

## *Techno*

Originators: Juan Atkins and his high school friends Kevin Saunderson and Derrick May

Musically Atkins, Saunderson, and May took the developing post-disco 'house' music of Chicago to create a dance music that became known as Detroit Techno

Detroit - centre of American motor industry, Henry Ford's assembly lines

Social history: Poor race relations, on 23/7/67 police raid on black after-hours spot triggered 6 days of riots (topped by LA in 92)

'White flight' to suburbs and the city's abandonment; 20 yrs after riot Detroit lost one-third of its population from 70% white to almost 80% black; by 1987 'Detroit the most racially polarised city in the nation'

Industry: 67-87 lost 45% of all jobs in the city; by 87 more than half the city's manufacturing, retail, and wholesale base had disappeared

Automisation, computerisation, robotics, and technological advances fuelled this loss

Media image of chaotic lawlessness actually one of eerie emptiness – a 'de-industrialised ghost town'

Post-apocalyptic mythology central to Techno (affiliative identification for Sheffield – Steel and mining in decline - but also broader feelings of the time – alienation through technology, etc...)

Increased the electronic content. Influenced by the nature of the city (social and economic realities) and Alvin Toffler's book (futurist and philosopher) *Future Shock*

Toffler: American author and futurist, concerned with the impact of digital technologies upon society. *Future Shock* from 1970 looked at the consequences of 'too much change in too short a period of time', coins the term 'information overload' and argues that accelerated technological and social change leaves people suffering from 'shattering stress and disorientation'.

Musical backdrop for Techno:

Detroit - (Post-Motown) Motor City Funk included the bands; Parliament, Funkadelic and Earth Wind & Fire

Local Radio DJ Charles Johnson 'Electrifying Mojo', from 77-82 on WGPR, then 82-85 WJLB: 'Midnight Funk Association' show segment playing electronic funk fusion – Parliament, Visage, B-52s, Yellow Magic Orchestra, Prince, Kraftwerk, etc.

Juan Atkins from Belleville (small 3000 fishing town 30 miles SW), few black families.

Became close to friends with two of his younger brother's friends (DM and KS)  
Turned them onto Electrifying Mojo's show, pause-button mixes for each other,  
swapping tapes

Also influenced by English synth-pop 'New Romantics' – Soft Cell, Human League,  
Depeche Mode and avant-garde Kraftwerk

### **1984 Human League 'Things That Dreams Are Made Of' (Virgin)**

DIY ethic, self-empowerment (as punk); own labels 1986 DM *Transmat Records*, KS  
*KMS Records*, JA as *Metroplex*

Initial creative efforts fuelled by competition with Chicago house DJs:

- DM to Chicago after high school to hear Ron Hardy and Frankie Knuckles
- DM and JA took records to Knuckles for him to play
- DM sells 909 to Knuckles to pay rent, contributing to the development of production style of House (from a Salsoul/Phillie disco break-based music to Chicago House)

Chicago an outlet for their music, but Detroit sound more reliant on funk and electronic music than disco

JA as Model 500 to 'repudiate ethnic designations'

Cloak persona behind machine-like veil (DM KS would follow suit)

Eliminate emblems of African-American identity (machine-aesthetic / race tensions)

Kevin Saunderson as Reese, Reese and Santonio, Reese Project, Keynotes, Tonik House,  
Inner City, Inter City, E Dancer (make the scene appear bigger than it was)

### **1987 Model 500 'Off To Battle' (Metroplex Records)**

### **1987 Reese & Santonio 'The Sound' (Trax Records)**

The Music Institute (1988-90 – time of early Acid House) was Detroit's answer to NY's  
Paradise Garage and Chicago's Powerplant. [QUOTE – ALAN OLDHAM]

For two years DM DJ'd (alongside JA and KS) fusing UK Acid House, Chicago House  
and the first Detroit Techno tracks. Fostex reel-to-reel new tracks beat-matched with TTs,  
using tape-player's pitch control.

See Cosgrove, Stuart (1988) 'Seventh City Techno' in *The Face*, no. 97, May 1988

### **1987 Rhythm is Rhythm (DM) 'Nude Photo' (Transmat Records)**

### **1987 Rhythm Is Rhythm 'Strings of Life' (Transmat Records)**

Detroit sound just 'house music' until the 1988 release of seminal LP, *Techno – The New  
Dance Sound of Detroit* (Ten Records Ltd, Virgin): Various Artists - including Derrick  
May, Eddie 'Flashing' Fowlkes, Kevin Sanderson, Blake Baxter, Juan Atkins,

Marks the shift of Detroit sound across to Europe...

**1989 Inner City (KS with vocalist Paris Grey) 'Big Fun' (Virgin) big hit across Europe**

Struggles in Detroit for the music scene encourage originators to work/live abroad; foundations of the music in Detroit crumble, but Techno becomes internationally successful

Second generation:

Carl Craig, Stacey Pullen, Kenny Larkin

Sheffield – Warp LFO, Forgemasters, etc.

Japan – Ken Ishii

Belgium – R&S label

New York – Joey Beltram

Canada – Ritchie Hawtin, Plastikman

**2004 Kenny Larkin 'My Reflection' (Peacefrog) from the album *The Narcissist***

**1996 Compilation 'True People' (React)**

**2005 Juan Atkins '20 years of Metroplex' (Tresor)**

**1999 Warp 10+1: influences (Warp)**

**1999 Warp 10+2: classics 89-92 (Warp)**