

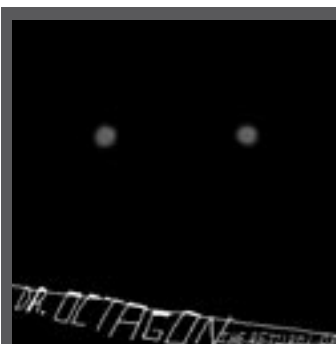
LEFT OF THE DIAL



Cut Chemist
The Audience's Listening
(Warner Brothers)

Early word had esteemed turntablist, sonic landscaper and beat inventor Cut Chemist making his solo debut, his first recording following splitting the Jurassic 5 crew and apart from work with Ozomatli and the block-rockin' outings *Brain Freeze* and *Product Placement* with DJ Shadow, as something of a far removed break from the tried and true template of the "DJ record." This album isn't quite a radical departure for the inventive needle and groove maestro (real name Lucas Mcfadden), but there's enough here to turn the ear of those even outside of the hip-hop underground's walls. At the same time, the ever loyal and vigilant headphone set is likely to remain enthralled with the Chemist's latest experimentations, straight from his laboratory of vinyl crates, that spread across *The Audience's Listening's* 12 tracks. He has fun splicing in lush strings and snatches of Brazilian tropicalia for the cool charm of "The Garden." The laid-back groove and easy bass line of "Spoon" bears the old school cool paraphernalia and soulful markings of a J5 track, while "What's the Altitude," complete with hypnotic guitar line and funky cowbell, has guest emcee Hymnal dropping easygoing rhymes. The head-bobbing scratch fanatics will find plenty to love in the future primitive beat banging of "Metrorail Thru Space" as well as in the kitchen sink mashup nature and heavy duty cutting and scratching on "Spat," a track that revisits the charged but fun atmosphere of the Shadow collaborations. What Cut Chemist proves here is that he has a vast record collection and, like his cohort Shadow, he is unafraid to mine in order to yield entirely new sounds and wonderfully head-spinning results.

—donny kutzbach



Dr. Octagon
The Return of Dr. Octagon
(OCD Records)

Keith Thornton may be the quintessential musical schizophrenic. Over the course of his 20-year career, he has recorded under many surnames, each with their own well-developed personality, including Kool Keith, Dr. Octagon, Dr. Doom and Black Elvis. Of these incarnations, Dr. Octagon garnered the most critical acclaim; his 1996 *Dr. Octagonecologist* record gets a lot of credit for the revitalization of post-gangsta underground hip-hop. This unexpected (and seemingly unwanted) popularity resulted in Thornton killing off Dr. Octagon on a subsequent release, a sign that this MC likes his audiences small and his records under the radar. Hence, *The Return of Dr. Octagon* is a bit of a puzzler. One gets the sense that Thornton is only half sold on the idea of resurrecting his most commercially successful incarnation. The album is a paltry 34 minutes long, and the only moments that truly fit the Dr. Octagon character—a time-traveling, intergalactic, impostor gynecologist—are four skits. For these reasons, it's tough not to believe the conspiracy surrounding the album, namely that this is an unsanctioned label concoction that was never approved for release by Thornton. But if you put all the drama aside and listen to the damn thing, you're in for a deliciously phantasmagorical half-hour. After the perverted galactic hold music of the opening skit "Our Operators Are Masturbating," Dr. Octagon gets oddly environmental with "Trees," warning of the consequences of wrapping paper consumption over a Neptunes-meets-Depeche Mode beat, courtesy of production team One Watt Sun. "Al Green" is a spaced-out denunciation of modern hip-hop, anchored by the bizarre accusation, "All you motherfuckers want to be Al Green." "Aliens" is the most adventurous of the bunch (which says a lot) with an apocalyptic landscape of slasher-flick synths, dissonant pianos and a horn section hitting strategically placed octaves. The track also contains one of the most skillfully executed tempo shifts in hip-hop history, revving its engines on an incredible, frenetic ska outro. If this is actually a record company hack job of throwaway vocal tracks and not the "real" return of Dr. Octagon, as many of his fans seem to believe, it's even more of a testament to his talents. The record may be unforgivably short, but it's rife with the MC's inimitable non-sequiturs and twisted sense of humor, and it spotlights some seriously adventurous production. Here's hoping this is only the first of many happy returns.

—joe sweeney



Group name: FarFromFree

When/where playing this week?

August 3rd from 9pm-1am at Club W on Chippawa and Delaware. NO COVER!

Band members?

Joline Bruckman—vocal
John Bruckman—keyboards, guitar Ted Chubbuck—drums
Adam Vallone—guitar

When did the band form?

2000—we're always evolving.

You might like us if you like...Hits from today and yesterday. For this show we will be performing mainly well-known covers, with a few originals entwined. Our original sound is inspired from bands such as Radiohead, Tori Amos and the Beatles. We pull from all everything from the classical genre to hip hop beats.

List of recorded releases...*Knee Deep in June* (2004).

Anything else you would like our readers to know about the band...

You're in for a good time!

Contact information...

John Bruckman Jr.: 634-3008

BANDWIDTH: FARFROMFREE