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egyptian empire: the horn track
(missile)

an old-school breakbeat track that came out in 1992 that has since been regarded as a classic. not that we've heard of it, mind. we were too busy trying to avoid all that awful rave nonsense at the time. still, it's been re-released with a new and old remix for fun. luke slater offers us an upbeat electro rendition of the original with over-the-top synth stabs and numerous build-ups and break downs. follows on nicely from the stuff he did on that last album.

defunct rave duo toxic 2 are reprised for their original 1992 remix. suitably annoying and driving in equal measure, it's surprising how little it has dated and could have easily been re-issued under the rephlex brandance manifesto. it all kinda works, but listening to this on a miserably cold and wet monday afternoon; it made no sense at all.

manitoba: if assholes could fly this place would be an airport
(leaf)

the next level of musicians who are willing to fuck with the 2-step formula are coming up with some amazing results. we've already had the dizzy rascal single which fuses conventional notions of 2-step with dark techno to great effect and here we have manitoba knocking out another effortless tune. the title track is a fantastically focussed bump'n grind affair that manages to fuse northern-bleep style retroism with swathes of deep-sub bass and clever snippets of processed vocals. best bit is right in the middle where it breaks down into looped bursts of fuzzed static before coming back with some more of that ruff-neck action. bling, bling indeed!



hrk: system error (thomas fehlmann remix)
(joint recordings)

electronica's flirtation with japanese pop music is not a new phenomenon. there's always been this symbiosis between the cutesy bubblegum saccharine world of eastern female singers and technology obsessed electronica scene. hanayo successfully worked with the likes of the black dog and panacea. i also remember a band called nav katze who had remixes by the likes of afx and mu-ziq. hrk is an acronym for haruka; a seventeen year pop temptress currently making waves in her native japan.

having not heard (and will never hear) the original, comparisons cannot be drawn. but this deft turn by former orb member thomas fehlmann is accomplished and beautiful. a funky groove holds together disparate elements in check. her searing vocals, dubby basslines, subtle turns of melody; all cleverly interwoven into a track that's part dancefloor-house, part pop song. smart.

hrk: love world (ulrich schnauss remix)
(joint recordings)

second clutch of remixes from the 'japanese pop star meets electronica elite' project. hrk this time ropes in rising artist ulrich schnauss to pour his hot digital love all over the appropriately titled 'love world'. ambient and indescribably gorgeous; if electronica is walls' ice cream, then this is a taste of haagen-dazs. rich, lush and totally edible. the mix with her vocals work best, as they are slightly distorted to wobble a bit. while schnauss commands an untold amount of laptops to generate an evocative symphony.

it may not be original and to some it may even be too sugary. but these tunes are happy, hopeful and optimistic. and in these dark times, that's more than enough. a perfect way to start 2003.

phon.o: mokkaustaubchen ep
(shitkatapult)

another remarkable release from the consistently excellent shitkatapult label. we've somehow managed to ignore all their releases up till now, but intend to make amends by giving them the coverage they deserve. another berlin native creates a house / techno / glitch-hop hybrid. splicing the best parts of preface 73, basic channel and carl craig across four tracks. he then thematically links everything together with some inventive ideas and smart production.

'the garage dudev2' is astonishing in its execution; digitally tearing apart a guitar lick to pieces, while cloaking it in a manic maelstrom of gravity-affected percussion and those subtle details that can only be heard through headphones. but elsewhere the thudding continues as normal, with movements like 'sachertorte am morgen' almost taking on a funk approach to pure techno.



anders ilar: replik
(shitkatapult)

the shitkatapult website claims that you should file anders ilar's output under 'minimal dance and abstract soundscapes'. that'll either be an endorsement or a warning, depending on which side of the minimal techno firewall you sit on. we are people of simple pleasures, so we get horribly excited by this stuff. and the opening menace of 'onehow' does not disappoint, a tough (you could say teutonic) bass drum nails everything else in sight before a 'where the hell did that come from' piano break makes us puts our hands in the air....almost.

but it's really how he manages to make deeply familiar elements of house and techno sound so fresh and invigorating. check out 'pedal' and the amazing 'replik' for proof. it maybe re-treading old ground for a lot of us, but listen carefully and you'll realise that with releases like this, we'll no longer need our musical maps for future reference.

