



DIRTY WORK /DIRTY LOVE THE SCUZZY ASSAULT OF ROCK'S NEW REMIXERS

STORY ERIC DUCKER PHOTOGRAPHY LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR & ARANTXA CEDILLO

So yeah, finally the rock kids are dancing again and the dance kids are rocking again and the dance rocking are kids again or whatever. We'd just chalk that up to the natural cycle of modern music, but holy shit! Some of these rock remixes and rockers doing remixes are so rad that we've kind of gotten in a tizzy about them—tracking down vinyl and sending harassing instant messages to our mp3 dealers. Bands like Bloc Party, Franz Ferdinand and Death From Above 1979 are not only out-croppings of the “I love the nightlife” rock movement, but also seem predisposed to letting these remixes have their filthy way with them, leaving dancefloors battered and bathed in booze. And with many rock groups ignoring the purist perspective and embracing the sound of the clubs, the dance community has let the influence flow back the other way—you can hear touches of the stuff in the recent work of Felix Da Housecat and Armand Van Helden. While we're also feeling the remixes by Justice, Whitey, Mylo, the Rapture and others, the remixers that follow are the bumpingest of the bumping. If you guys keep putting out shit like this, our podiatrist is going to have a fit.

Producer, musician, DJ and all-star remixer Paul Epworth takes a break from the decks to send a text. Photograph by Liz Johnson Artur.



EROL ALKAN

LOCATION: London, England

EQUIPMENT: A Macintosh G5, analog synthesizers, guitar amps, guitar pedals and other machines “with personality and charisma”

FIRST OFFICIAL REMIX: Ikara Colt “May Be 1 Day (Version)”

SELECTED REMIXOGRAPHY: Alter Ego “Drop The Pressure (Deaf Disco Re-Vised)”, the Chemical Brothers “Believe (Erol Alkan’s ‘Feel Me’ Re-Work)”, Death From Above 1979 “Romantic Rights (Erol Alkan’s Love From Below Edit)”, Franz Ferdinand “Do You Want To (Erol’s Glam Racket Mix)”, Mylo “Drop The Pressure (Erol Alkan Edit)”

FUTURE PROJECTS: More plans involving the Beyond The Wizard’s Sleeve psychedelic party he does with Richard Norris, 12-inches of original material released under an alias he won’t disclose

With his infamous Trash party in London, regular appearances at Manchester’s Bugged Out! and global DJing gigs, Erol Alkan has become well-versed in dancefloor dynamics. This talent is reflected in his remixes, where he’ll often take an element of a song and stretch it out like a rubber band before snapping it back to release the tension—just check his mix for Franz Ferdinand’s “Do You Want To” where he exploits a single riff for three introductory minutes before getting into some totally weird dance prog. During the mutant pop/mashup craze, Alkan released tracks anonymously under the name Kurtis Rush. From these unauthorized works he was offered legitimate opportunities, but on his first five attempts he never turned in a final product, saying, “There wasn’t enough magic in them for me.” Though his first completed

mix was for Ikara Colt, it was his edit of Mylo’s “Drop The Pressure” that established him in the remixing field. Alkan’s approach typically is to wrestle rock bands into the dark electro mud pit, knocking out any glam snot they’ve got left in them. Alkan often finds himself being asked to remix the songs that he’s helped break as a DJ, a difficult proposition since he often loves the original and doesn’t see a way to improve them. The label Skint asked him to remix Alter Ego’s “Rocker” three times before he accepted, deciding his only option was to destroy it by taking it into Slayer territory. “If you show something the minimum amount of respect, you can sometimes come up with something that’s a little more appropriate than if you look at it like it’s some kind of Holy Grail,” he says.

PHOTOGRAPHY LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR



Earth Wind & Fire do with this song?" Happy to have left behind a time when "it was a dirty thing to have your music fucked with" (as Al-P puts it), MSTRKRFT see the upswell of rock remixes as a natural return for the genre. "Rock & roll music has always been dance music. AC/DC is basically house. 'Got Me Under Pressure' by ZZ Top is like fucking techno," says Keeler. "I think the line [between rock and dance music] was less blurry before the whole grunge thing. You cannot play Pearl Jam in the nightclub and have people dance. You can't play 'Even Flow'."



MSTRKRFT

LOCATION: Toronto, Canada

EQUIPMENT: The 1970 Neve console used to make Fleetwood Mac's *Rumors* and almost all of Kiss and Chaka Khan's early records, some samplers, Roland 909 and 707, Moogs, live drums and live bass
 FIRST OFFICIAL REMIX: Panthers "Thank Me With Your Hands (MSTRKRFT Remix)"

SELECTED REMIXOGRAPHY: Annie "Heartbeat (MSTRKRFT Remix)", Bloc Party "Two More Years (MSTRKRFT Remix)", Death From Above 1979 "Little Girl (MSTRKRFT Edition)", the Kills "No Wow (MSTRKRFT Remix)", Juliette Lewis & the Licks "Love To Kill (MSTRKRFT Remix)"

FUTURE PROJECTS: Debut album of original material *The Looks* out this spring, new remixes for Services and Nine Inch Nails

Comprised of Jesse F Keeler and Al-P, MSTRKRFT (pronounced "Master Kraft") bring a horny robo-disco vibe to their remixes. For years these friends played each other the house music they'd created on their own, but it wasn't until the making of Death From Above 1979's *You're A Woman, I'm A Machine* that the two decided to team up. Keeler plays bass in DFA '79 and Al-P acted as producer, and after the album was finished, MSTRKRFT was born. The MSTRKRFT name entails not only their scuzzed-out reworks, but also their original material, their production for other artists and their recording studio in Toronto. In explaining their approach towards remixing, Keeler says, "We sort of imagine, What would





SOULWAX

LOCATION: Ghent, Belgium

EQUIPMENT: A museum of analog gear and ProTools

FIRST OFFICIAL REMIX: Einstürzende Neubauten "Stella Maris (Soulwax Remix)"

SELECTED REMIXOGRAPHY: Daft Punk "Robot Rock (Soulwax Remix)", DJ Shadow "Six Days (Soulwax Remix)", Felix Da Housecat "Rock It Right (Soulwax Remix)", Gorillaz "Dare (Soulwax Remix)", LCD Soundsystem "Daft Punk Is Playing At My House (Soulwax Shibuya Mix)"

FUTURE PROJECTS: Production of Tiga's upcoming album, continued touring in support of the Soulwax *Nite Versions* album, a new *As Heard On Radio Soulwax* mix

Soulwax's core is brothers David and Stephen Dewaele, a duo that also goes by 2 Many DJs and is known for their *As Heard On Radio Soulwax* series. Though they have a successful band, they are more associated with denizens of the European electronic music world and New York's DFA crew. The first commercially available Soulwax rework appeared on a Einstürzende Neubauten remix album in 1997 and in the first years of the next decade Soulwax was commissioned to revamp quality dance acts including Ladytron and Playgroup, plus big-in-Europe groups Muse and Sugababes. Though the Dewaele Brothers continued to get gigs, in 2005 they hit the warp speed button and started taking their shit to the ludicrous level. Their remixes of Daft Punk

and LCD Soundsystem get panicky with siren synths and pulverizer beats, while their take of Gorillaz's "Dare" pushes backup singer Rosie Davis to the front—turning it into a doob-smoking disco jam sesh. Last year Soulwax also released *Nite Versions*, an intensifying remixed overhaul of the duo's 2004 album *Any Minute Now*. In discussing the motivation for this move, David Dewaele explains, "Duran Duran's first US success was the 'Night Version' of 'Planet Earth', a stripped down and longer version of the single that focused more on the groove than on the vocals. [It was] a version to be played at night in clubs, as opposed to, say, a 13 year-old girl's bedroom in the afternoon."





In the past 18 months, Paul Epworth estimates he's worked on 160 to 170 different pieces of music in the capacity of either producer, engineer, songwriter or remixer. In the last category he has 22 entries, with only his take on the Killers' "Smile Like You Mean It" not seeing release. This prolific output is at least partially the result of the eight hour deadline Epworth puts on himself while making each remix. "It makes you go for some of those obvious triggers," explains Epworth. "I ask myself, How can I make this work brutally and effectively?" Known to get sloshed on wine and yell like a maniac while working on them, Epworth's remixes

reflect the hectic, urgent environment they came from. No trick is too cheap, no thrill is too easy, no time is too good. "It's not rocket science. The kids are out there dancing, they don't want to sit there listening to rocket science," he says. Many of his remixes are for the new wave of British guitar bands whose albums he produced—including Bloc Party, Futureheads and the Rakes—but he's also taken on icons U2, Gang Of Four and New Order. Epworth says he's retiring the Phones moniker that most of his remixes were done under, but will continue making them as the more kraut-rockish Echo Channel and his new grime-influenced alias Epic Man. Party on.



PAUL EPWORTH

EQUIPMENT: An old Apple G4 laptop with largely cracked OS 9 software

FIRST OFFICIAL REMIX: Lomax's "Modern Life (Phones Extended Mix)"
SELECTED REMIXOGRAPHY: Annie "Heartbeat (Phones Maximo Remix)", Bloc Party "Banquet (Phones Disco Edit)", the Futureheads "Decent Days And Nights (Phones Bad Acid Remix)", Gang Of Four "Not Great Men (Phones Extended Version)", the Rakes "Retreat (Phones Repeat Mix)"

FUTURE PROJECTS: Production on the White Rose Movement album and a remix for their single "Alstatian", working with New York-based duo Shy Child and London MC Plan B, original recordings under the Phones and Epic Man aliases for his Good & Evil label



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