netBloc vol. 2: DRM killed the music-product machine

bloc sonic™

DRM & Digital Music Pricing

Upgrade 'The White Album'... AGAIN!

The manipulators of the major music industry are masters of manipulation. They've had 100 years to perfect it to a science. Though, like anything else... even masters of any domain can slip up occasionally. Their blunder was going digital in the first place. Of course, the industry's short-sighted money grab turned out to be an uphill battle for it.

Throughout the history of recorded music sales, the music industry has found ways to get the music listener to buy new copies of their favorite albums. At first the promise was higher sonic fidelity. Each label touted their own propietary "hi-fidelity" format as their sales pitch. Then came "portable" audio formats — reel-to-reel, 8-track cartridges and compact cassettes. With these formats, you could play them in more "portable" devices, another reason to buy yet another copy. Forget about audio quality here, the consumer versions of these products weren't much better than vinyl. In the case of 8-tracks and cassettes, it was more of a downgrade from vinyl than it was an upgrade. Anybody who has listened to an 8-track can understand the annoyance of the track changing mid-song.

By the late 1970s, vinyl and cassettes sales had levelled off. There was no longer any reason to upgrade your copy of 'The White Album' by the Beatles. What was needed was a format that provided a sonic upgrade. Since the early 70s, digital audio recording technology existed and was first used by Denon and the BBC for select releases. By 1978, the technology had reached the pop world with the recording of Ry Cooder's Bop Till You Drop. In 1979 Philips and Sony set out to develop a digital audio disc format. 1982 saw the launch of the first major audio format since the 8-track's release in 1964. Unlike the release of the tape formats, this format could be said to be a sonic upgrade and one that "would last 100 years". The industry touted the CD as the be-all-end-all of audio quality. The public didn't immediately bite. It took until 1986 and the release of the Beatles catalog for the masses to finally find a collective reason to buy the then expensive audio equipment needed to play the shiny new discs. Finally, the music industry had us. We would go out to upgrade our copies of 'The White Album' yet again.

The digital audio age has proven to be one in which the music industry has consistently tried to screw the music fan. From the beginning of the CD, the music industry promised lower prices would come. They never came. In fact, prices have gone up in many cases. Although prices for CDs were steep, at least with the cost the industry incurred some sort of expenses – marketing, production, packaging and distribution – as an excuse for high prices.

For a short time, the industry attempted to find yet another format to replace the compact cassette – DAT. DAT was dumb. Why upgrade to it? Tape? Everday Joe was not going to bite for yet another TAPE format.

However, by the late 90s, fans could make perfect duplicates of their favorite albums. The music industry's blunder and lack of foresight became apparent. The race was on to find a "new" format. One that could also be protected in order to "protect the rights of copyright holders". The industry was beat to the punch by unsanctioned digital file formats. Particularly MP3. This became one of many new formats of choice... an unprotected one. However, not being a controlled format, nor one that the music industry developed, it was not THE format in the eyes of the industry. The formats they eventually offered – mini-disc, Super Audio CD and HDCD, all have failed to catch. When it comes down to the "new" format, users will decide in the digital age.

After years of fighting downloading, the music industry has officially

sanctioned digital music download sales. Though, any vendor who would like to sell digital music downloads, is required to wrap the lossy compressed files in a DRM (Digital Rights Management) protection scheme and apparently charge exuberant prices without complete album art. Dum..dee...dum.. here comes the Beatles remasters on iTunes. By your copy of 'The White Album' again.

.99 cents per track has become the de facto standard for selling digital downloads. iTunes has shown that average listeners are willing to be suckered again. Even independent artists/labels who are supposedly competing against the goliath that is the major music industry have joined the bandwagon. Independent music download stores are now charging .79-.99 cents per track. Why not? It's easy money. Let's see... no longer is there a distribution cost for the label, nor is there a need for packaging costs and marketing costs can be significantly lower. Wow... a fraction of the overhead that's incurred with CDs. Add to that the fact, that digital downloads are actually copies of the source file on a server (duplication costs? what? fugeddaboudit!), it's a wonder it took so long for the music industry to make the jump. Why is it that when music fans have more power than ever to choose what they listen to, they submit to such a controlled system?

The thing is, even a CD single can cost as low as 1.99 and that's with 2-3 tracks, packaging, distribution, duplication, marketing included in the overhead... and that still leaves room for profit. WTF?? I'm shocked that people have latched onto the .99 cent pricing scheme the way they have.

What happens when an alternative music industry blossoms? One in which labels provide their music in download form at the amazing price of free. One which derives it's livelihood from donations, sales of CDs on demand with complete packaging, merchandise and ticket sales? One which displays unheard of diversity and quality (at least unheard of in the major music industry)? What happens when the masses finally catch on to this alternative? What happens when an unreleased artist makes the major industry's music charts? Oh wait... the UK band Koopa just did it. What happens when that artist is on a netlabel..and their music is available for free download and is also Creative Commons licensed? Better yet, what happens when that blossoming industry decides it doesn't need the Billboard charts and comes up with it's own centralized charting system? Let's find out...

Peace
Michael Gregoire
Owner/Creator blocSonic.com

References

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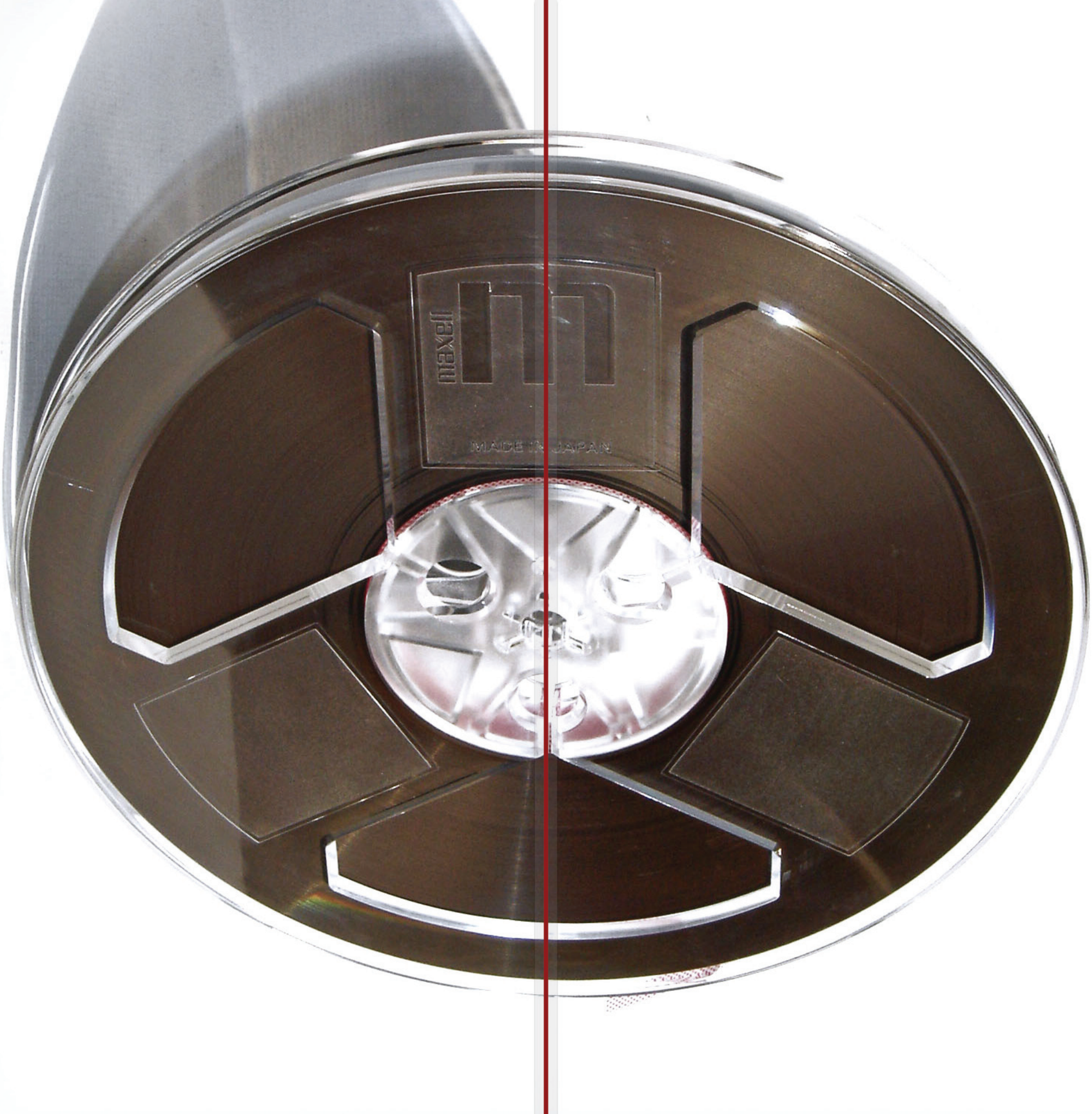
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_audio
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compact_disc
http://negativland.com/minidis.html


maxell
MADE IN JAPAN

2003/07/25

01 rockoutfit - disclaimer (2:39)

(from the 2003 tokyo trauma release 'You Are What's Happening Baby (Demo)' 20030925)

Written by: rockoutfit
Produced by: David Lichtenberger + rockoutfit
Performed by:
Lars Hillebrand: guitar, vocals
Philipp Heidemann: guitar
Thomas Herlth: bass
David Lichtenberger: drums, electronica
Recorded at: technopanda Steinhagen in 2003
Year: 2003
Release URL: http://www.tokyotrauma.com/list.php
Netlabel: tokyo trauma
Label URL: http://www.tokyotrauma.com
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/

disclaimer

A fusion of electronic and rock sensibilities merged so beautifully that you're going to fiend for a reunion of rockoutfit – at least we were left with this excellent 'demo' release, and what a 'demo' it is. From the sequenced opening to the final guitar riffs, disclaimer demands your attention. There's not a track that I've heard before that I can compare it to. Another example of why netlabels will be a force to be reckoned with in the foreseeable future.

rockoutfit

We found each other in 1998 amidst a lively DIY-scene in the small town Bielefeld, in the west of Germany. With singer Kerstin we recorded one and a half 7-inches and played a couple of shows under the name of 125, rue montmartre around Germany. After Kerstin left us to work in Hamburg in 2000, we started over as rockoutfit. we soon found out that we wanted to merge songwriting as a band and producing in terms of electronic music so we spent two years in rehearsal rooms and Davids bedroom studio never playing live.

In 2003 we ended up having this great demo (it is!) but heavily struggling with the effects of neglecting the rock-side of the band, so we kind of split and David and Thomas moved to Berlin.

tokyotrauma

tokyo trauma is a very small private netlabel for us and our friends. We don't sign artists from demos, the policy rather is to release all the great stuff by the people we know, so after many of us moved to different cities tokyo trauma's output went a little sporadic but we'll see what the future brings. but we'll see what the future brings.

ZENGINEERS
mental maps for large territories

02 zengineers - the legacy (3:36)
(from the 2006 iD.EOLOGY release 'Mental Maps for Large Territories EP' ID.031)

Written by: Pawel Sickinger + Julian van den Boom
Produced by: Pawel Sickinger + Julian van den Boom
Performed by:
Vocals + Lyrics: Pawel Sickinger
Beatz: Pawel Sickinger + Julian van den Boom
Recorded at: home
Year: 2006
Release URL: http://www.ideology.de/archives/000147.php
Netlabel: iD.EOLOGY
Artist URL: http://myspace.com/zengineers
Label URL: http://www.ideology.de/
License: http://www.ideology.de/archives/000019.php

the legacy

Hip-Hop, "Trip-Hop", "Acid-Rap"... whatever you want to call it... this smooth jam from the Zengineers recalls the sounds of Massive Attack with IMO a much tighter lyrical flow. It single-handedly made me revisit other releases of the so-called "Trip-Hop" subgenre. To me, this is essential HIP-HOP listening.

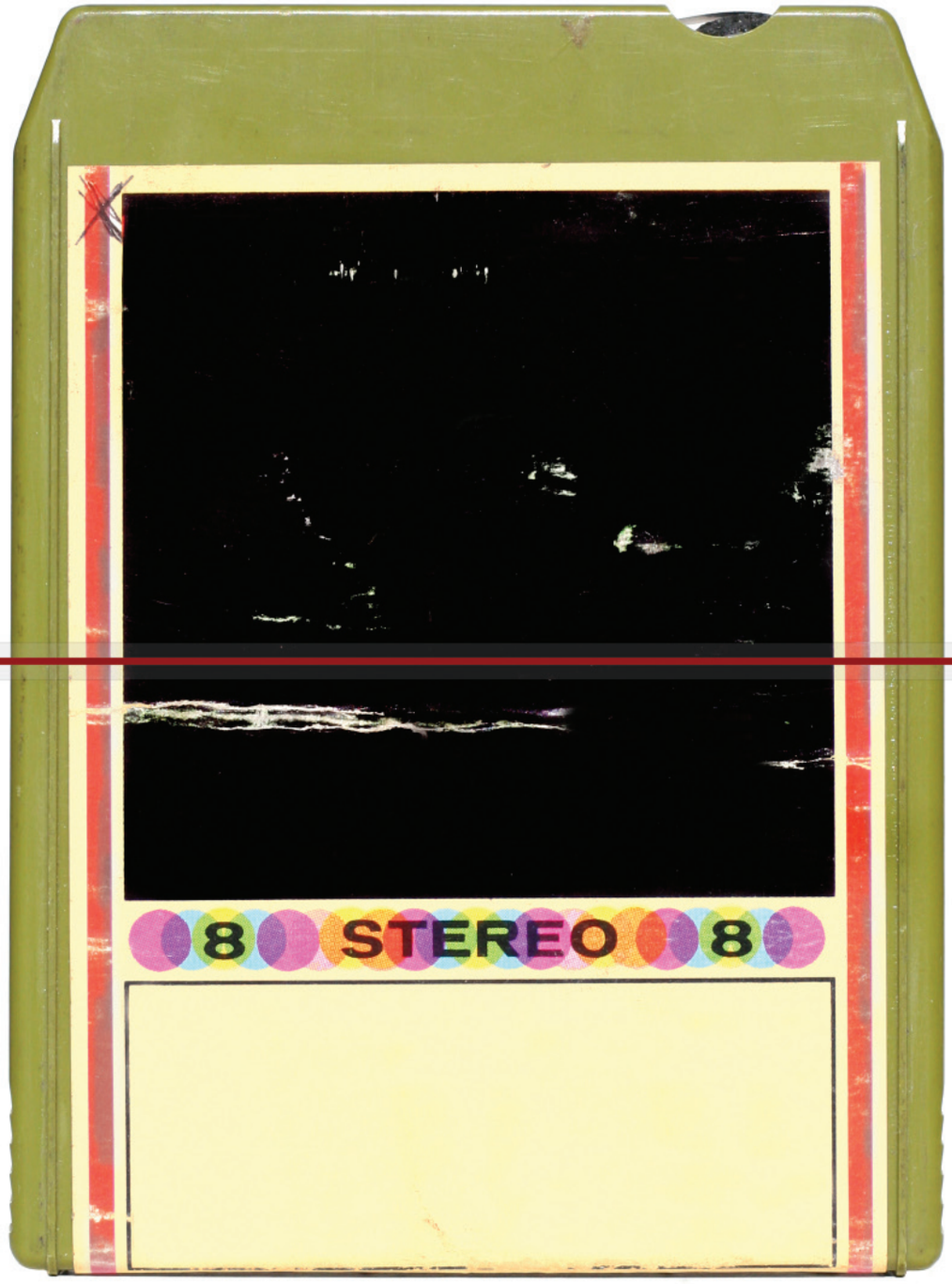
zengineers

The near future. A dark age has dawned upon mankind. Human cultural life has been taken over by soul- and faceless machines without anybody noticing. If anything from this period worth a cognitive notion shall survive, it is up to two men to stand up to the challenge. Down in the shades of the undercity, they are restlessly scheming, preparing themselves for the last stand of independent thinking. Over years of dedicated training, their skills have grown continuously and they are finally ready to step out into the open and face whatever the powers to be might send their way. And they are destined to shatter this world caught in a standstill down to the last brick...

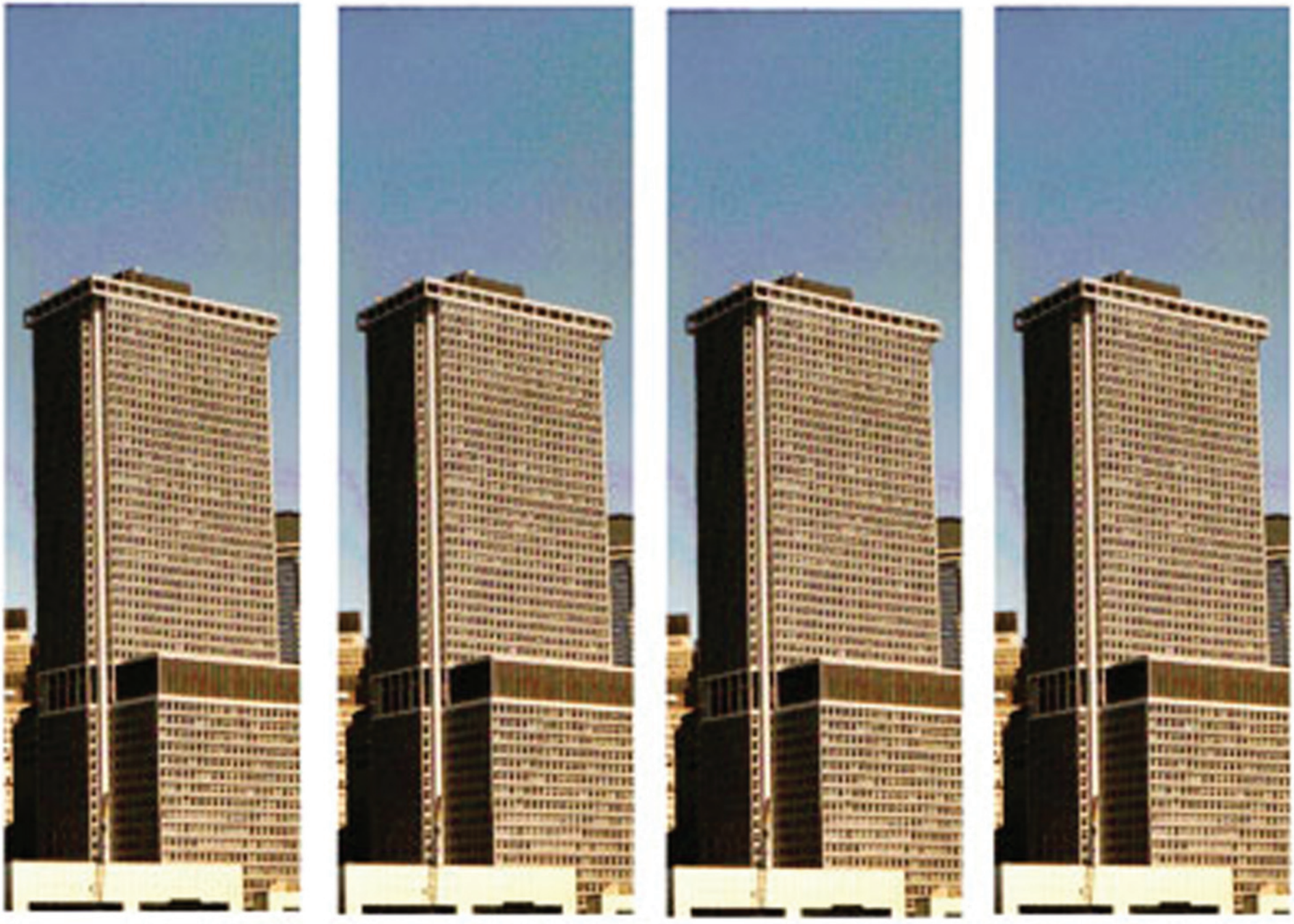
They go by the name of Zengineers, and if you should ever come across their work, you'd better listen with caution. Certain authorities have become well aware of the problem and are about to turn their full attention to it... there can only be two.

iD.EOLOGY

iD is for identity. iD.EOLOGY is a platform for identities. For iD.EOLOGY supplies artists with an iD in order to offer them a spot of their own within virtual space, an opportunity to publish their material. That's why our label strives to create a network, a communication-facility for musicians, graphics-artists, designers, lyricists, listeners and viewers. Simultaneously, the label is a display, offering free access to artistic content, sorted by iDs.


8 STEREO 8

CALYPSO



03 calypso - copacabana palace hotel (3:13)
(from the 2005 Pharmacom Records release 'Calypso' PCR009)

Written by: Alberto Gropello
Produced by: Alberto Gropello
Performed by:
Alberto Gropello
Vocals by: Patricia Lowe
Recorded at: Turin (Italy)
Year: 2005
Release URL: http://www.pharmacom-productions.de/pharmacom-rec/releases/pcr009online160.php
Netlabel: Pharmacom Records
Label URL: http://www.pharmacom-productions.de/pharmacom-rec
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/deed-music

copacabana palace hotel

The artist name, Calypso describes the sound best. Other things come to mind, tropicalia, sultry brazilian sunsets and walks on sandy beaches. Traditional calypso sounds with an ever so subtle touch of electronica for taste. Beautiful track.

calypso

My name is Alberto di Gropello. I presently live in Turin (Italy) and have lived in Paris, Brussels and Switzerland. I'm half French and half Italian. I studied literature in Italy for four years, which has been a great asset towards writing my own lyrics. To date I have written more than 100 songs, of which two of my songs have been included in compilations: "Don't Look Back" for Avventure Soniche (Fridge Italia) across Italy last year and "Encore une fois" for Philips Expanium, across Europe two years ago. A famous Italian band made a cover of one of my songs "Private Paradise".

pharmacom records

Pharmacom Records is an german underground label. The label stands for quality music from unknown (and known) artists all over the world. A platform to go new ways in music production and genres! We are not only electronic we are mindopen for all!

SLINKY / XXX EP

04 frivolous vs djg - kisses (.v3 edit) (5:37)
(from the 2005 Epsilonlab release 'Slinky/XXX EP' EPS12)

Written by: Daniel Gardner
(Sample from JIMMIE RODGER'S version of 'Kisses Sweeter Than Wine' circa 1958. Originally written and performed by 'The Weavers'.)
Produced by: Daniel Gardner
Performed by: FRIVOLOUS (aka Daniel Gardner): Electronics, Nord Keyboard, Electro-Magnetic Knife.
Recorded at: Home in Montreal late fall 2004
Year: 2005
Release URL: http://www.epsilonlab.com/main/releases/details.php?lang=en&id=37&t=1&p=2
Netlabel: Epsilonlab
Label URL: http://www.epsilonlab.com
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/2.0
Fact:
Performed acoustically at the '2005 Festival de Jazz de Montréal' with Richard Le Gendre on Contrabass, and Alain Mercure on Drums.

found deeply inspiring during his school days. Suddenly, he was able to develop something from the piano lessons which hitherto had only served to discipline him that was at once challenging, intensive and enjoyable. During the mid-nineties, de discovered dance music and soon began to dj at all the relevant afterhours in Vancouver. During this time, the city's club scene tended to be dominated by the more "obliging" US-house, which had a tendency towards vulgarity; the new European minimal sound was looked down upon by the audience as being poncy art music. Thus Daniel chose the alias Frivolous to smuggle this new sound into the clubs.

At first he was hesitant to release his music. Contributions to compilations on Canadian labels gained him an early modest reputation. When he finally sent demos to five renowned German labels, three of them wanted to release his music straightaway. Since 2002, Gardner has released more than ten EPs.

kisses (.v3 edit)

In a class of it's own. Fun and a bit strange all at once. This version of Kisses has two phases. The opening phase gets you in the mood with a snippet of what's to come. After a short segue, the second phase commences the fun, sampling Jimmie Rodger's 'Kisses Sweeter Than Wine'. Instantaneously infectious.

frivolous vs djg

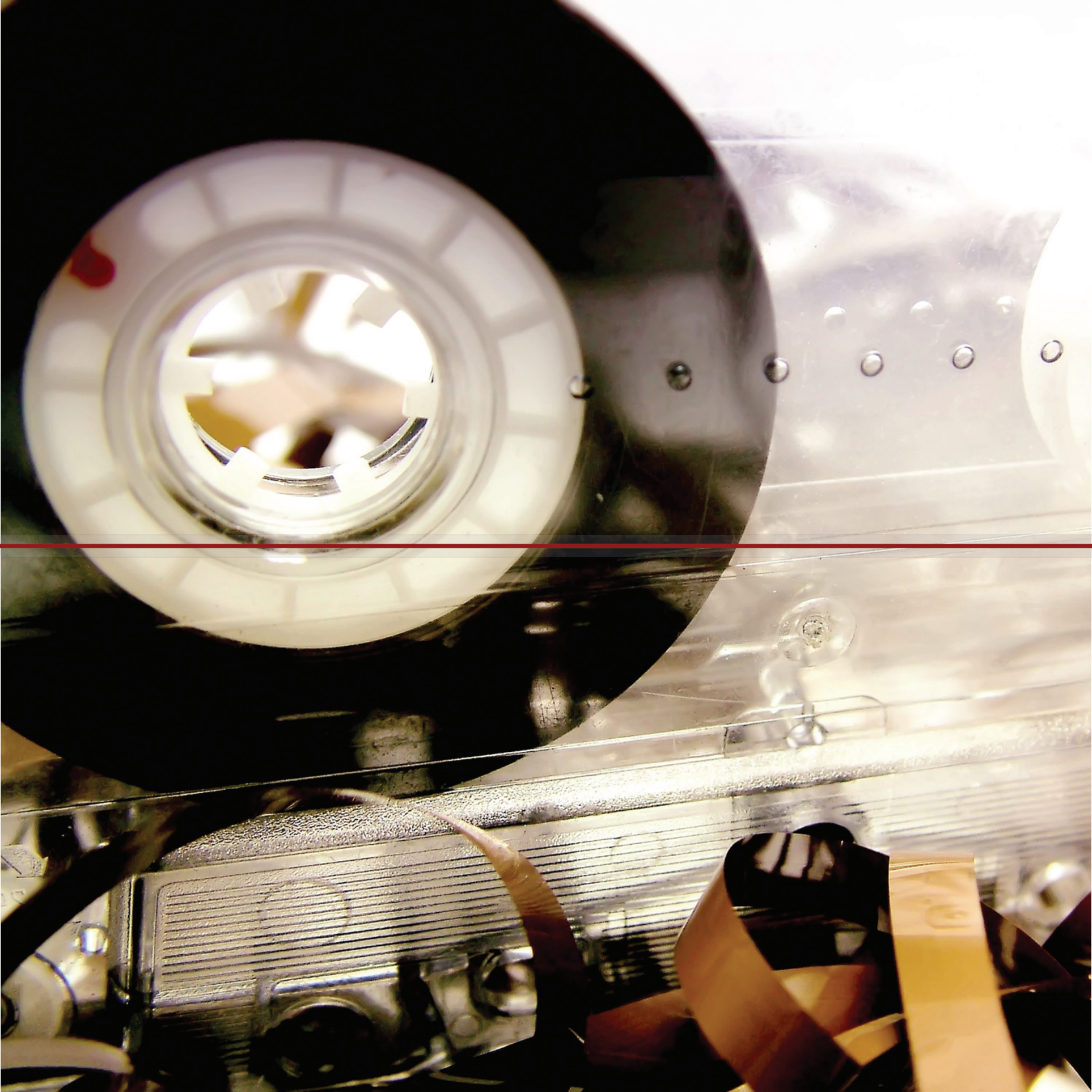
Frivolous is a protagonist of the minimal house scene. That is his reputation. Or rather, that has been his reputation so far. Now he has transported this sound to a place where it could become of interest for a wider audience and transcend the circle of insiders who up to now were his main audience.

"Electronic Music Composition" was the only subject which young Daniel

epsilonlab

Epsilonlab is a Montreal-based audio-visual label dedicated to promotion of innovative electronic music and digital art. Releases include CDs, DVDs and a constantly-evolving repertoire of downloadable audio-visual files. Epsilonlab is particularly known for integrating music with visuals during live performances and on DVD.

Founded in December of 2000, Epsilonlab was initially a collective of musicians, VJs, designers and contemporary dancers devoted to live audio-visual experiments in immersive environments. The collective's "Group Therapies" became something of a legend in the Montreal scene and helped establish a vibrant community of like-minded VJs and electronic music producers.



BLACK SCORPION DUB
by Finn The Giant
GIANT SOUNDS #007 1. BLACK SCORPION DUB (4.13) 2. PEACE PIPE (2.34)

05 finn the giant - black scorpion dub (4:08)
(from the 2006 Giant Sounds release 'Black Scorpion Dub' Net7 007)

Written, produced and performed by: Finn The Giant
Recorded at: Giant Sounds Studio
Year: 2006
Release URL: http://www.giantsounds.com/Net7/007.htm
Netlabel: Giant Sounds
Label URL: http://www.giantsounds.com
License: All net releases are in hight quality mp3 format (high, variable bitrates). They are free to download but you have to ask permission if you want to redestribute, sample, edit or use them in any other commercial way.

Distributed with permission

black scorpion dub

Electronic dub reggae at it's best. The bouncing rhythm and memorable melody is impossible to resist. This track reinforces my belief that some of the best reggae/dub in the world, is being released via netlabels.

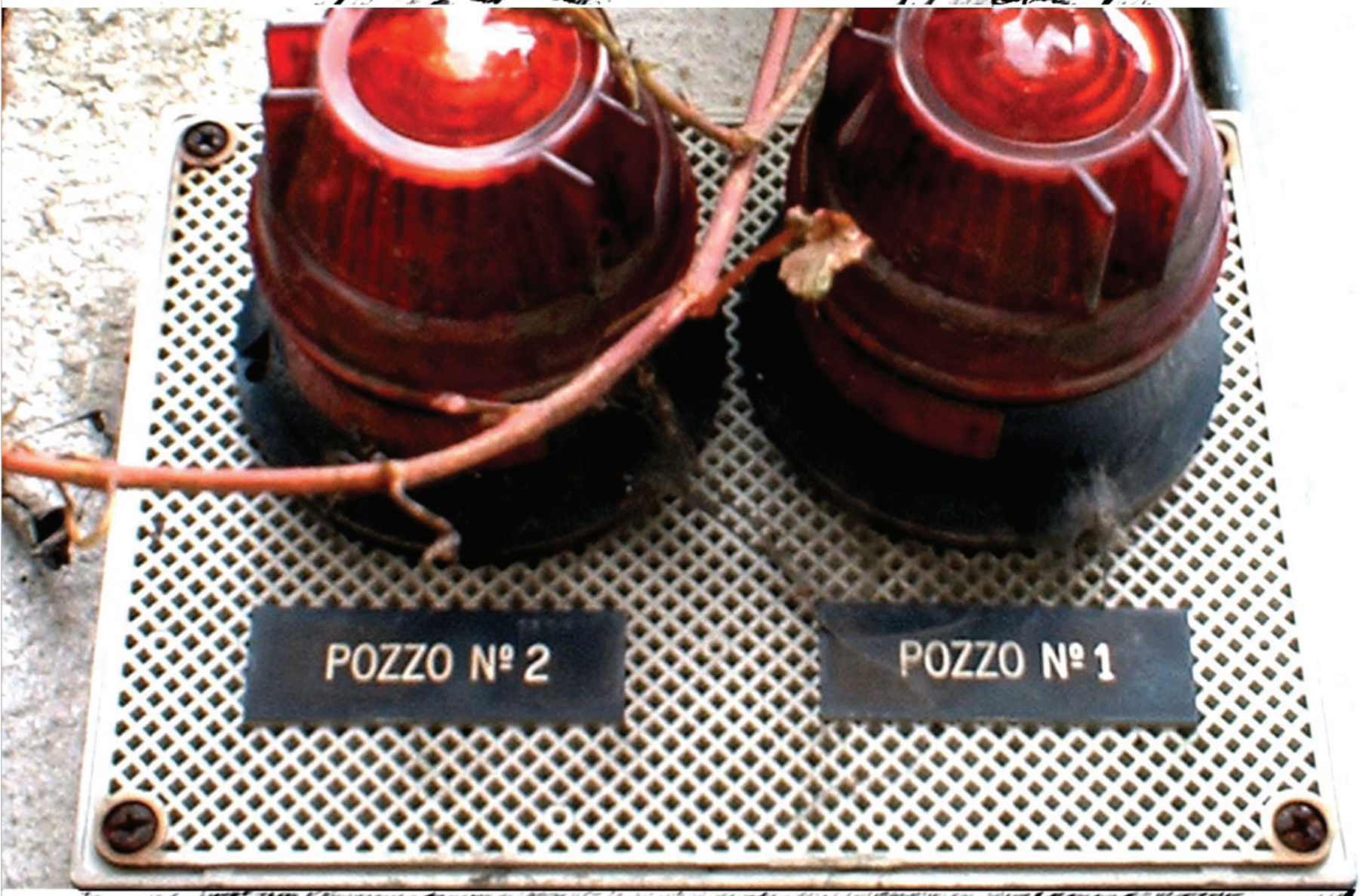
finn the giant

Founder of the Giant Sounds label and main riddim builder and dub mixer in the Giant Sounds studio. Determined to make fat, heavy music that still got soul. Started experimenting with dub techniques in high school together with some friend, and continued on his own for many years in the persuit of a giant sound. When he found it he launched the Giant Sounds label and started releasing his own productions along with remixes of some of Sweden's top reggae acts.

giant sounds

Giant Sounds is all about heavy and uplifting reggae music.

[dK]



pain provider

06 [dK] - painprovider / k06 mix (insert coin edit) (3:40)
(from the 2004 Stromklang release 'Painprovider' SK007)

Written by: [dK] ([K], [dixan], [captain])
Produced by: [dK]
Performed by: [dK]
[K] (vocals, sequencing, mixing, composition)
[dixan] (sequencing, composition, bass guitars)
[captain] (all guitars)
Equipment: Renoise sequencing, Steinberg Cubase, Steinberg LM4, GRM Tools, Terratec EWS88, Hoontech AudioDSP24, Rode microphones, AKG headphones, DI-port preamp, Ibanez guitars and bass guitars.
Recorded at: Indies Lab, the [dK] home studio.
Year: 2004
Release URL: http://www.stromklang.de/
Netlabel: Stromklang
Artist URL: http://www.endk.com/
Label URL: http://www.stromklang.de/
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/1.0/

The foundation of STROMKLANG is our answer to the ongoing development on the music market - including the discussion about piracy, CD-sales, charts, etc.

In the wake of its Net label predecessors, STROMKLANG will further promote the idea of free music over the internet as an alternative to the current music industry situation. Feel free to look/hear around and anyone who makes music and would like to have his/her works published here is invited to contact us. STROMKLANG, literally meaning sound out of electrical power, came from this very idea - presenting music which was created primarily by electrical means. But furthermore, STROM in this context also means flow, referring to a flow of creativity. We don't feel committed to one exclusive type of music. In most cases distinguishing between them is a fruitless effort anyway. But, in order to try a vague indication: Whoever makes music like ambient, chill-out, trip-hop, electro, wave, gothic or alternative may feel encouraged to contact us. We won't wince at electical guitars either.

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painprovider / k06 mix (insert coin edit)

Wonderfully dark electronic rock that immediately brings to mind "Music for the Masses" era Depeche Mode... only darker. Painprovider has a sound that approaches industrial but adds the catchiness of pop music... but this isn't radio-friendly fluff... check it.

[dk]

[dK] is an electronic dark rock band born in 2001. The band's vision has been bright since the very beginning: compose complex music, with non trivial aural impact, yet fluent and emotional when it comes to lyrics.

stromklang

STROMKLANG is a Net label from the most northern part of Germany.

When it comes down to it, it's our personal taste that decides, what we are going to publish.

LONG PLAY
ECLP 40556
AN ALL INDIA RADIO RECORDING

ALEKSI VIRTA MEETS TORSTI AT THE SPACE LOUNGE

07 aleksi virta - dragons (2:45)

(from the 2005 Monotonik release '...Meets Torsti At The Space Lounge' MTK123)

Written, produced and performed by: Aleksi Virta
Recorded at: Zion15
Year: 2005
Release URL: http://www.mono211.com/content/releases/mtkmp123.html
Netlabel: Monotonik
Label URL: http://www.mono211.com
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/1.0/

dragons

Dragons is all about adventure. Fast-paced and so very cinematic! I don't think about dragons however, car chases come to mind, voltron and spy films of the 60s. What a unique sound and an instantly memorable track!

aleksi virta

Aleksi Virta is an intergalactic secret agent. Constantly striving to save the world from Torsti and his evil minions. Travelling around the galaxy with his sound system, scraping up sounds to make you happy.

monotonik

Monotonik is a net.music.label that exclusively releases music online in the mp3 format. All of our releases are freely downloadable and distributable under a Creative Commons license that allows free non-commercial distribution, and we've been releasing .mp3 and .mod files online since May 1996. The label was founded by Simon 'h0l' Carless as an outlet for talented electronic musicians who weren't getting the attention they deserved.

microtonner

sub zero

LARIDAE
021

08 microtonner - frequency (3:49)
(from the 2003 Laridae release 'Sub Zero' laridae021)

Written by: microtonner in cooperation with lynxx
Produced by: microtonner
Performed by: microtonner (paul/martin)
Recorded at: microtonner
Year: 2003
Release URL: http://www.laridae.at/releases.php?id=24&start=10
Netlabel: Laridae
Artist URL: http://www.microtonner.com/
Label URL: http://www.laridae.at/
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/de/

frequency

An electronic adventure in it's own right... add to that, crunchy electric guitar and embedded distorted radio transmissions and you have yourself one hell of a boundary-smashing monster of a track. This track's sound only serves to emphasize the TON in Microtonner.

microtonner

MICROTONNER are PAUL PROLL and MARTIN BAUMANN from Austria. The roots of this 1997 founded band are not electronic industrial sounds, like on there latest works, they started very classical with bass, drums and guitar.

As a long-term cooperation with other musicians failed, microtonner had to change their tactics. By gradually electronic assembling they started to compensate the disadvantage of a two men business.

The consequence was a massive change of sound. Because of this development and a lot of hard work, Microtonner became a live-able project. Apart from music, photography, video and graphic design, became more important for them.

laridae

[la-ri-dä] is a netlabel, that means we distribute music via the internet. and we do this for free. why? because it's the best and easiest way to make YOU listen to it.

We try to provide a wide range of styles, everything from idm/indietronics to rock/industrial, defining ourselves as a kind of counterpart to the other 95% of netlabels, which are providing hardly anything but minimal dub-house stuff.

The story: The label was founded in spring 2004 but most of the artists got to know each other earlier in the fm4-soundpark (an online music community thing made up by the local radio-station FM4). but as the possibilities to release music there are limited to a single track once a month or so, we decided to make something on our own. so we founded a netlabel, laridae (named after a track by photophob).

giraffe

09 giraffe - a lot of history in a very short time (6:18)

(from the 2005 12rec. release 'giraffe LP' 12REC026)

Written, Produced and Performed by: J. Gardner
Recorded at: Santa Cruz, California, US
Year: 2005
Release URL: http://www.12rec.net/Release_Giraffe_026.htm
Netlabel: 12rec.
Artist URL: http://www.myspace.com/giraffe
Label URL: http://www.12rec.net
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/

a lot of history in a very short time

12rec. delivers yet another classic. What starts out with metal guitar riffs and an almost 80s rock sound, turns into a beautifully moody indie rock song. Giraffes' mellow lyricism only reinforces the mood. The soft insistent back beat keeps things going while the subtle multilayered melodies add beauty and depth.

giraffe

Giraffe, that is James Gardner. He is from California, USA, likes the beach and the sun, but he loves it most when sea and sky merge into monotonous shades of grey- a certain mood you will also find in his songs.

12rec.

12rec. is a German based netlabel that has been releasing music as creative common licensed MP3's and as handcrafted CD-R's for just over two years now. Their releases span a wide range of styles that include, but are not limited to, post-rock, electronica (in the broadest sense), rap, instrumental and electronic hip-hop, pop (in its seemingly infinite variations), and even folk. There is a strong leaning towards music that is, in general, both poignant and experimental.

VERNON · LENOIR
ENTER
4AWK!

10 vernon lenoir - the things they say (3:50)
(from the 2006 WM Recordings release 'YAWK!' WM040)

Written, performed and produced by: Vernon LeNoir
Recorded at: Grillstube Studios, Berlin
Year: 2006
Release URL: http://www.wmrecordings.com/releases/wm040.htm
Netlabel: WM Recordings
Artist URLs:
http://www.vernonlenoir.com/
http://www.myspace.com/vernonlenoir
Label URL: http://www.wmrecordings.com
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/

the things they say

Eclectic sample-based electronica meets the dance floor, meets hip-hop, meets your ears and greets them with a huge kiss... they'll be saying great things about this jam.

vernon lenoir

Vernon LeNoir owns a zebra. He likes to be referred as "The Albano & Romina Power Of The Balkans". He loves samples.

wm recordings

WM Recordings is a netlabel operating from Heerlen, the Netherlands. WM Recordings brings you music that is a little "different". We do not specialize in one style, but instead bring you exciting sounds that you're not likely to find anywhere else. We started in autumn 2004 and have released more than 50 free CDs since then. While our catalogue of free releases expands we also release music on iTunes and eMusic.

Design by: Michael Gregoire for nvzion.com
Site powered by: milkWare

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TOKYO TRAUMA