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Sunday, February 04, 2007

Aaron Spectre Interview: "Sometimes You Have To Abandon All Previous Work and Start From Scratch."



Aaron Spectre really doesn't demand much of an introduction for regular readers of this blog. His unique blend of on the fly mixing sees him deconstruct tracks from across the musical spectrum through Ableton and then complement them live with his own programmed loops, junglist horns and brutalist breakcore rattles roaring away in the background.

In Aaron Spectre mode his DJ sets set venues alight before firing your head with re-mixers and producers to scan the net for, as Drumcorps he uproots his own musical background in an astonishing flurry of metal tinged guitar, pained vocals and pounding laptop electronics. Here he talks to

About

Soundtracksforthem specialises in iconoclastic takes on culture, politics, and more shite from the underbelly of your keyboard. A still-born group blog with a recent surge of different contributors but mainly maintained by James R. Big up all the contributors and posse regardless of churn out rate: Kyle Browne, [Reeuq](#), Cogsy, Chief, X-ie phader/Krossie, Howard Devoto, Dara, Ronan and Mark Furlong. Send your wishes and aspirations to antropheat@gmail.com

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Soundtracksforthem about his own background, the move to Berlin, relentless touring and making music.

You've a Converge sticker on one of your mid-keyboards, do you come from a punk/hardcore background? If so, how does a punk end up mashing things up ragga styl-ee and what drew you away from hardcore and into electronic production?

I grew up in the middle of Massachusetts, outside Boston. A lot of what I saw in the all ages shows resonated with me and still does. I wouldn't say I was a punk or hardcore kid or what not, as I've never been into the whole fashion part of it but I have my local favorites: Converge, Cave In, Sam Black Church, anything with honesty and fire! I learned a lot during those days that still keeps me going.

Around age 15-16 I was playing drums in a few small hardcore bands, but I was also first getting into producing electronic music - I'd sneak into my school's MIDI lab during lunch and bang out tunes on the DX7 / Mac Classic. I discovered Orbital through a local record store's tiny electronic music section. I saw the Orb play on their Orblivion tour and a whole new world opened up. As soon as high school was over with most of us moved away for university & that pretty much finished off the band. Now out of the country and in the city, there were lots of other musical influences floating around. It seemed like a natural progression to start getting into electronic music... Jungle, Drum & Bass, Ambient... strange weirdness and crazy nomads. Many Drumcorps fans have followed a similar route in their music tastes... punk / hardcore early on, developing a taste for electronic music a little later, and now rediscovering their roots.

What made you make the famous move ala Hawtin and skip over to Berlin?

New York City had given me what I needed and it was time to move on. New York was (and still is) an awful place to be creative, for certain kinds of people. It's a great place to learn, to see crazy high-end awesome stuff, but not a good place to focus, too distracting and too expensive. In Berlin, now that I wasn't spending mad cash on living expenses, I was able to invest in proper music gear... sit down and develop, figure out how to make that sound I'd been hearing in my head for years.

Are your sets all on the fly mixing, or do you set out with a vague idea of what you are going to play, aresome tracks given the Spectre pre-treatment at home and then hopped off the laptop to the venue's speaker system?

Most of the Aaron Spectre set is on the fly. I have a good idea of what combinations work, but I like to leave it open to the feel of the night, what's appropriate to play at that time.

Just on production again, some would say breakcore is the new punk - does your music and breakcore more generally contain the DIY ethos of the punk scene?

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Breakcore is sorta the new punk, but it's different this time around. I like the slogan Droon (from Breakcore Gives Me Wood) has put on his MIDI guitar, "WOOD IS THE NEW METAL"! The Wood crew have the right idea, with their other slogan.. "my subculture can kick your subculture's ass anytime 24/7" It's not about subdividing into a little insular clan, it's about enjoying the music. Breakcore is raw, powerful, and pure. The music moves people and makes them totally freak out! If that was what punk was about, it's the new punk. I wasn't around in the original punk days so I don't really know, and so much has been distorted by now. Nowadays there's a growing right-wing police state, overbearing fear, similar conditions to the 1980s reagan days.... this oppressive political climate influences the music somewhat, maybe there are some parallels.

You've got to be DIY now, it's the way everyone operates. There are a million different niches and flavors. All you have as an artist is your word and the quality of your work. I like that, it keeps things pure. Those things are all you ever have really, but in a totally DIY environment you never forget it. I imagine one could lose sight of stuff like that once too many other people get involved...

In an XLR8R interview Parasite claimed that people like yourself and The Bug all have a political message to convey, aside from shitting all over copy right laws - what is this message?

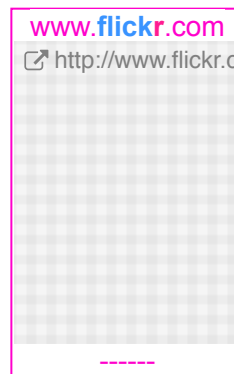
I can't speak for The Bug or anyone else, but my root message is one of self-reliance and self-criticism. Our heads are filled with so much marketing nonsense by an early age... talk to any 7 year old and you'll find them repeating a host of brand names, slogans, whatever they saw on TV. You need to clear that out, dig deeper and evaluate, think for yourself, LIVE for yourself. This can mean different things for different people, but the world would be a better place if people sorted themselves out. The first step to not being deceived into having false goals and ideals is to be honest with yourself. Many other political motives stem from this...

Where would you advise heads wanting to throw themselves into making/playing music to start?

Develop your tastes and find some good mentors, older people who can give you pointers. If you're making music for DJs, start mixing vinyl. It will give you perspective on what works and what doesn't. Get as many gigs as you can. Play everywhere, take chances, don't hold back. Don't wait for anyone to "discover" you, those days are long gone. Stay honest and make the music you want to hear. The tech is relatively easy to learn, it's that inner vision that matters.

Did Pitchfork [linking](#) to your Bastardmix do much for you or do you think your popularity is more due to the hard slog of touring and working?

Every bit of press helps, but there's no substitute for that hard touring. Just gotta go out there and do it...



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Irish Blogs

Who's coming out with the best tunes in your opinion lately?

Dev/Null's new record is amazing, he just destroyed it at the Wasted 4 fest in Berlin. Elemental, Vex'd, Search & Destroy, Toasty Boy, Rotator, Cardopusher, DJ C for electronic stuff... Converge's new album is amazing. The new Isis is great ... I can't wait to hear the new Aarktica..

there's so much good music coming out right now it's hard to keep track of it all.

With you using Drumcorps tracks in the end of most "Aaron Spectre" mixes, I'm confused as to why you saw the need for two distinct personas?

Aaron Spectre sets are more geared for dancing, club music. I change those sets up to suit the mood of the venue and time of the night, and the tone doesn't generally get dark & depressing. it's about dancing.... I do get a lot of requests for Drumcorps tunes so I tend to play a track or two in my sets if I can.

Drumcorps sets are strictly metal / breakcore. It's a performance presenting an idea, and it doesn't adapt as much to the mood of the place... more like a band. Drumcorps has a lot of darkness and brooding, bad feelings, anger, tension, resolution, emotions that don't go well in dance music. I use live guitar in the Drumcorps sets and it's a different thing, you'll see the difference at the Dublin gig.

The Lifewepromote and Bastard mixes seemed to define the general direction of your gigs over the past while, does the recent Reptiledub mix signal the way you'll be delivering things at future shows?

The studio mixes, like Reptile Dub, are more a reflection of the new tunes I like and the way things are developing. Sometimes that is reflected in the live sets but not always. I love dubstep and I've been following it for quite some time now, so i had to put it on a mix. Playing live is a different beast though, and it's best to approach each show on its own merits. It's not good to plan things out too much before a show - it's far better to just have a lot of options available and then go for whatever works at the night.

At a recent London gig, I had such an occasion. I had just bought a lot of new dubstep 12"s and ripped them into the computer and finished up a few of my own, and I was all stoked to play a deep dark dubstep set in the heart of south London but by the time my set rolled around the previous DJs (who were also stoked to play their new finds) had run the gamut of all the current dubstep releases! Every single one of them... it was the peak of the night and I couldn't be getting all halfsteppy, so I just threw out all I had prepared and played some jungle & breakcore & more uptempo music. The crowd exploded and things went great. Sometimes you have to abandon all previous work and start from scratch.

A mate heard a rumour that you and Scotch Egg were starting a grindcore band with Bongra - anything in this?

We are doing a project together, and I'm doing the drum programming. It's nice to be just a drummer again... but as far as forming a live band that's a little far fetched, as we all live in different cities.

The Drumcorps shows on Youtube look like carnage, with the next Dublin gig being a punk versus breakcore night i imagine it'll be just as mental. How have you rated your other gigs in Dublin? Doesn't the constant touring ever tire you?

Touring is rough, but you develop tricks to get by. The worst part of touring is the endless downtime and waiting. I love to read though, so the quiet time suits me fine. The hardest thing is

finding a steady stream of good books. Dublin has always been one of my favorite places to play, such good enthusiastic people there. It's always been mental - can't wait!

Aaron Spectre will be playing !Kaboogie in the Underground at Kennedies alongside Prince Kong, The Banker, Nihil, PCP and Richie Kaboogie on Friday Feb 16th. To get yourself in the mood pop over to the [Kaboogie Myspace](#) for a gawk at some Drumcorps videos. Meanwhile his own [website](#) is brimming with mixes and mp3s to pack out whatever Gigerwatt it is you play your music on. Watch an interview on Drumcorps over [here](#).

Labels: [Aaron Spectre](#), [Breakcore](#), [Interviews](#), [Music](#), [Punk](#)

posted by antrophe @ 5:49 PM

Comments:

Nice one

posted by  Clare : 12:41 AM

great interview dude. I like the pre-gig interview thing you've got going on.

The Newbridge travelling Circus appreciates your work..

posted by  Niall : 2:38 PM

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