

Bring Me The Head Of Freq Nasty

It's the Freq-in' weekend, baby were about to have us some fun. New Zealand ex-pat Darin Mcfadyen - Freq Nasty to anyone who's felt the width of his basslines on dancefloors round the world - knows well that the shifting patterns of culture mean fun by the ton in 2003. 'Bring Me The Head Of Freq Nasty', his first album for Brighton's Skint Records and the second of his career, impacts right into the rubble of dance music, where genre distinctions are collapsing, monopolies toppling and orthodoxies disintegrating on an hourly basis. Which is a good thing. Freq Nasty is the walking paradox that proves the 'death of dance music' is the best thing that's ever happened to it.

'Bring Me The Head Of Freq Nasty' arrives at a time when nomenclature has never been a more useless device: bashment, breaks, hip hop, garage, techno and drum & bass are identifiable components of an album that is defined by none of the above. It's a genre-transcending palette of raw music whose pluralism mirrors exactly the fundamental shifts taking place in the world around. 'Urban futurist music - that's what I get off on,' Darin says. 'Music that's a reflection of cities like London where a lot of different folk are doing their best to get on and there's a lot of friction.'

For the last 12 years, Darin Mcfadyen been tinkering with the back end of rave culture and carving radical aural geometry out of uncut bassline material and diamond-tipped breakbeats. In zones like Peckham, Brixton, Whitechapel, where human interaction is at its most raw and hungry, Freq Nasty has been crafting the sound inner-city danger and excitement onto some of the toughest dancefloor music of the millennium.

In 1991 he arrived in Britain from New Zealand via Australia with a one-way ticket and burning ambition to make the music of tomorrow's world. He'd been in bands at school and a devout student of the Akia Zen since he was a teenager. Twelve years ago he stepped off the 747 as Darin Mcfadyen - a lean, mocha-skinned six-footer with dreads grown below his waist - immersed himself into the raging elementalism of the drum & bass scene, and emerged, dazed and enthused, as Freq Nasty.

'I was involved in jungle by chance,' Darin says. 'Vini XXX had started the Motif and Sour labels, and Botchit & Scarper was a quirky offshoot. Jungle was the freshest shit at the time. I had come from a funk and hip-hop background and was looking for a sound: breakbeat was it. Except no one was calling it that.'

Back when jungle was still jungle, prior to its upwardly mobile rebranding as 'drum & bass', Vini's visionary imprint began producing music that rolled with the same rough-edged attitude and dynamism as drum and bass, but at a more moderate, club-friendly tempo -

'Breakbeat' was born. Whatever the music's origins, Freq Nasty rapidly established himself as one of the scene's pioneers, producing instant classic after instant classic with studio partner Blim: tracks like 'Boomin Back' Atcha' and 'Revolution Inc' from his debut LP, 'Freqs,

Geeks & Mutilations'. As breakbeat flourished into its own autonomous milieu of DJs, clubs, production techniques and musical vernacular, Freq Nasty's tunes remained ahead of the pack. The slithering, galaxy-sized bassline to his remix of Steve Reich's 'Desert Music' and his retooling of Sosunde's 'Metisse' were breakbeat's own Inner City 'Life' or "Energy Flash": emblematic signature tunes of a scene built on techno darkness, drum & bass edge and the rubber-powered dynamism of funk. Since then the likes of Fatboy Slim, Gorillaz and KRS One have all felt the benefit of a Freq Nasty re-rub.

Towards the end of the nineties, two Freq Nasty tunes flagged up the fast-breeding genetic link between breakbeat and the UK garage toward that was becoming obvious to anyone with a passing interest in music anthropology. 'Amped' and 'Goose', like Timo Maas's mix of Azzido Da Bass's 'Doom's Night', traversed genres effortlessly.

Round 1998, I knew breaks and garage would be the same thing in around 18 months time, Darin recalls. Breakbeat garage was the perfect synthesis of technique from breakbeat and the party element of garage's. Not that anyone, at the time, was remotely interested in the semiotics.

It was fucking cool having those records played by garage DJs, but in the garage scene, a good tune was just A Good Tune. The DJs didn't give a fuck. If someone said, "what do you call this?" they'd say, "Dunno mate - it's just a runnin' tune". There was much less prejudice then about what it was."

'Bring Me The Head Of Freq Nasty' was created by Darin during a long hibernation in his Brixton (CHK) studio with only a clutch of samplers, a powerful laptop and a very big imagination. He rationed appearances on his busy global DJing schedule and ignored radio, record shops and raves for eight months. What resulted is about as far from generic clockwork breaks as Brixton is from Brisbane: a cross-tempo Venn Diagram of an album, reflecting the genetic stew of urban music today: bashment, breaks, hip hop, drum & bass and garage.

On future single 'Come Let Me Know', veteran Brit rapper Rodney P flexes skills over deconstructionist bashment riddims. 'Clit Licker', meanwhile, applies breakazoid techniques to the progressive house formula, and turns out a pornographic breakbeat "French Kiss". 'Boomba Clatt' with Roots Manuva and Yolanda, is a slice of tough ragga breakbeat action, perfectly adapted to peaktime, big-room conditions, while on album closer 'Mad Situation', Junior Delgado adds some rootsical vibes to the proceedings.

Darin's album was produced according to one other principle: The Fuck-It Factor. That's what I introduced to the album. Thinking "Fuck it, I'm gonna make what I make," and not trying to make it fit into a scene. You can't focus-group a record. It's an easy trap to fall into to where you know which genre you're in and who's playing what records. That's when a genre is dead.

Conversely, it's also when music is most alive: working at a intuitive, emotional level, rather than an intellectual one. Breaks and drum & bass continues to be Britain's most successful export - they've

established themselves as the biggest scenes down under, in no small measure through Darin's evangelism. Meanwhile, 'Bring Me The Head Of Freq Nasty' is a beacon leading the way into virgin territory, musical terrain no-one has named yet. Breaks, bashment, hip hop, trashment: the question is not 'what do we call it?' but 'can you feel it?' Stick this CD on and plunge your head into a bassbin: these nasty frequencies speak for themselves.