SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS

"DOUBLE DUTCH / DEATH OF A STAR"
FIRST SINGLE RELEASED NOVEMBER 9, 2004. DEBUT ALBUM TO BE RELEASED IN 2005

Following their production work for *Jill Scott, Erykah Badu, Common, Dr. Dre, Heavy D, Pharoahe Monche, Bilal, Jurassic 5, Foxy Brown, Killer Mike* (outkast camp), and many others including work on *J-Lo's* current album, the SA-RA Creative Partners present their debut single on Ubiquity with an album to follow in 2005. Fans of the Neptunes, Outkast, Jay Dee, Prince & Sly Stone hold tight, this sh-- is truly cosmic!

(2004) JOHN PEEL AWARD WINNER
(BBC RADIO 1 GILLES PETERSON 'WORLDWIDE' AWARDS)

CONFIRMED PRESS COVERAGE TO DATE:


RECENT APPEARANCES:

- Taz Arnold From SA-RA Creative Partners featured In Common’s New Video ‘The Corner’ directed By Kanye West
- The Roots Pre-Grammy Party (Los Angeles)
- Los Angeles Natural History Museum Showcase
- New Years Eve @ Electric Factory (Philadelphia) with The Roots, Black Sheep & Rahzel
- 2004 Worldwide Awards Show (December 15 @ Cargo, London)
- Sway & Tech Guest Appearance
- Gilles Peterson ‘Worldwide’ One Hour Special (BBC Radio 1)
- Benji B ‘Deviation’ One Hour Interview (BBC Radio 1xtra)
- 2004 Red Bull Music Academy Featured Speaker
- Distortion 2 Static Interview (WB 20, San Francisco)
- Live Performance With Roberta Flack For Trace Magazine

RADIO/PRESS CONTACT:
AARON MICHELS0N
AARON@UBIQUITYRECORDS.COM
(949) 764-9012 EXT. 14
WWW.UBIQUITYRECORDS.COM
WWW.SA-RA.NET

MANAGEMENT:
JARRET MEYER, RAWKUS ENT.
SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS to release album on Ubiquity in 2005
The first single, “Double Dutch b/w Death of a Star” available 11/9

*How many people can say they produce me? SA-RA has some sh--*
Dr. Dre

"Next level music - SA-RA is the future"
Erykah Badu

"SA-RA is my sh-- right now! That’s all I’m listening to."
Kanye West

Following on from their production work for Heavy D, Pharoahe Monche, Bilal, Dr. Dre, Jill Scott, Jurassic 5, Erykah Badu and many others, the SA-RA Creative Partners will release a full-length album on Ubiquity Records.

You may already own some SA-RA Creative Partners productions, or maybe you have heard tracks from one of their highly sought-after CD-rs, either way a deal is now done and the first ever SA-RA Creative Partners album in the works for release in early 2005. Creating a huge buzz worldwide before any of their own solo work has officially been released SA-RA Creative Partners have already appeared on LA’s Power 106 with Sway and Tech, recorded a live session for Gilles Petersons “Worldwide” show on BBC Radio 1, been interviewed on Benji B’s Radio 1Xtra in the UK and asked to play alongside Ninja Tune act Ty on his US tour in addition to live and DJ shows in LA and New York.

Pronounced “Sah-Rah”, Om’Mas Keith, Taz Arnold, and Shafiq Husayn comprise the partnership and their name translates to “the off-spring of the most powerful energy in the universe”. These are children of the cosmos, ready to blast you with their magical mystical soul.

“There is something powerful about the Number 3. A triangle is architectures most structurally sound shape,” explains Taz. “And there is a sense of brotherhood among us, the strong sense of purpose we all share in our desire to cleanse the proverbial palette of music!” he adds. It’s an overused phrase that a band has a unique sound. But in SA-RA Creative Partners the three minds combine to make something that is definitely new, something twisted, a sound you have not heard before. It’s soulful but not limited by the neo soul tag, it’s hip hop but of the bugged-out other-worldly kind, it’s instantly catchy but not commercial, and it’s edgy but according to the list of high profile artists requesting their production services it’s got wide-spread appeal.

A joke has been circulating (started by label mate Waajeed of Platinum Pied Pipers who introduced the act to Ubiquity) that the bands signature loose, natural sounding, swinging beats are a bi-product of music making whilst watching TV or using Playstation. “Right! Yeah the TV might be on, or there might be an ill drum kit, or a bass chop, or a freak in the studio shaking her ass. Nuff Said!” explains Shafiq. The band are all avid music collectors and beat diggers but Shafiq boasts the largest stash, “Without digging the SRCP sound would be totally different,” he says. “Digging is a scholarly activity, in my opinion. It requires great attention to detail, and through continued activity creates within one a great knowledge of music and sound. It also involves a lot of reading. Liner notes and credits provide a wealth on knowledge for both the novice and advanced crate digger.”

Formed in 2000 SA-RA Creative Partners were brought together by music. With a love of hip hop, jazz, soul, funk and a heavy dose of Steely
Dan (honestly!) the trio had common influences and were united in their vision to do something new, to make the kind of music they wanted to listen to. Their collective creativity is not limited to studio production, these cats can sing, play, rhyme, DJ, and their live show is a burlesque-flavored attack on all the senses. Before the trio met they were already busy music business individuals. Taz Arnold was managing and producing artists like Hit Man and Major (which saw him involved in the six times platinum DR.DRE 2001 album) and scoring distribution through Aftermath/Interscope. Om’Mas was Studio manager and designer for a NYC based British Ad Firm. He also mixed records for platinum and multi-platinum artists like 8 Ball, Mobb Deep, and Foxy Brown and was involved in production with Suave House and as a Universal staff producer For M J Records. Shafiq has a heavyweight production resume that includes work for Ice-T, Lord Finesse, Jesse West, Grand Mixer DXT, plus remixes for Prince and Duran Duran, and work on numerous soundtracks including New Jack City and Thicker than Water.

Bouncing from coast to coast (Taz and Shafiq are based in LA, Om’mas in Queens, NY) the three have a busy schedule balancing recording an album with remix and production work. Most recent clients include Common and Jill Scott, and deals are in place/in the works for Roberta Flack and Jennifer Lopez. Om’mas explains the bands philosophy when it comes to approaching projects with greatly differing scope, “We are going to bridge a gap between both worlds, and keep both sides happy. No discrimination is our policy, we want Coldplay fans and Daedelus fans, 50 cent fans and Madvillain Fans. It’s easy to comprehend, just listen,” he says.

Asked whether any of their superstar clients will appear on the record Taz replies “Maybe we’ll have ‘em all? We can’t really guarantee anyone’s services right now. But we’ve worked closely with all of them.” He adds, “We definitely won’t be at a loss for creativity and the album will definitely feature songs with our artist Irisna Gayle, and formidable offerings from our group SA-RA.” After a forthcoming 12” single release of the fantastic “Glorious” and “Rosebuds” tracks on ABB, Ubiquity will release SA-RA Creative Partners tracks on a Japanese-only comp, on Volume 4 of the Rewind series, a SA-RA Creative Partners 12” or two, and a completely new album due to drop in 2005.

Check out www.sa-ra.net to read more about the band. And keep it locked to www.ubiquityrecords.com for more info.

SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

ARTIST:

HEAVY D: Produce, Mix [“I CAN’T HELP” feat. Anthony Hamilton] to be released on album and single this summer (Bad Boy Records)
NERD REMIX: Produce, appear and Mix [“MAYBE” Remi] to be released along with the album version as the next single on [Virgin Records]
KILLER MIKE: Produce, Mix, and feature on “MAMMOCUM” which will appear on his forthcoming (Aquanemil record) release
JILL SCOTT: Produce 4 songs including “CHOoCIAItE MAN” w/additional voc by SA-RA, for highly anticipated upcoming release on [Hidden Beach Records]
OBLINE: Produce one song featuring Dr. Dre to be released on a T/B/D album on [Aftermath/Interscope]
BLAL: Produce and Mix two songs including “HOLLWOOD” to be released on the forthcoming yet untitled LP on [Interscope Records]
PHAROAE MONCH: Produce and appear on “AGeNT ORANGE” and “GLoD RUIN PuLZ”[Rawkus/UMG]
RES: Produce 2 songs including “AN ANGEL” to be released on the forthcoming yet untitled LP on [Interscope Records]
BRICKMAN: Produc and feature on several projects including her next LP, as well as the anticipated “3D MIRE/MANDINGO” project featuring Erykah Badu, SA-RA, Karen Wheeler, Zap Mama and others.
KRUMA BAND:Produce and Mix and appear on “CERTIFIED” and the first single “TURN IT UP”[feat. SA-RA]. SA-RA also appears in the music video for the song[Golden Eyes/Koch records]
J ill ASIA:Produce, Mix, and appear on “HEY” from the album “POWER IN NUMBERS” and second single A side “HEY” [INTERSCOPE] & [UP ABOVE RECORDS]
LADY BUG: Produc and Mix, CA (formerly of digable planets). Produc 2 songs including “MR. MAYOR” which will appear on her forthcoming [NU-PARADIGM ENT] release

EARLIER WORK:

DR. DRE: Consulting on “CHRONIC 2003” LP [Aftermath/Interscope] & Platinum
SNIPPEGOGG: Licensing on “”THE LAST MAL” [PRIORITY] 1x Platinum
8 BALL: Produc and Mix on “LOST” [Suave House/UMG] LP 2x Platinum
BRIKAL: Produc and Mix on “MAMAS SUH”[Motown/UMG] LP 1x Platinum
FOXY BROWN: Licensing on “CHYNA DOUC”[Def Jam] LP 2x Platinum
MOBB DEEP: Licensing on “MURDA MUSIK” [LOUD] LP 1x Platinum
ICE T: Produc and Mix on “O.G. ORIGINAL GANGSTER, RHYME PAYS” HOME INVASION [RHyme SYNDICATE/PRIORITY] LPs [ALL Gold]
INTERNATIONAL DJ

BrokeBeat Elite
BreakBeats Own Band Aid

Sandy Rivera
"I Won't Ever Leave House - I Love It Too Much"

Kiwi Rap
New Zealand: The New Home Of Hip Hop?

Andy Farley
On-The-Road Madness In Sunny California

Plus
Joey Negro
DJ Hype
Mark Knight & MTV
Scott Bond
Plantslife
SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS

The messed-up future soul sound of 2005

"If you can use your imagination to fathom love, fucking, money-making, and pure blissfullness you just might be able to hang with the SA-RA Creative Partners!"

Well, that's me counted out then. As you'll see from the above, and know if you've heard their records, SA-RA Creative Partners certainly ain't backwards in coming forwards when it comes to describing themselves and their music. Probably something to do with the fact that they are brilliant, flamboyant, and have been background music tab players for long enough now to know when something is good, and also the fact that the trio of Taz Arnold, Shafiq Husain and Om Mas Keith are the definition of 'hot right now.'

The current brace of singles for Ubiquity and JAB have only served to enforce the buzz on SA-RA, who over the last decade have worked with Noka Deep, Ice T and Dr Dre and whose current workmates include Erykah Badu, Pharoah Sanders, Jay Dee, Common, J. Lo, and Jill Scott. Jesus! I ask the SA-RA trio why now is the time to step into their own limelight,

"We made a unanimous decision to be the 'sacrificial lambs' so to speak. In life you sometimes find that the best way to achieve vertical movement is to take matters into your own hands. We want our songs to be heard, and we can sing, so why not just go ahead and record! Since we record and write all of our songs anyway, the artists that hear our songs usually want them. We want the whole world to sing SA-RA songs. We are creative professional, artists, as well as businessmen, the choice to step out front was only natural for us."

Aside from sprinkling their twisted magic, or as they put it "new exigible shit", over some of soul, R&B and hip hop's biggest stars, SA-RA are about to release their debut album 'SA-RA Creative Partners Present...'. on San Francisco-based Ubiquity. "First and foremost," they write, "expect a whole lot of freakin' on wax, bangin' beats, big songs and sexy talkin'. Expect to witness the process of transcendence, ie. being born into an impoverished environment and mastering oneself to create your own heavenly reality for the people of the world to see and take part in. Our sound is a unique blend of raw and polished material. Straight from the dirt of the ghetto to the gold of the heavens! From glistening wind chimes to the grittiest of chittering chops."

You know only stars can talk sht like that! And when these stars sound like some unholy alliance of Prince, N collects, Fela Quintessence, James, Bop, soul, and cosmic jazz, they can walk it like they talk it. It only remains then for them to describe in their own words a future clearly so bright they gotta wear shades. Which they do.

So SA-RA, the future's bright, the future's... "Bitch as the fiery sun never to be outdone. SA-RA so keen always masters supreme" says Taz. "Clear and evident, success is eminent."

Omnivore chimes in. As for Shafiq, he's cool: "The future is the unknown about to be known." Believe.

Steve Nichols

The 'SA-RA Creative Partners Present... LP will be released in March 2005 on Ubiquity. The 'Double Dutch' EP is out now.
THE KILLS

VV & HOTEL

ON THE ROAD to ROCK’n’ROLL Nirvana.
PLANT LIFE, SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS AND THE RETURN OF LOS ANGELES AS THE EPICCENTRE OF FILTHY FUNK.

TEXT TIM NOAKES PHOTOGRAPHY B+*

Jack Splash has a taste for the murky side of Los Angeles. Following a precedent set by Rick James over 20 years ago, the frontman of new funk group Plant Life has used his fascination with LA strippers, partying and dirty beats to carve himself a niche in a city full of fakers. However, whereas James ultimately fell foul of his vices, Jack has managed to turn his addiction into an absorbing new strain of funk—one that blends progressive electronica, hip hop and P Funk grooves into a sound that is both seedy and sincere—much like Jack himself.

Sitting at a table in the salubrious West Hollywood strip club Jumbo's Clown Rooms, the diminutive singer orders a JD and ginger and recounts a story about an ex-girlfriend who came to LA to escape the Yaddie drug trade only to become a slave to the strip pole.

"I loved her for her mind just as much as for her body," he says as a tattooed Kelly Osbourne lookalike juggles her sagging assets behind him on a mirrored stage. "But like everybody in LA, she was one part dreamer, one part hustler and after a while the two sides became too much to handle. I had to break out and do my own thing."

It was the collapse of their relationship and a need to define himself that propelled Jack into 18 months of non-stop partying and fly-by-night booty calls, a period of recklessness that helped him to create the lyrics and imagery found on Plant Life’s debut album The Return of Jack Splash. While the LP also highlights the introverted and aspirational side of Splash’s personality, it was the nocturnal naughtiness of lead track “Appreciate” that first prompted ex-Talkin’ Loud boss Paul Martin to sign the group to his Gut Instinct label.

“We put out 5,000 copies of ‘Appreciate’ and ‘The Last Song’ on Counterflow records,” Jack recalls as he leaves Jumbo’s on route to his studio. “I didn’t think we were going make any money off it, I just wanted to put it out there. But then we started getting these crazy emails from DJs like Gilles Peterson and before we knew it the single had sold out. Everyone really caught on to what we were doing and Paul was one of those guys. He liked the way that we twisted funk, soul and hip hop into something that didn’t sound contrived.”

So far Martin’s gut feeling seems to be paying dividends, at least in Europe. Following a limited release of the album and a mini UK tour at the end of 2004, everyone from Mos Def to The Chemical Brothers have declared their love for Plant Life’s innovative stripper funk, with critics comparing Jack’s falsetto crooning to Prince, Lenny Kravitz and Andre 3000.

Yet in the band’s home city it’s a different story. Instead of actively contributing to a growing community of LA based musicians that include Daedalus, The Rebirth, Madlib, Ammoncontact, Dwight Tribble and Build An Ark, Jack has chosen to steer Plant Life on a fiercely independent course, meaning reduced rotation on the city’s most influential urban stations KPFK, Power 106 and KCRW.
"I'm cool with all those people," Jack says inside his incense-filled studio. "But for the last couple of years, I've really been on my own and tried to tune a lot of things out in order to just focus on my own music. I respect what everyone is doing out here, and there's definitely a new vibe going on but I just want to set it off on my own terms."

Carlos Niño, the host of the popular Spaceways Radio show on KPFK, thinks that Jack and Plant Life supporting players Panda One, Rashida, Dena Deadly and Orgone are just doing what comes naturally to them. "Right now the best music coming out of LA is multi-cultural and progressive, which is very much what Plant Life are about," he says. "Jack is a very savvy guy who has a vision of what he wants to see happen with this group and he has an amazing band supporting him. It's natural that some people choose to work closer together than others. After all this is a crazy town that's very easy to get lost in."

However Jack is not alone in his desire to set things off on his own terms. A few miles east of his West Hollywood studio is the bohemian stronghold of Silverlake, three other members of the musical community are mastering their own funk takeover.

Going by the collective name of SA-RA Creative Partners, producers Taz Arnold, Shafiq Husayn and Om'Mas Keith have spent the last four years honing a sound and persona that, like The Neptunes before them, defies standard urban categorisation. Their approach to music; a mix of space age stuttered beats blended with the business acumen of Donald Trump has already given SA-RA a reputation amongst taste makers, thanks to remixes for N*E*R*D, Spacek, Pharoahe Monch and new productions for Dr Dre, Common and J Lo. However, their time hiding in the shadows is about to come to an end. This spring will see Ubiquity Records release the trio's debut album as artists, and current king of the crossover Kanye West has expressed an interest in signing them to his new Columbia distributed imprint.
Breaking through: SA-RA’s Om’Mas Keith, Shafiq Husayn and Taz Arnold are out to shatter people’s perception of funk.
“THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE SA-RA TAKEOVER. BUT WE’RE NOT TAKING NOTHING FROM NO ONE. THERE’S NO MALICE, WE’RE JUST READY TO CONTROL OUR DESTINY.”

OM’MAS, SA-RA
“It’s very obvious to anyone who comes through this door what we’re here to do,” Om’Mas declares as he opens the door to their Silverlake lab. “To make good music that’s going to stick around.”

As you cross the threshold into their newly acquired suburban studio, you understand what he’s talking about. Vintage Moog synths propped up the kitchen breakfast bar while an MPC 3000 drum machine and a Technics turntable sit snugly on a sideboard that would usually be reserved for pots and pans. Picking his way through a scattered collection of drum kits, mics, trombones and guitars, he walks around a huge mixing console in the middle of what should be the dining room. On its walls ornate Arabic mantras hang next to Shafiq’s framed platinum plaques for Ice T’s OG album.

“You see, we don’t let any bad vibes in here man,” he says, looking for a lighter to ignite his refeel.

“After all we’re in Silverlake now, so we’ve gotta be bohemians! Just think, we might become the next Crosby, Stills and Nash!”

A gracious and highly entertaining host who splits his time between Cali and Queens, Om’Mas was raised in a jazz household and began sound engineering when he was just 17, working with artists such as Mobol Deep, 8 Ball and Foxy Brown. Pacing around the rig, he reminisces about building the studio in which his late mentor Jam Master Jay was killed, as well as working with Ol’ Dirty Bastard who had passed away the previous evening.

A few minutes later Taz, the smallest and most fashion conscious member of SA-RA, turns up looking surprisingly low-key for a man who likes to wear a crown and a pair of black angel wings on stage. The only native Californian in the group, Taz first became known in the LA hip hop world as a dancer but moved into a position of influence when his Big Yacht Entertainment production company helped Dr Dre produce The Chronic. 2001. The worldwide success of that album prompted Taz to pursue his own dreams instead of others, a decision that is now starting to pay dividends.

As Om’Mas fills the room with a new SA-RA track appropriately entitled “Hollywood”, Shafiq hauls his huge frame into the house. Like Om’Mas, Shafiq was raised in Queens, but emigrated to Los Angeles after scoring a double platinum hit with his first ever production – Ice T’s “New Jack Hustler” from the soundtrack to New Jack City. Acknowledged by the other two as their beat-making mentor, Shafiq quietly exudes an inner calm that belies the ferocity of the music with which he first made his name, preferring to talk about Stevie Wonder’s mastery of the Rhodes rather than AK’s and he’s.

“We have all been involved in bigger projects, and seen the way things have been structured,” Taz says later as they all sit around the sound desk. “And there have been situations which we would have handled differently if we were in the driving seat. So the way we put this team together was to actually make a nucleus, a perfect tried. As the company and the music grows we’re gonna take that same knowledge and understanding and help build other careers like people did for us. It’s a pyramid effect.”

“It’s important to be the architects of your own universe,” Shafiq adds, “the creators of your own destiny. Success for us is putting a project together from scratch, all the way through to the packaging. Whether it sells or not is a different form of success.”

The group, whose name is derived from an ancient Kemetic term meaning “the offspring of the most powerful energy in the universe”, obviously have a detailed blueprint drawn out for the future of the funk. In contrast to Plant Life, whose music is ostensibly good time electro funk built for night crawlers, SA-RA’s sound is certifiably schizophrenic. Constantly switching genres but holding their own at every turn, it is their ability to produce obscure jazz fusion remixes for Medeski, Martin & Wood, bubblegum pop for La Lopez and broken beat club bangers for London’s Co-Op crowd that marks them out as leaders in the emerging LA funk set.

“People like us because of our range,” states Taz. “A lot of our songs, like ‘Glorious’ and (Pharoahe Monch’s) ‘Agent Orange’ were made over two years ago, but they were very forward thinking. I think the thing that works in our favour is that there are three producers in this one collective. We all have our own ideas about how we want to go about making music with a common goal in mind. And now we’ve moved into the driver’s seat on all fronts.”

“This is the beginning of the SA-RA takeover,” Om’Mas adds. “But we’re not taking nothing from no one. There’s no malice, we’re just ready to control our destiny. People are just drawn to the confidence that we exude and how we’re so outward with it. Like Taz once said on Benji B’s radio show, ‘If you radiate people gravitate.’

PLANT LIFE’S ALBUM THE RETURN OF JACK SPLASH IS OUT NOW ON OUT INSTINCT.
WWW.PLANTLIFEWORLDWIDE.COM.
SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS’ AS YET UNTITLED ALBUM IS OUT IN MAY ON UBICITY.
WWW.UBICITYRECORDS.COM. WWW.SA-RA.NET.
DONT WAIT TO ESCAPE
FEBRUARY 2005

HE SHOT HOLLYWOOD
SLIM AARONS AND THE GOLDEN
AGE OF THE JET SET

THEYRE LEAVING HONG KONG
...AND HEADING FOR LANTAU

PARIS SECRETS
EXCLUSIVE HANGOUTS
OF THE NEW JEUNESSE DORÉE

GILLES PETERSON
WORLD:WIDE

Gilles continues his search
for the perfect beat on
World:Wide...

This month we take a trip
to the Red Bull Music
Academy in Rome, where
participants get a chance
to learn about making
music from working
musicians. Taz Arnold
from Sa Ra Creative
Partners gives us his
exclusive insight into the
project..

AUDIO
ALL FLIGHTS
Having lent their signature spaced out 'n' funked-up vocal and production talents to the likes of NERD, Jurassic 5, Jill Scott and Bilal, SA-Ra CREATIVE PARTNERS are now on a self-appointed mission to give music back its freedom. With an album due out via Ubiquity early next year, Al Burton caught up with the lucid trio to talk expression, porn and childhood jam sessions with George Harrison.
From the very moment the conversation begins, it's clear that this isn't going to be one of those 30-minute interviews strategically scheduled between brunch and the usual Saturday night out. You know it the first time you hear Ormaa Keith, one of the most innovative, forthright, and unapologetic musicians known to So-Ro Creative Partners, describe their work as 'this is a piece of art.' Or maybe it's the overwhelming honesty in which he and Taz Arnoq (the only other member present) employ words like 'cosmos' and 'universe' on the heels of words like 'normal' and 'regular.'

It's the same boundless expression that birthed sexuality tinged lyrics in songs like 'Rasabu' and pairs them with rhythms spawned by the beat generation while paying homage to the innovation of music's past. So-Ro is arguably the most uninhibited group of musicians to grace the music scene in the past 10 years. Unlike jazz in previous generations, So-Ro threatens to revitalize popular music by giving it something it hasn't seen in years — its freedom.

To define So-Ro (which officially consists of Arnoq, Keith and Shafiq Husayn) within the scope of existing producers is virtually impossible. Few are as unpredictable and even fewer are as free in thought. The name itself implies an absence of limitations evidenced not only in the group's sound, but also in their personalities and their approach to life as a whole.

"So-Ro is a Kamatou term," explains Arnoq. "It means offspring of the most powerful energy of the universe, or child of the cosmos. The concept is like three masters coming together as a new push of creativity and lifestyle forward. It's kind of like watching the Cosby Show. It's an example of better living, for black people in particular. It's a blueprint so to speak, for our generation."

It may be difficult for some to subscribe to So-Ro's 'Three Masters theory.' Often times the idea that three heads are better than one is more common than a sure recipe for disaster. But when you consider that each of them has been making music individually for at least ten years — they all play, write, sing, and make beats — a rare balance seems to be present among them.

"Creatively, we're able to multitask and go off and do our own thing," Keith confesses. "We still have our individual studies and then we come together in the large room, which is our designated So-Ra studios, Cosmic Dwi Recording.

"We're children of the same thought," exclaims Arnoq. "It's unconventional in regards to the thinking that we would eventually hook up, but the seeds were planted a long time ago.

All three of us have similar stories. His mom is like my mom. My mom is like Sheik's mom. Shafiq and I were a part of the same spiritual organization before I ever started making music. It's all so natural. We don't have to force anything.

"To a certain degree we've been groomed to do what we're doing right now," explains Arnoq recalling the many influences that have led to So-Ro's present place in the music business. "Doug Carr lived in his Kelby house. His dad played with Sun Ra. Ormaa himself is a big-time drummer. When I met him, he referred to him a magical jazz player. My dad's first wife was one of the first. She had a big career in the UK under the name PP Arnoq. I was going over George Harrison's house, from the Beatles, as a kid, for jam sessions. She had all of these people, Ike Turner, Parliament coming to my house.

"At the time you don't know what it's all about Parites every night. But later you remember all of that and you realize I'm a player. So when you play a record for your parents now and say this was influenced by such and such and they'll be like 'you don't remember when he used to come to the house?' I never knew who it was then but just having it around, influencing you, speaks volumes."

Since forming the super group, as they are often referred to, So-Ro has been lording both their vocal and production talents to several industry notables ranging from Dr. Dre to Jurassic 5 and Pharell Williams to Jill Scott and Bilal. They recently signed on to work on the upcoming Common album as well as the next offering from legendary R&B diva Roberta Flack.

But the real buzz surrounding the group isn't about the projects they're producing but rather their own upcoming album to be released on Ubiquity Records sometime next year.

"If you've been anything close to the industry wire you've no doubt come across a stray trick or two circulating through dj circles and internet groups. Thanks to the overwhelming popularity of the recently released 12″ "Glories" — a track that dresses a hip-hop influenced beat with electro-flavoured production reminiscent of George Duke and Parliament-like vocal stylings — So-Ro is quickly becoming a household name.

"It's amazing how "Glories" across the board, is everybody's favorite," comments Keith. "From the ultra conservative to the more progressive thinker to the head.

"Pricing themselves on their contempt for conformity, So-Ro's sound makes for a difficult marriage with many of today's more inhibited artists.
"In the beginning we had a big problem placing material because our sound is very unorthodox compared to what was being done at the time," Arnold points out. "Not being able to find the type of artist that could do what we wanted them to do is what launched us into forming our group, and our group is what's responsible for us getting placements. People would hear our tracks and say, this is cool, but I don't know what to do with it. So what we started doing was putting our songs before our tracks like a blueprint. So people hear our songs and instead of pitching our tracks, they pitch our songs. Brian heard 'Hollywood' and he picked 'Hollywood'."

As a result, the group often appears on their tracks alongside the artist.

"Artists want us because of our vocal arranging abilities," comments Keith. Artists see our ability to place vocals in spaces where they evoke emotions or they make you feel whatever you feel, and who better to do it than us on our own tracks. Everything we're on we write."

"We create a sound, Arnold continues. "A beat is a beat, but we make songs, lyrics, singing, the way we approach the track, arranging, it's creating a sound. To get that sound, you need us on the track."

"Parmount to the sound is the process — or, in the case of Sa-Ra, the lack of a process. Holding firmly to their non-conformist philosophy, they adhere to no pre-determined rules beyond the use of his feet and the MPC 2000.

"It kind of really starts with beats," reveals Keith. "That's usually as close as we get. Whatever is influencing us at the time is what's going to be happening with the beats. Whether we're listening to Leroy Burgess, David Bowie or watching a porno, and we hear some sleazy guitar line and it's like Oh, ok, we're true musicians in addition to being producers, music enthusiast on one level but hell deep into the study of music everywhere and we draw from all of those things. I say always joke with me because I'll play something and wherever I think it's coming from, he'll be like, No, it's coming from here. It just gets to show how there are parallels in all genres, how music and licks are intertwined."

In addition to their standard gear, they're also known to use less conventional methods to capture certain sounds.

"We have a playground of colours," states Arnold. "You've got to have the colours if you want to paint the picture. We might be in the studio beating on drums, tambourines. We might have little kids in there yelling, or rubbing brushes together. The baseline on 'Agent Orange' was all pots," he jokes.

On stage, similar to their recording process, Sa-Ra consistently challenges established standards of freedom and expression. Aesthetically, they appear as eccentric as Arnold's cardboard crown or the impressive assortment of vintage Gucci belts he wears in a summer-band-like fashion around his waist and abdomen. And if you've been trying to determine whether the winged men you may have recently seen performing was a fad of your imagination, well, chances are it wasn't. A similar logic applies to their musical accomplishment, which often consists of a single laptop. When it comes to Sa-Ra, you learn to expect nothing, and to appreciate everything.

"We change our band depending on the show," says Arnold. "Our last show in L.A. consisted of a 12 piece band, but no drummer. It's kind of like a Radiophonic show. You don't necessarily see the same show all the time. Our shows are going to vary like that. It's never going to be the same show all the time. We're always going to have in our shows the element of improvisation. You might see a jam session one show, the next time it might be a fashion show. We want to do some creative stuff, not just cut a show on stage. You might just see us three on stage with guitars and nothing else. We like room to mix and match."

Their current buzz notwithstanding, Sa-Ra has yet to receive the same response in the American market that they've received outside of the States. Keith attributes this to Europe's more intellectual approach to music.

"People outside of America seem to be more intelligent and accept genius. Charlie Parker was a genius. Americans might have known that but in America, the way our system is set up, people hold his actions against him and therefore they wouldn't accept him as a genius."

Though their flows don't go much deeper than their own brand of melodic avant-garde and an admitted love of pornography, Sa-Ra are aware that, like Parker, many in the States have been reluctant to embrace their genius. Still, they're confident that they will eventually be able to reach music fans in every pocket and every corner, globally.

"We're problem solvers. It's obvious that the random cat might not get with it but we've got things to combat that, like Hollywood or other secret weapons. We want to take pop back to what it was when Stevie Wonder was making records, songs with changes and inter-vals. Dope music... Steely Dan, Sly... music that was big because it was so good, not because it was pushed by the label. Our music is not so much for the beathead, but rather for people who love music."
Buzz Factor:

Three years ago, Taz Arnold, Om'Mas Keith and Shafiq Husayn partnered and founded Sa-Ra in an effort to recreate the sound of music. Collectively, the trio has consulted with Dr. Dre on his classic Dr. Dre 2001. They produced the "Get Off" remake for Prince, as well as songs like "Hey" for Jurassic 5. More recently, 50 Cent ("Move") and Pharoahe Monch ("Agent Orange") have been blessed with Sa-Ra's vision of musical reinvention.

Style:

Sa-Ra takes an indelible urban alternative to their sound. The collective is equally adept at penning touching lyrics about life as they are at programming a beat or playing a chord. The end result is a sensually advanced sound that mixes electronic, funk and alternative blues.

Status:

The new production kings are preparing to score and sing on their full length debut, Synthizers and Sex Toys, which is set to drop this Spring. With their own hits "Glorious" and "Rosebuds" currently blowing up speakers, Sa-Ra's handy work will also be featured on forthcoming projects by Bilal, Erykah Badu and Pharoahe Monch.
music

Bright future

Are L.A. funk ensemble SA-RA more brilliant than the sun? By Peter Nicholson

M
ever mind what Flavor Flav said — when we’re talking about SA-RA, go on and believe the hype.

It’s hard to recall another group that’s generated so much discussion before they’ve even released a record. Fueled by feverish reading of their CD-Rs, a few live shows, plus reports and predictions for the likes of N.E.R.D., K'naan, and Pharoah Monch, the trio of Orn/Max Keith, Tar Amed, and Shufi Hanany are stepping into the spotlight. Rumors of a NAACP Image Award nomination are swirling, and they’re in “serious negotiations” with Kanye West regarding signing to his label — it’s all a bit crazy for a group that’ll only release their first official singles (“Glorious” on ABB Soul and “Cocoa Pop”/“Death of a Star” on Ubiquity) at the end of this month. A Ubiquity album is due in February.

Articulate and confident, Keith certainly has the ego to match the buzz; but most important, the trio have the beats to back it all up. Over the speakerphone as he drives in New York (all three members are bisexual, though they recently established the SA-RA Compound in Los Angeles’ Silver Lake neighborhood as their base of operations), Keith explains that all members work on each song before it’s considered completed.

“Our approach to making music is pretty much free-for-all, everybody comes with your ideas, and then we just work from there. We’re all writers, we all are very skilled as lyricists, and we’re players, and we’re singers, and we’re rappers — the whole gamut.”

The result range from strutting yet sturdy R&B with an outer-space sheen, to thick hip-hop that pairs a ragged bass synth with spaghetti-western guitars, to numbers that contrast almost harrowing vocal arrangements with the pleasantly obese lyrics. Andrew Levits, cohort of KUSF 90.3 FM’s “Friday Night Session” and head of A&R for Ubiquity, recalled via e-mail the first time he heard a SA-RA track, when it was played by another Ubiquity artist, Wadada (Platinum Poet Pipers, Slam Village), on the BBC radio show “Rhythm.” “I was absolutely blown away and begged Ubiquity for the band’s contact info immediately. He was live on the air at about 1 a.m., UK time...” The staggering, gritty beats were just as right, they had a cosmic, soulful vibe that reminded me of classic Gary Steeples productions (Rotary Connection, Newmire Kretton, Earth, Wind & Fire, etc.) but was also very forward-thinking and unlike anything else out there.”

Keith’s own initial reaction to a club DJ dropping a CD-R of “Glorious” was equally immediate. After a night spent pumping up the wall, I finally launched myself onto the dance floor — much to the dismay of those in the immediate vicinity who couldn’t possibly appreciate my Bobby Brown pre-rehab skills.

Keith is a little cagey when it comes to divulging just how SA-RA create their music. We talk about ten to records... for textures, for chord changes and intervals,” he explains, “when you’re able to break down records in the sense that you can, or not just to sample this, I’m going to study it, and learn that there are things that I can pull from this, maybe not exactly chord.”

Anything from a record can drive us, but definitely our drums all come from digging.”

Keith isn’t talking about taking an entire drum break and dropping it into a SA-RA composition — he’s talking about finding that one perfect sound, the brightest high hat, and building a drum loop beat by beat.

This isn’t an unheard-of technique, yet it’s clear that the trio’s individual histories of studio work with the likes of Eightball, Mob Deep, and Ice-T mean they collectively bring some serious knowledge. Part of what makes SA-RA’s amazing sound is their ability to build tracks with a microwavable attention to detail and add the subtle shifts and hesitations that make it come alive, elevating SA-RA songs above the common commercial fare with which they’re well equipped to compete. The bass line to “Glorious” matters, then, because it holds your attention. “Death of a Star,” a more uptempo funk song, which Chicago house legend Roy Davis Jr. has described as “a semi-session with Prince and Bootsy Collins,” reveals deeper layers of production that appear and disappear within the space of a few bars, almost subconsciously animating a seemingly straightforward, sing-along track.

Brilliant, often unconventional songs that are still commercially viable, from a band with both underground and industry hype! Seems a little too much to hope for, but what’s not to love when Keith promises a SA-RA live show with all three members singing, the ubiquitous laptop, live instruments, and backup singers? If SA-RA are only a tenth as “fashionable, freaky, sexual” as he claims, I can’t wait.

SA-RA perform with Luis Fields Oct. 21, 10 p.m., Mighty, 119 Utah, S.F.
Call for price (415) 636-7069.
THE NEXT DRUGS!: IN SEARCH OF A NEW HIGH

THE ANNUAL NEXT 100

M.I.A.

LOUDER THAN BOMBS

PLUS BLOC PARTY THE GO! TEAM EDAN IDIOT PILOT THE DEARS ARCADE FIRE AND 93 OTHER ARTISTS TO LUST AFTER
Taz wears shirt by Alex B, all other gear his own | Om' Mas wears jacket by American Apparel, shirt by Le Tigre, pants his own
SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS

Want to hear the tracks that will be cooking speaker cones in 2005? You won’t find them at an exclusive club or on promo plates. The best place to look is at the L.A. house of Shafiq Husayn, Taz Arnold and Om’Mas Keith, otherwise known as the headquarters of SA-RA Creative Partners.

The trio, which formed in 2000, finds strength in numbers. “The pyramid is the most powerful structure in existence,” says Keith. “And the name SA-RA is an ancient Egyptian term that means ‘offspring of the most powerful energy in the universe.’”

Each member of this trio is a jack-of-all-trades in the studio, singing, producing and playing instruments. And they rarely sample. “The sample was played,” says Arnold. “Why can’t we create it?” The result — a disarming blend of everything from Prince and Parliament to hip-hop and bebop, all blended into a unique cocktail — is drawing plenty of attention. N*E*R*D and Jurassic 5 have already had them do production work and remixes.

Cosmological significance aside, SA-RA’s solo debut, set to drop this spring on Ubiquity, should make them stars in their own right. Maybe they’ll even have time to savor it. “This year, we’re doing work with Kanye West, Jill Scott, Erykah Badu and remixing Radiohead,” says Husayn. “And Madlib’s coming over tomorrow.” PS
Global Beats: DJ Krush, Anthony B, Azymuth, Daara J and more

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

BEST OF
2004

Matthew Dear
Ghostface, Stones Throw and Over 100 Of the Year's Highs (and Lows)

SA-RA Creative Partners
Geoff White
Platinum Pied Pipers
The Juan Maclean
Dzihan & Kamien
Tomlab

ehquestionmark

Over 200 new albums
and singles reviewed
In an ample recording studio strewn with musical instruments located somewhere in a labyrinthine BBC complex nestled away on a smart North London street, SA-RA’s Om’Mas Keith tends to a discarded double bass, plucking a few deep twangs around the room.

He’s recording a session for Gilles Peterson’s Worldwide radio show with fellow SA-RA member Taz Arnold (third member Shafiq Husayn isn’t around) and accompanying vocalist Irisna Gayle, but listening to them perform half a dozen songs to beats emanating from Keith’s laptop is far from appreciating the full picture.

The SA-RA story—some would say hype—spread globally by way of CD-R. A little over a year ago, the group circulated a couple of generously filled discs to a select few A&R people, DJs and tastemakers, informing them that SA-RA were not merely producers who made beats, but artists who made songs. Their sound was essentially hip-hop but infused with the slick funk-pop sheen of Cameo, the raw sexual edge of Dirty Mind-era Prince, the spacey sonics of Jay Dee and the punchy, chunky aesthetic of The Neptunes, all with a novel, modernist twist.

What the songs didn’t explain was that SA-RA’s business strategy is as honed as their musical one: Keith, Husayn and Arnold—products of Hollis, Queens, the Bronx and South Central LA, respectively—collectively co-manage their company, SA-RA Creative Partners. “On the corporate side that’s how we get down, it’s very businesslike,” explains Keith. “SA-RA the group is the same people, just a different concept and removed from the corporate. Point blank: we’re all 10-year veterans of this industry in one way or another.” Keith put in hours engineering Mobb Deep and Foxy Brown records; Husayn was in-house producer “for every single Ice-T album that ever came out” and Taz Arnold’s company consulted extensively on Dr. Dre’s acclaimed 2001 project.

“Who else you know of that’s working with Spacek and J-Lo?”
"A lot of the time we were finding ourselves at a stalemate with artists."

Suit. Less in need of styling is Taz Arnold; a spiky mohawk crowns his sharp wardrobe—garb that reflects SA-RA’s eclectic musical zest. But despite his artfully funky threads, Arnold and his cohorts’ business side is no less salient. "We’re a creative house—SA-RA Creative Partners provides creative solutions to the music world in general. Not to sound so corporate, but everything we do falls under that umbrella," he says. "If you look at companies you either have an ultra-creative company which doesn’t have the presence in the marketplace or you have a big corporate infrastructure which lacks creativity. What we set out to do was to merge the two."

But in addition to the business and production side of the partnership, SA-RA felt it was important to nurture their own output as artists. "It’s a throwback to another era," Keith says of the group’s creative endeavors, which encompass not only playing instruments but also engineering, writing and singing lyrics. "A lot of the time we were finding ourselves at a stalemate with artists. They’d be saying, ‘Wow, we love the sound but what do we do with it?’ So from SA-RA Creative Partners as producers, enter SA-RA [the artists]. We started recording these crazy songs—for ourselves primarily—and once the artists got wind of it they were like, ‘That’s the shit we want! We want your sound.’ It’s a creation. At the end of the day we are making art.”

Whether they can maintain their art and stringent business acumen as two separate entries remains to be seen. Says Arnold: “We decided to take our destinies in our own hands and be the artists, be the production company, be the producers and the executives behind our own thing and make it happen, as opposed to going to other people and saying, ‘Is this good enough?’”

“We’re coming from [the mindset of producers like] Phil Ramone, Jam and Lewis and Quincy,” says Keith. “We’re also devout students of popular songwriting. We’re bridging the gap in a big way—who else you know of that’s working with Spacek and J-Lo? It’s our little secret but we’ve got a formula down; we know how to make big records.”

SA-RA’s debut album will be released by Ubiquity Records spring 2005.

GAVIN DeGRAW
Riding to the Top on Piano-Powered Pop Bonus! Songwriting Secrets Finger Finesse

EXCLUSIVE!
The Making of the Alesis Fusion

Thievery Corporation
The Tao of Downtempo
CONTENTS

INTRO

14 Rumour, Innuendo, and Libel

SA-RA

Doug Petry with Tears for Fears

Key Tracks: The Jayhawks

Gadget Bag: Digital Idea Recorders

Go Seel

LINKS

8 EDITOR'S NOTE
10 LETTERS
12 REVIEWS
20 NEW GEAR
94 PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT
103 CLASSIFIED ADS

PLAY

40 BEGINNING
Gavin DeGraw’s “Chariot.”

40 INTERMEDIATE
Gavin DeGraw’s “Chariot.”

42 ADVANCED
Modal colors.

44 FULL SONG
Gavin DeGraw’s “Chariot.”

HOW TO

46 WHAT’S THIS FOR?
Styles and arranging.

48 SYNTH WORKSHOP
Tips for Korg Triton, Roland Fantom v.2, Yamaha Motif, and Dave Smith Evolver.

54 MUSIC/PICTURE
Jeff Rona’s international collaboration.

60 ON THE GIG
Your gig survival kit.

62 COMPOSING
Gavin DeGraw’s song writing tips.

64 SOFT STUDIO
MP3 players in the studio.

AUDITION

66 ROLAND JUNO-D

70 MOTU MX4

76 WAY OUT WARE TIMEWARP 2600

80 ARTURIA ARP 2600V

84 APPLIED ACOUSTICS ULTRA ANALOG VA-1

88 SYNTHOGY IVORY

96 DVFORGE GARAGEKEY

96 PROPELLERHEAD REASON DRUM REFILLS

OUTRO

98 VINTAGE SOUNDS
Sequencer licks on the ARP 2600.

102 VINTAGE SYNTHS
The ARP 2600.

112 30 YEARS AGO TODAY

ON THE COVER:

www.keyboardmag.com

6 keyboard 03-2005
SA-RA

Fueled by a high-profile production career, SA-RA is taking hip-hop in a unique direction, combining funk and electro-pop to create a fresh sound that’s outgrowing its underground roots. Under the name of SA-RA Creative Productions, Taj Arnold, Shafiq Husayn, and Om’Mas Keith have produced for the likes of Dr. Dre, Jurassic 5, and Erykah Badu. As SA-RA the group, however, the L.A.-based trio gained a substantive underground following by distributing CDs at clubs. Now, they’ve released two new singles and are working on a full-length album on Ubiquity Records (www.ubiquityrecords.com) that should be this spring.

“Basically we have a no-discrimination policy,” says Keith of SA-RA’s gear, which runs the gamut from Propellerhead Reason to a Maestro Rhythm King (said to be the first beat machine ever made). “It’s an original one and cats are just in awe when they see it.”

SA-RA’s studio also includes a Pro Tools TDM system and a myriad of keyboards and synths, including an Akai MPC1000, two Roland SH-101s, Wurlitzer and Fender Rhodes pianos, a Hohner Clavinet D6, and a Roland Juno-106, currently the group’s favorite.

“It’s so controllable, you can work on the fly. It’s a realtime analog synth. It’s on so many of our records — most notably the bass line on ‘Agent Orange’ by Pharoah Monch (produced by SA-RA Creative Partners),” says Keith.

Surprisingly, SA-RA’s music doesn’t employ any samples — it’s all recorded in their studio. Yet you’d swear you’ve heard that guitar riff or drum beat before on an old LP. The secret lies in ten years of production experience, and their love of music as varied as Steely Dan, John Coltrane, Kraftwerk, and Herbie Hancock.

“We’re all very well-versed in the art of synthesis and sound sculpturing,” says Keith. “The secret is to listen and to be an avid researcher. You got to reference the cats that were using this gear and you have to listen to their records. Then you’re able to hone in on these sounds.” Narasu Rebbapragada

For more info, visit www.sa-ra.net.
RADIKAL
LE MAGAZINE DU MOUVEMENT HIP HOP

TEFA & MASTA
DIX ANS DE SON HIP HOP

ROC-A-FELLA
BLING BLING REPORTAGE

NTM IAM ASSASSIN
LE RETOUR DE LA OLD SCHOOL

SINIK
LA NOUVELLE ÉCOLE DÉBOULE

8BALL & MJG
EXPLICIT SAMOURAÏ
MR. R
LES ASSISTÉS

OM ALL STARS ORISHAS STEEL PULSE MANU KEY GRAF'H DIZ
SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS

GROUPE DE 3 PRODUCTEURS ETABLIS ENTRE NEW YORK ET LOS ANGELES, SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS A COMMENCE PAR PRODUIRE ERYKAH BADU, COMMON, JILL SCOTT OU BILAL, POUR CULER AUJOURDHUIURS SES PRODUCTIONS SUR LE DEBUT DE DR DRE. LE TRIO S'APPRÊTE À PRENDRE D'ASSAULT LA MUSIQUE MONDIALE, APPUYÉ SUR DES THÉORIES EN FORME DE RECETTES COSMIQUES. ENTRETIEN AVEC OM'MAS KEITH, UN TIERS DE LA FORMATION.

Halte ! Pour la memoire sur la formation de Sa-Ra ?

C'est une histoire, bien. Sa-Ra Creative Partners évolue avec les beatmakers et comprend un compositeur de pop, une dynamique, une riche mélange de musique électronique, de hip-hop et de musique classique. Nous sommes en train de développer une nouvelle forme de musique, qui nous permet de créer des morceaux uniques et originaux.

Avant de créer Sa-Ra, qu'existait-il dans notre espace ?

Le monde était un ensemble de sons et de rythmes divers, mais nous cherchions à créer quelque chose de plus. Nous avons voulu créer une musique qui allait au-delà de ce que nous avions déjà entendu.

Où est situé le siège de Sa-Ra ?

Sa-Ra est une entité virtuelle qui existe dans le monde entier. Nous sommes connectés à travers le monde, mais nous sommes aussi un ensemble de personnes qui se rassemblent pour créer de la musique.

Quels sont les plus importants pour le succès de Sa-Ra ?

La musique, la passion, la créativité, la volonté de nous surpasser, la volonté de faire quelque chose de nouveau et de différent, et de nous amuser en faisant de la musique.

Comment travaille-t-on à la fois studio ?

La musique est une forme d'expression, et nous essayons d'utiliser tous les moyens possibles pour transmettre notre message. Nous utilisons des technologies avancées, mais aussi des techniques traditionnelles.

Bref, c'est une entreprise artistique qui cherche à sortir de la norme et à créer quelque chose de nouveau et de différent. Nous sommes une formation qui a pour but de faire évoluer la musique et de la rendre plus accessible à tous.
SA-RA

Glorious

[ABB Soul] One of the contenders for 2005 is the much-hyped SA-RA Creative Partners, a Los Angeles-based trio that claims everyone from Dr. Dre to Jurassic 5 on their lengthy resumes. Their second single serves up a slick fusion of Jay Dee-styled micro-boom-bap and 1970s space jazz. Check for their frazzled Sly and the Family Stone cover on Ubiquity's Rewind 4 as well as their upcoming full-length debut. HH
FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: KARL INJEX

Atlanta, GA holla! Your boy Karl Injex is standing permanently at the ready with a syringe of new school funk. Scouring record bins for a range of sounds—from West London broken beat to Detroit soul to West Indian vibes—Injex has become a staple of the future jazz scene. With partners Tyler Askew and Garnall Awad, he helms the groundbreaking Rude Movements night at NYC club APT; since 1999, he and Askew have also penned the Transatlantic Audio column in Straight No Chaser and dude is also a graphic designer. Keep an eye out for a Japan-only mixtape dropping soon, but first check out what he’s feeling this month. Vivian Host

PLATINUM PIED PIPERS vs. SA-RA DEEP INSIDE Puma/US/5x12

Some things just seem to make sense, like this collaboration between Wajeed’s PPP and nascent superstars Sa-Ra. Made for inclusion on the ultra-exclusive Puma 5x12 series, “Deep Inside” is a rough and ready slice of future funk, one to bump on the dancefloor as well as in the trunk. Touching down somewhere between Detroit and Hollywood, this one will drop hard at your next yacht party. KJ
NV 2005 CAR GUIDE
Driveway Necessities

WRITTEN IN THE STARS
The business of Astrology

FINALLY DEBT FREE
One Woman’s Journey

FROM START TO FINISH
African Americans are driving automotive innovation at GM

THE ONE
Ritta McLaughlin spent “Every Friday Night” searching for THE ONE and you might spend yours doing the same but have faith there is someone for you.
While the name SA-RA creative partners (SAH-RAH) may not be the easiest name to pronounce, it’s quickly proving to be a name that is hard to forget. That’s because the team of seasoned music producers who make up this three-way partnership are the driving force behind some of the most innovative music today. Not only has their music talent helped them land deals with some of the biggest names in the music biz but their savvy business skills are making them successful.

That’s where trust factors in, Shafiq says. “The other two may have a vision, a different angle or solution that they are comfortable with and the third partner will roll with it. We trust each other enough that it is the right decision.”

Other times, they might seek the advice of their attorney or manager. That’s a smart move, business experts agree. “We recommend partners set up an outside board of advisors because they bring a non-emotional element to decision-making,” says Henry Turner, the executive director of the Small Business Development Center at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Turner also advises, making a business plan and creating a business arrangement agreement that clearly defines the partnership members, investors, responsibilities, compensation, and entrance/exit strategies. “Most go into partnerships with a good friend and when something happens they realize they never outlined how they would handle it. Business agreements really are crucial,” Turner says.

Set up properly, business experts agree that the advantages of a partnership outweigh working separately. Clients see the advantages of working with SA-RA, in particular, because they get three times the talent, don’t get burnt out working with the same individual, and the threesome can split up multiple tasks on the same project, which cuts down on production time.

“If an artist has a question about what we are doing, there are three different people to look at, three different opinions,” adds Om’Mas. Artists appreciate hearing three voices, he says, especially “knowing that we are all acting for the betterment of their career.”
When it comes to their own careers, the trio just inked a partnership deal with Rawkus Records where they will head its creative and artist management divisions. They also formed a singing group, simply known as SA-RA (meaning "offspring of the most powerful energy in the universe"), and are hard at work writing their new songs. Their unique, futuristic sound, which Taz describes as kind of "Parliament-meets-Steely Dan-meets-early Prince," has already caught the ear of industry types and artists, such as Kanye West.

To meet demand and maximize the "potency of being creative times three," Taz, 30, says that they chose to work and live at their Los Angeles "compound." The combination studio-home-office cottage is surrounded by lush green plants and waterfalls, contains walls lined with photos of legendary jazz masters, floors covered with Persian rugs, and rooms filled with computer monitors and vintage keyboards.

The partners say that their passion to change the current musical landscape, business prowess and vision for their company's development has them poised for big things.

"We're like a fraternity. We've put our personal ambitions aside for our collective ambitions," Om'Mas says. "We're really looking to be in this for decades. We want to form a corporate brand, like Motown. One that is instantly recognizable around the country -- and around the world."
THIEVERY CORPORATION

afrika bambataa the zulu nation wants you
dirty business of bass mf doom strictly kep
back 65 romancowski oo-ra creative partners
maya hayuk the juggaknots nonconceptual
When hip-hop was still in its embryonic stages, powered by Bronx streetlights and its own youthful abandon, it was pretty damn weird.

The cosmic afro-spirituality of the Five Percent Nation met the vigorous debauchery native to New York City and the results oozed from turntables and drum machines in the bedrooms of a few visionary kids. Twenty-five years later, it’s tough to remember that these “instruments” a) weren’t really considered instruments at the time and b) sure as hell weren’t being manufactured so a kid rocking Cazals and a shearing and smoking a fatty could pound out some twisted electronic drum beat that would make the girls at the next rec-center jam lose their shit.

The problem is that, save for a few underground exceptions, the spunky experimentalism that made hip-hop sounds so fresh in the first place has been abandoned for chart-placement theorems. Critics shower praise on super-producers like The Neptunes for being edgy and unique when they create a distinctive yet ultimately formulaic sound and then bust their collective loads when said producers take their slightest step out of it (see: Snoop Dizzle’s “Drop It Like It’s Hot”).

Enter Sa-Ra Creative Partners. The name sound like some in vogue new-age ad agency, but don’t be fooled, Taz Arnold, Shafiq Husayn and Om’Mas Keith ain’t brainstorming for Old Navy. Taz breaks it down: “Sa-Ra means ‘offspring of the most powerful energy in the universe’ and we call the music we make ‘atmogamic electronic spirituality’.”

So there you go. Actually, the music they make is what some people would call hip-hop, and what others might refer to as some-freaky-electronic-head-nod-type shit. Collectively, the Sa-Ra dudes hold a none-too-shabby resume including production for Dr. Dre, a post—“Now That We Found Love”, Heavy D and even the (dissed in the previous paragraph) Neptunes.

When I call Taz on his cell phone in Los Angeles, he swiftly tells me “Sa-Ra’s making history in LA right now. We with J-Dilla making some shit...” and that I’ll need to call back in a few. When I do, the guys are eager to pass the phone around so they can all talk about everything from wanting to work with Gwen Stefani (Taz: “We could definitely lend something to her”) to making moves with Kanye West (Om’Mas: “We’re in negotiations for a Sa-Ra album to be signed to his label!”) and their dream of a collaboration album with Ralph Lauren. The Sa-Ra approach is not all bling-lined big dreams however, their intuitive approach to producing has everyone from Jill Scott to Pharoahe Monch vying for their studio time. “We just try to be sensitive, and we do our research. We try to make people feel comfortable and establish a neutral ground where everyone can voice their ideas.”

With a full-length Sa-Ra album forthcoming on Ubiquity Records as well as a project for Cali upstarts Sound in Color, plus other assorted collabs and productions, Sa-Ra won’t be looking at much downtime in 05. It’s easy to lose perspective when you’re in demand, but these creative partners seem mindful of the tickle nature of the rap game. “We’re coming up with cutting edge type music, but we’re also being conscious of falling into the same sound. That’s the struggle,” Shafiq assures me without a hint of doubt in his voice. The future’s looking bright, and according to Om’Mas, it’s likely whoever you are, you’re going to be digging on some Sa-Ra pretty soon. “Sa-Ra got everything for every listener, from the gritty to the high-end.”
本誌の独自の視点で
2005年の流行を斬る！
PREVIEW
2005

feat.
ファッション・旅・映画・オモチャ・家電
スポーツ・アート・クルマ＆バイク・音楽・パーティ
NY発 '05年ファッションのキーワードは
「カジュアル・ピンプ」

夏まで待てない！
『スター・ウォーズ エピソード3』
超プレビュー
2005年のヒップホップは西海岸アングダーグラウンド

NY出身のオマスとシャフィーク、そしてLA出身のタスの三人によって結成されたプロデューサー・チーム<SA-RA Creative Partners>（以下、SA-RA。発音は「サーラー」）。ジャーシック5のアルバムへの参加を皮切りに、N.E.R.Dやファークル・モンチというビッグ・ネームを含む数多くのアーティストのプロデュース・リミックスを手がけ、知る人ぞ知る存在になっている彼ら。'04年後半には初のSA-RA名義の2枚のシングル「Double Dutch」、「Glorious/Rosebuds」をリリースし、2005年には日本のジャッキー・スピードから2枚のEP、そしてユビディから待望のファースト・アルバムが予定されている。一方でまたと驚くアーティストとのプロジェクトも複数進行中で、彼らが2005年の音楽シーンの台風の目になるのは間違いない。LAにあるSA-RAの自宅兼スタジオを直撃し、メンバー全員勢揃い、本邦初公開のエクスクラーチュ・インタビューをお送りしよう。

photo: Ikka Koshibe
loc: Kiwanu Onda
O 俺たちが個々の音楽的な経験も十分あったし、自分たちのやりたい音楽で周りのものを見ていくんだ。あの当時といえば、ブリティッシュの全盛期だったけど、「みんなはソウル」って言ってたんだ。それで最初端でフレッシュなものを一緒にやろうと決まったんだ。

T まさにグッド・ミュージックだね。

O そう。俺たちならそれが出来る。それに俺たちもチャプツーもスキャン・フルシューもクレイジー・デイトリーと一緒にしかおうってね。

W SA・RAという名前の意味は？

T 古代のアフリカの言葉で、世界最高のエナジーを持った子孫とか宇宙の子孫とかいう意味があるけど、基本的には自分たちを創造するという意味で付けたんだ。

W SA・RAとしての最初のももデビュー作品は、ジュジュ・シックスのアルバム「Power In Numbers」に収録された「Hey」ですよね。

O あれがお前の名前が最初にクレイジーされた曲で、俺たちにとっても大きな意味のある曲だよ。あの曲はリズマニオンパワクを含めた思いを込めて歌って、いろんな人があのアルバムの好きな点として挙げててくれる。

W 今でこそSA・RAが手がけた作品で、重要なものを勝るとなったらどうだろう。

O ソロ・モンジの「Agent Orange」、これは凄い作品。

T DJミックス・ヒップホップの「Negative Ion (SA・RA Remix)」だね。

W それからN.E.R.D「Maybe」のリミックスもやってますよね。

T ええ、あそこも凄く重要だよ。重要な作品は本当にもう三つあるし、それにまだリアリズムじゃないものがたくさんある。

W まだリリースされてないものの中には、ドレッド・ドクストのアルバム「Detox」に参加してるんだ。ドレッド・ドクストが、それをタイトルに取って、あそこでスタジオに入って、楽しんでアルカランに入っているし、曲としても完成してるよ。

T アルカランのタイトル曲になるよ。

W え？ アルカランのタイトル曲になるって、それは滅茶苦茶嬉しいですね。

T うん、多分、だけどね。

W それから、ジンクス・ソウル・チャイルドのミュージック・ソウル・チャイルドのミュージック・ソウル・チャイルド、まとめに参加するそうですね？

T そうね。でも、もうたくさんの曲を作り、ヘヴィ・D、グラム・スナッチー、プラナダム・ヘヴィ・D・バイパー、キング・プリットとのギャングブルとヘヴィ・D・オフィシャル・プロデューサーたちと一緒に……。

W エリカ・パトリック、M.F.S.B、ジュネヴィエーヴも参加ね。

T オーガスト・デイトリーとヘヴィ・D・ニューメージャーや、「Glorious Rosebuds」のデュードルとしても。

W それを手がけたのは、2004年に彼がSA・RA名義で初めて2枚のシングル「Double Dutch」、「Glorious Rosebuds」をリリースしたのも。

T 「Double Dutch」はプロブレイン・ヒップホップ、エレクトロニック、ニュー・オーディンズ、ステップ、いろんな要素が混ざった楽しい曲。

W オーガスト・デイトリーが手がけたのが2004年に彼がSA・RA名義で初めて2枚のシングル「Double Dutch」、「Glorious Rosebuds」をリリースしたのも。

T 「Glorious Rosebuds」はまさにSA・RAのジャズから生まれたものと言えるよ。

W 個人的にはSA・RAの曲の中では「Rosebuds」が特に好きです。

O ああ、そんなのが人気に入れてるっても、俺たちも凄く好きな曲なんだ。

W ああ、来年リリースされるコンビ「Rewind 4」でのスライダーズ・アンド・フリース・アンド・フリースのカバーを聴いたのが、生まれたときから聴いてきたるものなんだから、SA・RAのもって見た目が選んでそうです。

T よほどのアーティストのカバーをするというのであれば、アイディアには考えても見ていて、是非参加したかったんだ。俺たちはプロデューサーということもなく、ミュージシャンとして、それを証明するために、もちろん音楽界に出てきた。

W SA・RAみたいなツインが実際、今まで聴いたこともないもので、メインストリームからアングラグラウンド、そしていろんなジャルク書も経験して、さらに新しい音色もあるし、クラシックでもある。ああいう音が聞き出す理由は？

O 俺たちがどこまで来たつもりが、こういう音楽を作っているその答えになるよ。俺たちがいつもミュージシャンから音楽の影響を受けている。SA・RAは凄くたくさんの音楽を吸収しているし、たくさんの音楽を聴いているんだ。そして、最終的には、コンサウンドが、ディスコなど、あらゆる種類の音楽を колледに、ただ自然に流れるものができる。そうゆって、ビープ、トラックではなくて、あらゆる種類に、自然に流れるものになる。そうやってお互いにグルメがツムウェルを書くわけだ。

W つまりセッションもまた新しい音です。

T イー‌ーグ。そういうこと。

O 俺たちがやっているのはシーケンス・ミュージック・マジックだよ。全員がいろんな実験を出来るから、実際にジャックマンをやるわけ。この音楽をスタジオで24時間いつでも演奏するから、曲が出来、SA・RAの全員が音に影響を与えるの。

W もう、2005年リリースのアルバムですけど、現時点（12月上旬）での進捗状況は？

T 既に50％-60％は完了しているよ。

O このアルバムには、今後はこだわるヒップホップの曲がいくつかあって、みんなそのことを知っていると思うよ。

W アルカラン参加するかは？

O いろんな人が参加すると思うけど、それが誰か具体的（笑）。けど、俺たちはコーディネートで大きなステージをステージ `'フィービング' に、キャンディーは奇跡が起こる。まるでソウルを夢見る。もっとうれしいと感じてみて。だから「あーあー」が鳴ってんだけなんて気分はなきゃ、クールな感じにしたんだ。

S 聞け、俺たちの人気を使って、凄いアーティストをたくさん参加するのですだね。

W 他に2005年の大きな予定があれば。

T ロックンとパートナーを結ぶなどとなっているんだ、メーカーのエグゼクティブ・プロデューサーとして、俺たちは新しいアーティストを発掘したり、若いアーティストを育成したりするんだ。

S 2005年はSA・RAの年になるよ！
MOUSE ON MARS
SEIICHI YAMAMOTO
RASHINBAN / MIND GAME

Exceptional MUSIC
RYOJI IKEDA, MASAYA NAKAHARA (Hair Stylistics) with KAZUSHIGE ABE, FILAMENT, TAEJI SAWAI, PAN SONIC

The West Is Uprising
OMID & NOBODY, ILL SUONO + DJ QUIETSTORM, RICCI RUCKER, GB, MARCONS, SA-RA

JIM O'ROURKE + JUN TOGAWA, RADIAN, BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY, JACKIE'O MOTHERFUCKER,
AOKI takamasa, RECHENZENTRUM, OPDISC & RADIQ (FUMIYA TANAKA + YOSHIHIRO HANNO), GROUP WIRE,
KAMA AINA, DJ KLOCK, LUKE VIBERT / WAGON CHRIST
インディー・メジャーレコーラの謎を解くにあたり、シー・ノリオタケを以至于るサーバー・オアシスマギット・バウナーズ、スピーチ・アルコール・シグナル・ド・ローマスを挙げたのも、次代の音楽シーンをも顧及されている。

彼らは、アメナーラング・アーティストのプロデュースからミュージシャン・アーティストのヒット曲制作までを手がけ、ソロルクスからテレコロッカスまで Dannie による。今後進化を起こす新しい音楽文化。全てをここで一掃する。

---

結成のきっかけについて教えてください。

「2000年秋に結成しました。彼女のラジオ番組のリスナーに、一緒に音楽を楽しみたいと提案された」という話が広まりました。12年前に、3人の元ラジオアナウンサーが、彼女の番組を出_particlesから始まります。彼女は、グラッフィック・デザイン・シェルター・ラジオのメジャーレコードを重要視しています。

---

クリエイティブ・ディレクターの役割を果たすのは、どう考えますか？

「クリエイティブ・ディレクターは、プロデューサーを経て、ヒップホップ・レコードをプロデュースし、ヒップホップに影響を受け、彼女が音楽への影響力に寄与する。」

---

アーティストの活動について教えてください。

「アーティストの活動は、プロデューサーが中心で、形をつくる。他のメンバーが必要とすることで、ヒップホップに影響を及ぼす。」

---

今後の活動について、何を考えていますか？

「今後、新たなプロジェクトに取り組み、音楽の可能性を探求する。ヒップホップに影響を及ぼす。」
Singles

SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS “DOUBLE DUTCH”

Ubiquity’s bi-coastal production triumvirate SA-RA use stuttered beats and analogue b-lines to give soul a brand new identity. Expect huge things from these guys in 2005.

Wir alle wissen, dass Hiphop der Bebop von heute ist. Von Jazz zu Hip-Hop, das ist eine natürliche Entwicklung. Und die Art, wie unsere Stimm Körper in Bewegung bringen, bleibt eine große Herausforderung, die nicht jeder meistern kann.


BAD LIEUTENANT

Le DJ Laurent Garnier, en mission de longue durée, se bat sur tous les fronts pour imposer sa vision éclectique de la musique.
STYLE Une nu-soul décalée, à la fois prospective et immédiate, qui touche au funk du futur.

LABEL Ubiquity donne à découvrir les talents capables encore d’emporter ses têtes chercheuses : funk, soul, hip hop, jazz afro-cubain ou dance.

ATOUTS Ils ont un son propre, déjà convoité par tout le métier, puisque le trio rétrograde aux stars des productions ajustées.

Gilles Peterson, Pharell Williams et autres Dr. Dre ne jurent plus que par eux. Et pourtant, les SA-RA Creative Partners n’ont toujours pas à leur actif ce premier album réussi qui assolit d’emblée une réputation. C’est qu’en ces temps musicaux où le producteur est roi, Taz Arnold, Om’Mas et Shafig Husayn, musiciens et compositeurs de studio, se sont fait un nom au cours des années 90 en contribuant, ensemble ou séparément, aux succès planétaires des représentants du grattin du rap et de la nu-soul. Certains classiques d’Erykah Badu, de Snoop Dog (« That Last Meal ») ou Mobb Deep (« Murda Muzik ») doivent ainsi quelque chose à ces artistes aux pseudos bizarres et à la drôle de touche, basés entre New York et Los Angeles.

Le « buzz » qui les entoure est aujourd’hui tel qu’on attend avec impatience leurs collaborations les plus récentes avec Bilal, Common, Jill Scott, Roberta Flack et... Jennifer Lopez. Les SA-RA agissent en effet le plus librement du monde, et au gré d’engagements qui les font passer d’un mois sur l’autre de la réalisation de remixes édités à mille copies à des sessions de studio grassement payées par les labels des stars. Mais le style propre de SA-RA, que Taz Arnold qualifie en une formule esthétique de « Spiritualisme Afro-Magnétique Électronique », est déjà bien présent sur les maxis signés chez Ubiquity et ABB Records, les excellents « Double Dutch » et « Glorious ».

A ces petites compagnies, SA-RA réserve ses productions les plus originales, portées par un funk au futurisme voisin de celui de Platinum Pied Pipers, Spacek ou encore Plant Life. « Ces artistes nous ressemblent, ils partagent avec nous une vision sans entrave de ce que les médias appellent sans plus trop faire attention aux mots qu’ils utilisent : « soul music ». En écoutant la musique de ces frères ou en évoluant à leur contact, on enrichit notre son tout en aidant le leur à prendre des directions inattendues ». Si le groupe n’hésite pas à abuser de propos au mysticisme démesuré, ou au moins en décalage avec la portée encore relative de ses créations, on admettra la tonalité novatrice de ses titres et surtout le plaisir immédiat qu’ils procurent.

Ce qui n’est pas si mal de la part d’un trio soucieux de la qualité d’une musique brillante qui doit autant aux bidouillages féconds des samplers qu’à l’étude scrupuleuse de l’œuvre des géants. « Reprendre à la loupe les partitions du Duke, de Monk et de Miles, écouter encore et encore Stevie, Jimi Hendrix et Sly Stone... Cette assimilation de notre héritage culturel est indispensable pour nous épauler et faire naître de nos machines et instruments les chansons universelles de demain. Nous cherchons, comme Albert Ayler, à propager la paix suprême, à soigner les plaies de notre monde malade. » L’intention est noble et pas incompatible avec des préoccupations plus terre-à-terre, de celles qui conduisent donc un groupe à faire le grand écart entre projets personnels et pikes de luxe. Pas dupe des contradictions qu’implique une telle gymnastique, Taz reconnaît volontiers les avantages matériels et les inconvénients de travailler pour des majors. Ce qui ne l’empêche pas non plus de rêver à une situation idoine. « L’argent et la visibilité qu’offre un gros label sont des biens inestimables. Et le jour où la part de concessions que l’on est obligé de faire aux majors se sera réduite, on peut très bien imaginer que des disques qui ne doivent rien à personne d’autre qu’à leur concepteur seront alors programmés en radio, promus à une écoute mondiale. »

Pour le moment, c’est par le canal de l’indépendance que SA-RA s’appuie à sortir son premier opus. A paraître ce printemps sur Ubiquity, il est présenté par le groupe comme étant un disque « expérimental » qui accueillera collaborateurs prestigieux et moins connus. Mais les affaires étant ce qu’elles sont, le trio discute activement avec Sony d’un possible deal qui lancerait pour de bon sa carrière au sein de Good Music, le nouveau label du prodige Kanye West, un autre de leurs fans.

Pierre-Jean Chiarelli

www.sa-ra.net & www.ubiquityrecords.com
SA-RA
Glorious b/w Rose Buds
ABB Records
Sa-Ra is what happens when you marry Parliament/Funkadelic, Del the Fonke, Kool Keith, The Roots and the the energy of the cosmos. Sa-Ra is the human form of that marriage and putting their creative DNA makeup into record production. This 12" reminds me of going to hipster loft parties and some record-digging nerdster plays the funkiest shit you never heard as art school kids in Adidas Campus’ cut the rug up with wack-dancemania. The point is; this 12er pulls the funk out of you and demands a reaction. And there is only one way to react to some good ol' funk.