Fat Jon’s Rapture Kontrolle— Hip hop with an emotional content

Nick Barrickman
25 March 2013

Rapture Kontrolle is the eighth studio instrumental album by hip hop/electronic producer/song writer Fat Jon the Ample Soul Physician (born John Marshall in 1969), released in 2012 on Ample Soul Recordings, under the alias Maurice Galactica.

After emerging in the late 1990s as a singer/producer for the hip hop group Five Deez, Fat Jon has maintained a steady, though relatively obscure musical career, producing for himself and others. He has also been creating instrumental works released under both Fat Jon and Maurice Galactica. He is perhaps best known for his work on the soundtrack of *Samurai Champloo*, an anime series broadcast in Japan in 2004-05, as well as on the Cartoon Network in the US. Fat Jon now resides in Germany.

Unlike other hip hop instrumentalists such as Jay Dee (James Yancy, 1974-2006) and Madlib the Beat Konducta (Otis Jackson, Jr. born in 1973), whose chief specialties are their attention to musical context and subtlety, Fat Jon’s strength lies in his dedicated efforts in regard to technique and the expansiveness of his sounds. One is consistently struck by this artist’s attention to detail; the drum work and percussive elements often consist of layers of intricately constructed instrumentation, which, despite their complexity, complement the other elements as a whole. This contributes to what is perhaps the most rewarding feature of the artist’s music; the sensation that each song is larger than the sum of its parts.

Rapture Kontrolle consists of more than a dozen instrumental works that build upon Fat Jon’s oft-visited themes of exploring outer space, along with hints about his feelings for the opposite sex (titles such as “A Wingman Supreme,” “Divided Ascension” and “Eternal Type Satellite” capture these themes most succinctly). Many of the tracks contain snippets of female vocals, taken from multiple sources and woven into the structure of the songs, strengthening the emotional content of his work.

The aforementioned “Divided Ascension” contains much that Fat Jon has come to be known for: a mournful Spanish guitar sample wafts alongside 1980s electro-influenced drum work, replete with a tastefully used synthetic high hat/ride that helps to lend the work a feeling of suspense. This bringing together of synthetic elements and more ex pressive and “warm” organic instrumentation can be seen as another aspect of the artist’s larger concern.

The artist’s capacity to make an emotional impact on the listener is best experienced on “Intellect Bombs (To Save You).” One is taken with the expressiveness of the work, which manages to contain triumphant, almost bravado-tinged elements, as well as more somber and evocative aspects (emphasized by the melancholy female vocal that haunts the piece).

There are limitations to Fat Jon’s approach; the emphasis on the more “traditional” aspects of hip hop tends at times to produce a somewhat formulaic sound. This is perhaps most noticeable in his drum work, which, despite its intricacy, is hindered by a repetitive “looped” format, when it not accompanied by more engaging melodic instrumentation.

Many of Fat Jon’s albums contain songs with more pop-sensible or danceable melodies. Though he skillfully executes his work with an attention to detail, the musician’s apparent drive to remain accessible to the broader pop audience sometimes lands him in less than inspiring territories. It says something that after nearly a decade of making recordings his basic motif and approach has remained largely unchanged.

Fat Jon first became known as one-fourth of the Cincinnati, Ohio-based Five Deez (short for Five

© World Socialist Web Site

Dimensions). The group was notable for its blending of classic rhythm and blues and jazz, as well as electronic elements, with adroit drum programming, creating an expansive mosaic for rappers Pase Rock (Patrick Johnson) and Kyle David to immerse themselves in.

The group's initial full-length offering, *Koolmotor*, is notable for the nearly stand-alone qualities of its instrumentation, for which Fat Jon and co-producer Corey Brown were responsible. The unique structure of songs such as "B.E.A.T." creates a very loose and carefree atmosphere, while songs such as "Decapitated Orgasms" capture feelings of uncertainty and stifled emotion as vocalists Pase Rock and Fat Jon describe heartbreaks they have suffered at the hands of women.

Though *Rapture Kontrolle* has its definite shortcomings, it is a thoughtful work whose strongest features, such as "Intellect Bomb" and "The Prowess," among others, deserve consideration.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site