

Chapter Fifteen: The Corporate Loom

“Emancipate your selves from mental slavery

None but yourselves can free our minds

Have no fear for atomic energy

Cause none a them can stop the time

How long shall they kill our prophets

While we stand aside and look

Some way it’s just a part of it

We’ve got to fulfill the book

Won’t you help to sing, these songs of freedom

Cause all I ever had, redemption songs...

Redemption Songs”

- Bob Marley

Redemption Song

Hip Hop music, sometimes known as Rap, was developed in the mid-1970s by several luminaries including Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc and others whose names have either been forgotten or heralded by time. It was a DJ driven culture in the beginning which grew out of a blend of Disco, R&B and Spoken Word. Its beginnings

were very much like that of House music a decade later, an artistic reaction to the institutional dance music and part of a complete culture that included graffiti art, break-dance and reactionary dress. Some attribute its invention to DJ Kool Herc, one of the Jamaican who first brought the Jamaican tradition of 'toasting' to New York turntables in the late 1960s, which involved reciting improvised rhymes over instrumental sections of his reggae records. Some attribute it to DJ Hollywood in Los Angeles, who did the same sort of experimentation over Disco records in 1972- in albeit a much more publicized attempt. A lot of people attribute it to Grandmaster Flash and his first Hip Hop performances in New York City, for actually popularizing and refining the experimentation. The question of origination is much less clear than it is in House music, though this is not unusual as throughout history the credit for many important discoveries has been split between several different people. Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace share credit for the Theory of Evolution. The Nordic people, a secret Vatican exploration dated in 1485, some believe the Chinese, and Christopher Columbus all share in the credited history of discovering the New World. Copernicus, Aristotle-era philosophers and the ancient Egyptian thinker Eratosthenes all share in their observations that the world was round.

Where dance music and Hip Hop, both initially DJ driven art forms, diverged was the point that while dance music- initially quite vocals driven- evolved into an instrumental genre, Hip Hop focused on the vocals of their MCs. Afrika Islam, Grammy award winning Hip Hop DJ and son of Afrika Bambaataa, explains, "The role of the DJ, like it or not, is no longer the center of the Hip Hop universe. The rise of video and the so

called 'Hip Hop as new media', the lost art of finding new music and a fear of playing music other than Rap has killed the DJ's power to make and break... He is now a human record player". MCs and vocalists are occasionally used in Electronica music, but in Hip Hop it is the MC that gets nearly all the publicized credit for creating the music.

However this has had several effects on Hip Hop. DJ Jazzy Jeff, who won the first ever Grammy award for Hip Hop with his MC Will Smith in 1987 and who played the character of 'Jazz' on Will Smith's hit sitcom 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air', went over this very subject. "When I started out (Hip Hop) was so new that people really took care of it. We have lost a lot of our culture, the cornerstones of Hip Hop. The cornerstones are now the MCs and the producers, we lost a lot of the values. I do still like a lot of the stuff that's out there, but I grew up in an era that I worked a job, I mowed lawns to buy myself some turntables in high school so I could DJ for free. Paying dues is not that you do certain things, it's just that you work very hard to get there- this is lost. When someone gets signed, that is like the first day of your job- you just got hired, what makes you think now is the time to sit back and relax? ...my attitude has changed over the years, I started out doing it for the love of it. And then I wanted to make a lot of money at it, get all those status making things, but the problem is that once you've got it all you have to figure out a way to keep it. Eventually I realized that I wasn't doing it for the love anymore, but for the money, and that I only wanted the money because I was worried about what people would say if I didn't have all those things anymore. I realized it didn't matter, you know, and that can give you a greater appreciation of things if you open yourself up to it".

As someone who has been in the very deepest sense a part of Hip Hop since the 1970s, the creator of different scratch techniques and a DJ that has sold three million solo records and tens of millions of collaborative records, Jeff has had one of the most expansive and enduring careers of any musician in the past thirty years. He has been able to mature in the industry, but that death of Hip Hop culture he refers to is caused by the leaders of that culture not committing to the industry long enough and perpetuating an image of consumerism instead of rooted culture as the pinnacle of Hip Hop. Hip Hop clawed its way to the its current success because its musicians were not afraid to sacrifice short term goals for long term results. “That first Grammy award was bittersweet, it was one of the top three categories of music back then but they refused to put us on TV. What we chose to do was just not to go to the ceremony out of protest, and soon enough they did put us on the television. Receiving that award was good, the way we were to receive the award was not so good, so we just didn’t go”. The first Hip Hop stars like Jazzy Jeff made tough choices to keep their music alive and moving forward, yet the dilution of the current Hip Hop culture by mainstream money has become very apparent.

While many times the lack of recognizable faces in Electronica has been blamed for its exclusion from mainstream popular culture, in a sense this has preserved it. In Hip Hop the recognizable MCs did positively affect sales, but some of them ended up becoming all Hip Hop was about and crushing the culture which lifted them up. Instead of being thunderstruck by the Hollywood crack pipe, Electronica has been able to slowly mature- much like Jazzy Jeff. Earlier you read of Hip Hop DJ Jason Nevins and the twenty

million dollar record that earned him only ten grand. These kinds of stories exist in Electronica too, yet the more under the radar approach of Electronica has allowed them to be less common. The greatest champion of this is Matt Black, the inventor of Trip Hop, member of the DJ group Coldcut and cofounder of Ninjatune records.

“(My partner) and I felt that creative output was being stifled by the contractual position we were in. It was much better for people like us to have control and freedom. We started out our careers with a label called ‘Ahead of our Time’, but felt they were using us as music making machines more than artists, as they wanted. We had this stealthy idea to start our own label, Ninjatune. We were lucky at that time that we were able to do it, it was hard work and just being in the right place at the right time. You don’t need much to start a record label really, just a good tune, five hundred (dollars) and a telephone... Well, (at our label) we don’t really set out to teach people anything, you can suggest things to people if they are interested- we haven’t consciously tried to teach anybody except but to set an example that you can make a living at making music without sharpening too many people. When you trust someone to take care of the business side of things and forget about it entirely, you can get screwed and that happens a lot in the music industry. We hope that Ninjatune sets a better example, we let artists have a lot of creative control over their music and provide constructive A&R. You can’t really teach people anything, but you can show them. The music industry has changed somewhat to the good over the past forty years- less artists are getting ripped off. The vice like hold that corporations have on the wind pipe of culture is quite a sorry state of affairs. It makes it difficult for people to get heard or get sold. The fact is, the music

industry is a game, but it doesn't have to be that way". These words are the basic description of how Matt has created an environment that teaches DJs how to watch their back, while giving them a healthy artistic environment and helping them learn the business side for themselves instead of just taking care of it for them.

Stories of major DJs meeting complete strangers in a foreign country and having them invite them on tour out of nowhere, to help them climb up to the next level, are not uncommon. New Argentinean DJ superstar Hernan Cattaneo gives the DJ legend Paul Oakenfold a lot of credit for this, "Paul was a huge part of my international career. He was the first to believe in me and took me on tour to a lot of places where I was completely unknown and would never be booked to play. He opened all the right doors for me, and the public thought that if he believed in me that I must be okay". Another patron saint of DJs is Trancelot, founder of TranceDomain.com and first ever DJ to open the Love Parade in Germany. "Trance Domain was an idea my wife Veronica and I came up with. It came from my desire to have a radio station type outlet to present all genres of Electronica music to the masses. I wanted to feature not only the big name DJs and artists, but also DJs who do not get heard- the ones banging out awesome mixes and productions in their bedrooms. I wanted to be able to let DJs post their mixes and perform live so they would have a chance to be heard and recognized. When I thought about a way to do this, the Internet was my only choice. It provided worldwide coverage. I think it is important because the music gets heard... and their music is pure- it has never been compromised by any purpose, money or commercialization".

His service has made bedroom DJs into internationally booked artists, such as Jason Butera who received his first international dates after getting coverage at Trance Domain, “Trancelot invited me to come play the site... by age twenty I was playing my first international date in Canada”. These kind of people have held the spirit and underground vibe of Electronica culture alive through the worst of times. The example of Jason Nevins is classic in this as although the Hip Hop industry robbed Jason Nevins of any residuals, Simon Harris of the Electronica culture and his important friends welcomed the new kid into the DJ world with an invitation to partake in their documentary. This is not to say that there are no dark secrets in Electronica, as Drum n' bass DJ Dieselboy- once ranked fifth best DJ in America- expressed:

“My worst experiences... Not getting paid by promoters used to be a big problem, they’d get you to play and then run and hide and be unreachable. Worst gig I ever had, to let you know just how bad it can be, was in 1997. It was the late Nineties on a trip to Israel with no MC- an MC makes the job a lot less stressful, gives me company. I had absolutely no interest whatsoever of going to Israel but got on the plane anyway, I got in and they picked me up in this little tiny car- proceeding to take me into this bombed out area of Jerusalem and told me that this is where I was staying. There was no hotel and it literally looked like a war zone, the most bizarre place. After staying there for three days they brought me into the party I was going to play at four in the afternoon and I didn’t even get to play until five o’clock the following morning. Then, after sandwiching me in after Run DMC and Chemical Brothers and all these huge acts, they pulled me off the table after five records- like fifteen minutes! And the place was patrolled by kids with

machine guns, no joke, they were like twelve years old with these huge guns. So after nothing to eat and no sleep for three days and the worst playing experience, I arrived at the airport to find out that the check that the promoters had used to pay for my plane ticket home had bounced and I had no way home. I had to stay another couple days there before I could finally get back to Philadelphia!”

Dieselboy continues, “I am working on my eighth record and the biggest and most disappointing thing is, the reality of this is, that when you try and license a record to use in your set, the business side of things really comes out and you find all these people just in it to make money. Half of the Techno and House DJs out there just out and out refuse to license to me at all, no reason at all, it’s just an ego thing. They don’t want to help anyone else out. It sucks to find out in real life what assholes some people are that you used to look up to, very disappointing. It’s like finding out that Santa Claus isn’t real. But that’s not everybody, just some people. It can get weird, with Electronica having a smaller piece of the pie in the music industry, it’s almost like a bunch of people fighting over a grain of sand really”. Spilling his heart, there was never a word that did not come with a positive light afterwards as he truly loves and believes in this music, yet there was a tinge of disappointment when he discoursed on the few things wrong with Electronica- reminiscent of the undertones of Jason Nevins’ voice during his interview.

To say that because the Electronica culture has not met with extraordinary financial success that the members of it are poor business people is not accurate. There is a true entrepreneurial spirit in the business motions of much of the Electronica industry, like

with the example of Dieselboy's friend DJ Dara, cofounder of the Planet of the Drums collective, "I opened the first ever record store to focus purely on Drum n' bass in the United States 'Breakbeat Science'... It was a real gamble for us at the time, myself and (cofounder) DB. I was working at this shop one day a week, a friend of his had this space and had to give up the lease, so we just took the opportunity... We outgrew it in 2001 and had to expand, then opened up a new store in Tokyo, Japan in 2004. The Japanese approached us a year prior, we didn't think we had enough clothing and stuff but we just kind of went with it. Created a new line of fashion". Many DJs have spread around their influence to create a thicker foundation for the Electronica culture, founding record stores and labels, instead of just signing contracts with the bigger labels and then moving on.

The story of Dieselboy and Dara doesn't stop here, as they teamed up with friend AK 1200 to create the Planet of the Drums collective. Dieselboy was the one who fully described this collective, "Planet of the Drums was my idea, my baby, but at the end of the day its four guys- me, Dara, AK and Messinian (the MC). We were all friends but none of us ever played together, people were too cheap and didn't want to book more than one Drum n' bass DJ because they didn't think the bill would sell. So we put together this super show, all three of us DJs on the same decks, pushing Drum n' bass onto the main stage for the first time. We went out there, took the initiative, and proved to promoters that Drum n' bass was better than good enough for the main stage- before they would just have us playing in the side rooms while some House or Trance act was up on the main stage. We mixed into each other's sets, adding sound effects and teases

for fun, it was much more relaxed- and there are always adventures to be had on the road”. It was this push, alongside Roni Size’s 1997 Mercury award, that is accredited for pushing Drum n' bass out of the deep underground and into the greater Electronica consciousness, and the subgenre is now considered to be one of the top three in all of Electronica.

The slow rise of the Electronica culture should not be considered to be a sign of low potential for commercial viability. It took Jazz music nearly forty years to come to its full potency and truly become a commercial force. Blues music took even longer, and Electronica has only been around for approximately twenty years. In addition to dozens more stories of pushing the boundaries of Electronica culture like those of DJ Dara and Dieselboy, Electronica acts have had a lot of multi-platinum albums to date. Moby’s record ‘Play’ sold ten million copies, the Chemical Brothers have gone platinum, as well as 2 Unlimited, Robert Miles, Fat Boy Slim, Hippy Torrales had a remix that sold eight million copies, and these are just a few of the many examples. Yet having a multi-platinum album is not all gravy, and not always good for the industry. Darude, a multi-platinum Electronica artist out of Finland with his single ‘Sandstorm’ that rocked the charts in every country on the planet, admitted, “I have my own views on things, but I don’t preach them, so it irritates me when somebody comes up and pushes their opinion on me... Ten years ago the general public in this culture was talking about ‘revolution’ and making music in whatever way you want and as a thought that is still great, but as soon as you have a little bit of success there is so much intolerance that you encounter.

People are close-minded, there are people that will come up to your face and call you names and demean your music, they judge you”.

DJ Sammy from Germany, another multi-platinum artist from the same early Twenty-first century era, shares a similar story, “Selling millions of records means you are making millions of people happy, but in the underground the first thing people say as soon as a track is successful is that it has become ‘shit’ music”. There is a hermetic mentality that sometimes forms in an underground music scene, the same mentality that scolded Louis Armstrong in the 1940s Jazz culture, which can harm the scene as much as it preserves it. Having some commercial success with records produced in the underground allows that underground scene the money to continue and keep making records in an unorthodox manner, it is sad that some records and artists are treated so badly for no reason at all. The defense reflex that people in the underground culture have to condemn any record that has been tainted by the music corporations and their deep pockets can help to keep music pure, but if too often becomes simply a generalized hatred of anything that makes money no matter how it was produced. One must remember the words of Eric Anzalone, ‘pick your battles’.

However most Electronica artists have long careers even in this atmosphere that is sometimes hostile to financial success, for in this Electronica culture we have the emergence of an artistic middle class. DJs don’t have to either play the biggest clubs for hundreds of thousands of dollars a show or a small bar for twenty bucks like musicians in other genres, there is a middle ground for DJs which allows the available performance

income to be spread more evenly. Constant work can come in the form of club residencies where the DJ is paid to play four times a week and in the form of remix or production work, these opportunities are so abundant that they can keep a steady paycheck coming for many years. Every city around the world has a few dozen artists that make a good living in the Electronica culture, and that doesn't even include event security, club owners and promoters that all make an equal go of it. There can be up to a few hundred people in the bigger centers that are able to survive off work in the Electronica culture, something that does not exist in any other music form. There is no middle ground in things like Hip Hop and Rock, genres that offer millions to their stars and bills to their prodigies, thousands of Electronica artists around the world can maintain a steady income from their art- something not seen in any other art form or genre. Interestingly enough, a perhaps unexpected power has resulted from the existence of this first artistic middle class.

A big part of maintaining the artistic middle class of Electronica is the abundance of production and remix work available on non-Electronica recordings. The evolution of music over the past fifteen years has been marked by this, because the essence of Electronica is keeping up with ever-improving music technology and that is the kind of expertise needed in the newer production suites. In addition to practically every track produced by a major label having a club remix done by an Electronica DJ, the production work for each original song has taken on a very Electronica feel. The process has become so involved that major producers like David Morales liken the process to completely rewriting the whole song, claiming that the word 'remix' is just a tag that

allows the record companies to deny the producers any significant compensation for their work. However, a deep respect for the artists who put themselves in the hands of these remixers is still felt by the DJs. A great example of this is Peter Rauhofer, who despite helping more than forty people over his career hit number one on the Billboard charts by remixing their records for the clubs, still responds to questions about the people he has worked for with utter humility. In a 2003 interview with Metrogroove in London, for instance, he replied, "I guess every remixer's dream is to do a remix for 'Madonna'. I was really excited to remix her records... she definitely will always be a favourite" (Metrogroove).

The creep of an Electronica sound into mainstream music does have precedents. Jazz music producers were the musical backbone of their day, and an impulse to shift a lot of that era's musical tone to something with a Jazz feel filled the nervous system of all genres. Blues music producers pressed their imprint on early Rock, and Rock pressed its influence on music during the Seventies and Eighties. These influences came from more than the presence of master musicians capturing the imaginations of a new generation, it was literally the producers of the music weaving old tricks into the new showcase of artistic skill.

A great example of this lies in the musician Ray Charles and his producers, who used his extensive history in Blues and Gospel to influence the Rock music of his day into a revolutionary blend of old school themes and new school performance techniques. A second great example is that of the Blues guitarists Muddy Waters and B.B. King,

alongside their main producers like Muddy's Leonard Chess, both of whom heavily inspired the work of The Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton and much of the Rock music that came out in the Sixties and Seventies, as their sound reverberated throughout the entire music industry. As the musician Little Steven wrote for an example of this in the April 21, 2005 edition of Rolling Stone Magazine, "(Eric Clapton) introduced the essence of black electric blues- the power and vocabulary of... the three Kings, B.B., Albert and Freddy- to created an attack that defined the fundamentals of Rock & Roll lead guitar".

Electronica music has in fact had such a great influence, that the rise of new subgenres in Electronica music is often mirrored by a reactionary shift in Pop music. For example, after the ascent of Talvin Singh, Asian Massive and Arabica, a distinct ripple of traditional Asian instruments and themes rolled through the mainstream. This can be attributed to the fact that at the dawn of the Twenty-first century these DJs and artists became the choice remix and studio producers for many Pop artists. House music infected early Nineties tunes with a bump and grind repetition, and Trance music brought an Ambient feel to much of the music coming out in the late Nineties. This influence bodes well for Electronica, as historically it has been men like Quincy Jones, Phil Spector, Dr. Dre, Mutt Lang, Lee 'Scratch' Perry and their kin who have staked the most powerful positions of influence and creative control within the music industry. This is especially true of producer/musicians like Quincy and Dre, whom stood as pure examples of how to keep their respective musical cultures as hooked into their roots as each were into financial success.

As the example of the clout that Dr. Dre specifically carries, Grammy award winner Kanye West, writing for the same Rolling Stone Magazine edition as Little Steven, said of Dre, “Do Hip Hop producers hold Dr. Dre in high esteem? It’s like asking a Christian if he believes Christ died for his sins... I remember hearing Dre’s music before I really knew who he was. It had a tape of Eazy-E’s *Eazy-Duz-It* when I was ten years old (until my mother found out it had curses on it and confiscated it). I didn’t know what ‘production’ was back then, but I knew I loved the music. The more I learned about producing Hip Hop, the more I respected what Dre was doing. Think about how on old NWA Records the beat would change four or five times in a single song. A million people can program beats, but can they put together an entire album like it’s a movie? ...He’s the definition of a true talent: Dre feels like God placed him here to make music, and no matter what forces are aligned against him, he always ends up on the mountain top.”

The structure of this underground market is another reason for the power and longevity of Electronica culture. Club nights and frequent raves are run by promotional groups, usually groups of local entrepreneurial club kids and DJs. They are independent entities with little to no ties to record companies or nightclub institutions, which allows them managerial freedom and serves to raise many local DJs up on public performance rather than garage sessions, due to the great number of performance opportunities provided by the great wealth of promoters. Most other genres of music have tours run by either major booking organizations or big nightclubs, rarely do such independent promoters take the initiative to run their own events outside of these institutional dates- except possibly

within the Punk music industry. These promoters normally use local talent, but do bring outside talent about once a month. To do this, they contact booking agents who represent the bigger DJs- musicians who have proven to have superior skills and have become guaranteed draws. There are hundreds- if not soon thousands- to choose from, a huge pool of master talents that generally tour nationally and internationally on a regular basis. Yet instead of a long list of preset dates and an official tour 'name', DJs fly from place to place at random, filling whatever new dates have been opened by the independent promoters around the world and often find double or triple the amount of shows per year that groups in other genres typically book for their tours.

Once DJs prove themselves at this level, they may be able to try their hand at recording one of their sets for sale. There is a quicker way to record though, and that is to start out as a producer. A producer is a songwriter who uses the Electronica medium to create their songs. They do not always know how to spin live, but they can create very good compositions from scratch. They create the records that DJs use on their turntables, and which DJs license in order to create their own recorded mix sets for sale. There are few examples of people that start out as producers and then become DJs: if the path from DJ to producer is a slippery slope, then the path from producer to DJ must be a really hard climb. However there have been artists like Darude that have been able to make the transition successfully. Paranoid Jack, a DJ/producer from Canada, explained the importance of this structure from his perspective, "It certainly helps your own name when bigger more established DJs are willing to put your tracks on their CD. These guys have earned the right to be the 'tastemakers' in our scene through their accomplishments and

longevity, and when they have to narrow down their selection to twelve or thirteen tracks they feel are the absolute best, and your tune makes it, that is something to be proud of. It doesn't mean that you have to be licensed to their CDs or labels to have credibility as an artist, but it can certainly help expose your music to a larger audience that doesn't necessarily hit the record stores every week to hear all the new releases. Most people have their favorite DJs and leave it up to them to expose them to new music that they might enjoy".

Who is the World's Best DJ?

"There has never, ever been a best DJ in the world... each DJ is the world's best DJ."

Mark Alsop (Australia)

"The ones making tons of money, flying around the world!"

DJ Advent (USA)

"Andy C, Dieselboy, Mampi Swift, Friction."

AK 1200 (USA)

"The ones I haven't heard of yet and are fighting for their spot."

Benjamin Bates (New Zealand)

"Underworld."

BeXta (Australia)

"DJ Zinc, DJ Hype and Shy FX."

Boj Lucki (Sweden)

"Pete Tong, Kris Kersey, DJ Geoffe."

DJ Strobe (USA)

"Carl Cox, Dave Clark, Christian Smith, Donald Glaude"

DJ Dan (USA)

"Bob Sinclair, Deep Dish"

Delly-D (Germany)

"Derrick Carter, DJ Dan, Donald Glaude, Mistress Barbara"

Charles Feelgood (USA)

The Electronica mix records usually come out on independent labels owned and operated by small groups of producers and DJs, and tracks will spend up to a year in the underground club scene before being picked up by a major label and released commercially. This system allows thousands of artists to release music and keeps the selection a DJ has to choose from fresh. Some argue that this system can allow a saturation of the market with lesser albums and that the good ones can get lost in piles of crap, but there are some labels such as Warp Music, Ninjatune, Perfecto (now a part of Madonna's 'Maverick' label), Moonshine and several others that have acquired reputations for finding the best of the best. The positive effects of having so many labels was touched on by Dutch DJ/producer Benjamin Bates, "I think it's important to try several (labels) before you decide which one to go with. I don't think it has a lot of use switching labels all the time, but I would also never advise someone to sign with the first one that shows interest in their product. The crucial part is finding a label that believes in you as an artist and that will go all the way to promote you as you are. It could be your first label, but that's not very likely... I did about two hundred productions before I felt comfortable recording- no joke". This kind of environment, where you can find the right company for you as an artist, exists only because there are so many to choose from.

The variety of labels also makes Electronica a genre that artists of other genres can experiment with easily. DJ Hell, owner of one of those 'tastemaking' labels Gigolo Records, was one of those artists who had a history in Punk and Rock music before landing in Electronica. He explained his drifting between genres, "I do it because I love music, I didn't want to limit myself and I wanted to see the whole picture... For me it is

about timeless music, whatever genre you find it in". He was able to come into Electronica and form his own label, while continuing to produce other music outside of Electronica and not have the two different parts of his career thrown into the same pool of recordings. In the past there have been many examples of musical acts trying new genres and losing their fan base because the fans felt the new music wasn't what they wanted to purchase, Electronica allows artists to work on their experiments casually- on the side- while maintaining the fan base they worked so hard and long to build up. This makes Electronica an alluring option for any artist looking to do something new. The influx of artists from other genres, independent promoters and label owners all add to the pool of people in Electronica culture's artistic middle class.

Smaller labels also put less pressure on artists to release quickly or to record under a certain sound. Nightmares on Wax, a Hip Hop group signed to Ninjatune records, elaborated on this point, "We found Ninjatune when I was like eighteen years old and have been with them ever since, fifteen years... Patience is important. Some of the finest wines take a long time, it's an important message that needs to be more strongly felt in music: you can never rush a record. Every time you record it is a different experience. I like the adventure of not knowing where it is going to go; I record like a kid beneath the Christmas tree shaking in anticipation and excited about what I'm going to get. It cannot be premeditated". A good way of looking at it is that an artist's first album will be filled with the inspiration and vast experiences of his entire life, whether that be fourteen, twenty or thirty-five years it doesn't matter. This fusion of the artist's music and life took decades to ferment and the first album will be in a sense the very pinnacle of that

artist's existence. You cannot expect the same sort of quality by asking for a second album six or seven months later, when an artist has in a sense exhausted much of their material and is only slowly acquiring replacement inspiration. Very rarely can artists of any art form pump out masterpieces consecutively four, five, six times without some period of rejuvenation in between.

Though Electronica culture has many upsides and its entrepreneurial environment is inspirational for kids looking to learn about business, maybe start up a small company at a young age, the system doesn't always work perfectly. As the Electronica culture has matured there have been less problems, but there was a time when the lack of supervising authorities within the underground marketplace allowed unfair business practices to go on unnoticed. In addition to the story shared by Dieselboy, fellow Drum n' bass DJ Freaky Flow had a message for the industry regarding this very subject, "One of the messages I have, at least on the musical level, is that Electronica music itself is capable of receiving more success than it has received to date. But this brings me to a message to people within the Electronica industry: the only way for this to happen is for more of these people to take a professional-minded, organized and honest approach to the way they drive the industry. Just like other industries, there is shadiness. But unlike other industries, there is a sometimes ridiculously high ratio of shadiness to non-shadiness, and unless this changes, there will be a grim future for our music. Likewise, this is ultimately my main message for the world on all levels: abandon all of the shadiness and try your best to act and behave honestly". As it is with anything that is young, the Electronica

culture has had its share of bad behavior coarse through its veins, however as it matures things are changing.

That there have been some less than tidy business arrangements in the underground marketplace should not be a reason to avoid participating within it. The corporate world may provided more astringent contracts and career structure, but ones artistic freedom and ability to release music at all is what becomes sacrificed. SASH! is a very successful Electronica group from Germany, who described their experience with corporate music, “We had a platinum album and three singles that went to number two on the international charts, most would consider this to be a fair amount of success, I think. Yet the release of our second album almost did not take place, they said that they could not release any music which sounded significantly different from what had worked before. It was amazing that after such immediate success, the industry did not want to hear anything more from us unless we could copy our previous performances. There was no trust in us, the artists that earned them millions of dollars”. These kinds of artistic clamps rarely exist in the Electronica industry.

The idea was somewhat more fleshed out by Mark Alsop, the thirty year veteran DJ from Australia, “It took time for Australia to finally embrace Electronica. Whilst it has blossomed and thrived, many local record companies simply await its eventual death. In fact they are trying to accelerate the process by no longer supporting labels and artists. The release or support of most Electronica has diminished significantly. Some big name record companies have turned their backside upon so much Electronica, they are blatantly

isolating Australians from the rest of the world by NOT supplying so much of this music. It is shown time and time again by the lack of releases on our market, as well as their ineptitude to supply anything but the radio versions on the CD singles... Unfortunately, the record industry is behind much of this... It is indeed strange to find that our dance clubs and bars are still at capacity every night playing Electronica. The clubbers are thoroughly enjoying Electronica and are often unaware that they are being limited as regards to the variety of music available to them due to a downfall within the music industry...

Surely it is not unreasonable to give the people musical diversity?"

The threat Electronica could pose to undermining the strangle hold that corporate music has on today's recordings has been felt in some countries, as was just detailed by Mr. Alsop, but the more immediate threat it poses is to the medium of radio. There are some great uses of the radio in Electronica, DJ Judge Jules is a top radio personality in Great Britain and explains that, "Not only does it provide me with a unique opportunity to showcase and break new music, which is very important to the dance scene as a whole, but it gives people a way to relate to my personality- which most club-only DJs don't have. In short, it's been very important to my career". However, a different side of the medium of radio is felt by most. Maggotron, Hip Hop DJ from the Miami Bass Movement that took the United States by storm in the mid-Eighties, described his own experiences.

“When my first record ‘Computer Funk’ came out and I heard it on the radio it was quite cool- and of course... getting something on the air was part of the road to success. Or so I thought. Eventually I learned how corrupt radio was and what the real deal was with radio stations- personalities, program directors, etc... Fortunately the progression that led into and out of Miami Bass was not only driven by the radio but by word of mouth/ club play/ flea market vendors/ etc... Which was great because I was basically hating the whole radio scene... The budget needed to generate serious radio play back then- and now- is quite expensive either in dollars or favors. Eventually the artists pay for that, I figured the real fans would discover what I was doing so radio was no longer even sweated. College radio always supported us back then and even today which means more and has more value to me, however don’t get me wrong- a nice radio hit looks good on those BMI statements. Right now radio is a joke”. Maggotron describes here his experiences with radio personalities that need their palms greased before playing a track on their station, the corrupt middleman, but admits that these bad experiences in the end had an elongating effect on his career, “Miami Bass never was mainstream enough to get worn out, run into the ground like MC Hammer or Vanilla Ice who are basically long jokes being played out over time. For those who consume popular culture and the weasels/pimps that cater to them, Miami Bass will never be over, as they may determine of other more overexposed musical forms and have in the past”.

The Electronica culture also circumvents another concern about corporate music, put forth by Eric Anzalone of the hit Disco group The Village People, “My worst experience in the industry... Artists don’t run the music industry, and that’s a shame. People with

money try to force their opinions on you. In addition, I do believe there are bands and artists out there that only ever got to where they are either because of nepotism or because they had a lot of money to begin with. A lot of times nowadays you'll turn on the radio and say 'how did this crap ever get on here?' What's released is not the cream of the crop. I love all kinds of music, I've been in Rock bands, punk bands, in the opera and in dance music bands (obviously). I go see other artists, I see how hard these people work, and they won't get anywhere because it's less about talent and more about luck. Some people are just never in the right place at the right time, and that's a real heartbreaker. Especially when you see someone in the industry's cousin or daughter or girlfriend or nephew coming out with an album that sounds like crap and took minimal work to happen for them... Also, when artists are treated as such, they don't realize that the music business is a *business*. I went to the University of Miami and one of the things they taught us was that even though everyone in the class was an artist, an artistic business was a *business*- you have to know the business end of it, musicians need to know the business end of it. You need to know how things work, in such an industry so cushy for some young stars, musicians end up screwing themselves out of their own money before the record industry can do it for them".

With a more open system, the Electronica culture escapes the nepotism that plagues the rest of the industry in addition to raising artists through an education process rather than just giving the kids everything they want and watching them trip over it all. There are some stars that rise quite quickly, such as Trance DJ Armin van Buuren- ranked the third best DJ in the world in 2004- but Armin has come from an industry that kept his head out

of the clouds. When asked about dealing with his new found fame, he replies, “I always say: don’t get caught up in the bullshit of your own creativity. The pressure gets definitely bigger, but if you stay focussed on your fans and the music, then nothing can go wrong”. Armin van Buuren is very representative of the top of the Electronica industry. He is well educated after going to law school, something many other DJs have done including the legendary radio DJ Judge Jules who spoke earlier in this chapter, and is comfortable in his success because he doesn’t let it get to his head.

The best symbol of the Electronica culture however, is the DMC competition, which allows any DJ from anywhere to enter and whose winners are truly embraced by the Electronica community. The DMC competition is a DJ battle, starting out in local competitions the world over- city championships open to anyone with the small entrance fee in his pocket and a dream in their head big enough to merit them the title. These smaller competitions lead to national competitions held in dozens of countries, where the DJs of each nation battle it out to see who is the best. The national champions from each country are then flown out to the world championships held once a year, and whose winner becomes one of the best known DJs in the world each year. A great example of how this competition can change your life is found in DJ Craze- now widely considered one of the top DJs in the world. Craze learned to DJ himself by watching videos and trying to match the skills on tape, starting out without any nepotistic connections or vast amounts of money in the bank. Craze was just a kid with a new found talent, who fell in love with the idea of creating blends of Hip Hop, Drum n’ bass and Turntablism for both himself and those who would listen. In 1998, Craze decided to take his skills to the DMC

championships in his home state of Florida, as much to watch a hundred other kids just like him and what they could do as it was to showcase his own skills.

World DMC Champions

<u>Winner</u>		<u>Year</u>
DJ Cheese	(USA)	1986
Chad Jackson	(UK)	1987
Cash Money	(USA)	1988
Cutmaster Swift	(USA)	1989
DJ David	(Germany)	1990
DJ David	(Germany)	1991
* Rocksteady DJs	(USA)	1992
**Dreamteam	(USA)	1993
Dreamteam	(USA)	1994
Roc Raida	(USA)	1995
DJ Noize	(Denmark)	1996
A-Trak	(Canada)	1997
DJ Craze	(USA)	1998
DJ Craze	(USA)	1999
DJ Craze	(USA)	2000
Plus One	(UK)	2001
Kentaro	(Japan)	2002
Dopey	(Canada)	2003
I-Emerge	(USA)	2004

*Rocksteady DJs was a DJ team comprised of MixMaster Mike, Q-Bert and DJ Apollo

**Dreamteam was a paired down version of Rocksteady DJs, no longer accompanied by DJ Apollo, MixMaster Mike and Q-Bert went at it on their own in a two man tag team

DJ Craze would go on that year to win the world championships. Craze would then go on to win the world championships in 1999 and 2000, making him the winningest single world champion in the history of the DMC (though both Q-Bert and MixMaster Mike have won three titles each, also consecutively, however this was as a tag team). Over night he went from complete unknown to the idol of practically every DJ on earth, if asked many DJs will tell you that DJ Craze is one of the best DJs ever without question.

In the words of Craze himself, “The DMC championships are the best thing that ever happened to me, it’s why I’m here (performing in another country). The competition is really stressful, you have to have lots of practice and get things absolutely perfect- it becomes your life... But I owe much of what I have here to the DMC, I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the championships”.

Watching Craze behind the turntables is amazing, but what is more amazing is to think that without the atmosphere that exists within Electronica culture today, Craze may have gone on undiscovered and never played to the international fan base which now considers him the best they’ve ever heard. He loves what he does, you can see it in his eyes, and talks a lot about just how much fun he has being a DJ period, if even without the added rush of thousands of bodies in front of him dancing to his beat. “People just like to have fun and not worry about what’s going on in the world, I love how I get to entertain them”. These are the words of a man who personifies what the Electronica culture is all about, joking and constantly having the most fun possible as well as developing a complex social conscience and sticking to his roots. He is something that never could have occurred if it wasn’t for the Electronica culture- his music is pure.