

## Aaron Spectre – Building The Panopticon EP

Words by Mat Taylor



**Label:**

**EXE**

**Released:**

**12/12/2016**

**Rating:**

**4/5**

*The latest release from the EXE Project sees the notorious Aaron Spectre, best known for his Drumcorps project, with the Building the Panopticon EP. The Ruckuz gives you a track-by-track breakdown of the release, and we have an exclusive premiere of 'Replicate and Survive'.*



Aaron Spectre is internationally renowned for his Drumcorps project which saw him mashing up classic metal and hardcore punk guitar with brutal amens and kick drums. He has also carved out a fearsome reputation for his hyper speed jungle sets and brutal breakcore releases on labels like Ad Noiseum and many others. Since then, he's changed direction considerably. In fact, this release on the newly formed EXE project, based in Manchester, England, will surprise a lot of people. Here's my track by track breakdown.

Title track 'Building the Panopticon' introduces the theme of dystopian unrest and waning civil liberties. A military sounding snare pattern builds steadily towards an explosive drop full of snarling, chunky bass and skittish, spine shattering snare drums. Fans of Current Value's earlier sound will love this track. It sounds broken, distorted, and aggressive, yet somehow incredibly clean and digitally crisp at the same time. Aaron has clearly taken a lot of time over the mixdown here and unlike so many breakcore artists, he's managed to create a huge, rich sound without compromising the raw, violent essence of the track. Probably the hardest track on the EP, this is everything good hard drum and bass should be. It has that staccato, drum solo quality that Donny and many others are so fond of but it also has the same kind of digitally rendered shimmer that characterises the rest of the tracks on this release.

Next in line is 'The Void Which Binds.' This is a straight up stepper with an epic sounding intro, complete with a distorted monologue that talks of a terrible, sci-fi future. The dramatic droning sounds create that sense of tension we all crave before the bass kicks in. The drop is absolute carnage and as many would expect, skates the fine line between drum and bass and breakcore. Unlike a lot Aaron's earlier work, there is neither a distorted guitar chord nor a screamed ragga sample to be found. If anything, this is closer to the kind of music Current Value has been making recently, but with an added level of restless, fidgety precision that keeps things interesting. Although this track would mix perfectly well with most drum and bass out there, its brutal switch ups and numerous break patterns make it something to be categorised in its own genre. (Digital Dystopian Tear Out, maybe?) Sorry. I'll go and think about what I've just written. It's hard drum and bass at its most experimental and it's absolutely brilliant.

'Robot Future' continues the hyper modernity that seems to characterise the ethos of the EXE project. With a crisp, simple, kick and snare intro accompanied by a list of robotic rules taken from Issac Asimov, this definitely sounds like the music of machines gone bad. The drop is bizarre. It's twisted, bleeping noise carries us through for a few bars until the full weight of the savage bassline erupts underneath stuttering kicks and bleeps. With a beat that swings and skips, this would even sit quite comfortably against some of the noisier jump up that's out there at the moment.

'Replicate and Survive' is up next and is more robotic, neuro driven darkness that will satisfy the salivating fans of all that is dark and futuristic in drum and bass. The short intro describes the year 2046. A time when we will all probably be genetically modified thumbs attached to a brain in a jar with lidless eyes that stare at the perpetual blinking of a screen...or we might just have faster broadband and fewer trees, I'm not sure. This is my favourite track on the EP. It's big, buzzing bass line, high pitched, mangled digital effects and weighty kick drum will give it all the impact needed to destroy dance floors. The track continues to evolve as a different bass line kicks in around a third of the way through. At this point we are transported back to the glory days of 2001 when dystopian sci-fi nightmares were cool the first time around. The busy, techno driven percussion and bass sounds like an updated but very different version of what Konflikt and Stakka et al were doing back in the day. If you love neuro, you need this.

EXE are clearly trying to do something different from other drum and bass labels; indeed they are deliberately avoiding using genre names in order to allow them to have a wider scope in terms of the styles they can release. This EP comes with a carefully designed 'user guide' which fits perfectly with the label's name and concept. Everything about this crew screams of a nightmarish future where machines rule and humans fight for survival. Give it a few years under our current crop of world leaders and these terrifying sonic tales will be the daily soundtrack to our lives – or maybe we'll just have bigger hard drives and more old people, it could go either way.

*Building the Panopticon is released on the 12th of December 2016 on EXE. Check out the EXE Project here (<http://exe-project.com/>), and Aaron Spectre's diverse set of talents here (<https://drumcorps.co/>).*

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