

Three of a Perfect Pair

Droid Behavior champions its own brand of techno in Los Angeles.

Some might say that Droid Behavior, the seven-year old techno collective comprised of Acid Circus' Vangelis and Vidal Vargas as well as Moe Espinosa (a.k.a. Drumcell) has pretty much built the entire Los Angeles techno infrastructure themselves.

Everything from label (Droid Recordings) to party promotion has pretty much put the trio at the center of the SoCal techno universe. Originally brought together at a house party back in 2000 by their mutual love of technology, Espinosa best summarizes the group's mission of fusing the essential elements of performance software with the powerful dynamics of a DJ spinning records when he says "We aim to push for something totally different when we perform."

What's interesting is that neither Acid Circus nor Drumcell are DJs in the traditional sense of spinning pre-recorded media using two decks and a mixer. Rather, they are each pushing the edges of music technology by fusing software such as Traktor Pro and Ableton with the kinetic energy of a live DJ performance.

Acid Circus' live set-up consists of FL Studio, Ableton Live and Traktor Scratch, coupled with drum machines and midi controllers that are all routed through a four-channel Xone 92/464 DJ mixer. Drumcell has a deeper connection with DJing having done it for over twelve years but now uses a combination Traktor and Ableton software to cut other people's music apart to create unique new sounds. What's interesting

is his use of the versatile Xone 3D that allows him to pry his eyes away from the laptop and get them back to the dance floor to read a crowd just like a DJ.

"With Acid Circus we aim to bring all the cream elements of live hardware programming with fast paced DJ transitions to create a unique and exciting digital experience," says Vidal Vargas, summing up the duo's sound.

Espinosa adds, "I was DJing with vinyl records for almost 12 years before I made the switch to digital. Although I am quite content with the many possibilities of software, I am not ruling out the idea of returning to old-fashioned analog and hardware performances."

This focus on pushing the boundaries of technology to create new sounds and then perform them like a DJ seems to be the main source of inspiration for this trio. This idea is catching fire with higher profile electronic music artists like Richie Hawtin and Joris Voorn, but no one right now is using the Traktor software like Droid Behavior, and it's only going to be another nanosecond before these guys are as high profile as those aforementioned superstars because of this relentless dedication.

It's been a long time since there was any sort of underground music rumblings in L.A., but there have been few anywhere on the planet as hardworking as the Droid Behavior trio. The collective's relentless pushing of technological boundaries within the traditional practice of DJing have certainly gained themselves and their city worldwide attention but there is no doubt that these guys would be on this mission whether they lived in El Lay or Elko.

—Sean-Michael Yoder



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CHATTER

Enjoy the Silence

Chitown producer Stephen Hitchell finds his stride on his album that's ten years in the making.

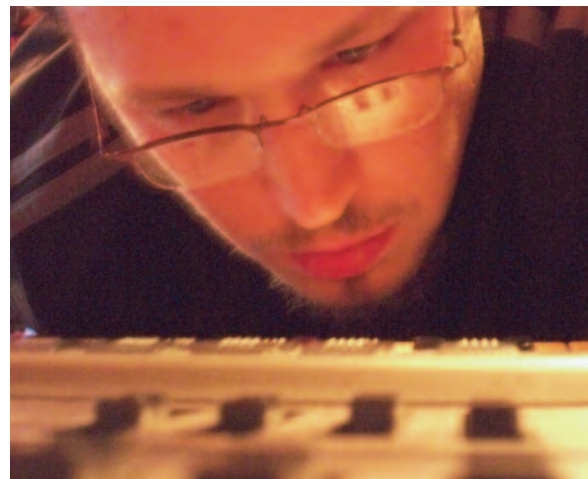
"Intrusion and Echospace were a bit more focused on a certain sound or method to recording the music," explains Chicago-based producer Stephen Hitchell about the differences between his production aliases. "Intrusion, for example, was based around a technological event which brought all the music together—most of the work was recorded on the same reel-to-reel, which is what ties the sound together more than the music."

Hitchell is a throwback to a time when engineers custom-built the effects units and sound processors used for a recording session, vinyl was still king, and all synthesizers were analog. Besides the Basic Channel leanings that tie him to the techno genre, there are even more noticeable influences of dub reggae, Pink Floyd, and practically every other dude who has

wielded a beastly vintage synth or built his own patch bay in Hitchell's work as Soulttek, echospace, and Intrusion.

The recent Intrusion album, *Seduction Of Silence*, was created over a decade-long period using only analog equipment—each track a snapshot of his studio at that moment in time. The album is a deep and earthy look at the creative bond between man and machine with heavy nods to the inventive imaginations of garage engineers like dub scientist King Tubby. Despite this heavy focus on gear and process Intrusion's album bears out Hitchell's insistence on analog. Subsequently, the melodies on the album seem to come to life while the techno sounds are crisper than anything created on a laptop.

"*Seduction Of Silence* is a decade's worth collection of songs which helps to explain the dynamic range of sounds," says Hitchell. "I change my studio around quite often and have a new set up every year to keep the sounds new but with the good comes the bad, if I ever want to go



back and replicate something it would be virtually impossible."

There's a real sincerity in this method of making music that seems to be lost in the digital realm and that is something Hitchell would like to preserve as artists. In fact, he will probably be in the garage building reverb units out of Slinkies long after the last old synthesizer is finally sent to the landfill.

—Sean-Michael Yoder



Parallel Universe

An Irish newcomer gives the world his interesting take on Detroit techno.

Irish producer the Parallel (Colin McKeown to his mum) sounds an awful lot like a seasoned techno veteran with tracks reminiscent of long lost Red Planet singles. The reality is that he just dropped his first release a little over a year ago with a style best described as a throwback to classic Detroit techno.

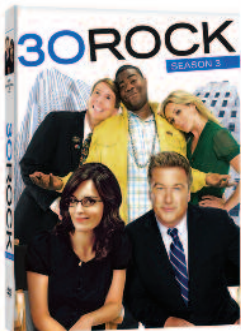
Following in the footsteps of the relatively few Irish techno legends out there like David Holmes, as well as D1 Records' Eamon Doyle and Rob Rowland, McKeown and a small cadre of loosely associated producers are slowly starting to assert themselves on an international level. This newfound recognition is driving a deep,

almost wooded-countryside approach to the techno being made in Ireland. He's had his own string of deep space techno releases like the *Galactix* EP that fit this new mold. McKeown says it comes from his many years of listening to ambient music and the Detroit sound, which he claims has many similar traits, "and perhaps the blustery Irish weather," he also jokingly admits. His mission as the Parallel has been to blend those two distinct elements together and he has thus far succeeded.

He chuckles and says to "maybe check back on him in a few years" when asked where he fits in with what he describes as a "very healthy" Irish techno scene. "I am just too new a name," he humbly admits. Fortunately for us, that shouldn't be the case for too much longer.

—Sean-Michael Yoder

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