BREAKESTRA: *Hit the Floor* CD/DLP  
**Release date: October 25, 2005.** Ubiquity Records (URCD/LP178)

“I sampled that shit myself! The first time I heard their cuts, I didn’t know it wasn’t recorded in 1972!”

?UESTLOVE (THE ROOTS)

“One of the heaviest outfits amidst the current crop of contemporary funk bands”

DJ MAGAZINE

Released on Stones Throw in 2001 *The Live Mix part 2* put the Los Angeles-based live funk band Breakestra on the map. In 2005, their new album *Hit the Floor* (Ubiquity Records), a new single featuring members of Jurassic 5 and People Under The Stairs, and recent performances with GZA, Guru, Raekwon, Digable Planets and De La Soul (at New York’s Summer Stage) will launch the band further into the public eye.

While their debut album and legendary live shows predominantly paid homage to old school breaks n’ beats gone by, Hit the Floor goes a step further as Breakestra create an album featuring all-original compositions and songs. The funk flavor is as strong as ever and Breakestra’s main man Miles Tackett explains the transformation from a cover band into one flaunting their own material as the obvious next step, “While hip hop dj/medley inspired covers are the foundation of Breakestra, it is only natural we’d want to express our own soulful proclamations,” he says. “I’ve been releasing original funk cuts before putting out The Live Mix Part 2. The first Breakestra single was an original song called “Getcho Soul Togetha”, so this album is really just a part of the natural flow,” he adds.

Four years is a long time to wait for a second album, but judging by the size and enthusiasm of crowds at Breakestra shows or at their weekly hosted Rootdown party in LA their fan base continues to grow. And the global funk scene, which Breakestra are thoroughly entrenched in, now includes a distinguished list of bands like The Bamboos in Australia, The Dapkings in NYC, the New Master Sounds, Speedometer and Quantic Soul Orchestra in England and seems to be growing stronger by the day. “I don't think this music is going to be here today but gone tomorrow,” Tackett enthuses, “it's the best it’s been in years.”

Explaining the time lag between debut and sophomore albums Tackett says, “I have a slight tendency to be a perfectionist, so creating all original material was a little more difficult than I thought.” He adds “It’s an intimidating thought for me that the music that inspired Breakestra had set such a high musical bar.”

To help kick-start recording Tackett opened a heavily soundproofed Funky Tilt recording studio last year. Setting it up from scratch with Tackett paying as close attention to musical detail as he does any of his recordings meant the public would have to wait a little longer to hear Hit the Floor, but eventually this space allowed for late night writing and recording sessions. During this time Tackett and co perfected a blend of rough n’ready sounds that is matched by great songwriting. From the call-out party vibe of the break driven intro’ track “Stand Up” to the catchy blues-tinged “Hiding” and “Recognize”, to the ‘60’s vibe of the title track, Hit the Floor is a varied and accomplished second outing built on the foundation of a great debut and countless live dates.
A rotating cast of players make up the Breakestra line-up, but collaborating with Tackett (who sings and plays bass, guitar, drums and keys) and right hand man Mixmaster Wolf (singing and soulful shouting!) on this album are Pete McNeil (drums), James “The Penguin” King (saxes and flute), Pete “The Buzzard” McNeal (drums), Pat Bailey (guitar), Chuck Prada (percussion), Marshall Thompson (keys and organ), Dan Hastie (keys and organ), Devin Williams (trumpet), Todd Simon (trumpet), and Mike Bolger (trumpet). Plus there are guest appearances from Charli2na and Soup (of Jurassic 5) and Double K (of People Under The Stairs), plus Mixmaster Wolfs percussion-playing father Munyongo Jackson on an old school posse cut in the spirit of the live-band old school rap jams called “Family Rap”.

In addition to making a new album and building a studio Tackett hosts the weekly 8 yr old Rootdown party in LA where Breakestra perform regularly to capacity crowds along side hip hop luminaries such as Jurassic 5, Dilated Peoples, Black Eyed Peas, Freestyle Fellowship, Company Flow, Cut Chemist, Nu-Mark and DJ Shadow.

Tackett grew up on a steady diet of music by father his Freddie Tackett of Little Feat. These home-schooled sounds were mixed with a diet of Steely Dan and music from New Orleans. “My Dad played with a New Orleans band in the 70’s and 80’s and did a few Neville Brothers/Meters things which were my first introduction to straight funky music. In fact I met Leo Nocentelli hanging out at one of their local gigs when I was a young teenager though I had no idea who he was until many years later.” Singing since he was only 8 years old Tackett Jr. made his first appearance in a prog/classic rock band at the tender age of 13. In addition to his current role as Breakestra leader Tackett has numerous productions as This Kid Named Miles. He has produced T-Love’s acclaimed “Return of the B-girl” EP, and supplied tracks for Cut Chemist, Rakka of Dilated Peoples, and contributed songs to Macy Gray’s debut LP.

High resolution photos, album cover, sound clips, etc. are available online at www.ubiquityrecords.com/press/. To arrange an interview or if you have questions about Breakestra or Hit the Floor please email aaron@ubiquityrecords.com or call (949) 764-9012 x109.
Homegrown and happening

Which local bands are taking it to the next level? Whether it's indie rock, hip-hop or power pop, we look at some promising up-and-comers. Page 30
Out of Southern California's disconnected musical landscape could come the next indie faves, hip-hop purists or reggae revivalists.

Bands on the brink

By Kevin Bronson
Times Staff Writer

Los Angeles has no "music scene." It has a bazillion niches populated by musicians of every stripe who cultivate their small followings and clamor for more attention, all in the shadow of a music industry that magnifies the line between commerce and art.

Myriad sensibilities abound. What's cool on the Sunset Strip might be crass in Silver Lake; what rocks Orange County might earn shrugs in Hollywood; what's hip in Long Beach might be harlequin in the Valley.

Mine those nooks and crannies and you might find the next great L.A. band, or at least an artist appealing enough to get you off the couch and into any of the more than 150 Southland clubs where, on a given night, 300-plus acts take the stage.

Here we profile seven acts — some new, some not-so-new, all just hitting their stride — whose distinctive take on their respective styles...
Anthroced and ignited by bubbling bassist Miles Tackett and force-of-nature drummer Josh “Wallet” Cohen, this Los Angeles group made its bank reeling off neck-bone-funky medleys of classic hip-hop breaks à la the Roots (but with more groove juice). This is their first record of originals, and it’s a keeper—so fierce the vocals almost seem intrusive.
Breakestra

Hit The Floor [URGENT]

Hip hop magpies' second LP proves they got the funk.

Breakestra began as a live band equivalent of a sample-happy DJ. Their gigs and debut album, The Live Mix Part 2, were hour-long medleys of fragments of late '60s and early '70s funk sampled extensively by hip hop artists. Hit The Floor, their second album, moves things forward by several giant leaps. Their first record of original material, it's 1970s funk re-imagined by 21st century hip hop trainspotters. The style and sound retain a rustic, Meters-referencing authenticity, but the compositions are calculated to excite those whose attention is piqued by breakbeats and loop-ready riffs. Yet these are uncommonly strong songs, with vocalists Miles Tackett (son of Little Feat's Freddie) and Mixmaster Wolf doing a bluesy Hendrix-via-Shuggie Otis thing (Hiding, Recognize) and a warm, throaty Bobby Byrd (Keep On Playin', the title track) respectively.

Angus Batey
It's often said that history has a tendency to repeat itself. Well, I don't buy it. History is just that: history. And history is a record that never skips; the only way it gets repeated is when someone personally lifts that great needle of time and drops it back into yesterday's groove. It seems only fitting, then, that the greatest conductor on the tracks of history is the hip-hop DJ. After all, those of us from the Sampling Generation often find ourselves tracing history only after hip-hop DJs have already gone and retreated it. Such was the case when I came across Breakestra, the funk-break cover band that turned out to be so much more.

Breakestra itself is a relatively new creation, founded in 1997 by DJ and bassist Miles Tackett, but its roots stretch deep and wide. In the late '60s, as inner cities across the U.S. were scorched by riots radiating from the unrest of Black communities that were losing leaders like Martin Luther King, losing young men in Vietnam, and losing faith in the government and the economy, the escapism that was soul music became tinged with the grittiness of reality. The funk sound was defined in principle by three signatures: swinging, syncopated rhythms; juicy bass lines bellowing with a flanged-out "ow"; and the nascent backbone of hip-hop, the drum break. Leading the way was James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, who was fast becoming the Godfather of Funk and would eventually become the Godfather of Hip-Hop—his 1969 track "Funky Drummer" is considered by many to be the most frequently sampled song in history. The most popular funk tracks at the time, tunes like Brown's "My Thang" and Archie Bell and the Drells' "Tighten Up," found their way into the repertoires of lesser-known acts, who traditionally stayed true to the originals, acting more like live jukeboxes than reinterpreters. But by the mid '70s, such cover bands were becoming phased out by nightclubs in favor of DJs, who were more than just "live" jukeboxes. The first hip-hop DJ was Kool Herc, who invented the break beat by taking two copies of the same record and mixing them so as to continuously loop the drum break; his technique started a revolution, where the DJ became a one-man band capable of creating new songs from old ones. The funk songs that served as the components for this new music became known collectively as "the breaks." These are not only the roots of Breakestra but the foundation of hip-hop itself. And while the latter has begun to stray from its origins in search of new ground, Breakestra has done nothing but stay completely true.
When Tackett first introduced the Breakestra concept it was an informal venture, a way to bring live instrumentation into the fold of a weekly Los Angeles coffeehouse DJ night. He invited a variety of musicians to come down and jam in the coffeehouse’s loft space while MCs huddled in freestyle sessions down below. If another bassist showed up and there was no guitarist, Tackett would pick up a guitar and take that role; when a drummer showed up with a drum kit, he was the one who got the gig. The song selection was completely improvised, as Tackett would lead the way with whatever funky groove came to mind. “I was working with this library I had in my head from listening to funk and hip-hop mixtapes,” he says. “I’d scream out the break and hope somebody would hear me. Then someone said, ‘Hey, do you think you could write it down?’” He took the notion a step further, translating his mental mixtape to cassette form for his bandmates to study.

As the band began to tighten its set, the crowds started to expand, especially the MC and DJ contingents. Whereas in prior weeks the DJs had been spinning chilled-out jazz breaks for couch-sitting coffee-sippers, the change for the livelier sprung heavier funk breaks forth from the record crates of soul controllers like Mixmaster Wolf. The event came to be known as The Breaks, and Tackett correspondingly dubbed the band the Breakestra, also an allusion to free-jazz legend Sun Ra’s funkified Arkestra. It wasn’t long before they outgrew the venue and found a new home elsewhere in L.A.

In 1998, following the success of The Breaks, Miles decided to take a stab at capturing the Breakestra vibe on tape. At the suggestion of MC Hymnal, one of the founders of The Breaks, Miles invited Mixmaster Wolf to host the recorded set and lend his forceful voice to Breakestra’s rendition of Bobby Byrd’s “I Know You Got Soul.” “As a DJ, I’m stuck in time,” says Wolf, “so it made sense to start my vocal career with a band that wanted to move back in that direction.”

'It keeps flowing, like a DJ set... That's hip-hop. That's the foundation. Breakestra, essentially, is the DJ.'

He was an exceptionally apt addition, possessing the musical knowledge and imitative ability to suit Tackett’s dogged determination to replicate the original breaks word-for-word. The Live Mix Part 1 was the product of the recording session, perhaps the first mixtape ever concocted from scratch, each song an ingredient perfectly blended with the next.
The following year, Breakestra released their first original composition, "Getcho Soul Togetha," on Stones Throw Records. The departure from cover-band status was easily concealed by the song's authenticity, from the decidedly lo-fi nature of the recording to the spirited groove to Wolf's vintage soul shouts ("Go on, take it to the bridge!"). Fittingly, Tackett later sampled the track while producing a hip-hop beat for Rakaa of Dilated Peoples. It also made for the perfect bonus track to round off Breakestra's The Live Mix Part 2, released by Stones Throw in 2001. Like Part 1, the album was a bona fide representation of a typical Breakestra set, kicked off with a headlong rundown of classic hip-hop beats before moving into covers of funk originals, whirled together harmoniously as if orchestrated through turntables and a mixer. "It keeps flowing, like a DJ set," says Tackett. "That's hip-hop. That's the foundation. Breakestra, essentially, is the DJ."

With their 2005 release Hit The Floor on Ubiquity Records, Breakestra turned the clock back in a different direction. The third full-length is entirely comprised of new material, tunes that, like "Getcho Soul Togetha," could easily dupe funk connoisseurs into believing that they're listening to a piece of 1972. Miles and Wolf led the way, sharing vocal duties, with Tackett holding down the smooth, soulful lines and Wolf leading the charge to the dance floor. "I guess you could say Miles is like the English teacher and I'm the P.E. coach," Wolf suggests. "I handle the screaming and hollering." The cover-band origins of Breakestra served them well in capturing the throwback spirit. "We didn’t deconstruct Breakestra to make it more like a straight-up band,” Miles asserts. “What inspired Breakestra still inspires Breakestra.”

The raw essence of funk music is an enigmatic quasi-entity, intangible yet powerful enough to clutch unsuspecting ears at the snap of a snare drum, contagious like a virus yet curative in its tenacity—a panacea disease. "Just listen to those drums when it's really gettin' down, man," says Miles. "It's infectious." I personally came down with a case when I first discovered The Live Mix Part 2 while making my first venture beyond hip-hop. It was a wake-up call that didn’t need to ring twice, a history lesson that actually lifted my head off my desk. I soon found myself chasing down the original cuts, trying to make up for years of ignorance by finally doing my homework on all those hip-hop samples that had passed through my ears. Like any subject, the more you learn the more you realize how little you know, and as I interview Tackett I find myself further schooled. It's all good though—"Breakestra is edutainment," he says. Moreover, it's a funky magic school bus that boards at the Bumpin' Bus Stop and brings its passengers on a journey back in time (funky good time, that is). And even history itself can’t compete with that.
Contemporary funk can be very hit or miss, sometimes hitting the mark of authenticity, other times straying into homogenized, derivative blather. So when L.A.-based Breakestra hit the streets a couple years ago with The Live Mix, Part 2, it caught the attention of DJs, singers and MCs alike who often spent time diggin’ in the crates for similar—but overlooked—sounds of yesteryear. Though it’s got a little bit of that new-school sheen a la Galactic, it trumps that, and similar bands’ efforts, by utilizing a wider variety of vocalists and orchestration. While most every song has the necessary propulsive bass and snap-tight drum shuffle, songs like “Stand Up” with Mix Master Wolf on vocals, “Recognize” with jack-of-all-trades frontman Music Man Miles on the drums, mic, keys and guitar and the instrumental “How Do You Really Feel?” are able to define themselves, each demarcating itself with distinct melody and sonic nuance. While other bands end up faking the funk, Breakestra delivers it the only way it should be served: straight-up.

★ Josh Baron
DVD EXTRA!
Celebrities reveal their favorite movies p. 118

"YOU GOT ME WHAT?"
The holiday gift guide that will save your ass

SPECIAL REPORT

BREAKESTRA
HIT THE FLOOR
DATE OCT 25
LABEL UBIQUITY

"I sampled that shit myself!" Questlove of the Roots says of this Los Angeles-based funk cover band, which releases its first original songs here. Main man Miles Tackett's dad was in Little Feat, so he grew up around blues-tinged funk. Chali2na and Soup of Jurassic 5 shine on the single, "Family Rap."
Breakestra

WHAT: Beloved hip-hop/funk ensemble

Kool it, NOW: Though Breakestra pay homage to funk/soul/jazz greats such as the Meters, James Brown and Sly Stone, leader Miles Tackett cites (early, pre-“Celebration”) Kool and the Gang as his most inspirational funksters.

It’s a Family Affair: Multi-instrumentalist Tackett, who started playing music at 8 years old, is the son of Little Feat axman Freddie Tackett.

In Da Club: Born in ’97 out of Tackett’s weekly party the Breaks, the combo found their wild funk jams — featuring local MCs working their flows over F.T.’s instrumental grooves — becoming a local phenom. A competent DJ as well, Tackett now co-hosts and spins at two clubs: the Rootdown at Little Temple and Funky Sole at Star Shoes.

Rapper’s Delight: "When I first got into hip-hop and realized they were sampling old stuff, I wanted to know who made the music originally. These beatmakers would take the best part of a track and make it something new," says Tackett. "I got into making beats myself, and then incorporating the same rhythms and little breaks live on instruments with the band."

Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag: Badass covers are one thing, but with its latest album, Hit the Floor, the group shows off some scorching original material, all of which holds its own next to the greats it emulates so well.

Ebony & Ivory: It’s a yin-and-yang thang when Tackett and crooner Mixmaster Wolf get together in the studio and onstage. Wolf’s wildman party rants and raps make a crackling contrast to Tackett’s smooth & soulful vox and more personal songwriting approach.

Get Down Tonight: From "Stand Up!" — "Got That Bottom Shakin’ with no hesitation, baby, slide on down the line to my marination baby/You got to stand up let me see those hands/Jump up act a fool, stomp & dance." Roger on that.

—Lina Lecaro

El Rey • November 16 • w/People Under the Stairs, Cut Chemist, DJ Dusk and host Chali Tuna
BREAKESTRA — Hit the Floor

BREAKESTRA

URQUALITY

BREAKESTRA are back with another slice of the staunchest funk being served up out in La La Land. Their 2001 release was a veritable hip hop mix tape — played live — that caught the attention of classic funk fans as well as hip hop’s elite. This album of new material has tested well with audiences over the past few years, supporting Jurassic 5, DJ Shadow and Dilated Peoples. Just imagine: you can throw this on at any party in LA without risking being shot.
Breakestra’s Down
L.A. funk-jazz-hip-hop group brings a dash of depth to its nonstop party

BY DONNELL ALEXANDER

Now, let’s see: that three-note bass line is actually from “Are You Experienced?” And the Honeydrippers put down the beat from “Impeach the President,” not Eric B. and Rakim. Who thinks this way, though, really? It certainly wasn’t one tireless dancing El Rey Theater crowd during Breakestra’s November 16 release party for its new album, Hit the Floor. The overriding vibe was to simply call that Hendrix riff the Pharcyde’s “Passing Me By” and lose one’s self in the groove.

Denizens usually of the extremely intimate Little Temple space, Miles Tackett’s nine-member-plus-funk-jazz-hip-hop band piles its signature restless trade in a way that hardly feels nostalgic, despite relying on the funk and R&B convolutions of various hip-hop classics. Tackett’s tight set of musicians won’t ever be mistaken for samplers. On this night, in this larger-than-usual room, Breakestra worked in newer songs, which function in a more traditional songwriting vein, among all the Pavlovian calls to dance.

Before the headliners even hit, old-school rules were locked in concrete. 

Taking 45 rpm vinyl cuts literally through the air in the act of skipping from song to song. His scratches were varied and numerous, yet tasteful. Just as impressively, Cat Chemist leant on the cross-fader as well as anyone practicing turntablism in town. He cut back and forth between funk songs heavy on hi-hat and old-school rap classics in a way that extended the tunes’ meaning and gave their feeling more bite.

Replacing him was People Under the Stairs. Members Thes One and Double K alternately ably between turntables and microphone in a way that kept hip-hop’s most naturalistic impulses. Specialization is a contrivance they refused to follow. Perhaps the highlight of this set was a rhythmic exchange in which Thes One played drum machine against Double K’s scratches. The effect was as close to anything the headliners would do.

At one point in the People Under the Stairs set, a question was begged: Is there anything more viscerally satisfying than the call-and-response gimmick, in which the on-stage artist goes, “Ea-aay!” And the crowd instinctively responds: “Cal-ee-for-ni-a-a-a!” As often as performers use this, it almost never gets stale. But Breakestra showed there’s an audience-involvement technique that’s coming up fast on the back stretch.

Early in their set, singer Wolf commanded, “Lemme hear ya say, ‘Fuck Bush’!”

Then the crowd went: “Fuck Bush!”

Again, Wolf “I said, ‘Fuck Bush’!”

And the crowd said, “Fuck Bush!”

And it really could have gone on like this all night, transforming into the kind of rally International A.N.S.W.E.R. would envy, except Breakestra’s aspirations are a lot higher than that these days. The band opened with “The Gettin’ to It,” one of Hit the Floor’s most Breakestra-sounding cuts. Throughout, Tackett and crew only sprinkled the more nuanced and lyrically centered material. There’s no question of where the group’s bread is buttered. Still, for every 16-bar hilarious of the mark that is Black Sheep’s “The Choice Is Yours,” followed by a 16-bar interpolation of a Gang Starr beat whose title eludes me, which was followed by 32 of Marvin Gaye’s “Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler),” there was the plaintive vocal of Tackett’s “Hitting.” Woodwind specialists David Ralite and trumpeter Mike Bolger helped make the song more than an opportunity for the audience to exult. The song stood on its own.

Breakestra hardly stopped. There were no song separations, effectively just pauses in the overall jam. One spot, however, where everyone in the house seemed mildly taken aback was the group’s horns-charged and ragga-inflected take on Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire.” For once, we couldn’t help but stop and do the math. We couldn’t deny the utility of noting the contrast, deconstructing the selection, even if, at the end of the day, it’s all just folk music.
BEATSEEKING MISSIVES BREAKESTRA

Some people—including this columnist—believe that if you don't like funk (that ridiculous genre invented by James Brown and honed to a sweet science in the four decades since), you probably don't like sex. Miles Tackett, leader of Los Angeles-based octet Breakestra, is as funk-savvy as any musician toiling in the nation. But he isn't buying my theory. "Uh, not necessarily," Tackett replies, laughing. "Just go to a record-collector swap meet on a Sunday morning and see whom you find."

Point taken; there are some fugly virgins among funk's fan base. Still, I'm suspicious of those indifferent or hostile toward funk. And if I had to recruit evangelists for spreading the funk gospel, I'd recommend Breakestra.

Exhibit A would be the ensemble's 2001 debut album, The Live Mix Part 2. With a fanatical accuracy to detail for funk circa '68-'75's steamy, thrusting stew, Breakestra breathe new life into nearly 30 famous and obscure gems in 51 minutes. These songs have formed the basis for hundreds of hip hop tracks. If they're hot enough for the RZA, DJ Premier, and many other stellar producers, they're certainly worth your time and sweat. When the Roots'Questlove discovered the truth about Breakestra, he remarked, "I sampled that shit myself! The first time I heard their cuts, I didn't know it wasn't recorded in 1973!"

Which leads one to wonder if it takes great effort to re-create the sounds and vibe of '60s/'70s funk. Do today's musicians need a studio full of old analog equipment? "It just takes an ear and a little experimentation," Tackett says, as if it were as easy as baking a chocolate cake. "(Our) studio is a mix of old gear, new gear, whatever works."

Perhaps Tackett has a genetic advantage, as his father Freddie plays guitar for oddball funk-rockers Little Feat. The Kid Named Miles, as Tackett calls his solo project, shows him mastering bass, cello, guitar, drums, keyboards, and vocals, proving he's not spending all his time in search of dusty vinyl. In fact, he spent almost four years penning new material for Breakestra's new album, Hit the Floor (Ubiquity). Knowing so much funk history proved daunting to Tackett, but he and his crew delivered a vital slab of retro-fetish funk that's all about money maker-shaking and baby-making grooves.

"The greatest difficulty (in writing original funk tunes) is having a love for this kind of music and having heard the bar that's set by the other music—the challenge of being able to do anything that's up to that level has been in the back of my mind," Tackett admits. He needn't worry: Hit the Floor will inspire folks to do just that—and other more carnal activities. DAVE SEGAL

Breakestra play with Omgera Watts and Electric at Tues Dec 20 at Crocodile, 2060 Second Ave, 441-5611. 9 pm–2 am, $15, 21+. They also perform live on KEXP (www.kexp.org) at noon on Tues Dec 20.
FRIDAY DECEMBER 16

music

Breakestra w/ Cut Chemist, Chali 2na, Miles & Dusk, DNA Lounge, 9 p.m., $20, 21+
Spearheaded by Miles Tackett, son of Little Feat guitarist Fred Tackett, Los Angeles funkateers Breakestra turned more than a few heads with 2001's creative covers record *The Live Mix Part 2*. Since then, Tackett has continued to host the popular Root Down party, he opened the Funky Tilt recording studio, and he's been obsessing over the band's first full-length of all-original tunes. Recorded with mainstay Mixmaster Wolf and a cast of helpers—including People Under The Stairs' Double K and Friday opener Chali 2na (Ozomatli, Jurassic 5)—*Hit The Floor* shakes its rump to grooves inspired by several decades of funk, jazz, and soul. The weather outside might be getting a tad frightful, but Breakestra will make sure to turn up the heat at DNA Lounge on Friday.
Grooves

Breakestra

*Hit the Floor* (Ubiquity)

There's something about Breakestra that takes me back to my childhood — they're whimsical, fun, and just a little groovy. It's like listening to the background music during the chase scenes on *Scooby-Doo*, but with much better musicianship and bass lines that cause a carefree smile to spread across your face. But that's not the entire story. When the beats of the title track off their new album, *Hit the Floor*, begin to pump through your headphones and Mixmaster Wolf's grainy vocals kick in, along with the breaks, you're somewhere else altogether, deep in the funkified sound of "Akestra."

Working in the hip-hop tradition, they've managed to revive '70s funk and soul, giving those genres new energy. "Family Rap" is filled with old-school rhyming styles and new-school guest artists like Chali2na and Soup, from J5, and Double K, from People under the Stairs, along with percussionist Mungungyo Jackson. Producer and multifaceted musician Miles Tackett has brought together Josh "Wallet" Cohen on drums, Geoff "Double G" Gallegos on sax and flute, Todd Simon and Paul Vargas on trumpet, Dan Osterman on trombone, Carlos Guacino on keys, Davy Chegwidden on percussion, Dan Ubick on guitar, and soul sister Demya for a release that makes you feel so good you'll want to crank it up inside your ride with your windows rolled down and your hair blowing in the wind. *Breakestra* play a CD-release party Fri/16, *DNA Lounge*, SF. (415) 626-1409. (Jana Rogers)
BREAKESTRA
Hit the Floor
Ubiquity
Transitioning from breakbeat covers to an original funk sound isn't easy. It's one thing to master other people's licks, riffs, and jams, but quite another to come up with your own. Hit the Floor's challenge is to incorporate all the retro influences that made Breakestra's 2001 debut The Live Mix Part 2 such a revelation, but make it sound contemporary, a tough task considering funk is regarded more as a seminal influence on hip-hop and R&B than a currently active genre. Indeed, most of the songs here sound like lost gems from 1978; "Family Rap," featuring Jurassic 5's Chali 2na and Soup along with People Under the Stairs' Double K, brings to mind a SoCal version of the Treacherous Three backed by the Sugarhill Records house band, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Bandleader Miles Tackett and his Breakestra crew clearly understand the cosmic slop paradigm, and Hit the Floor's best song -- "How Do You Really Feel?" -- an epic excursion into a dimension of deeply soulful instrumental groove -- proves that true funk (sweaty, sticky, and thoroughly rewarding) is timeless. — Eric K. Arnold

Breakestra plays the DNA Lounge in SF Friday night with Cut Chemist, Crown City Rockers, and Ohmega Watts. $15-$20.
MassiveSelector.com or DNALounge.com
When it comes to nightlife in Los Angeles, trends come and go, and yet the weekly club night “The Rootdown” has managed to deliver inventive DJ sets and brilliant live funk bands to revelers for nearly a decade. The party’s main ambassadors appreciate the jazz-funk culture of the Bay Area and are once again taking their show on the road. The chief operatives for the evening: live funk band Breakestra, Jurassic 5 DJ Cut Chemist, and “Rootdown” residents Miles and Dusk. While you’re certain to hear selections from Breakestra’s new release, Hit the Floor, spontaneity is part of this group’s lifeblood, so expect plenty of surprises, especially when guest MCs such as Jurassic 5’s instantly lovable Chali 2na drop by, as he will when “The Rootdown SF” gets going on Friday, Dec. 16, at the DNA Lounge; call 626-1409 or visit www.dnalounge.com for more info. — Tamara Palmer
Breakestra to bring his favorite old-school jams (and breakbeat sample sources, hence the name) to life. In between gigs with Jurassic 5 and DJ Shadow, the group released two volumes of The Live Mix, flaunting its command of funk through DJ/mix-influenced medleys of dusty groove covers. In the four years since its last record, Breakestra has been hosting weekly "Rootdown" parties in L.A. while working up a powerhouse repertoire of original material. On Hit the Floor (out in October), Tackett switch-hits on guitar and bass, while the band features a full lineup of horns, wah-wah guitar and organ. But a breakbeat orchestra wouldn't mean a thing without a hard-hitting drummer providing the funky undertow, and Shawn O'shea and Pete McNeil trade off kit duties in a monster display of syncopation that would make Tower of Power proud. Topping it all off, Mixmaster Wolf fronts the band with his loose, soulful singing and shouting.

While groups like the Quantic Soul Orchestra and Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings may mine similar soul-revival territory, Breakestra grooves with a uniquely West Coast flair that recalls the laid-back acid-jazz its new record label, Ubiquity, pioneered back in the early '90s. This funk's so deep you'll be wading in it.—Ben Taylor
BREAKESTRA
*Hit the Floor* (Ubiquity)

**KINDA LIKE:** James Brown just boarded the Soul Train

**THE DEAL:** The hustle of a cinematic 1970s street scene weaves its way through the L.A. funk band's second album. *Hit the Floor* is a green-light affair of urgent vocals, impulsive percussion, blaring horns and buoyant guitar riffs.

— CHRISTINE CLARKE/DOSE
IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FUNK WITH IT

BREAKESTRA BRING A HIP HOP EDGE TO THEIR SOUL SHOTS AND DEEP GROOVES

FALL NEW MUSIC

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Bring on the deep funk revival
L.A.'s Breakestra use their hip hop roots to get in the groove

KENNA BURIMA

A break — an instrumental or percussion section or interlude during a song derived from or related to stop-time being a "break" from the main parts of the song.

David Toop from the book Rap Attack

Back in the day, everything started with the breaks. The elastic breakbeat was said to have been invented by legendary producer-musician DJ Kool Herc (a.k.a. Clive Campbell) — the first DJ to get his own record and mix the break together. That record was more than likely a funk record and to many the breakbeat was the only way anyone learned about the talented musicians who backed James Brown in the JBs like Fred Wesley or Bobby Byrd.

Fast forward about 30 years and hip hop has been given a bad rap, but instead of blaming hip hop for musical ill, give thanks to the Ultramagnetic MCs' classic album Critical Beatdown for keeping funk alive. It was that 10-second slice of percussive magic in the middle of a funk song that, when looped together by progressive DJs in the 1970s became the basis of the hip hop movement. Or at least according to Miles Tackett of Breakestra.

Tackett is one of a handful of musician-producers involved in the deep funk revival that has usurped dance floors around the world. Based in L.A. (a.k.a. Chael Roth of Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings and Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra), Will Holland (a.k.a. Quantico Soul Orchestra and The Limp Twins) and Philips Leeman (of Soul Fire Records) all have something in common with Tackett — they're all funk fans via hip hop. Like so many of his peers, Tackett came by it through DJing.

"It's what's behind the instruments that counts — Breakestra aren't afraid to give funk some air"

Tackett was throwing down The Meters, Kool & The Gang and The JBs in L.A., clubs and coffeehouses, and in those formative years the seed for his 10-piece Breakestra was planted.

"I met Meenmaster Wolf in the early '90s at Peace Pipe. There were these Tuesday night jam sessions where five musicians would play with DJs doing breaks," says Tackett. "They'd spin strictly the original funk breaks. Those nights, I wasn't a DJ — Wolf was. I was a musician for these sessions. I'd jump on drums or bass or guitar. We all connected. All of us were the children of Los Angeles music."

But it wasn't until seven years later, when Tackett revived that night, and brought in Meenmaster Wolf to DJ, that a house band was created. The night was called "The Breaks" and the house band was The Breakestra. Tackett wanted a band that could interpret that deep, raw funk for the hip hop generation, with Meenmaster Wolf doing the soul shots. It worked, and the group started covering funk classics. In 1999, Breakestra dropped their debut, "Getcho Soul Together," on Stones Throw Records. Then came The Live Mix Part 2, with more covers and breakbeat samples, but 2005 has brought in a new era for Breakestra with Hit The Floor, a full-length all-original album.

The funk flavour is as strong as ever and Tackett says the transformation from cover band to full-fledged original band was a natural step.

"While the hip hop DJ-mediated-inspired cover bands are the foundation of Breakestra, it is only natural we'd want to express our own soulful proclamations," says Tackett. "I've been releasing original funk cuts (since) before putting out The Live Mix Part 2. The first Breakestra single was an original song... so this album is really just a part of the natural flow."

Since then, Tackett has transformed from a hip hop fan into a respected hip hop producer. Besides producing T-Love's acclaimed Return of the B-Girl EP and supplying tracks for Cut Chemist from Jurassic Five and Rakka of Dilated Peoples, he's also written songs for Macy Gray's debut LP.

All this has helped Tackett get closer to creating the sound that Breakestra is known for — real and raw. Even Tackett, producer and drummer for Tha Roots, was tweaked into thinking Breakestra was some unknown garage-funk band from 1972. Much like Rosco Mann of the Dap Kings, Tackett is a perfectionist and the four years between The Live Mix Part 2 and Hit the Floor proves that Tackett is searching for the perfect sound.

"It's all about experimenting," says Tackett. "Trying to minimize things and strip away the excess. It's deciding to use analog or digital. It's figuring out microphone techniques. But when all it comes down to it, the drums are the foundation and the hardest thing to get really right. Once you get it you can do anything," he says.

"This is why you gotta have air in this kind of funk. Funk music needs air to breathe. So with microphone placement you give the instruments some room. You create the sound that you'd hear if you were right in the room with the band — not just how it sounds on an inch in front of the instrument."

But of course, technique can only take you so far. When pressed about what really defines the Breakestra sound, Tackett is frank.

"You have to have an ear," he admits. "You have to know what you want. But most importantly, of course, is that you put in front of those mics — the music, the musicians, the people behind those instruments."

MORE UBQUITOUS RELEASES

On October 25, Ubiquity records releases Hit the Floor by Breakestra, but that's not all that the label has in store for the waning months of 2005. The label, (also home to Nostalgia '77 and Quantico Soul Orchestra) has been dropping groove-heavy platters left and right.

Earlier this fall saw the release of Music Is My Art, a mixtape of sorts from the HW89 Art Installation Crew. This group of young Montrealers have great taste in music and have brought together tracks from such artists as Plantlife, J-Boogie and John Arnold. If you have a thing for the slow grind, be sure to check out "The Hop" by Radio City featuring Baja, the comp's standout track.

Hip hop fans have probably already picked up The Find, the latest from Omega Watts, also on Ubiquity. Watts (aka Milton Campbell) is a New Yorker transplanted to Oregon and his latest is loaded with big beats and special guest stars. Combining tight rhymes and crispy production with some old-school accents, this proves that hip hop albums can be more than a few tight jams bulked up by a bunch of fillers.

If you're already hooked on the Ubiquity label, keep your ears open for releases from Nina Moschella, Radio City, Gillis Peterson Greyboy, and Owusu and Hannibal to drop later this year.

JASON LEWIS
FREESTYLE RECORDS, LONDON

1. BREAKESTRA Family Rap Ubiquity
   Old school raps from Jurassic 5 and PUTS members. Can’t go wrong, really.

2. TREVA WHATEVA Dustbowl Ninja
   Utterly rocking cut-up of a certain dusty funk seven-inch.

3. THE SOCIETY Human Nature Diesler Remix Freestyle CDR
   Diesler can do no wrong in my book!

4. SLEEVE My Life Frisco International
   Samplerdelic goodness to keep the sun shining.

5. M.F.O.S El Padrino Freestyle
   Snowboy revives his alter ego and the world is a better place again.

6. DJ Bitte Dreh’n Grande Buffo
   I know nothing about this cheeky little 7” other than it is German and ace.

7. LITTLE BARRIE Burned Out (D) Nu Mark Remix Genuine
   The Jurassic man gets all frooked out with the hairy mob.

8. SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY YOUTH PROJECT Dance Freak Freestyle
   Stonkingly good cover of the Patrick Adams disco classic.

9. THE BAKER BROTHERS Ponky Wockets Revenge Peddler
   Weirdy-beardy wonky funk from Bournemouth that tickles in all the right places.

10. LOST IDOL Chip Funk Cookshop
    Dr Rubberfunk turns in a corking remix too.
thin once the “Ohhhh, that’s from [insert famous rap song here]!” angle wore off. With *Hit The Floor*, an album of all-new and original material, the Miles Tackett–led group proves undeniably that they are still the leaders of getting asses on dance floors and keeping them there. While tracks like “How Do You Really Feel?” diversify the record with a jazzier, psychedelic vibe, it’s gems like “Don’t Need A Dance,” with its rallying cry vocals, James Brown horn blasts and drums that could be 30 days or 30 years old, that ensure time hasn’t dulled any of their edge. *Jason Newman*
BREAKESTRA

Hit the Floor
(Ubiquity)

The evolution of Breakestra has been an auspicious journey of funk and feeling. Bandleader Miles Tackett has reserved his place in the Los Angeles mind as leader of the weekly Rootdown party, a hangout for conscious and breakthrough hip-hop/soul/funk mavens. His band started by playing covers of soul classics, eventually writing a solid repertoire of its own. Hit the Floor marks the group’s debut of original material, 14 studio slices of what’s made it a stellar live outfit. The record does fall into the pitfalls one would expect of a former cover band, like the wedding band routine vibe. But the production has enough integrity and the rhythms enough groove to grant certifiable credibility to the record. The flute lead on “Burgundy Blues” and Tackett’s low-end vocals on “Stand Up” and “Recognize” — the latter having a bit of Neville Brothers spirit — guarantee an enjoyable experience. Guest appearances by fellow Californians Jurassic 5 (we can imagine fans cross-pollinating) add rap etiquette to the grime of funk. And grimy it does get. When they say hit the floor, they mean it. — Derek Beres
BREAKESTRA

HIT THE FLOOR

Ubiquity/US/CD

When Miles Tackett put baby teeth under his pillow, he woke up sleeping on scattershot snare beats; on Christmas morning, Tackett’s granny left Rickey Calloway howls and funky flute vibes under the tree. It paid off. On the new, all-original Breakestra album, Tackett & Co. drop 14 of the stankiest live breakbeat funk tracks of this age. From the relentless opening salvo of “Stand Up”—the new “Internationale” of funk—to vibey instrumental numbers (flute thang “Burgundy Blue”; Rhodes workout “How Do You Really Feel!”) to Mixmaster Wolf’s thick-maned vocals, Hit the Floor does so runnin’ and never lets up. Justin Hopper
BREAKESTRA

*Hit the Floor* (Ubiquity)

The resurrection of live funk

Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Miles Tackett was so influenced by old-school DJ culture that he turned to analog to re-create the club-ready funk sounds of his youth. Little surprise, then, that “Stand Up” has a serious Jimmy Castor Bunch feel. All 14 tracks capture the vintage vibe, and the bass is prominent without being overpowering. The energetic level of “Got to Let Me Know” and “Family Rap” (featuring California neighbors Jurassic 5) keeps the fist-pumping Marvin Gaye “Who’s the Man?” jams intact. *Hit the Floor* is destined to hit breaks-sampling DJs in the sweet spot.—Derek Beres

★★★★☆
Breakestra
HIT THE FLOOR
Ubiquity

4 years, shit I was in college longer than that, then they drop Hit The Floor. Well that's proof you can't rush perfection. This album is prodigious in it's own right. The Funkafied feel just exudes from the speakers. It is like having an soulchresta at your disposal. With a mix of percussive bliss infused with jazz, creative mastermind Miles Tackett shows off his musical dexterity in this long awaited album. To talk about one track would not be veracious, each one reinforcing it's own soulful presence. Hit The Floor emphatically proves Breakestra's long overdue musical value.
(-dirty jers)
Breakestra
*Hit the Floor* (Ubiquity)
Danny DeVito will never dunk a basketball, your redheaded buddy will never achieve the perfect tan, and Breakestra’s CDs will never surpass the band’s live show. Go ‘head, etch it in stone. But that doesn’t mean it’s not fun watching them try (that goes for all three). Emulating live the dusty breaks diced up by hip-hop DJs from Kool Herc through to Cut Chemist, Breakestra funks up dance floors and how. Scientific tests have proven it impossible for a human being to attend a Breakestra jam and not have fun. Such stanky sets that leave everyone in the joint’s T-shirt drenched in funk were laid to wax on parts 1 and 2 of *The Live Mix*, the latter released on Stones Throw. With the West Coast throwback sextet’s first album of predominately original material, main man Miles Tackett is aided by the star presence of howlin’ Mixmaster Wolf and a superteam of in-the-pocket musicians that, much like Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings, captures the elusive soul of the late ’60s. Members of Jurassic 5 and People Under the Stairs pop by, but the energetic drums and horns remain centre stage. Not quite as fulfilling as the in-person experience, but damn close. —L.F.
BREAKESTRA
HIT THE FLOOR

Ubiquity (US), URC0/LP178

With a history dating back to the late 1990s, Miles Tackett's Breakestra outfit are the unofficial granddaddies of the modern funk scene. When they dropped their acclaimed 'Live Mix Part 2' set on Stones Throw back in 2001, such unabashed revivalism was somewhat frowned on: in fact, Tackett's funkateers were seen as something of a hip hop novelty, playing live renditions of DJs' favourite old skool party breaks. These days, the announcement of a new Breakestra album is big news — something of a reflection of the iconic status in which Tackett's band are held in the contemporary funk scene. The good news is that 'Hit The Floor', their first album since 2001, is pretty damn good. In fact, it's probably the best album to come out of the modern funk scene yet. As you'd expect, it features a mix of previously-released floorburners — 'Recognize', 'Don't Need A Dance', the recent party hip hop smasher 'Family Rap' — alongside a string of cracking new compositions — all of which were written, for the first time, by Breakestra themselves. There's plenty for funk fans to savour, from the heartfelt soul of 'Got To Let Me Know' and 'Hiding' to the classic vocal funk of 'Shaw And Prove' and Sly Stone-ish title track. In terms of criticism, 'Hit The Floor' is hard to fault: sure, it's effectively a new album in a 30-year-old style. But when the grooves are this good and horns this hot, who cares? Good-time gold dust.

Steve Anniss
NOBODY, BREAKESTRA
at Temple Bar, September 5

Though Elvin Estela has a DJ's credentials, that's not what Nobody — Estela's sunny psychedelic vision — is about. Passionately cavorting and banging a tambourine as often as he pored over decks, Estela whipped up miasmas of analog/digital saturation that transported this shaggy love child as much as us. Thanks to a swinging, versatile trap drummer, the crew (drawing for the most part from the hypnotic new Pacific Drift) never lost the head-nodding cadence of hip-hop, even when the shimmering textures reached critical density. To their credit, Nobody et al. rendered a Zombies tune (!) unrecognizable, but the guitarist's request for a "Dewars rocks" just didn't fit with the paisley frippery.

Where Nobody could shoegaze with the best in Britain, Breakestra is the proud voice of America's inner cities. The band, one of those outsized groove collectives, moves between genres with the ease of a medley. There were literally no pauses between the James Brown preacher frenzies, marathon Afro-pop workouts, thumping funkdowns and horn-stabbed rave-ups, as these styles coalesced into one big sweat-soaked jam. At times the band cleaved a bit too close to the classic Motown vinyl that inspires them, and while the reverent references were never less than energizing, the set at times came dangerously close to cover-band territory.

The individual musicians made such considerations secondary. The guitarist was lost in the mix, but you could savor the Manzarek-worthy lounge histrionics of the organist, the trumpeter's film-score-caliber clarions and a Tina Turner—style songbird who jumped onstage for a few sex-drenched numbers. Leader Miles Tackett demurred from abusing the microphone, encouraging his band to show off their skills instead; every harmonic convergence needs a prime mover.

(Andrew Lentz)
THAT KID NAMED MILES BREAKS IT ON DOWN.

When Miles Tackett gives up the funk, you best believe that it’s the whole funk and nuthin’ but the funk, because there’s no way you’d catch his act, Breakestra, fakin’ the funk. The son of Fred Tackett—guitarist for one of Southern California’s most versatile and idiosyncratic bands, Little Feat—that little kid named Miles inherited pop’s prowess, and is now an accomplished multi-instrumentalist in his own right. Proving himself by performing with such luminaries as B.B. King, Macy Gray and Black Eyed Peas, Tackett comes from a scene of funkateers who refuse to let hip-hop be the only representation of funk. He’s out searching breaks alright, but not for a sampler. Rather, that lost vinyl cut is brought back to life by a nimble and stankin’ band.

Tackett will be the first to tell you that DJ culture inspired his quest for funk ventre. "Cut Chemist, Mixmaster Wolf and Marvski used to cut up breaks back in 1990 and ‘91," he recalls, "so we wanted the band to emulate that cutting, only with live music." DJs like Kool Herc started chopping breaks with records, but Miles envisioned how cool it would be if there was a live band on the figurative ones and twos, starting and stopping, dropping break after break of live funky soul.

That was the goal with Breakestra’s demo, The Live Mix, Pt. 1, and their Stones Throw debut, The Live Mix, Pt. 2. The band goes through a trade of jams, all with the good-golly howling scowl of a soulful Mixmaster Wolf, who—by his sheer Sanford and Son-like presence—you’d swear was the best showman around. In his dusty jackets and uneven trousers, Wolf is a modern ambassador of funk. And if you remember the gloryhollastopdoop of those old Bill Cosby Jell-O commercials, you’ll hear early proof; it’s a rare trivia tidbit that when the cho- rus in the jingle goes, “Kids go ape for Jell-O grape,” Wolf (as Bill Cosby) shouts, “They got the giggles and the wiggles all over the place!”

When they’re not playing at the Root Down (their own night, which brings in many of LA’s underground hip-hop heroes), the Breakestra is on the road, sharing the stage with acts like the late Sun Ra’s Arkestra. And even though their impetus is the preservation of forgotten funk (the Root Down even prints their own baseball cards honoring the likes of Roy Ayers and Gypsy Moth), their recent EP, ‘Deuces Up,’ encouraged them to create new classics.

"The new album will be 90 percent original material," Tackett promises, announcing the twist, "I’ve been dying to use more MCs." Judging from new singles like "Show N Prove," Tackett’s dead-on when he concludes, "Breakestra [does] more than just educate—we’re there to rock a party."


WHATS LAS BEST-KEPT SECRET?
Miles: I hate to be biased, but it has to be the Root Down. It’s one of the funnest, most progressive DJ nights happening in Los Angeles. I’d also say Funky Sole Miles and Egon from Stones Throw night; there’s simply no other venues playing that variety of stuff.
B +, Kid Koala, Ageel, Waine TVE, Cage, Atmosphere, Kinky Music, Marc Ecko, Ohmega Watts, The Tape vs RQM, Xhelazz, Zawinul, Breakestra, Wanted Magazine. Repaso de novedades en cd's, 12", 7", turntablism...

5 € (REVISTA Y CD)
Breakestra Putas del break

Texto: El Sr. Raro  Foto: Jeff Bender

The Breakestra es la banda que mejor representa el tránsito del funk al hip-hop y viceversa, un reconocimiento de la aportación de los dj’s al concepto del show que hasta ahora no había sido tomado como un ejemplo para la ejecución de un directo. Hablamos con Miles Tackett, bajista y compositor de la banda y productor de ritmos bajo el alias That Kid Named Miles, sobre el origen y evolución de la banda.

Cuando escuchamos por primera vez The Live Mix pt.2 pensábamos que había un dj mezclando todos esos break y nos sorprendió descubrir que se trataba de una banda en directo. ¿Cuál fue el eje de esa sesión? Fue inspirado por años y años atrás de haber estado en fiestas en Los Ángeles con dj’s como Cut Chemist o el cantante de Breakestra, Mixmaster Wolf, que también es dj. Yo les veía a ellos y a otros dj’s underground que ponían rare grooves. También el hecho de escuchar hip-hop y cómico en este estilo se pasa de una muestra a la otra fue una influencia. De éstas dos cosas, las producciones y los dj’s haciendo el hip-hop original en los platos, cortando los break y haciendo las transiciones entre canciones sin parar, salió la idea de experimentar un poco con ésto en otros proyectos musicales. Hacerlo con una banda en la misma manera que lo haría un dj, así, cuando empezamos Breakestra se convirtió en el concepto prioritario de lo que hacíamos. Cuando Breakestra toca, lo está haciendo un dj.

¿Habéis hecho algo parecido alguna vez junto a un dj? Lo más evolucionado que he hecho solo ha pasado un par de veces, una de ellas con Shortcut; vino a un concierto que dábamos en L.A. y le dije los break que ibamos a hacer, se trajo muchos de los discos donde aparecían las frases de los scratches de los estribilios: el scratch de “Mass Appeal” o el de un tema de Lootpack.

Sé que hiciste algo parecido tú junto a Cut Chemist en colegios... Sí, pero éramos él y yo solos. Yo añadía líneas de bajo y guitarras mientras el recuperaba un break, haciendo solos de juggling y cosas así. Fue una colaboración entre un músico y un dj.

Te vamos a proponer un ejercicio de selección basado no en los break, sino en los músicos, algo así como un top 5 de canciones por músicos de funk, soul, jazz:

- Batería: “Funky Drummer”, un poco obvio.
- Sección de metales: “Soul Pride” de James Brown. Tiene uno de los arreglos más guapos para vitores que he escuchado.
- Guitarra: “Chicken Strut” de los Meters.

¿Estás en contacto o conoces otro grupo contemporáneos de funk?
Conozco a los Poets of Rhythm, Soy amigo de los tiros de The Dapkins, en Los Ángeles, hay un par de tiros que suelan tocar con Breakestra: se llaman Coney Prize and The Keystones. Conocí también a Malcolm Catto. En realidad no hay tantos. Hay otros grupos como The Bamboos, en Australia. Conozco también a los tiros de The Mighty Imperials, aunque creo que ya no existen.

¿Cuál es vuestro planteamiento en directo? Cuando Breakestra toca en directo es lo mismo que cuando escuchas The Live Mixtape, el mismo estilo. Tocamos durante una hora o una hora y cuarto sin parar. Ahora estoy mezclando los nuevos temas en el directo estándar y mezclan bien. Ya he estado añadiendo algunos temas originales de Breakestra en los directos pero no mucho, así que en nuestros nuevos directos habrá una cantidad decente de temas nuevos mezclados con clásicos. El directo será como una fiesta.

En el nuevo disco, Hit the Floor, cada canción tiene un break... Esa es una norma que Bosco Mann escribió en una revista: “no seas una puta del break de batería”. Yo no puedo evitar serlo, es divertido.

**HIT THE FLOOR**
de BREAKESTRA
está editado por Ubiquity Records.
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Jim Noir + A Bite of the Apple + Surf Showdown + Man and Machine

RECENT RELEASES

These albums and many more are available on our online shop www.stranger-shop.com Every sale helps support the magazine!

Words by
Kingsley Marshall
DJ Pinks
Lotte Mahon

Matt Wilkinson
Zander Grinfeld
Neil Johnson

If you dig funk and you don't already own Breakestra's Live Mix Part 2 (released in 2001), you've got some serious catching up to do. The band started life as a live ensemble, dropping non-stop breaks of yesteryear in a DJ style: Hit the Floor continues with the heaviest of grooves, but this time contains nothing but new and original tracks, 'proper songs' and guest appearances from members of Jurassic 5 and People Under the Stairs. Indispensable stuff! PINKS
More than funk
L.A.’s Breakestra change up the groove

By TIM PERLICH

Breakestra at Lee’s Palace (529 Bloor West), tonight (Thursday, September 8). $38.50. 416-532-1598.

In the four years since Breakestra released their Live Mix (Part 2) disc, the Los Angeles deep funk crew haven’t been overly prolific in writing or recording.

So the fact that they’ve finally got a new album finished and ready for release on October 25 is a pleasant surprise in itself.

But the real shocker for fans of the group—who’ve made a career out of recreating the classic rare groove, soul jazz and instrumental R&B joints that are the sample source of modern hip-hop—is that Breakestra’s forthcoming Hit The Floor (Ubiquity) contains only original material, and many of the tracks have vocals.

The good news is that their songs are solid enough to stand alongside the Roy Ayers and Blackbyrds tunes they cover, and Breakestra’s rhythmic core is tight enough to make up for any compositional shortcomings.

A departure from the usual program, but they work in an album context where following one hard-pounding funk track after another can make for a boring listen.

“We’ve been planning to put out a recording of original material for a long time now,” says founding member Miles Tackett from his Los Angeles home, “but something always came up—from playing shows to living life—so it took us a minute to get it done.

“The initial plan was simply to do some music of my own and see what would happen. With Breakestra, I knew whatever we did was going to be funk-related, but within that idiom I think we’ve come up with a really broad range of stuff. I really didn’t expect we’d be doing real song songs with lyrics, bridges and the whole bit.”

Even with tracks like Family Rap, on which Jurassic 5’s Chali 2na, Soup and Double K rhyme nostalgically about the old days of the early 90s on the L.A. scene when DJs, MCs, jazz and funk musicians would all hang out together at Peace Pipe every Tuesday night, the groove-heavy Hit The Floor still sounds very much like a Breakestra record.

Slow-burn ballads like Hiding and Recognize sung by Tackett are obvious-
Breakestra
HIT THE FLOOR

I was standing outside a club one night getting ready to check out Jurassic 5. I hadn't heard who was opening up, so I wasn't in any big rush to go in. I heard the main loop from Pete Rock and Cl. Smooth's "Straighten It Out," which was a nice change from the usual suspects of songs, so I went in. There was what seemed to be a 15-piece band playing every old school break in the book. The crowd went bananas and that's when I fell in love with Breakestra.

On their second full-length release Hit The Floor, Miles Tackett and the rest of the crew are as raw and funky as ever. Seriously, this album is everything that is good about live music—hard basslines, tight drumbeats, deafening horns, and an unmistakable lead vocal.

"While hip-hop and DJ medley inspired covers are the foundation of Breakestra, it is only natural we'd want to express our own soulful proclamations," announces This Kid Named Miles.

Playing and working with groups like People Under the Stairs, Guru, De La Soul, Jurassic 5, and GZA from the Wu Tang Clan, Breakestra are a part of an emerging breed of modern funk artists. With peers like The Dapkings in NYC and the Quantic Soul Orchestra in London, Breakestra are poised to change the face of popular music.

Let your funk flag fly

BREAKESTRA
With DJs Nau, Kola, Thu, Sep B. Lee's Palace, 529 Bloor W. $10 from Rotate This, Soundscapes, Horseshoe, Ticketmaster.

Miles Tackett feels — and feeds — the funk. Inspired by artists such as The Meters, JBs, Sly & The Family Stone and Kool & The Gang, the Los Angeles-based musician, DJ and producer (also known as This Kid Named Miles) has devoted much of his life to the music. As bandleader of Breakestra, Tackett has also helped fan the flames of a global funk resurgence, joining contemporaries such as New York's Sharon Jones and the whole Daptone Records posse, and England's Quantic and Speedometer in pushing a raw, rootsy sound.

Tackett formed Breakestra in 1997, three months after Inclined — the funk-rock band he'd played guitar in from age 15 to 27 — disbanded. Developing as the in-house act for a weekly soul, funk & hip-hop party called The Breaks, the band soon developed a following for its solid sets of covers. Word spread beyond California with the release of a seven-inch on Peanut Butter Wolf's Stones Throw label in 1999, followed by The Live Mix Part 2 in 2001.

But the real challenge for the band leader, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist came with the decision to record an album of originals. Hit the Floor, set for October release on Ubiquity Records, bears the fruits of Tackett buckling down to write material that would be influenced by '60s and '70s sounds, but not limited by them. “It was absolutely a leap for me,” says Tackett. “When it came time to start dealing with this album, it was pretty much starting from scratch — which never feels like the best place to start from, especially given that I was making a record within the same vein of what Breakestra does as a raw funk band. All of the funk music that I love and respect has a high water mark for me. I needed to be satisfied with the level of quality from the songwriting to the sound, to the quality of the groove. I keep asking myself, 'Is this worthy?'

Hit the Floor hits the mark. An accomplished collection of gritty funk with hints of soul and blues, the album is a testament to Tackett and Breakestra's musicianship. Though homophobia in hip-hop during a recent MTV interview, stating "Every body in hip-hop discriminates against gay people... And I wanna just come on TV and just tell my rappers, just tell my friends, 'Yo, stop it, fam.'"
Breakestra
Hit the Floor
Ubiquity

The Breakestra has an international reputation for their live shows and releases where they reinterpret classic and influential funk tracks. But on Hit the Floor, they cast that reputation aside, instead opting to feature original compositions. Leader Miles Tackett and company prove to be as solid in the songwriting department as they are onstage, with standout tracks like the jazzy "Burgundy Blues," the funky soul power of "Don’t Need a Dance," and classic Breakestra funk jam "Sunny Delight." Furthermore, Tackett emerges on this record as a surprisingly soulful vocalist with a broad appeal. Check it. — SF

The Kingsbury Manx
The Fast Rise and Fall of the South
Yep Rock Records

This is an album of subtleties. The songs, the arrangements, the instrumentation and harmonies don’t come at you all at once, but via tasteful nuances throughout this album of sophisticated, yet subtly incendiary, pop. Jauntily loping waltzes interspersed with trumpet, organ, banjo, piano and textured harmonies create expansive fields of sound, which support the effortless vocal melodies that hover above the simple structures of verse and chorus. Try imagining Lambchop, the Sea and Cake and (mid-’70s) Pink Floyd collaborating on an indie rock album and you’re in the right ballpark. —KF

Various Artists
Christmas Remixed 2
Six Degrees

If you’re going to listen to Christmas music, it might as well have a good beat. This second Christmas Remixed installment once again lets modern beat-makers lay down groovy rhythms under Christmas songs. The compilation producers were wise to include Jazz, classical and pop originals with an equal mix of instrumental and vocal tracks. The vocal versions are better than the average mall fair, especially from the ladies: Ella Fitzgerald, Mahalia Jackson, Patti Page and Rosemary Clooney all get retrofitted. Standout mixes are delivered from Portland producer Ohmega Watts, King Kooba, Kaskade and John Beltran. This collection actually makes these holiday tunes fun again. —AM

John Coltrane
One Up, One Down; Live at the Half Note
Impulse

This live recording, previously only available as a low-quality bootleg, captures the classic Coltrane Quartet, which featured McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones, in its last year of existence. The double-disc set includes performances from two nights in the spring of 1965. Highlights include mind-blowing, 20-plus-minute versions of classics like "One Down, One Up," "My Favorite Things" and some incredible piano playing from McCoy Tyner on an inspired version of "A Love Supreme." The set is rounded out by a 20-minute version of "Song of Praise" in which the beauty and emotion of Coltrane’s saxophone is simply stunning. They don’t make ‘em like this anymore. —SF

Various Artists
Le Pop 3
Le Pop Musik

The nouvelle French pop, part of the so-called neo-chanson movement, on the Le Pop series was once on the fringe. New artists like Vincent Delerm, Camille and Toma are becoming part of the Paris mainstream. This collection captures excellent tracks from artists inspired by diverse influences: reggae, R&B, indie rock, electronica and hip-hop. All together it creates a casually seductive compilation that brings to mind Pepe le Pieux as a crowing hipster. This is fun and laid back music, great for mornings or setting the mood on a first date. —AM

Paul Armfield
The Four Good Reasons
Evermine

Paul Armfield and his group, The Four Good Reasons, hail from the Isle Of Wight and aptly dub their music Folk Noir. Armfield is a crooner with a silky voice and a sad heart on his sleeve. He tells his tales over smoky European jazz created with lifting acoustic guitar, brushed drums and his upright bass. The songs shuffle slowly along, with the occasional crescendo of energy and sense of urgency in his voice. The album gets repetitive but has its captivating moments. —AM

The Joggers
With A Cape And A Cane
Star Time International

While many bands fold after a breakout on their way to the top, Portland’s The Joggers act on the contrary, while Ben Whitesides’ vocals still sound like a drunken sailor singing in a fake Brit accent, the songs are far richer than anything the group has done before. Jake Morris’ multi-genre drumming (anything from disco to metal) is the backbone bolstered by Darrell Bourque’s astounding bass hooks. All of this, behind Whitesides’ and newcomer Daniel Wilson’s piercing guitar riffs, brings to mind a weirdly out of tune, but beautifully eloquent orchestra. —AD

Animal Collective
Feels
Fat Cat

With Feels, the innovative New York quartet Animal Collective continues their path to a bigger audience. The album still has some of the sonic experimentation of their early work, and also some of the melodic psychedelic pop of the widely acclaimed Sung Tongs, but it adopts a bigger, bolder, more electrified sound. It’s more like psychedelic glam rock suited for a big club rather than the art scene or loft party. "Did You See the Words?" and "Grass" both have the pulsing percussion, rich layers of sound and bold vocals that make this album stand out. The energy fades as the album goes on, but not the creativity. —AM
Breakestra
Family Rap (This Is the Sound)
(Ubiquity) LA’s funk masters are back with their first full-length in four years. This lead-off single is an upbeat funky jam with Chali 2na, Soup and Double K rappin’ that old school flavor. The track suffers a bit from the trite and uninspired chorus. But the gem on this piece of wax is the Cut Chemist edit of “How Do You Really Feel?” On that number the fellows in the band really let loose for a barrage of left-field jazz-funk craziness. (4/5) ED
BREAKESTRA
FAMILY RAP

Ubiquity (US)
Take Breakestra’s tight old skool funk grooves and add raps from People Under The Stairs’ Double K and Jurassic 5’s Soup and Charli2na. The result? A slammin’ slice of party funk that evokes memories of hip hop’s golden age. Choose from the horn-toting full-vocal original, instrumental or stripped-down 1979 Mix. Essential, as usual. MA
THE BREAKESTRA

DON'T NEED A DANCE

(UBIQUITY)

Moving over from hip-hop heavyweights Stones Throw, The Breakestra maintain rule over live funk and beats drawn from 1972 but only put to disc yesterday. This time there are no covers, just originals; the home brewed feel adds true excitement to a set-up that interprets the essence of funk superbly. Let's all catch a plane over to their LA hangout and get down. Or we could just croon over these instrumentals. CW
BREAKESTRA

Don’t Need A Dance *Ubiquity*

★★★★☆

Possibly one of the heaviest outfits amidst the current crop of contemporary funk bands that are roaming the planet right now. ‘Don’t Need A Dance’ is proof absolute - super tight fatback drums, horn and guitars in perfect unison and ‘back in the day’-style vocals from Mixmaster Wolf drive this nugget of funk right off the scale. No parking on the dancefloor! *(FS)*
Breakestra Hit the Floor (Ubiquity)

Long known for their legendary live shows and their first two albums of funk covers, Breakestra now release Hit the Floor, their first record to feature all original tracks. It’s 14 songs of pure funk goodness. Founder Miles Tackett is known as a perfectionist. He spent countless nights in the studio over the last few years crafting jams that are as good as the classic funk that inspired them. Most of them are upbeat funk cuts with Mixmaster Wolf shoutin’ and sassin’ but there are also some subtle funk ballads like “Hiding,” where Miles shows he can sing with the best of ’em. There’s even a nine-minute psychedelic funk cut that’s perfect for daydreaming. The album’s lead single, “Family Rap,” features Wolf rhyming with Chali2NA and Soup of J5 and Double K from People Under the Stairs. Mixmaster Wolf really nails it on the title track “Hit the Floor,” with a freestyle rap about racing around LA freeways. “Rolled on by the 405 and rolled on past/’cuz the 405 can kiss my ass.” One of the last lines finds Wolf saying “Take it to the Bay Bridge!” As the drum breaks begin swinging, it all comes back to the words of Miles Tackett, “What are the first three letters of funk?” —Mike the Poet
NÚMERO 6 SEGunda ÉPOCA

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5 € (REVISTA Y CD)

BREAKESTRA
HIT THE FLOOR
(UBIQUITY RECORDS)

Breakestra se dio a en 2001 en el entorno hip-hop gracias al interés de Peanut Butter Wolf. Entonces, Stones Throw publicó The Live Mix Pt. 2, un doble vinilo en el que se repasaban algunos de los breaks más populares de la historia del sampling, interpretados a tiempo real por la banda como si de la sesión de un dj se tratara. Deudores del “Funky Drummer”, en todo este Hit the floor, los músicos de Breakestra han puesto el énfasis en la composición de las baterías para dar vida a este álbum de soul-funk rudimentario. Han dejando momentos de degustación (breaks) en cada tema para deleite de los buscadores de ritmos (el propio ?uest Love de The Roots reconoce haberles muestreado antes de saber que eran contemporáneos). Hit The Floor incluye cortes instrumentales, rappers (Chali 2na, Soup y Double K en “Family Rap”) y una voz rasgada a la manera de los antiguos (Bobby Byrd, King Kurtis...) que construyen un sonido entre los Meters y el primer JB. ¿El re-nacimiento del funk? El Señor Rojo
KRIKOR

MICHAEL MAYER

KITTY YO

BREAKESTRA - DON'T NEED A DANCE
[UBIQUITY - GROOVE ATTACK]
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