

Reciprocal Territory: The reimagination of hip hop production

In November 2018, self-proclaimed ‘allstar [sic] Hip-hop big band’^[1] Abstract Orchestra released their *Madvillain Vol. 1*^[2] LP on ATA Records. Following the template established in their Debut LP *Dilla*^[3] in 2017, *Madvillain Vol. 1* is a ‘reconstruction and reimagining’^[1] of the work of Madvillain, a collaboration between US hip hop artists Madlib and MFDOOM during the mid 2000s. The production of the LP eschews traditional notions of sample-based hip hop music production, instead drawing on big-band jazz traditions of live capture of musical ensemble performances in the recording studio, with minimal use of overdubs, audio processing or editing. This approach foregrounds the historical relationship between jazz and hip hop^[4], and building on the work of artists such as the Roots, and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson’s arrangements of J-Dilla^[5], it operates in what Rob Mitchell, Abstract Orchestra’s band leader and arranger, refers to as the ‘reciprocal territory...between jazz and hip-hop’^[1].

Through analysis of the *Madvillain Vol. 1* LP this paper explores the frictions that occur from such modern interpretations of hip hop music production, which focus on live musical performance rather than sample-based production, against the traditional notion of DJing as one of the foundational elements of hip hop culture. By drawing on, and extending D’Errico’s concept of ‘progressive “post-turntable” artists’^[6] this paper frames the production practices embodied in *Madvillain Vol. 1* as simultaneously rejecting and embracing the historical functions of the DJ within the hip hop music production.

References

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