



'THE BEST OF LEWIS RECORDINGS'
VARIOUS ARTISTS

[Lewis]

Damn son, can you think of a better bunk-up than dropping the certified, indie-rap-retro-futurism classic, Edan's 'Mic Manipulator', as your label's first release? How about 'Emcees Smoke Crack'... actually, screw that, the whole of that Edan album 'Primitive Plus' is killer. It's kinda like a living incarnation of Ego Trip magazine edited by the Beastie Boys. Edan was one of those MC/producers that knew more about hip hop than you ever would, and delivered it in a punked-up, arrogant, 80s b-boy stance sorta way. Lovable. Five years after 'Mic Manipulator' and Mikey Mike Lewis' awesomely lo-fi, bump-riddled rap imprint celebrates with a 'Best Of...' compilation. Alongside Boston's Edan you get the old school (hip hop historians would say mid-school) vibes of Connecticut's finest revival, Dooley-O on 'I Don't Want To Lose You' (slap that on a mixtape now) and album track 'I Wish'. Although Edan and Dooley-O are the crown kings of Lewis, this compilation is a family affair with Mighty Casey's addictive and simplistic style on his ode to the ivory - 'White Girls' - and the brilliant freak-a-leak, Casio-nursery-electro of pseudo-pop act Cinnamon.

You know Lewis are gonna have some exclusives on here and they don't disappoint. How about Kool Keith associate Kutmasta Kurt playing The Funky Redneck guise, with a Cotton Eyed Joe version of The Darkness' 'I Believe In A Thing Called Love'? Damn right you better believe. Or a raw, dismantled (near broken) live session from Edan and Dagha? It's down, all seven minutes of madness. Basically this compilation is essential, especially for Lewis newbies, just buy the bloody ticket... proverbial ticket that is. I'm sure they'll be happier if you buy the CD though. You'll get more out of it, just trust us. **6/7**



'THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE'
DIRTY DIGGERS

[Zebra Traffic]

Young Max and Pat Stash are the London-Yorkshire alliance that takes loop scavenging and vinyl excavation to Olympian levels while rhyming in post-pub plain talk. The Diggers adopt that essential English "mustn't grumble" mentality, living a beer-fogged, likely lads lifestyle dominated by crap weather and reality taking regular bites. Reality that includes the perils of crate digging-induced injury, hoping their folks can stomp up some loft space for their vinyl habit, and wrestling with one another's geography for the love of the game.

Again making terse, tight drums the focal point of their work, DD allow themselves some outside help from Nostalgia77 and 42 Blues to go with their down-to-earth rhyme skills. 'Cuts & Bruises' converts this lyrical style into a cautionary yarn about picking your friends over lazy jazz piano, and Zebra Traffic colleague Rup logically joins the pair in writing bleak hometown postcards on 'City To Sticks'. The pair maintains melancholia through click-clacking organs and dusted funkiness, as previously demonstrated on their very fine debut 'Freakishly Strong'. However, the album's best moment is also its most wound-up: the brass slam 'Bang On It' is right on the money alongside the always ravenous Micall Parknsun.

'It'll Be OK', a cup of keep-your-head-up cheer, doesn't totally turn frowns upside down, but is a dreamily soulful insert featuring Fourteen Corners that allows the Diggers to walk under less of a cloud. Its contentment runs into 'The Goodun Tune' - where bliss is gleaned from a stack of new 12"s and sticking the kettle on - helping to shape the pair's mood swings. 'Aw Man' paints the pair's picture: thick as thieves and mutually telepathic while bitching like hip hop's odd couple, and ultimately, perfecters of a first-rate follow-up. **5.5/7**



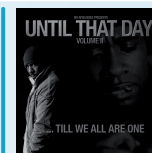
'THE SWEET VANDALS'
THE SWEET VANDALS

[Unique]

At the helm of the Madrid quintet, Mayka Edjo performs wholeheartedly with a wonky Winehouse-like twang that on first listen you can't quite get comfortable with. It emerges with a hard to define quality, the best description being that it carries a certain bounciness. Like the notes she hits are done in bubble writing as her words appear somehow "rounder" and lispy. The voice breeds a bossiness that can soar or sound guttural and gristly according to the funk behind her, and without a doubt it has much to do with her Spanish twang grinding out English language vocals. It's a quirkiness that in parts almost sounds too awkward or lopsided for the job, yet it puts her in a class of her own.

Behind Edjo, The Vandals' time-honoured funk runs from sushi-raw to sounding like a freshly dusted 45 from way back. Rhythmically it's quite simply structured, but you'd be wrong to think the group just add Latino-by-numbers. Instead they concentrate on looping electric guitar dominating deep and bassy (yet clean cut grooves) such as the instrumental warm-down 'Nite Lites'. Clinical mid-tempo style has 'You Wanna Be My Lover' and 'I Got You, Man!' both claiming a love interest, whether he likes it or not.

Elsewhere, nimbler numbers bristle with confidence, a cover of James Brown's 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' amongst them. The slow ballad and secret weapon 'Beautiful' is ideal for Edjo's voice to sound totally pain-stricken over aching Hammond organs, and applies the cherry to a tasty cake. If all vandals were as sweet as the Sweet Vandals, why, I'd be going down to the park tonight and handing out bats and two by fours to every hoodie I could see. As long as they stayed away from my car. **5/7**



'UNTIL THAT DAY 2'
NO APOLOGIES PRESENT...

[No Apologies]

For those of you that missed the first instalment of No Apologies' 'Until That Day' mixtape, it's back and even bigger than before. This time around our main man Major is joined by a wide variety of well known and not so well known peeps from all manor of urban genres. As well as regular collaborator Doom Man, we are treated to appearances from MCD, Hyper, Tinie Temper, Wookie, Harvey, Bruza and Dipset's first lady Camilla amongst others.

In keeping with the extensive roll call of featured artists, this mixtape reflects a wide range of musical styles. While Major takes most inspiration from big budget US hip hop, 'Until That Day' still wears its British identity proudly, with the influence of the home-grown garage and grime scenes especially audible on 'I can See' and 'Kicking off Doors'. The latter half of the CD then sees Major and crew amp up the bashment flavour as Gappy Ranks, Elephant Man and Tornado take over microphone duties. Especially with the amount of the poorly conceived and shoddily made mix CDs doing the rounds on road these days, it's a relief to hear that Major and Kiss FM's Manny Norte have done a top job with this one.

All the way through it has been crisply mixed and mastered, and the abundance of original instrumentals makes it sound more like an album than a mix CD in places. While there is definitely still room for improvement, (you'll be cursing Prince Paul for inventing the skit after hearing a couple of comedy Too Free's lame efforts) this is a slick and solid effort. If you're after a mix CD with all of its urban bases covered you could do far worse. While it won't be setting the world alight, it's a good representation of its scene. **3.5/7**

Label Profile: **FLAMIN' HOTZ**



Inspired by home town heroes Diplo, Low Budget and the Hollertronix parties, Casi G founded the Philadelphia based Flamin' Hotz label. Although only a year old, the imprint had been in the works for a while, but it was when he dropped a bootleg baile funk 12" - after linking up with the Brazilian DJ Zezinho - that everything started flowing. The 12" helped bankroll what would be one of the fastest selling EPs at the Turntablelab record store, the 'Curtis Vodka' EP, which featured a handful of the Alaskan producer's Baltimore blends that

had got him noticed on those pesky message boards. Platinum on the internet son!

How's Philadelphia living? The highs and the lows...

The highs are definitely the music and club scene and low-slung Philly feel in general. It feels like all the disparate scenes are coming together and Philly is coalescing and building itself up. The obvious low is the murder rate. It's getting a little crazy here, while the alternative scenes seem to be building themselves up, the poorer areas of the city are in chaos right now.

You've got some pretty notorious players on the Philly club scene, but from a local point of view, how is it?

Easily the best thing right now is the White Tees White Belts party with Emynd, Bo Bliz and Dan the Swede every first Friday. Fluid looks to take back the crown of small/medium size clubs now with Jay Simplefy taking over bookings bringing in Sinden for his first US dates. Not to mention there is a crazy DIY house party scene taking off in West Philly. There is a great deal of energy and spot on DJs right now throughout the city.

What's up with that initial baile funk record you guys put out?

This record actually created a lot of tension. I got into some email battles with Man Recordings and Diplo wrote some stuff about me bootlegging poor kids in the favela. Which is true, I did bootleg that record but I also put a full color sleeve, and full color labels to add value to the music and the record. But some people have commented that the international baile funk scene is so small that all my record did was expose it to more people. While the international baile funk scene was up in arms, I found out from DJ Z in Brazil that no one knew or cared about it. There is too much money wrapped up

in local parties and bailes for people to care about 1000 vinyl units of music that is already highly bootlegged on underground CD markets and is several years old in Brazil.

Can you talk about your current releases?

The 'Bass Bandits' EP is a group of hybrid club tracks that range in flavor from the emerging dirty bass scene. It's produced by the Trouble and Bass crew. We were at a Trouble and Bass party and when they played 'Ballers' from that EP the whole dancefloor erupted into an frenzy and I thought I saw people start hitting each other. Some crazy shit. The other release is the 'WTWB' EP produced by Emynd and Bo Bliz. It was the first time I was able to really work with some local DJs that I respect and put there music out to help define the Philadelphia Club sound. Plus we shouted out Allen Iverson in the credits.

So when are you guys gonna come party in London!?

The White Tees White Belts party is setting up a tour right now for the UK to begin at the end of May. They are working with Sinden as we speak to possibly secure a booking at Fabric for all you UK heads to experience this Philly shit.

FLAMIN' HOTZ

- TODOSANTOS: 'OMG We Got It'** [Flamin Hotz]
- UFFIE: 'Dismissed'** [Ed Banger]
- CROOKERS: 'Made In Italy EP'** [On The Brink]
- RYAN ADAMS: 'Come Pick Me Up'** [Bloodshot Records]
- SWITCH: 'Any thing this guy has done in the past two years'** [All labels]
- SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO: 'It's The Beat'** [Wichita]
- THREE SIX MAFIA: 'Dope Boy Fresh'** [Atlantic]

'White Tees White Belts' and 'Bass Bandits' are both available now. Watch out for a Baltimore Bass Connection '50 Ways' 12" in April, as well as a slew of baile releases on 12", CD and DVD later in the year.

www.flaminhotz.com