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Balam Acab

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offthesky

The OO-Ray

Jody Redhage

Andy Vaz

**BACKTRACKING WITH ANDY VAZ'S 'STRAIGHT VACATIONING'
SPOTLIGHT 2: MUSKOX, OFFTHESKY, JODY REDHAGE**

Articles

Backtracking Andy Vaz
Spotlight 2

Albums

Aardvarck
Anonymeye
Balam Acab
Balmorhea
Blue Sausage Infant
Steve Brand
Harold Budd
Causa Sui
Cosmin TRG
cv313
Dalot
Ricardo Donoso
Paul Eg
Fjordne
Roman Flügel
Emmanuelle Gibello
Greie Gut Fraktion
Gurun Gurun
Chihei Hatakeyama
Saito Koji
Tobias Lilja
Martin & Wright
Jasmina Maschina
Mobthrow
Nickolas Mohanna
Muskox
Namo
offthesky
The OO-Ray
A Produce & Loren Nerell
Jody Redhage
The Mark Segger Sextet
Static
Sub Loam
The Teknoist
To Destroy A City
Damian Valles
Andy Vaz
Yard

Compilations / Mixes

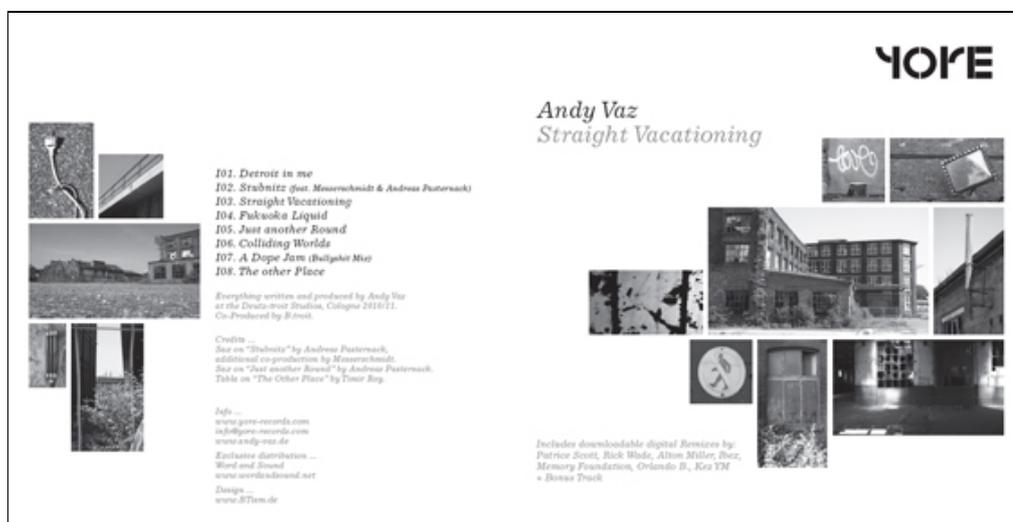
Audible Approaches
Dave Clarke
Dixon
Marcel Fengler
Jamie Jones
Kompakt Total 12
Damian Lazarus
Soma Records—20 Years
Stilnovo Sessions Vol. 1

EPs

A Wake A Week
James Blackshaw
c.db.sn + Scaffolding
Dagshenma
Isan
Namo
Felix Cartier

**BACKTRACKING WITH ANDY VAZ'S STRAIGHT VACATIONING**

Andy Vaz has been a textura fixture for many years now, and we're indebted to him for the support he's given us. We're even more pleased that the Yore label head has generously agreed to share background details in a track-by-track overview of his new collection *Straight Vacationing*. It's Vaz's first full-length since 2006's *Repetitive Moments Last Forever...* on Persistencebit Records, and perhaps more significantly it's his first full-length on the Yore label that he established in 2007 as an outlet for music rooted in Chicago house and Detroit techno. Since its founding, the label has featured exceptional albums and EPs by the likes of Rick Wade, Alton Miller, Kez YM, Orland B, and others, but it's now Vaz getting the full-length treatment.



“Detroit In Me”: Ahh, an apt choice, as the title already clarifies where I wanted to go with the album. The opening track deliberately makes a strong statement at the outset in order to give the album a sense of direction. Obviously, it's also a personal reminiscence about the melodic and dreamy side of Detroit house. That lush and dreamy side is, in fact, rather rare, as “Detroit In Me” doesn't follow the common, often sample-based soulful path one hears in today's house music but is more concentrated around synths and keys. They're also accompanied by a gently swinging 303 line, which is not often used in Detroit-related House music these days, and no samples were used either.

“Stubnitz”: This is the most spontaneous song on the recording. After playing a DJ Gig in Rostock, Germany, I was on a ship called the MS Stubnitz, when I happened upon a local DJ and a sax player improvising over a classic house set. Their set literally blew me and the entire crowd off our feet,

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 Dirk Serries
 Jeffrey Wentworth Stevens
 David Tagg
 Mano Le Tough
 Simon Whetham

and it turned out that the forty-seven-year-old sax player Andreas Pasternack, a classically trained jazz musician, had an open mind and ear for house music. So I invited him to my studio in Cologne for a recording session, and we got such a good vibe going we knocked out the track in two two days. It's another example of soulful and jazzy house that doesn't involve sampling.

“Straight Vacationing”: This is among my personal favourites on the album, even though it's a hard one to describe. My original idea was to create an after-hours vibe with it—an easy but sharp weapon for clubbing dancers in the morning in all their madness. My initial focus was on the loud, distorted snare and dirty drums; those were the elements I started with, as I originally planned the track to be very basic and stripped-down. But for whatever reason, I found it hard to leave it sounding so cold and machine-like, so then added a little melody and then another and another. I then removed the steady 4/4 bass drum that originally went throughout the entire track, and then added another chord on top of it. The whole feel of the piece underwent a drastic change, even though in the end result you can still hear the dark and disturbed drum pattern but now combined with a number of sweet little melodies that flirt with your ears. The breaks and the on-and-off drum patterns give it a drive that still allows it to work on the dance floor, but it grew into something much more unique compared to how it sounded at the beginning.

“Fukuoka Liquid”: This goes back, as the title suggests, to an experience in Fukuoka, Japan, an island located in the very north of Japan. When I played there for the second time, everything seemed to be rather insane; I accidentally ended up on acid—totally unintended and by mistake—resulting in a "lost in translation" kind of thing. So there I was, totally mad in Japan and not able to speak or read in my known language. What came from that experience is an experimental-edged acid track that tries to translate my crazy Fukuoka visit into sound. It's a quirky mix of acid madness that defies explanation.



“Just Another Round”: This is one of the album's most straight-up, dancefloor friendly tracks, so there aren't too many associations that need to be addressed. It has a very strong groove, and the sax loops add nice additional flavour to the track and give it a rare twist. A limited, orange-coloured seven-inch featuring this track will be released as a collectors item.

“Colliding Worlds”: This one is a pretty personal affair. My girlfriend (NOW) comes from a very different background, and her entire way of life is very different from mine and vice-versa. She has no music- or artist-related background at all. She is pretty much a calm and serious person, whereas my life is filled with madness and chaos; in that respect, we are worlds apart. So after we met and started dating, she didn't believe we could ever possible unite these two worlds and make it into a working relationship, simply because we are so different. I made this old-school, Chicago-styled acid track based around two main elements that constantly compete against each other. There is, on one side, a short synth sound, and, on the other side, the upfront 303 acid line. The two work very opposite grooves, just like our different worlds colliding. The goal was to somehow unite these very opposite elements and make them work simultaneously to prove that the relationship can work, sort of by finding a balance within the two worlds.

“A Dope Jam”: This one's another dance-floor, disco-type affair. I've really been getting into early disco music recently and so wanted to somehow incorporate that feel into my music with a mixture of classic samples, acid basslines, and weird textures and voices, things you wouldn't typically find in a classic disco-tune or edit.

“The Other Place”: My first ever electro track—classic Detroit electro with a modern twist. It's

also the first time I've ever musically explored my Indian Roots by including tablas in the song. I started it while touring India as a DJ/live act through the Goethe Institute last year and already had in mind that I wanted to incorporate a classic Indian instrument in the track. After having returned back home from India without having met someone to jam with for the song, I came across Timir Roy, a trained Tabla player who lives in the Cologne area (through his brother who is a long-term friend of mine). So we met for a spontaneous jam in my studio and recorded these quite trippy sounding tablas on top of the track, which was then re-built around the tabla and elements I'd created back in India.

The track title is bit of a mystery in itself. When checking back over the recording of the tabla, I suddenly heard a voice saying, "That's the other place." I couldn't figure out if it was Timir or my own voice or why it was being said. I called Timir and played the voice to him, but he couldn't say if it was him saying the phrase and nor could I. It must have been somebody, but since nobody could figure out who it was and why it was said or anything I liked the idea of putting the voice into the song. It ended up in the recording for that reason, and I really do hope it was one of us having said these words. Otherwise it would be a bit scary...



YORE RECORDS

October 2011

top

Articles

Backtracking Andy Vaz
Spotlight 2

Albums

Aardvarck
Anonymey
Balam Acab
Balmorhea
Blue Sausage Infant
Steve Brand
Harold Budd
Causa Sui
Cosmin TRG
cv313
Dalot
Ricardo Donoso
Paul Eg
Fjordne
Roman Flügel
Emmanuelle Gibello
Greie Gut Fraktion
Gurun Gurun
Chihei Hatakeyama
Saito Koji
Tobias Lilja
Martin & Wright
Jasmina Maschina
Mobthrow
Nickolas Mohanna
Muskox
Namo
offthesky
The OO-Ray
A Produce & Loren Nerell
Jody Redhage
The Mark Segger Sextet
Static
Sub Loam
The Teknoist
To Destroy A City
Damian Valles
Andy Vaz
Yard

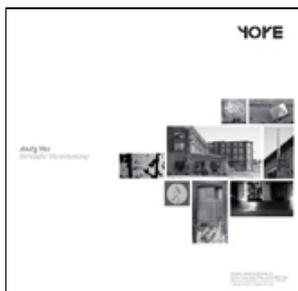
Compilations / Mixes

Audible Approaches
Dave Clarke
Dixon
Marcel Fenger
Jamie Jones
Kompakt Total 12

Damian Lazarus
Soma Records—20 Years
Stilnovo Sessions Vol. 1

EPs

A Wake A Week
James Blackshaw
c.db.sn + Scaffolding
Dagshenma
Isan
Namo
P... ..

**Andy Vaz: *Straight Vacationing***

Yore

Andy Vaz's *Straight Vacationing*, his first album-length collection of studio tracks since the 2006 release of *Repetitive Moments Last Forever...* on Persistencebit Records and his first full-length to appear on his own Yore imprint, registers as less a straight-up collection of dancefloor burners and more a variety pack that mixes club tracks and dance-based songs. Listeners hungry for 4/4 throwdowns will hear their share of those, but they'll also get a whole lot more on this dynamic and well-rounded set of eight tracks (nine counting the bonus) from the Yore pilot. If one were curious to know just how much Vaz's music has changed over the past decade, listening to *Straight Vacationing* alongside one of his earlier *Soundvariation* releases would make that abundantly clear, with the exuberant deep house vibe of the recent material worlds removed from the stark minimalism of the earlier.

Straight Vacationing kicks off in fine form when an acid-funk bass line percolates aggressively in "Detroit In Me" alongside a female vocal motif ("Got a little bit o' Detroit in me") and a wealth of radiant synths and a late-inning jazz piano episode; if the track title obviously leaves little doubt as to the genre on offer, Vaz nevertheless polishes the track's Detroit surfaces to a mirror-like sheen, and the track proves to be a radiantly soulful start to what will be a trip of multiple colours and satisfactions. After a laid-back intro, the title cut digs into its bass-heavy rolling groove determinedly, with Vaz sprinkling its slow-funk pulse with electric piano and organ accents, while, on the clubbier tip there's "Fukuoka Liquid," a bubbly, acid-techno shape-shifter featuring a hammering groove overlaid with synth smears.

An occasional guest adds a distinctive touch to the material too, such as when Timir Roy's tabla playing takes the house-driven fury of "The Other Place" to a, well, whole other place. And a little bit like what Maceo Parker might sound like soloing over a funky, Detroit-styled groove, Andreas Pasternack spreads his tenor sax wail all over the creamy base Vaz fashions for him in "Stubnitz" and in so doing bolsters the hard-grooving cut's bounce. The album's poppiest moment arrives in "Just Another Round," whose infectious hooks, vocal and otherwise, Vaz powers with a thunderous bass attack. The supremely funky bass playing is rooted in the grand Larry Graham-and-Bootsy Collins tradition, and the music's cold sweat might remind listeners of a certain age of the J.B.'s, James Brown's '70s band.

A few questionable moments do arise. Though "Dope Jam (Bullyshit Mix)" slams with bass-thundering force, the sample lifted from A Taste of Honey's "Boogie Oogie Oogie" is a little too conspicuous for my liking, and on the bonus track "Soul Feelin'" it would have been nice had Vaz given Eva better lyrics to sing; instrumentally the track is fine and so is her singing, but lines such as "It's a feelin' you got me feelin' and I'm lovin' it like a groove deep in my soul..." aren't terribly, shall we say, thought-provoking. Still, such flaws are minor and hardly cast a serious shadow on a superbly crafted album that otherwise hits the mark solidly.

Included as free digital downloads, the remixes are hardly second-rate add-ons—but that won't surprise listeners familiar with the output of Yore associates Patrice Scott, Rick Wade, Alton Miller, Memory Foundation, Ibex (Tony Olliviera), Kez YM, and Orlando B. In their "Detroit In Me" makeovers, Miller exploits the tune's acid potential, while Orlando B focuses on the cut's house side in a rolling, effervescent take that's so fleet of foot it feels airborne; in contrast to the other two, Scott strips the vocal away altogether, turning the original into a trippy, beat-centered shape-shifter in the process. In addition, Wade adds his inimitable touch to "Soul Feelin'" by animating it with a crisp house swing, Kez YM takes the tune out into the streets where crowd noise and congas add to the free-spirited party vibe, and Memory Foundation invests "Stubnitz" with a jacking, hyperactive intensity that splits the spotlight between sax playing and mechano rhythms. It wouldn't be stretching things too much to say that the remixes could be looked upon as an

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indispensible component of *Straight Vacationing*, even if they're supplemental to the album proper.

October 2011