

DRUM AND BASS IN NORTH AMERICA

An overview of the music's place in North America today

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From techno, to breakbeat, to hardcore, drum and bass has been steadily evolving over the past 10 years as has the scene surrounding it, in both its UK birthplace, and North America, as this story will examine.

Many of the pioneers responsible for getting dnb heard on this side of the Atlantic are still involved in the scene and one of the reasons the music continues to evolve. "Anybody that was doing it back then and is still doing it now is definitely the reason it's all still around," says San Francisco's DJ UFO of Phylum Recordings.

In NYC, DB stands out as a key player from dnb's early days. In 1992 he launched NASA, the city's first London hardcore breakbeat night. A few years later he launched Sm:) communications. In 1995 he released his first CD and signed DJ Dara to Sm:)

In 1996, Dara and DB alongside Sean Shuter and Paul Morris established Breakbeat Science, America's first dnb record shop. "Most dnb 12"s weren't readily available in NYC at that time so Dara and I started to set up a distribution company (called) Lunar Distribution," explains Shuter. "That didn't work out but Breakbeat Science was on the horizon shortly afterwards."

As established DJ and Producer Marcus Sills (a.k.a. Marcus Visionary) explains, the music found an early home in Toronto. "The most regular party night was Sykosis held at 318 Richmond, which is now the Joker Nightclub," he says. "Then there were raves like Exodus, Chemistry, Nitrous, Pleasure Force, Phase, Infinity, Genetix ... I started Delerium in 1992."

Sills wanted a company that played exclusively dnb, and Toronto's first dnb only rave was Delirium's Lost in the Jungle on December 12, 1992. He says there was incredible support from day one. "The early parties were just a couple of hundred people. From '92 to '94 a large party was 1,000 people. Then in '95 the numbers started to reach 2,000. After that it just became insane. Syrous and the Lifeforce crew were getting 13, 000 regularly at the CNE events I believe from 97-99."

In Montreal, DJs Double A and Twist were two early key players. They were also among the first North American producers (apart from Jamie Myers) to have tunes released on a UK label. The label, Basement Records, eventually went bust but they continued releasing tracks on their own label, Dune Records, established in early 1999.

In the mid-nineties, after incredible growth, new labels were established as an

output for the work of producers eager to get their tunes heard. In San Francisco, Eric Hull (a.k.a. DJ E-Sassin) founded Sound Sphere Recordings to prove that American-made dnb was up to par with its UK counterpart. Other labels pushing boundaries included Rawkuts and Carlos Soul Slinger's Liquid Sky/Jungle Sky. In Canada it was the Vinyl Syndicate crew.

Recently, dnb and raves in general have faced government crackdowns on events and bad press. Harry Schrecengost (a.k.a. Ransom), promoter of DC's newest weekly called Volume, explains that due to this, many in the dnb scene want to disassociate with the rave scene. "Dnb has a lot of its own things going on and could stand alone if need be," he says.

But this crackdown may even have a positive effect. "I think it serves to increase the popularity of dnb because the energy is so empowering, liberating, defiant and in-your face, the appropriate response to governmental oppression," says Mary Morris, who helped promote Wild Things, one of DC's first weekly dnb events.

From its meager beginnings, drum and bass has spread across the continent like an incurable disease. Cities and states from coast to coast now boast dnb scenes all their own. This article shows you a glimpse of a few of the major players including: Philadelphia, Texas, Vancouver, Toronto, Atlanta, Chicago, Washington DC, and Florida. In the following pages you will find an information grid of labels, websites and people to watch out for across North America in 2003 and beyond.

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