

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH 8-BIT OPERATORS

8-BIT PLAYAS

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Remember the good old days? Back when no Playstations blew your wallet, Ryu and Ken were pals, and arcade battles were fought and won with just two buttons and a broken beep? Rejoice, for retro game music is now back in a big multi-play way.

FL.ag picks up the controls, and wreaks arcade hell with 8-Bit Operators. And this time, no one's gonna tell us to finish our homework first.



Stage 1: Press START to play

In the 70s, game music, or 'chiptunes' as it was commonly called, was borne out of the limitations of arcade game tone reproduction. It mainly managed gurgles of beeps and blips designed more as sound effects than full-blown music. Hardly art.

By the 90s however, geek boys were suddenly pulling out their old Gameboys and Commodore 64s, and sowing the seeds of what would later be called the 'bitpop' movement. It continued to evolve and artists like 8-Bit Construction Set started hitting the circuit in the early 2000s, and *Pac Man* became cool again.

8-Bit Operators now bear the flag of holy "geekdom". The brainchild of long-time electronic and 8-bit artist Jeremy Kolosine (a.k.a. Receptors), the collective's upcoming album pays tribute

to classic Kraftwerk songs - re-interpreted through home-brewed synth cartridges and obsolete 8-bit computers. Jeremy notes that Kraftwerk was chosen because "It first occurred to me when I saw pics of gameboy artists live, that reminded me of the Kraftwerk 1981 Computer World tour. It seemed to validate all that Kraftwerk had predicted. The symbiotic cultural-ism of the idea seemed like a poem as yet unwritten, but already rhyming, so it had to be done."

To be released on Astralwerks in June, *The Music of Kraftwerk* features some of the top 8-bit composers from North America, South America and Europe. In a 2004 Art Forum interview, Glomag, one of the album's contributing artists, said the Operators have made Kraftwerk's phrase 'I'm the operator with my Pocket Calculator' more apt than ever.



Stage 2: Scoring points

But before you dismiss it as just another samples album, PAUSE.

“Actually, this genre tends to lean towards the use of NO SAMPLES,” says Jeremy. “Other than the occasional Roland drum machine sample, the whole drive behind creating these sounds is the desire to create sounds synthesis from scratch, which is what the album is.

“I kinda wish I put ‘No Samples’ on the CD instead.”

The album took electronica by storm, and praises came fast and furious. XLR8R magazine gave it full points for “taking back a pure and total part of our childhood and turning it into something crazy and new.”

For Jeremy though, the best compliment came from “The

expression of the fact that the music is now considered a serious genre and not just a gimmick to be written off; and that we pulled this project off right.”

He explains: “It’s always been a battle to get past the assumed hilarity of it all and get people to realise this is serious shit we’re doing, not a joke!”

Stage 3: Press + to continue

With increased exposure, the genre looks set to get bigger. Even now, the live fan and artist base continues to grow rapidly and connect more intimately through festivals and online collaborations. But the burgeoning publicity also comes with the threat of mainstream success, corruption — and eventual demise.

For now though, one can only hope with Jeremy that

the movement “stays pure to form on the deepest level - no matter how commercialised, exploited, sampled, packaged and marginalised the promoters make it on the surface.”

Yet, naysayers will always be rife, most dismissing 8-bit music as a novelty that will pass like the games they were spawned from. As Jeremy himself concurs, “although the live fan-base and artist base of 8-bit music should continue to grow and connect more intimately through festivals and online collaborations; there will always be a bit of a backlash from both sides of the camp, one saying it’s not real music and the other who will prove them wrong!”

Press SELECT for the latter.

For more information on 8 Bit Operators, log on to: www.8bitoperators.com and www.receptormusic.com