

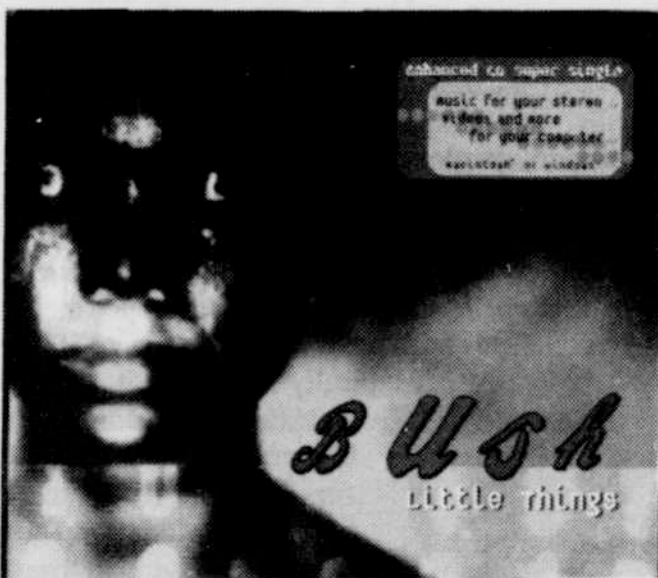
TONGUE IN GROOVE

Battle of the CD-ROMs

For clarity's sake, let me reveal the latest trend in music promotion: the CD-ROM. This stands for Compact Disk Read Only Memory, a form of storage media that looks just like an audio CD but stores other data such as fonts, photos, electronic encyclopedia, games, etc. With the advent of music videos and such, bands can now advertise their sounds with imagery. Today, those music videos are marketed in several different formats, one of which is CD-ROMs. Here are two such promotional materials that I've checked out.

MUSIC

BUSH
Little Things • Trauma



The British alternative band Bush (no, not Kate Bush), and its label really put a good amount of high-tech graphics and audio into this promo item, which is packed in eco-friendly cardboard material. Smooth and loud video/audio clips can be selected at the click of a mouse (or, in my case, trackball). Video clips are included of mini interviews with each band member. Also notable are interesting though somewhat trivial video clips of such images as the band's touring bus, a stage set with all the musicians' gear sans band members, etc. With good design overall, the CD-ROM is very user-friendly and fun.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Spew+ • Atlantic

When I received this CD-ROM, I was quite excited and anticipated a pretty good production. It comes from Atlantic Records, probably the only major mainstream company to have a special marketing wing that specifically targets us (er, the gay, lesbian and bisexual population). I guess I just set myself up for disappointment.

Apparently the first CD-ROM that the company has put out, this shows there is definitely room for improvement. Not only did I have trouble running Spew+ on my multimedia-capable AV Macintosh, but it was also graphically uninteresting—almost petty in design. As much as I was really interested in listening to and seeing the several different recording artists featured, I found myself spending way too much time wrestling with the technical difficulties of running the disk.

"Are you sure you want to shut down your computer now?" YES.

The Techno Reviews

Having always been proud of my affinity for electronic equipment and its many accessories, I thought it would be great to profile some techno and electronic music in this issue. Note: I use the terms electronic and techno here interchangeably, as the two terms go pretty much hand in hand.

Since the discovery of electricity, thousands upon thousands of gadgets, gizmos and other machines have been invented that depend on this energy source. These gadgets include various musical instruments and sound making and manipulat-

ing devices that, in turn, have revolutionized the music culture.

For the real die-hard electronic music lovers, the label to watch is Eye Q/Harthouse. The L.A.-based company was started by German recording artist and DJ Sven Vath. To experience the variety of sounds that come from Eye Q-produced CDs is like going to a Filipino fiesta—you definitely get your fill of gazillions of different foods and have a really hard time resisting the urge to indulge yourself in just one more itsy bitsy li'l piece of that leche flan (a really nummy dessert) or any other delectable dish.

An admitted music glutton, I listened to six different CDs with a variety of techno styles. Of the bunch, Alter-Ego's self-titled CD was the most soothing, blending soft and slow bass beats with a jazzlike melody, for the most part. Surrealistically, it's like watching Jello jiggle in slow motion. The duo that is Alter-Ego is more commonly known as Acid Jesus/Rebel Youth. Definitely a CD to chill out to—you can bet your bottom dollar that you'll find me winding down to this after a hard night of groovin' to hardcore dance music.

Stevie B-zet's When I See... came in close in the "No thanks, I don't need pot to chill me out" category. B-zet, who has worked with Quincy Jones, Sheila E., Black Box and Stina Nordenstam, shows his penchant for the sublime yet blatant by blending haunting vocals with fast rhythmic melodies, layering these with a healthy dose of bass beats without overwhelming the overall sound. It's truly jazz-ambient; in enjoying this, I've never felt so lucky to have ears.

Moving on to a faster tempo, I checked out Cygnus X's Hypermetrical, with tracks ranging from 136 to 150 bpm (that's beats per minute). I must say I became addicted to the playful vocals of the title track—it became something that I kept playing over and over for days on end. I think part of it was the fact that I really loved the CD cover (the collaged face was so compelling).



A couple of compilations, Harthouse Compilation Chapter 6: Six Flags and Harthouse Compilation Chapter 7: Scorch the Sky, feature collections of tracks by Vath, B-zet and other electronic music artists such as Der Dritte Raum, Assign, Jiri.ceiver, Koxbox, Soap, Hardfloor, Braincell, Hippies with Attitude, Virtual Symmetry, Patrick Lindsey and Vandal Sound. For someone who is a hip-hop fiend, blasting these two compilations on my stereo has made me feel like I've engaged in a major electro-debauchery of sorts. Ah, but with vibrations like that resonating throughout the whole house, who cares?

The last of this electronic music smorgasbord especially catered by Eye Q/Harthouse is the Dark Hearts 2 compilation, once again combining hard grooves, soaring soundscapes and electrifying frontiers of sound, with a hint of acid jazz.

Burp! How's that for a feast?

Reviews by Rachel Ebora. Don't hesitate to contact me about shows that I should know about. Check the general Just Out info for address and phone information. For the cyber-heads out there, I'm e-mailable at: tongueout@aol.com.

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