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# Global Beat Fusion: Sun People the World Over

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"The sun people," Brooklyn-based DJ Nickodemus told me, "are in some way all of us." Wishing to create an album that expresses the general attitude of the American population after the swearing in of Barack Obama, he realized that "not that much has changed--yet." Realist more than optimist, however, Nicko was born and bred and New York, displaying the positive swagger native to his birthright. He didn't need to go into a multicultural, Edenic spiel. Anyone who has

gotten down at his Turntables on the Hudson parties over the last eleven years knows that optimism trumps negativity on the dancefloor, and that is the world in which he moves (and which he moves).

This general attitude pervades his second full-length recording, *Sun People*, put out on his homegrown Wonderwheel Recordings, with a distribution deal via Thievery Corporation's label ESL Music. The record drops on June 16, the week of the solstice, perfect timing to this globally influenced album featuring the sounds of Romania, Turkey, India, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Brazil, Africa, and, of course, New York City.

We sat in the blaring sunlight down the street from my Park Slope apartment, flipping between politics of nations and politics of music. He expressed his general interest in creating something uplifting, something he has essentially done for the nearly two decades of his turntablism career. Whether expressed in the anthemic and soulful "The Love Feeling," featuring singer Brian Jay (of the Pimps of Joytime), the gin-infused dance house throwdown "Brookarest," with two guests from the inimitable Balkan brass blarers Taraf de Haidouks, or two versions of an uptempo cruiser, one

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featuring Mandingo Ambassadors vocalist Ismael Kouyate ("N'Dini") and the other local emcees The Real Live Show ("Sun Children"), Sun People perfectly expresses the unifying nature of this city, in philosophy as well as music.

It was no surprise to see Nickodemus's name appear on the new remix outing of Turkish ney player **Omar Faruk Tekbilek**, appearing alongside labelmate and good friend Zeb, possibly the most innovative oud electronist this side of the Hudson River. Their digi-Sufic rendition of "Whirling" is divided into two chapters, one for the commencement of the ceremony, the other for the ritual of trance (as in ceremony, not musical style). The record, *Rare Elements: Omar Faruk Tekbilek* (5 Points Records) drops on June 9, and features quite an impressive roster.

While I've never been a huge fan of Tekbilek's original work--I understand his importance in Turkish folk culture; for me he leans too much towards "world pop" in production and approach--he has long contributed some incredible tracks, and been very open to experimentation and remixes. This album is better than the normal mixed bag of global electronica retakes, including a solid outing by Algerian-born San Francisco-based DJ Cheb i Sabbah ("Shashkin") and a deep house stomper by another Brooklynite, Jordan Lieb ("Laz"). The latter is destined to peak late-night dancefloors the world over.

To complete this circle, Zeb pops up on *Coba Coba Remixed* (Cumbancha; June 16), a collection of remixes of Afro-Peruvian digitizers **Novalima**, who recently played their first show in America a few months ago. (You can read my interview with them for *National Geographic* here). His dubby midtempo take on "Ruperta" is one of the album's highlights, as well as a nice floor smash by Da Lata ("Tumbala") and a sweet, sensual take on "Africa Lando" by Boozoo Bajou, a Germany-based duo who pretty much own bragging rights on the term "downtempo electronica." (Not they can't turn it up a notch as well.) Full disclosure: I am one-half of the production team EarthRise SoundSystem, and we took a Bedouin edge to Novalima's "Se Me Van"; I won't "review" it, but allow your ears to judge.

Novalima returns to the states in July after their successful show at SOB's a few months ago. They are through and through a live band, living in an interesting circle: the founding five members started out in high school playing live; they moved to five separate countries and created and self-released a smash album in Peru via email and shared files; they then returned to Lima, now playing together again on the stage as much as inside the studio. *Coba Coba*, the album from which these remixes were pulled, perfectly straddles this line between live and electronic, which in a microcosm represents much of music today. All three of these excellent new releases are indicative of this trend, and thankfully it shows no sign of slowing. It is where music has evolved.

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