Tomography” and “Sketches of Spring” (collectively as Sketches) in November 2019. “There is no secret to how I reach established producers. I just sent them tracks I thought would work,” Briggs said calmly.

Briggs’ initial connection to Yoruba Soul was through a promoter (based in Dallas, Texas) who booked a party with Osunlade. He then asked if Briggs (as Zoetic) would open with a live set. The success of that party was the impetus behind Briggs’ affiliation with Yoruba Soul and later collaborations with the promoter producing Soul Funktion parties in Detroit. “I’ve always tried to be involved in musical endeavors that I thought filled a void. Whether it was throwing parties or composing music, my motivation has always been in creating something unique.”

The latest tracks are mature, full sounding dance tracks with hypnotic, enveloping and mental teleportation properties. I feel like I’m on the dance floor and in the tropics at the same time, or even outer space at times. All are so perfectly matched to their respective label sounds.

Briggs’ latest submission to the DEQ Magazine compilation, “Beyond the Horizon,” (May 2020) is a nod to the late ‘70s R&B with a modern spin. “I intended for some of the parts to be performed live in a studio (primarily bass, percussion, and some strings) but ultimately with no budget, I had to rely on my abilities. Only the keyboard solo was recorded live. The inspiration came from the realms of Nile Rodgers (guitarist, best known as the producer, songwriter for the group Chic) and Patrice Rushen (superstar R&B vocalist and jazz pianist.) I imagined the three of us producing a song together.”

The Electrifyin’ Mojo’s radio shows were also influential to Briggs as a pre-teen hearing artists like Yellow Magic Orchestra, Kraftwerk, Visage, and Prince. “Everyone was trying to be like Prince, but the reality is no one can be like Prince (a total package of indisputable talent), except Prince. Mojo was a spark that lit a fire of imagination for me musically. His shows influenced me to dig deeper into music that wasn’t widely popular with black audiences at



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the time. It resulted in my discovery of post-punk, industrial, and noise bands. I already had a solid foundation of disco from my mom, the Motown sound from my dad, and jazz from my step-dad."

In the early to mid-'90s, Briggs began experimenting more with blending ethnic music into his electronic compositions. Because he shared a studio with multiple musicians for a time, there was always different gear for experimentation. The results birthed his short-lived band "Marooned." Along with a rotation of singers (Kim Ballard, Renee Wade, Daphne Briggs - no relation) and musicians (Dennis Sheridan - percussion, Joe Hayden - bass, Tony Drake - fretless bass), they performed locally and he produced one "Marooned" self-released/titled album and several singles under its name. Two of their songs, "I'm Consumed" and "Daydreaming", were featured on the Summer 1998 and Fall 1998 cd samplers that accompanied Alternative Press magazine's issues. Lastly, recording a drum & bass interpretation of "Night Theme" for an Iggy Pop Tribute CD that Detroit promoter and label head Sue Summers compiled (Pop O.D. The Songs of Iggy Pop on Static Network & Records, 1998.) During the same time, Briggs was also enamored by emerging broken beat and hybrids of house and techno coming from Europe in the mid to late 90s from artists like Matthew Herbert, Bugz In The Attic, Seiji, Jazzanova and 4 Hero (among others.)

A few years later, long time DJ/producer Alvin Hill, who held a residency at Foran's Irish Pub (downtown Detroit, now the Grand Trunk Pub) and the label called Below The Surface, heard that Briggs was making music. Briggs submitted tracks "Angry Blue Planet" and "Simple Text" for Hill's Below The Surface compilation CD and later "Love is All We Got" (BTS 04) which was pressed on vinyl in 2004. "Below The Surface was a co-op label where the artists control their paths and their music. I wanted to bring some artists to the surface and John was making some great music," Hill said.

Fast forward to 2020 and John Briggs is reinvigorated. With a beefed-up studio, advanced musicianship, and ninja production techniques, the sky is the limit. He can swing for the fences and he's hitting home runs. He's still ever critical and selective because, well, he can do it his way. He can ping who he chooses.



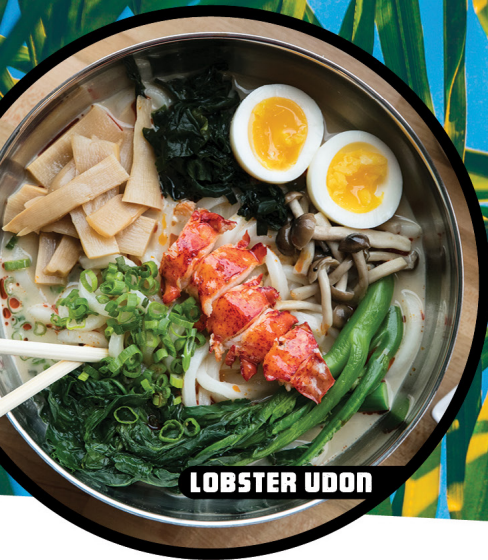
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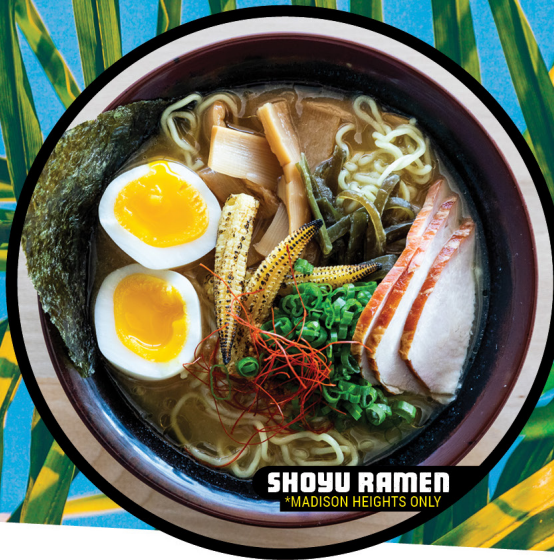


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THE BASSMENT

Steps beneath a home's surface, for many of us in all parts of the world, bring back memories of everything from learning how to play records and music lessons, to crazy, dark basement parties, to the dream drowning devastation of floods. It's also a very personal experience meeting someone's family members and pets or going through a sidebar of personal mementos before getting down to music business.

The night I played the Bassment in 2016, it was a straight up blizzard. I almost slid into two snow banks on unplowed streets trying to find the house. Once I got there I was greeted by friendly faces that said, "you made it!" I said, "of course I made it. I'm from Buffalo, the land of ice and snow." Sean Tate aka the Butcher and Derrielle were there and made the experience so pleasant and personal. Guests who play get a true taste of Detroit life, from a real music household, a family, in a DJ's own home. It's a taste of what makes our music family such a special one that is recognized not only for its talent, but personalities as well.

"People want what we have," said DJ, producer, host Mollison Folson, one of the Bassment. co-founders. "People see we have a show that is an unfiltered, live Detroit experience that reaches people all over the world. I mean every country. But the funny thing is this. When people see how much work goes on behind the scenes for little to no pay, even if you give them the blueprint to do it, they won't."

The Bassment Detroit, which is now six years strong, evolved out of something called Detroit Promo TV, which Folson produced with Derrielle for two seasons [26 Episodes]. It was a self-funded, thirty-minute show that aired on Channel 20 (Sunday mornings at 3:30am.) It was a less DJ, more artist and local business centered program at that point. "The idea was to cut it on after you came home from the club, but it didn't really catch on. It was hard to get sponsors that at that late/early time slot."

After the show's closure, Detroit Promo TV is still running strong, not only promoting the Bassment Detroit, but doing a local music video show on Comcast TV68 Saturdays at 3pm EST.

"It (The Bassment Show) wasn't planned," Folson add-

ed after discussing the ending of the TV show. "We just did it and it just grew to get where it's at. So with that plan in mind, there was no plan in actuality... Once you open a new gate, you gotta keep running. You never know what connection you are going to make."

The passion behind the group is encouraging. "See, there's more to this (Detroit techno/electronic music) game. The main way to reach people is through radio and television. That's when they accept it. Everyone wants to keep techno underground. Cool but no. There's more to techno than music and the five people that get talked about constantly. **TECHNO, EARLY IN THE GAME, DID THEIR BEST TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT...IT NEEDS TO BE BIGGER THAN IT IS...SO, YOU EITHER STAND BY AND WATCH IT OR YOU STAND UP AND DO THINGS THAT ARE NOT DONE. YOU STAND UP AND SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT AND OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT DO SOMETHING THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE DONE.**"

After finding its' footing for a year, the blast off moment came when global sensation, Underground Resistance star producer, Suburban Knight (aka James Pennington) came on the program. "It put us on the map," Folson said.

The show is steadily growing. One of the highlights of the year is the annual Bassment Backyard BBQ held on the Sunday of the Movement Festival and is a must pilgrimage for Bassment fanatics. They even did a broadcast version from MOCAD for Goethe Chicago/Germany and Detroit/Berlin Connection in 2019.

When asked about the future goals for the Bassment, he smiled and said that the plan is in motion to become a non-profit. "The whole house is going to be the non-profit with the Bassment show downstairs and teaching people how to DJ and broadcast shows upstairs. We want this house to be a normal part of Detroit, known as a place that gives something to the community. If you come to Detroit, you gotta come to the Bassment. Kind of like a Submerge but different." Folson said.

He also acknowledged that 8 Mile is so well known that it's cool that something that stands for good is there. I spoke of the Motown studio house. I asked Folson if he was the Berry Gordy of 8 Mile and the preposterousness of it made us explode with laughter.



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In the Key of D,
Jon Dixon

DETROIT— Of the 139 square miles that make up the musical landscape of Detroit, there is chemistry amongst generations of mentor-mentee musicians, unlike any other city in the world.

Jon Dixon, age 35, grew up in Detroit's East Side on 6 Mile; home of the first mile of concrete highway poured in the U.S. in 1909.

He is a dedicated father, husband, jazz musician, independent record label owner and electronic music producer—he's crushing negative stereotypes and opinions about millennials with a Detroit approach to mentoring musicians of all ages and backgrounds.

"One of the beautiful things that nobody really knows about Detroit is that there is this huge mentorship that goes on here across all genres, where people take you under their wing and a lot of them don't want credit, which is the way it should be," Dixon said.

He's not afraid to attribute his success to his mentors, nor is he unwilling to share what he's learned with the next generation. Dixon believes that no Detroit musician or member of the art community is solely responsible for his/her talent.

"We've all had a mentor, whether it was in the church, whether it was through your Mike Banks (Underground Resistance), whether it was through your Marcus Belgrave, we all had people who we looked up to, who took the time out to sit down and show us some stuff," Dixon said.

Dixon's smile grows wide as he discusses his transformative relationship with mentors Mike Banks, the co-founder of Submerge and the late (trumpet player) Marcus Belgrave, Detroit's beloved jazz musician and mentor, since 1963. Belgrave passed away on May 23, 2015.

"Mike always says I graduated from the UR Bootcamp and it was a boot camp in many ways, but once you graduate, he knows that you should be able to now go and get somebody else and show them, teach them, raise them musically, if you will, in the same manner, that 'I've done with you,'" Dixon said.

People around the world expect a lot from musicians, but the demands on Detroit artists are tenfold. The complex elements of style, dedication, durability and sustainability

of Detroit's music scene span more than seven decades. It covers nearly every musical genre, from Gospel, blues, classical to jazz and techno.

"Once you step on the bandstand, they expect you to deliver a certain level of musicianship based only on the fact that you're from Detroit," Dixon said.

The mentor-mentee relationship is one of the ways Detroit retains its ability to deliver consistently. Now, he too is passing it on. Dixon has taught a lot of people to play the piano; he insists that you must be passionate, caring and willing to share all that you know to see your students grow. He possesses a show don't tell approach, to make a visual impression on his mentees to help them grow into themselves.

Dixon admits, he didn't realize he was being groomed at a young age to be a mentor until later on in life. For instance, during his transition from jazz to playing keys in a church with a gospel choir, the church organ player told him something that didn't make sense at the time, but now as his list of mentees and students grows, the organist's words make complete sense.

"He told me— 'when you (Dixon) play, you don't play with any feeling,' I'm thinking I'm playing the song how it is, what does that mean? But it's life's experiences, these things that you experience, rather, whether it's failing a college course, or, you know, your cat died or something, I don't have a cat, that's an inside joke for somebody who reads this interview," Dixon said.

In this scenario, the organist was pushing Dixon to use his instrument in a way he hadn't used before. Dixon believes this can only happen when you see another person feeling it. Regardless of an individual's relationship with the church, he offered the term "catching the Holy Ghost," and shared here with DEQ Magazine, the only way to experience music on a different level truly is to listen to Gospel music live in a church.

"GOSPEL FOR A LOT OF US IN DETROIT, WHETHER YOU GO TO CHURCH OR NOT, YOU (DETROITERS) GREW UP IN THE CHURCH, WHETHER YOU WANTED TO GO OR NOT—AND THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING YOU CAN LEARN AND TAKE AWAY FROM THAT,"

Dixon said.

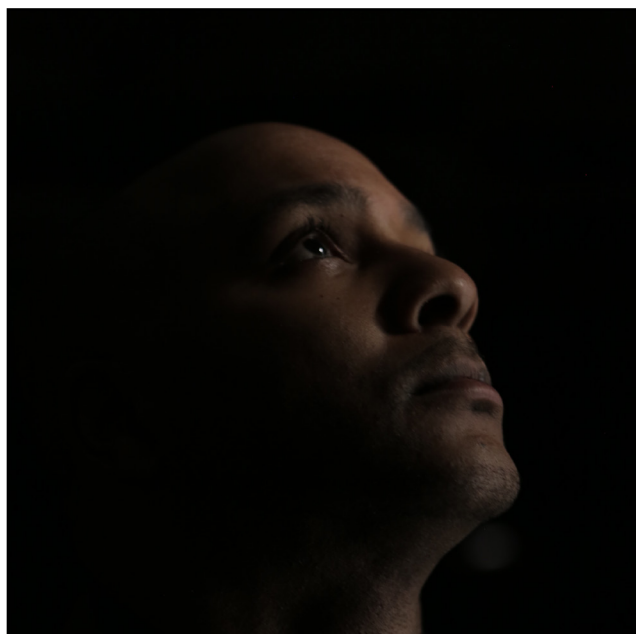
He suggests for you to go to Greater Grace or Greater Emanuel in Detroit on any Sunday if you want to hear and see a new level of musicianship.

(He points to his ears) “You use these, your ears are the only muscle you use (in church), your ears and your eyes figure out,” Dixon said.

According to Dixon, pianist and shout musician Darius Quince featured on Dixon’s label, 4evr 4wrđ 004, “Want It” released in 2019 with Dixon and Wajeed, is a true example of a church mentorship. Shout music is fast tempos, counter-rhythms frequently played by gospel musicians. It’s a common practice for young musicians to remain in church after the sermon and taught how to play an instrument.

“Someone showed him (Darius Quince) what they knew when he was, I think three or four years old and he picks it up like a sponge,” Dixon said.

In 1995 Dixon discovered *We Live Here* by Pat Metheny. Two things happened to him after hearing this album.



1. He felt new emotions
2. He started seeing things visually within the music.

After listening to Pat Metheny’s album, Dixon states, he couldn’t verbally explain what was happening to him. As a 5th grader, he was moved. Fast forward 20 years to a random car ride with British musician Goldie, after playing a festival in Croatia with Timeline. Dixon and Goldie randomly figured out they both loved Pat Metheny and they talk at least once a month about their projects and help guide each other out, the way good friends do for one another.

While Dixon was a freshman at Wayne State University, he and saxophonist De’ Sean Jones traded musical ideas in his mother’s attic, also known as “the coldest area in the winter and the hottest in the summer.” Jones and Dixon played music games that Dixon refers to as “phrase wars.”

“I would say OK, let’s only play quarter notes using chord tones (or) quarter note triplets using chord tones for the three chords in a loop, small things like that or don’t play eighth notes and we would just trade all these ideas back and forth in my mom’s attic,” Dixon said.

These formative year improvisational relationships still permeate throughout Dixon’s call-and-response life in music. Playful exchanges with Jones and others are the key ingredients to the camaraderie that breeds radical live band experiences around the globe.

By 2011 Jones and Dixon had been invited to join the Underground Resistance’s Timeline, UR’s Hitech Jazz band.

D3 is another live band project outside of his label, it is entirely non-scripted, a shoot from the hip band feat. Jon Dixon on keys and De’Sean Jones on saxophone. D3 is led on stage by the exceptional and incomparable beat master, percussionist and producer, Mark Flash.

“Mark is kind of like the driver and we’re in the backseat—wherever he goes, we have no choice but to follow and so whatever he plays, we use our ears,” Dixon said.

Approximately two years ago, Dixon and Marquis Johnson started a band called Room 131, named for their high school band room at The Detroit School for the Fine and Performing Arts. On May 20, the duo was scheduled to perform in Lyon France at A day with Jeff Mills, as Room 131 with Johnson on drums and Dixon on keyboards feat.

De'Sean Jones on saxophone. The event was postponed due to COVID-19.

When it comes to music production, he says he only gets about 10% of what he would prefer to get out. He learned early on from Banks that a DJ's record bag is like a toolbox, sometimes they need a hammer, a few bangers, sometimes they need some masking tape, etc. Because of this, Dixon tries to offer something for everyone. Dixon breaks down the 2018 release from 4evr 4wrđ – 4EVR-003, the Sampa EP.

"With Sampa EP, I tried to have something for everyone. Derrick May likes A1 and the B1, whereas more of the jazzier people like 5 15 (A2) and people who like more eclectic music they like B2," Dixon said.

On a trip to Portugal, Dixon kept singing Anita Baker's, "Caught Up in the Rapture" three years before 4EVR-002 "Fly Free" was made. He was able to finish the track in time for Al Ester to play at Movement 2016.

After its debut by Ester, everyone was asking for the release. Dixon said he made the track for fun and he never intended to release it. The version Ester had is not on the EP, it's approximately five minutes long, too short for a dance track.

Under the advice of Banks, Dixon asked international DJ and historian John Collins (aka Papa John to the family) to produce an edit of "Fly Free." Collins agreed that the original track wasn't quite dancefloor-ready, it definitely didn't highlight Dixon's talents as a keyboard player.

Collins thinks Dixon is a brilliant keyboardist and producer— he's watched Dixon morph into electronic music while maintaining his jazz roots and according to Collins, Detroit "needed to hear a Jon Dixon solo."

When they went into the studio Collins had Dixon listen to a keyboard solo of one of Collin's favorite house music tracks and said, "I need something like this" Dixon answered, "I got it."

The keys you hear on "Fly Free" are what Dixon played in one take that day, and Papa John (Collins) knew it was absolutely perfect. Dixon wanted to re-record but Collins and Banks both agreed it was perfect and it was a done deal.

"I asked Mike Banks to listen to the track and in particular, Jon's solo. Mike looked at me and said, 'That's it,' I knew at this point if Mike said it was good. It was good. The next day Jon agreed to keep the solo. And the rest is history!" Collins said.

Dixon also loves receiving feedback in the studio from techno pioneer Carl Craig, and other notable Detroit producers, including Kenny Dixon Jr.—They are not related. However, Jon Dixon's dad who's quite the roller skater knows KDJ from Northland (Roller Rink.) Dixon grew up skating at Skateland, but his dad is the roller skater in the family.

In the spring of 2020, 4evr4wrđ released its 5th EP, Times of Change, featuring artwork by DJ, producer, visual artist Rebecca Goldberg (Goldberg designed the album jacket and label for 4evr4wrđ 002, 003 and shared the byline for 004).

Dixon says his wife and one-year-old son are his number one go-tos for everything he produces. Even though he didn't get to release as much music as he would have preferred in 2019, the joy he feels watching his son grow up for his first year of life overrides any concerns about how much he's producing. Dixon hopes to release three EPs in 2020, barring any production issues with pressing vinyl.

On the rapid growth and revitalization of Detroit, Dixon considers himself a foodie and is definitely happy to have more than five restaurants to choose from, but that doesn't supersede his biggest fear.

"My biggest fear is in Detroit becoming a city that's not at the forefront of music anymore," Dixon said. "Imagine if Detroit is one grain of salt on a table and it's the one place that people can always count on to go to for art and music that's completely different. What would it be like if that grain of salt is no longer on the table and now we are the rest of the world and now people can't even count on us, we get brushed off the map, and now there is no more Detroit sound?"

Dixon believes the world looks up to Detroit because of its musical history from Motown, gospel, techno, jazz, r&b, hip hop, rock n roll, to garage bands. That's why he's adamant about teaching students and reminding himself via his mentors, that it's his job to sound like him and not anyone else and finding as many students as possible to help is the best way to retain the culture of music in the D.

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GREY AREA



Southwest Detroit's art and music scene has been on the rise for years now. Standing at the forefront of this movement are dual visionaries Eileen Lee and Christopher Taylor who operate out of the experiential art gallery, retail and aura photography space, known as Grey Area. They are amongst those leading this emergence. Their work is a gift to all of us, challenging us to think about the way we see things, expanding mental boundaries, capturing spiritual essences on real film, and unearthing unique artifacts to sell from their vast travels across the country. Their eyes and sense of style are so keen and their art shows are not to be missed.

AL: There's been a long road getting to where Grey Area is currently. Tell us your story and how the store came to be?

CT: It began fifteen years ago. Eileen worked for (now defunct) *Real Detroit Weekly* and I worked at Diesel (clothing store.) Eileen went off to college in East Lansing and I took a job offer with Diesel in Chicago as a Window Dresser. I was back in the D almost every weekend though going out to electronic music clubs like Oslo, Corktown Tavern, The Works or just house partying. Eileen joined me in Chicago and then we eventually moved to Los Angeles for seven years. We wanted to see how things function in other cities and then bring our experiences back home. Once we got back to Detroit, we spent about a year looking around and came upon our subtle space in Southwest. Grey Area has been open for almost three years now and it's still a humbling experience running our own space in the city.

AL: You both complement each other so well. What are your individual specialties and things you share in common to make the gallery come together?

EL: Chris really is the yang to my yin in so many ways, especially with how we operate our space. He has such an incredible eye for merchandising. He also has an innate understanding of how people flow through spaces

and interact with objects from his retail background. It's truly an art and so he gets to apply it to our space. Since it's technically three separate rooms that change to suit different purposes, it can be difficult at times! My former life was in marketing, event production, and public relations - always in the cultural aspect of things.

We both deeply love art, culture, music and found items. Grey Area has been a way for us to bring all of these aspects together and share it with others. During our time in LA, we did the flea market circuit as vendors and also ran the original Venice Beach Flea Market at the high school.

AL: How did you wind up doing aura photography? And you use real film? How did the idea come out to incorporate this into your gallery space?

EL: Within the first year of us dating, at some point Chris would mention to me the color of my aura. At that time I had no clue what an aura even was, and after his explanations I found it incredibly interesting. When we moved to LA, the topic of energy and auras somehow came up in life and I went down the rabbit hole pretty far. It's something I've been fascinated with for years. At some point upon returning home to Detroit, the notion of practicing aura photography to explore and research the human energy field in a tangible way outside of books and literature became this idea I couldn't get out of my head.

Photography has always been a personal passion. I feel incredibly lucky that all of my interests have aligned in such a synchronistic way. I studied film photography briefly in college, during the time I was working at *Real Detroit Weekly* as an intern. I was that girl you saw in the photo pit at shows during the first three songs snapping shots of the band on 35mm, then going to my job at CVS as the one hour photo girl where I'd develop my own film. Anyways, early 2017, I decided to take the plunge and literally called up the inventor, Guy Coggins, and asked him to build me a camera.

While my camera was being built, we had been exploring the possibilities of opening up a space that would be some kind of representation of our interests. When Chris found our spot in Southwest, it just felt natural to include AURA AURA as part of the space. And yes! The specific model of camera I use requires packfilm, which Fuji announced back in 2016 they were no longer going to be producing, so the amount of film left in the world is finite, which makes this process pretty special.

AL: How do you both come to an agreement on an art show to have at your space? Is there a lot of research that goes into it or is it more like a hey I saw this...

CT: There's no research really. The main idea is to provide space to established or emerging artists we come in contact with through the community here as well as incorporate people from out of town. Hopefully we open avenues for exchange to flow. We had a show for Lucy Cahill not too long after we opened who lives in the neighborhood. We first learned of her from noticing the gig posters she creates for venues around town. She illustrated our Grey Area shirts and our ads as well. Eventually she started working with the Youth Arts Alliance (group that provides creative programming to juveniles in detention facilities.) Lucy organized a fundraiser for YAA at the space through an art auction in which dozens of local artists contributed to and some eventually had their own shows with us.

EL: Chris is basically our artist liaison and producer. He fields all the inquiries but always runs ideas by me before solidifying a show, which I appreciate. While our intention is creating a platform for budding talent, another aspect is to make art approachable. I like to think we operate in a very DIY collaborative way, and always want to make sure we are working with someone who creates work that Detroiters can actually afford.

AL: In your travels, you both pick up some of

the greatest items to sell in your space. Are there particular things you look for to sell? What is the strangest thing you ever bought and sold in your shop?

EL: It sounds simple, but we literally buy what we like. And of course what we think others who are like-minded would enjoy. I curate the women's vintage, and Chris the men's, but when it comes to art and objects we both find things and will bring them to each other to get input. It's a rare occasion that we'll buy something the other person does not like.

CT: With the travel associated with Eileen's aura photography, I enjoy getting off the road and seeing what we can find to bring back to the city for the locals to find use for. As far as vintage clothing goes I like the idea of encouraging people to buy second hand after seeing some of the negative environmental aspects associated with fashion and clothing retail in general. Some of the stuff I gravitate towards are utility wear like woolen mill articles, old denim, stuff with chain-stitched embellishments and obviously anything music. As for the strangest things we've sold in the store we dabble in the macabre with turn of the century medical charts, 1800s wheelchairs, quack medical devices and taxidermy type stuff.

AL: Do you always have music at your shows? What role does it play in the experience you are looking to provide for people? What are some memorable highlights from past shows?

CT: Every show has had audio thus far! As far as performances we've had two Sick Llama shows where he played among his works. The first one he did live tape dubbing of out of print stuff from his cassette label for attendees. Pablo R. Ruiz and Ben Saginaw did a set with video work by Vinnie Massimino. That was a wig sizzler! DJ PIA did a live thing that night too where she looped a Miles Davis track that is still circling my brain. When it comes to visual art shows, the artists choose if they would like DJs, playlists, etc. We've been lucky to have Danny Kroha of The Gories, Zak from Deadbeat Beat and even

these guys who sell records while DJing play for openings.

AL: You both are DJs. What is your music inspiration? You sell records at the shop too. Is it hard not to get high off your own supply?

CT: I grew up listening to anything on the radio, fortunately Detroit in the '80s didn't disappoint. I remember hearing "Summer Madness" in the backseat as a kid before I was old enough to see out the window and feeling instantly changed. When I entered school I liked anything hip hop so my mom bought me a compilation tape because it had LL Cool J on it and MARRS – "Pump Up The Volume" was the first track. I was hooked on that sound and could only find it on WJLB on weekend nights (club broadcasts) so I tuned into that until the mid '90s. After moving to Chicago when I was 21 I learned about WBMX from (DJ) KSTARKE and got into other forms of electronic music like Italo, freestyle, etc. As far as the shops selection goes we pick up records when we can and sell DJ records as well as popular stuff. It's hard to not keep some of the stuff obviously but I'm always happy to drop some under appreciated stuff from my own collection in the bins at a price.

AL: Why are records important and which ones mean the most to you?

CT: I take things literally and records are in fact what the name alludes to, a record of a time and place. A file of captured vibrations submitted to eternity via minuscule notches cut into black plastic. The ones I appreciate the most are ones with my friends' work put onto them and the gems I dug outta the dirt.

AL: What is on the horizon for Grey Area?

CT: We're hoping to get an online retail space going for collaborations to create limited edition pieces available to people everywhere. The plan is to bring in more new releases as far as music is concerned too.

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Back in 2004 a slick, mini club and restaurant called Oslo opened at 1456 Woodward Avenue in Downtown Detroit. It was delicious news. It was a thousand rays of sunshine for an overworked, underpaid creative class in this stressed city we call home.

Amidst boarded up facades stood this stunning Italian Renaissance, eight-story gem of a building from 1917. Oslo Owners Brooke Campbell and Sameer Reddy relentlessly renovated the basement club and lobby restaurant, properly outfitting it with dark wood walls, (purposefully) minimal décor, an essential club sound system, and a modern, partially exposed kitchen.

It wasn't only the smart, expansive music programming by DJs Scott Zacharias and Sharif Laffrey at the onset that got us so excited. The other crucial half was the hiring of chef Kaku Usui for the restaurant.

Usui, who was born and raised in Tokyo, moved to Lansing, Michigan with his girlfriend who accepted a new job offer (in 1995.) He had a wealth of underground music knowledge, DJ skills as well as solid years of culinary arts study under "hard core, military style" traditional sushi chefs. After training with such strict chefs, disappointing experiences in other restaurants afterward left him longing to run his own kitchen. "Every restaurant I ever worked at after, I never saw better than them. I was very lucky," he said.

In 1997, along with good friends Mike Ransom (DJ, Ima restaurant founder) and music producer, performer Kevin Reynolds (Yoruba music, Todhchai), the young trio rented a small house in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood. This way they could be closer to the electronic music scene and explore their dreams of food, music, fun and Detroit culture.

They say that luck is when preparation meets opportunity. While Usui was DJing at the famous electronic music club Motor Lounge, Campbell, who fully understood the mind melting power of Japanese food and techno, approached Usui while he was playing records at legendary Motor Lounge in Hamtramck about heading up Oslo's kitchen. After careful consideration, he agreed.

Oslo was a smashing success. Although this was Usui's first experience running a full kitchen, you would nev-

er have known it. The restaurant was packed upstairs with patrons and it was hard to avoid the throbbing bass coming from the club downstairs on the weekends. Even during non-DJ nights the music was always carefully and tastefully selected.

Food and music tend to run in parallel lines. Reynolds states, "Kaku's food is very similar to his music production. Experimentation built on a solid foundation. Kaku's bass lines in his dub style techno start out with a good basic foundation. Kaku is quite fond of the word foundation. His mix starts out extremely simple and then progresses into this amazing, delightful bouncing of delays and reverbs. Much like his food, it is deceptively simple and then when you taste it there are all these different notes hitting. His willingness to not just stay in the lane of tradition but have respect for it encapsulates his ethos. His pride in craftsmanship is always inspiring to me."

When the who's who of electronic music either played there (or anywhere in the city), a pit stop to have sushi from Oslo was a must and there were too many acts to mention. Even Kraftwerk, after one of their shows, came to hang out!

The principles for Usui's successful menu remain consistent to this day: provide fresh, delicious, affordable, simple food. "More is too much sometimes," he said. "Places get you with gimmicks. More sauces. More deep fried. More sides. More this or that. There needs to be care for every ingredient and thought into how they go together. If one part is bad, the whole experience falls off."

As Usui's positive reputation spread, other restaurant owners came to try to lure him away and in 2007, he became the head chef at a much larger, more upscale, suburban restaurant, Ronin (in Royal Oak.) "That was a lot of work," he recalled in a part wow, part laugh, post growth expression tone. The place was easily four times the size and in a more affluent area. It was another opportunity to learn, grow, and get closer to his dream. He switched up the menu with all new ingredient combinations and biblically adhered to his guidelines. Part two was and continues to be a success.

There was, of course cooking in between ending his time

at Ronin . He also worked closely with good friend Mike Ransom to open his award winning restaurant Ima.

“When I met Kaku,” Ransom said “he had just moved to the states from Japan and our friendship began around techno music. A few years later, we moved into a place in Corktown with Kevin Reynolds and lived there for almost eight years. During this time, Kaku was working at the best sushi restaurants in Detroit and Oakland County. On Sundays we would invite friends to the house and cook, and drink and play music. Kaku always brought fresh fish that was left over from the week and roll sushi, make hand rolls and for breakfast he would make ochazuke or rice porridge with leftovers. He knows so many ways to work with fresh fish! He would cook stews, soups and vegetables as you would in a Japanese home. It was like nothing that I had experienced in Japanese restaurants. The way Kaku cooked with common western vegetables opened my mind to Japanese cooking techniques. We were always blown away by the simplicity and precise control of delicate flavors.”

After years of planning and perfecting he and his wife Maikue finally opened Kaku Sushi and Poke (2017) in Bloomfield Hills and then a second location in 2018 in downtown Birmingham. “I got tired of copy cats. People copied my recipes everywhere I went. Now with the new restaurant, I’m concentrating less on sushi and more on Poke to change things up.”

It was a clever decision. Poke is technically a Hawaiian dish, but it goes nicely with Usui’s traditional sushi background. There are bowls made for you, for example there’s the Salmon Ponzu that comes with salmon, shizo, scallions, cucumber, fresh jalapeno, edamame, nori seaweed, sesame seeds and ponzu sauce. You can also make your own bowl and pick all the ingredients. Rice can be substituted with arugula salad for a base.

Environments are also key concerns for his restaurants. “Clean, minimal, open style, nice colors. The environment is every bit as important as the food and that includes music,” he said as his inner DJ popped out “I like a minimal sound in my music. Not too many instruments but still groovy.” While I enjoyed my Poke, the music ranged from some jazzy Tribe Called Quest, some acid jazz, broken beat, and very mild but funky house beats from groups I have not heard, but would like to know



about.

I asked how the restaurant business affected his DJing and music production. Evidently all this is on hold while he tends to the two restaurants, family and raising two kids. “The equipment is collecting dust at home,” he laughed. “My passion for music is always there. Even though I’m not DJing like I used to, I’m always ready. I play the new tracks at the restaurants so good music is around all the time.”

As for a location downtown, he would definitely like to do that. “I’m going to wait though. There are already too many restaurants and bars down there. The population is bigger and growth is good, but I’m going to wait a bit and see.” He’s right to be cautious, however, I think Detroiters would rush to find his restaurant not only to reminisce about the great times through the years, but to rekindle their love for Kaku’s food that nourishes the soul.

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THE DISTINGUISHED BLACK-AND-WHITE STENCILED LOGO IS A TESTAMENT TO THE CREW IT REPRESENTS: SHARP LINES, NO-FRILLS, AND DEFINITIVE DESIGN WITH STAPLE COLORS THAT FIT IN ANYWHERE AND LOOK GOOD ON ANYONE. IN A TIME OF STAGE ANTICS AND UNORIGINAL GIMMICKS FROM TODAY'S POPULAR ELECTRONIC MUSIC "ARTISTS", IT'S A SAFE BET THE DETROIT TECHNO MILITIA STAYS FOCUSED ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS: PROVIDING THE DIE-HARD AND NEW FANS AN EXPERIENCE OF THE MUSIC'S ORIGINAL INTENT. BILL STACY (DJ SEOUL) AND DTM CO-FOUNDER T. (TOM) LINDER ARE THE NOT-SO-SECRET AGENTS HEADLINING AROUND THE WORLD AS THE DTM 2X4. THESE TWO DEDICATED TRUE DETROIT SOUND AMBASSADORS REVEAL HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY, AND A WHOLE LOTTA HEART.

AH: When / what was your first Detroit Underground party?

DJ Seoul: The first time I went to an underground Detroit party was 1994. I was hooked right away. I couldn't believe the energy and the love I felt. After going to many of these events, I had to get involved with the music. It was everything to me. The first underground event I played downtown was called "Get Smart". It was in January of 1998, put on by Joe Hix and Mikel from Detroit Threads. Boy was it cold! I still remember it like yesterday even though it was over 22 years ago.

T.Linder: My first underground party was around 1996-'97. I remember walking in and being almost knocked over by the kick of the speakers. I didn't know or care who the DJs were, but I loved it. A few months later, a DJ named DJ Eclipse (aka Greg Montgomery) was playing at a show, and his performance changed my life. It could've been shit, and I never want to hear a recording if it exists, but his command of the audience was one of the purest expressions of techno that I have ever seen to this day. A few weeks later, I heard about a guy selling a pair of Gemini DD-50 decks for \$350 at one of the dorms near me. I bought them without ever playing a record before. I hooked them up with the \$75 Audio Technica DJ mixer that I bought from Best Buy and I never looked back. I figured, "I spent all this money, so this is my life now."

AH: Favorite tour story?

DJ Seoul: Favorite story for me probably isn't Tom's favorite. One time in Eindhoven, Holland, it was their national holiday, "Queens Day". We just got done performing at a massive festival. Tom leaned over to grab a fence so he could vomit. It was an electric fence. I had to dive to tackle him and prevent him from puking on the electric fence and dying. We started walking and he did it again. I had to save his life twice that night!

T.Linder: Great story, asshole. And thanks for that one by the way! One of my musical heroes, Keith Tucker from Aux 88, always tells us to watch out for each other when we are on the road, and that advice worked out really well that night! One of the great things about touring is actually being able to experience different cultures and make some really close friends along the way. It is

also a huge honor to be able to share our craft with audiences who sincerely appreciate our approach to Detroit techno.

AH: What's always in your bag?

DJ Seoul: Records, needles, backup needles, slipmats, headphones, thumb drives. Ready for all gigs no matter what. As far as a certain record or records, there really isn't anything that flies to every show. If I had to choose one though UR-003 Final Frontier is the perfect record for almost every occasion.

T.Linder: The records that I play with our DTM 2x4 performances tend to be a little different from what I bring for a solo set. They are still on the more aggressive side of Detroit techno, but the tracks that people expect to hear when I play solo might not get played when we do the 2x4. One of the records that I always bring out is an exclusive DTM "Battle Record". We had our friend Kero from Detroit Underground Records cut a super limited edition of it for only us to use. Only three copies exist. It has loops, re-edits, and DJ tools that only we have.

AH: Do you have a favorite release on your label?

DJ Seoul: All of the releases are in my heavy rotation playlist. I love the 3xLP compilation, "The Tip of the Spear", but I have a special place in my heart for "Electrified Planet" on DTM004. It's the one that I did. I love how the record turned out and I still play it regularly. Out of all of my releases, it's the one I hear other DJs play the most.

T.Linder: For me, it's "The Tip Of The Spear" album. It is a compilation of tracks by every member of DTM at the time. All of the artists in the crew come from different musical backgrounds, and everyone has their own area of expertise. Some of us play deeper stuff, some more Industrial, some more electro, some harder more sparse Techno, and some more funky. I think that album is a great representation of each of the artists' personal style.

AH: How did the idea to form a militia come about? When did it start? What influence did Underground Resistance have on your group?

T.Linder: DTM started around 2002 as a response to what was becoming really popular in Detroit at the time. The stuff that was being classified as “techno” was an entirely different vision of what we considered techno, and the stuff that people were calling “electro” was a long way from our style of electro.

We came together because we share a common respect for Detroit’s musical history that I think was being lost on some audiences. We take a militant approach to our craft: how it’s made, how it’s played, and how it’s performed. So the “militia” thing just fit.

Underground Resistance was obviously a massive influence on us, especially their early material and their uncompromising approach to their music. Mike Banks has always been very supportive of what we’re doing, and he has become a great friend over the years. I am truly honored and humbled whenever we are compared to, or even mentioned in the same sentence as UR.

AH: There are many members of DTM, who are they?

T.Linder: The members are Neil V., Darkcube, DJ Psycho, Shawn Rudiman, Loner.9, Maxx-T, ?Confusion?, Hazmat Live, Annix TM, Winnettra, Doc Matthews, Dimitri Pike, The Mercenary, Steve Crawford, DJ Seoul, and myself. It isn’t run like a normal label where people submit tracks and we put them out. Apart from remixes, almost everything we release is by people in the crew. Not everyone in DTM is from Detroit, but we all share a common reverence for Detroit electronic music and we all have a great respect for that tradition.

AH: Regarding the Detroit Techno Militia 2x4, can you explain to the readers the set-up that you use?

T.Linder: Without getting too far into the technical weeds, here it is: Detroit Techno Militia 2x4 is basically two DTM DJs performing on four turntables and two mixers at the same time. It’s an off-the-cuff, unplanned, 100% improvised ensemble performance. Bill and I have been playing together like this for at least 12 years, and we vibe off of each other really well. We both have pretty massive record collections, and we feel most comfortable playing the (Technics)1200’s, so it’s usually an all-vinyl set. But we have integrated live gear and CDJs along with the turntables in the past. We work our asses

off behind the decks and it’s kind of a rarity to hear one record playing alone at any time.

AH: What’s going through your mind when the dance floor is lit?

DJ Seoul: When the floor is lit, all of that energy is flowing through me and I really don’t think at all. Things get magical when the floor is packed or when the crowd is really into it. Records start to choose themselves and the pitch of the records just seem to be right on. The flow happens on its own. I start vibrating and my mind clears itself. It’s by far one of the best feelings out there.

T.Linder: I’m really not much of a spiritual guy, so bear with me. When our shit is all on point, there is some kind of weird energy or something. It is kind of like when you hear athletes talking about being “in the zone”. I try not to get too philosophical about it. Everything falls into place based only on instinct. I’ll be up there sweating my ass off and moving with the crowd. After our set, I usually need to cool down and catch my breath. We pour it all out there. This is Detroit techno. This is life.





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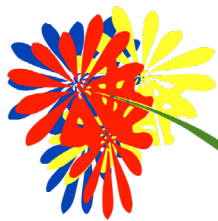


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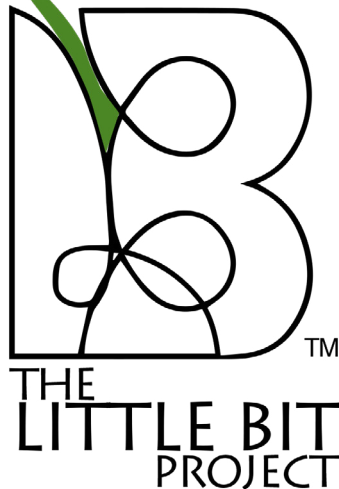


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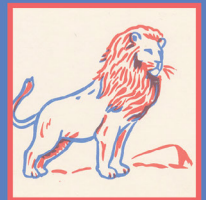
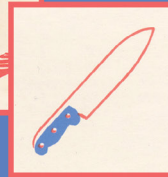


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IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, PETER CROCE AND HIS IMPRINT ROCKSTEADY DISCO HAVE PROVIDED AN INTERESTING CONTRAST TO WHAT CONSTITUTES AS THE “DETROIT SOUND.” BOTH HE AND THE GRASSROOTS LABEL HAVE BEEN CATCHING THE ATTENTION OF SOME OF HOUSE AND DISCO MUSIC’S MOST DISCERNING HEADS. WE CHAT A LITTLE ABOUT HIS SOUND, VALUES, AND PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT DANCE MUSIC HAS TO OFFER IN 2020.

DA: First of all, how's life?

PC: This interview catches me at a funny time because currently I'm feeling a bit more like a travel agent than a DJ! I'm just getting done booking planes, trains, and automobiles to London, Berlin, Chicago, Boston, and New York. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to bring the Rocksteady Disco sound to more places. We're six years into this label and party now, and I think people are beginning to catch the vision of what we're doing.

DA: Knowing you personally, I get the feeling that your label, Rocksteady Disco, is a pretty good extension of yourself as an artist. What is the vision of what you're doing?

PC: I think our releases and musical selections show people that they have permission-- permission to be a freak, permission to not be a freak, permission to let their nerd flag fly, permission to dance, permission to love music from all over the world. It's been really exciting to see the way that our party has brought together all sorts of different people across age, gender, and race lines.

DA: So it sounds like you're trying to encourage artists and listeners and dancers to just be themselves in a way. Do you also try to influence? Or do you think encouraging self love and discovery are the primary functions of the music for you?

PC: Yeah that's exactly right-- we have everything we need inside of us and we're loved and beautiful just the way we are. That's a fairly iconoclastic notion in our current era, so I suppose I do try to influence, although until you asked me that question I think it's been unconscious.

DA: So what made you want to start Rocksteady Disco?

PC: When I launched it in 2014 I wasn't producing, but I was DJing a lot. People were sending me unreleased tunes, and I was listening to what my brother Topher Horn was working on and the edits that Lafleur was doing. The music that Rocksteady Disco is interested in is soulful, global, eclectic, but still rooted in the US dance music tradition. And I noticed that there wasn't really a label or hub for that sound, especially in Detroit, and especially for the younger folks pushing this sound. So it all sprouted up organically, and naïvely.

DA: Sometimes naïveté is the best way to start anything. It means you're open to learn. What have you learned along the way?

PC: I remember when we put out our first 12" from Lafleur-- Crosstalk International was my distributor and he basically took all 500 we pressed the first week. Then just a few years Crosstalk went out of business due to Brexit and other factors. So there went a few hundred dollars in my net-90 agreement with him. Many labels and pressing plants lost thousands though so I guess I got lucky. There's also the reality that this whole thing we do is show biz. It took me a while to realize this because I was fixated on our talent pool instead of the fact that we don't really have a music industry here in Detroit.

DA: Speaking of Detroit, I know that you grew up near the city. Did the D provide any specific musical background for you to develop around, or did that come later in life?

PC: My dad was a professional drummer, and my mom has great taste and rhythm, so I grew up in a household that was playing a wide range of music. Also I'm lucky that I went to a school that valued jazz, so I was introduced to the bedrock of all good music through my public school jazz band teacher when I was 16 years old. So I guess through a sort of osmosis Detroit provided a musical background, simply because Detroit is a music city. I knew there were kids in my high school sneaking into parties in Detroit, but I never really went to a proper party until 2012. Looking back on it I'm really grateful that I got the music background without the party background.

DA: How did that affect your perspective of dance floor culture and DJ style later on when you are imbedded in party culture?

PC: It's been liberating artistically. A lot of my all time favorite records aren't exactly club tracks, and a lot of the music I buy and play and re-edit aren't really in the typical rave or club tradition. They're just beautiful songs that (hopefully) make you want to dance or love on somebody.

DA: Speaking of edits, you've done some pretty well rinsed versions yourself. What drew you to editing, and has your view on editing and releasing changed at all as you've stepped deeper into the production realm?

PC: To me, editing is as much a part of DJing as digging for new music, beat matching, blending, programming, and gain staging. I think DJing is such a beautiful and misunderstood artform. Motorcity Wine's David A-P and I talk a lot about how a great DJ can play literally any song, as long as they program it properly in their set. As a good DJ you have the discernment to know what will work for your dance floor and what will not. So by editing you've done something unexpected, and you've created something greater than the sum of its parts. I've had people come up to me after playing certain edits that they never imagined would be played on a dance floor—specifically Andi Hanley's edit of Yello's "Tied Up". A dude came up to me and said that his estranged dad used to play the original version of "Tied Up" all the time when he was growing up, and he went and called him the next day because he took it as a sign that he should get back in touch with him. What a gift to make the familiar unfamiliar and the unfamiliar familiar!

DA: Contrasting that with original productions, your EP "Revival" did quite well and got some major remixes and playtime. Are you working on more original productions as well?

PC: "Revival" really was an unexpected turning point. At the time I had just moved to Chicago, and was struggling with distribution and having any money available for Rocksteady Disco, along with depression and anxiety that I struggle with. That record revived the label, and pushed it into the chapter it is in today. To have some of my favorite DJs in the world playing it and remixing it is a cherry on top.

I am working on more original productions, but they're on the backburner due to the label and my DJing being my main priorities. But there will definitely be more original productions coming out sooner than later, including the remix on this release.

DA: And in a music culture that is constantly evolving its opinions, outlook, and values as a reflection of the culture around us, where is the real influence coming from right now?

PC: I read a recent interview with Quincy Jones where he says that there really isn't a music industry anymore. For better or worse I think what we're a part of is more of what Adorno and Horkheimer call the "culture industry." The culture industry is not all that interested in music, despite how

it looks on the surface. Whether people know it or not the opinions, outlook, and values being presented by those with power in this industry are not radical or genuine. They are marketing. And I think the only reason this is a shock to people is because we all think we're "underground" (which is another fun marketing term.) when in actuality we're a pretty sizable economy. And where there's a sizable economy there are people ready to capitalize and commodify.

DA: We'll have to do a more in depth discussion on that another time I think! Wrapping up though, what's on the horizon for both you and the label?

PC: 2020 has seen Rocksteady Disco's heaviest release schedule yet, with a record a month so far. In May we put out our first full length LP entitled, The Art Of Us by Blair French. It's been a massive undertaking with a ton of moving travel parts. I have a feeling it will be the beginning of Rocksteady Disco's next chapter. Blair and I are working on a hybrid live project and an art show to go with the LP, which we hope to take on the road. We also have a 12" from Kiko Navarro dropping in June. Due to the Apollo fire we won't be able to keep up with that hectic of a release schedule, but there will be quite a few represses and a few new EPs to come. Personally, I'm super excited for my remix of Peabody & Sherman from back in 2015 to finally get released on vinyl thanks to DEQ. Also I just had an edit come out on Brooklyn-based Razor-N-Tape's 50th release.

I'm coming off a hectic last few months with gigs in Seoul, Tokyo, Mexico, New York, Berlin, London, Chicago, Boston, Lansing, and of course my beloved Detroit. I'm playing Movement Festival this year, Rocksteady Disco's Viva La Resistance VI party 5/22, and a balearic/sleaze set to start off Marble Bar's notorious 21 hour Memorial Day party. Belle Isle Balearic (aka Blair French and I) finally have a monthly residency called Mango Dive at Temple Bar. I'm excited to do some all night sets for my Sunday Revival party at MotorCity Wine, and my summer monthly Chicago residency is in full swing too. Suffice it to say I've got my pillow and AeroPress in the travel bag ready to go.



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There are crucial things brewing at 1464 Gratiot and it's not just the locally roasted coffee. Trinosophes is no ordinary, "Brooklyn" cookie-cutter cafe. The industrial feel of the large, open space, the energy of people in it's Farmer's Market location, the carefully thought out minimalistic furniture and art selections, the music played (ranging from archaic to experimental), and the addition of award winning Warda Patisserie (Chef of the Year, Detroit Free Press) make it a prime location for creative people to congregate. In addition, there's a partial wall that is a gateway to the art gallery and event space complete with a sizable stage and sound system. Trinosophes is the brainchild of musician, event organizer Joel Patterson (Bohemian National Home) and his partner Rebecca Mazzei who own the whole operation and carefully book the diverse shows there.)

Two Rooms

Sharing the same address is the legendary Peoples record store. Brad Hales (owner, musician, historian, rare record collector, DJ, producer) put together one of Detroit's finest record stores that doubles as a Detroit music museum. Old posters, photos, extremely rare records, paintings, artifacts adorn the walls and records are organized in bins everywhere. Sam Hooker (Michigan Underground Group or M.U.G., Peoples Records) is one of the key clerks at the shop. He is an extremely humble, eclectic and knowledgeable composer, collector, event organizer, promoter and DJ. To work there an appreciation for the arts is essential.

The synergy between the event space/café/ Trinosophes and the neighboring legendary Peoples Records are truly inspiring as both spaces share a love for all music, but a genuine passion for boundary pushing and rare sounds especially if it is Detroit rooted. It's like going to music church.

The address, 1464 Gratiot, is also the headquarters of Peterson and Hooker's record label, Two Rooms. Even though they work under the same roof, they have a shared, forward thinking, risk without reward vision for their music label.

In 2018 they decided to make a go of it, putting out their three releases at once in the middle of the summer. This included the eponymous Quartet Now! (TR-001) a group that was put together by veteran co-leaders Alex Harding-baritone saxophonist with Sun Ra, Roy Hargrove, Aretha Franklin, Ethnic Heritage Ensemble etc.- and legendary drummer Leonard King, of the Lyman Woodard Organization, who performed on the Detroit cult-classic, Saturday

Night Special. With the additions of bassist Rocco Popielarski (Bettye LaVette, John Douglas Quartet) and heavy-weight trombonist Vincent Chandler (an alumni of Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, Regina Carter) the group went into the studio to make their debut release. Upon hearing the five track recording, Peterson and Hooker knew that it should be included in the first batch of LPs, to help layout one aspect of what Two Rooms would be doing.





"The record culture in Detroit has always been curious. Even if you look at people sampling records or people playing out, it's kind of weird and eclectic," Hooker said. "That's always been true in my lifetime," Peterson added. "As evidence from all these releases from back in the day (big band, Motown, funk, electronic, rock) Detroit always touches all the extremes of what was/is happening in music."

Also in that initial batch of releases is the second LP by Viands, entitled *Seven Thousand Year Plan*. It features Detroit's David Shettler (DJ, drummer, keyboards) on Roland Piano and Moog while Peterson played on a Rhodes, Arturia Minibrite and a Wurlitzer. They were getting ready for an abstract performance and captured the practice set with a hand held recorder for the record. It's a wild mix of robotic sounds, people communicating through machines, melodies, ambient styles, layered echoes and effects. It definitely challenges the way you may perceive music and all rules are skillfully broken.

When I asked about the size of the experimental scene in Detroit, Peterson said that although there are ebbs and flows, in his estimation the audience usually stays about the same size. "The motivation for us (as a label) is to get this stuff (music) out there so it exists and there's documentation and artifacts of creative musicians working globally with an emphasis on Detroit and it's cultural history. It's always been important but under documented so anything we can do to expand the awareness of what's happening now and (shed some light on) people not getting their due we will do." This mission of the label in documenting this period is more important than massive record sales.

The third LP of the initial batch was initially commissioned by Trinosophes as an investigation into microtonal piano music by collaborators Thollem McDonas (Debussy Proj-

ect, Tsigoti, Estamos Ensemble) and Clem Fortuna (World 48, Xenharmonic Gamelan). This multi-year project has resulted in numerous performances and recordings, the first of which is the Two Rooms release, *Your Letter Must Have Followed Me All Over The World*. An otherworldly atmosphere pervades these tracks, where each piece is performed in it's own tuning system and unique harmonic system. Undoubtably one of the most unusual piano records of recent years.

In 2019, Two Rooms released a five track LP from the Ryan Jewell Quintet called *Vibration!* It features John Philip Allen (double bass), Alex Burgoyne (saxophone), Abhilasha Jayanthi (electric and nylon string guitar, kashaka, mixing bowl), Ryan Jewell (drums, percussion Mellotron, vibrating monitors) and Caleb Miller (piano, electric piano, synth, pvc pipe, prepared piano, clarinet and vocals.) It's a very wide open, live jazz suite that ranges from congenial to radical selections in a beautiful, thoughtful way.

With their first four releases on the Two Rooms label, Peterson and Hooker have done masterful job of not only documenting and preserving some of Detroit's experimental music history, they are expanding it by adding live shows at Trinosophes to augment the studio recordings, which gives them a wider net to pull from Detroit's rich scene. "Records, cds, and even digital releases are keys to unlock a larger world," Hooker said. "If you follow up with the people on these records and look deeper, you start to get a picture of what's happening around them, building these connections. Back forty years to like the Lyman Woodard Organization (Dr. Professor Leonard King) to now."

One of the next records coming for 2020 is an exciting collaboration with high profile harpist and electro acoustic-music pioneer Zeena Parkins and modular synth-player and electronic composer Jeff Kolar. Both were commissioned to do the music for a dance production in New York City and the music on this record comes from the score for that piece. Parkins, a Detroiter who went to Cass Tech and moved to New York City in the '70s, played with many different people from John Zorn and Fred Frith from the early New York scene to Bjork and Courtney Love's band Hole.

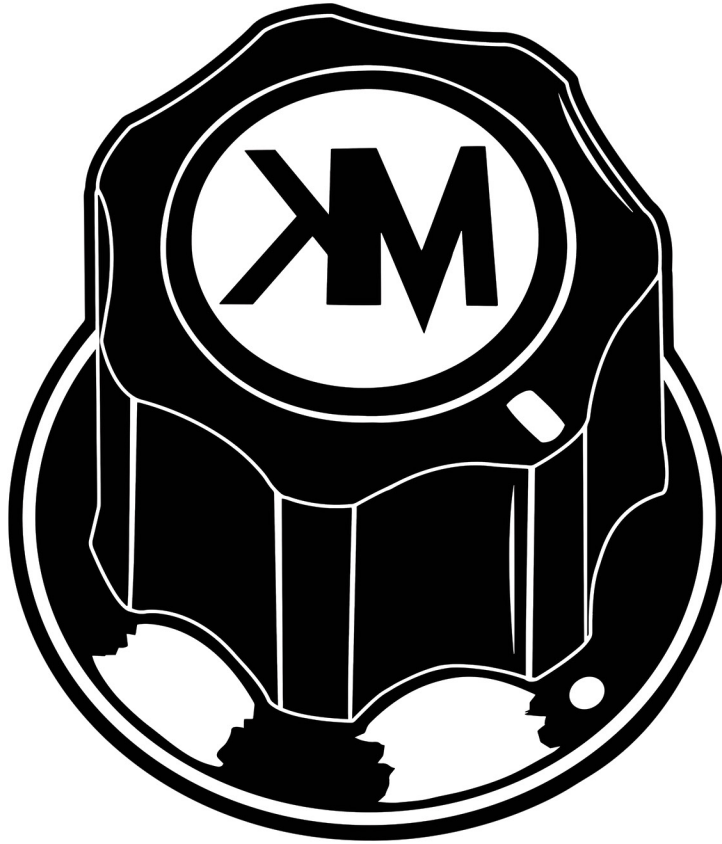
It's exciting to have a culturally cognizant record label like Two Rooms here in Detroit. Seeing and hearing these thoughtful collaborations thrill at every turn will never get old.

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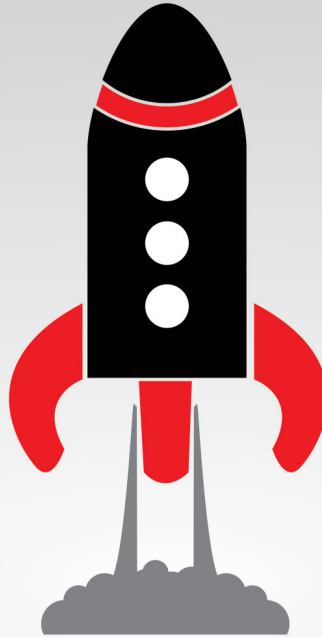
"The primary task, I feel, is to create a piece of art that is better than the same amount of silence; I would prefer to sit silently thinking for ten minutes than to listen to certain pieces of music, and therefore feel that it is my duty as a composer to occupy the time of the listener and the musicians with something challenging, engaging and emotionally alluring."

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DEQ 17 / 18 VINYL TRACKLISTING:

JON DIXON - RESURGE
Written and produced by Jon Dixon 2020

JOHN BRIGGS - BEYOND THE HORIZON (REDACTED MIX) :
Written and produced by John C. Briggs

PEABODY & SHERMAN - ROAD TO YESTERDAY (PETER CROCE ROCKSTEADY DISCO REMIX)
Written and produced by Peabody & Sherman. Remixed by Peter Croce.

VIANDS - NON-AUTOMOTON
Written and produced by Peterson and Shettler

CLAUDE YOUNG JR - DETROIT NOIR (YEAR 2120)
Written and produced by Claude Young Jr.

TECHMARINE BOTTOM FEEDERS - DYSTOPIAN UTOPIA
Written and produced by Mack Goudy Jr. & Emeric Di Paolo.
Published by Dr Bootygrabber Music, EPM Music

DJ HOLOGRAPHIC AND ALEX WILCOX - BECAUSE OF DETROIT (RADIO EDIT)
Written and produced by Alex Wilcox and DJ Holographic

DJ MOPPY - SHIVA TEACHINGS
Written and produced by DJ Moppy.
Additional production: Morgan Wiley (keys) and Kel Angel Saxxy Wildflower (sax)

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