

*More Brilliant than the Sun* amplifies the disconcerting strangeness of today's music. Where most music writing absorbs the future shock of Sun Ra, Alice Coltrane, Lee Perry, Dr Octagon, Tricky, Parliament, Goldie, Underground Resistance and other Afrofuturist audionaries, Kodwo Eshun breaks brand new ground by activating the concepts these figures themselves invented, assembling an entirely new field which he terms sonic fiction: the intersection between science fiction and sound. *More Brilliant than the Sun* explores the new kinds of perception that emerge from this breakthrough: the machine mythologies and the cyborg mindstates, the Unidentified Audio Objects and the sensory lifeforms thrown into earshot by a sonic world long since blown to pieces. *More Brilliant than the Sun* is a machine for travelling at the speed of light; Press REWIND if you don't remix your mind.

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More Brilliant Than The Sun:  
Adventures In Sonic Fiction:  
Kodwo Eshun



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# More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction: Concept Engineered By Kodwo Eshun

*More Brilliant Than The Sun* is a machine for travelling at the speed of thought, a probe for drilling into new levels of possibility space. 'Its mission is to undermine the concepts this present has of "Health" and "Culture" and to excite mockery and hatred against these hybrid monsters of concepts.'



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# SYNTHESIZING THE OMNIVERSE

## **[Dialogues Concerning] New World System Builders: Sun Ra**

*The Impossible attracts me, because everything possible has been done and the world didn't change*

**Sun Ra**

### **The Break with Deliverance**

Underlying Southern gospel, soul, the entire Civil Rights project, is the Christian ethic of universal love. Soul traditionally identifies with the Israelites, the slaves' rebellion against the Egyptian Pharaohs. Sun Ra breaks violently with Christian redemption, with soul's aspirational deliverance, in favour of posthuman godhead.

### **Infatuation with the Despotic**

But Ra identifies with the Pharaohs, the despots, the ancient oppressors, by seceding from America: 'I ain't part of America, I ain't part of black people. They went another way. Black people are carefully supervised so they'll stay in a low position. I left everything to be me, 'cause I knew I

was not like them. Not like Black or white, not like Americans... black people, they back there in the past, a past that somebody manufactured for 'em. It's not their past, it's not their history.'

### **The Posthuman**

Soul affirms the Human. Ra is disgusted with the Human. He desires to be alien, by emphasizing Egypt over Israel, the alien over human, the future over the past. In his MythScience systems, Ancient Africans are alien Gods from a despotic future. Sun Ra is the End of Soul, the replacement of God by a Pharaonic Pantheon.

### **Terminate the Slave Revolt on Planet Rock**

Sun Ra looks down on humans with the inhuman indifference and impatience of a Plutonian Pharaoh. As the composer despot, he breaks not only with gospel tradition but also with Trad future-slave narratives: *Planet of the Apes*, *Brother from Another Planet*, *Blade Runner*, *Alien Nation*. Rather than identify with the replicants, with Taylor from *Planet of the Apes*, Ra is more likely to dispatch bladerunners after the Israelites. He's the Tyrell Corporation's unseen director; it's Ra that wants the Brother from Another Planet genetically tagged and bodybagged. For Sun Ra, the oral tradition is no Glorious Heritage; it's merely the songs slaves were allowed to sing in the concentration-camp universe of 18th C America. Far from being the enduring spirit of affirmation, the soul heritage is the mnemotechnics of enforced dematerialization, of the genocidal virtuality of the Middle Passage.

The '72 movie *Space is the Place* sees Ra at his most Pharaonic, this despotic alien from an Other Plane of There. Ancient Egyptians arrive from the AlterDestiny, from a parallel future. Driving through poor areas of downtown Oakland, flanked by the figures of Horus and Anubis, he observes: 'The people have no music that is in coordination with their spirits. Because of this, they're out of tune with the universe. Since they don't have money, they don't have anything. If the Planet takes hold of an AlterDestiny, there's hope for all of us. But otherwise the death sentence upon this planet still stands. Everyone must die.'

As space vocalist June Tyson intones, 'It's after the End of the World. Don't you know that yet?'



### The War in Time

In the 20s, Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey, the 'Black Moses', named his shipping fleet Black Star Liners, to plug the notions of repatriation, of return to the patria, the fatherland, into that of interplanetary escape.

Ra zooms this lost Africa into a lost Pharaonic Egypt. By reversing this lost African Egypt out of the past, and fastforwarding it out into the interstellar space of Saturn and Plutonia, Ra swaps Garvey's politics of secession, radical at a point when imperial capital demanded reserves of black labour, for a MythScience system assembled from George M. James' New Philosophy of African Redemption in '54's *Stolen Legacy*.

*Stolen Legacy* is realworld sci fi in which Egyptian MythSystems are stolen, disguised and sent back into the past to prevent an African-American future ever happening. Back in '40, Walter Benjamin was forecasting a War in time where 'even the dead will not be safe' from 'the enemy' if he wins. This anachronic zone is later photofilmed by Chris Marker as *La Jetee*. By '64, Frantz Fanon glimpses a 2nd War in Time where a Terminator 'turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.'

### Egyptillogic

For James, African-American history is nothing but white mythology. Egypt is both outside history and a corrective to history, a benign despotic state, the hydraulic slave state, the ruins of a resplendent heliopolis. It is Apartheid America in reverse. Fanon calls up an onscreen memoryfile and gazes at the image of a 'very beautiful and splendid era'. Its existence, he suggests, catalyses 'an important change in psychoaffective equilibrium' which 'rehabilitates us.'

The Egypt that James builds is a despotic paradise, mirror image of America's apartheid delirium. The West is just a side-effect: this byproduct, this usurping parasite of the Egyptian's archaic blueprint. Reprogramming white mythology from the operating system upwards leads into philological labyrinths, the maze of MythSystems.

*Stolen Legacy* triggers the Egyptillogical Sonic Fiction of Earth Wind and Fire. Flip to the back cover of Shuzei Nagaoka's artwork for '79's *I Am* and there's the Egyptillogical landscape lit in the glaucous redlight of Dali-ized nuclear mysticism. Mushroom clouds hover in the background; Pharaonic rock statues sit next to Babylonian ziggurats powered by lines above Fuller domes; transport grids run through temples built by D. W. Griffiths for his film *Intolerance*. Elizabethan ships crash over waterfalls; UFOs circle lazily.

*If you launch from 1847 to 1523, you launch the  
missile not into the future but backwards.  
Now you were disrupting time as the timetables.  
You had time versing time*

**Rammellzee**

### **History Is a Paranoid Madman**

Turning to history becomes a moral duty in an endless war against miseducation. Finding continuities in the past or retentions back to the West Coast of Africa becomes an imperative of self-knowledge, from James to Fanon to KRS1.

If the war in time is a Forever War, then all the troops have to be stationed there all the time. It's no surprise when the soldiers go awol.

Who are they fighting for? The folks back home? What if time isn't a besieged trench on a Forever War, but an indeterminate situation: 'What if history was a gambler, instead of a force in a laboratory experiment'? What if history isn't 'a reasonable citizen' but Ralph Ellison's 'madman full of paranoid guile'?

50s America is an unending nightmare, an endless *Night of the Living Dead* in which 19th, 18th and 17th C stereotypologies stalk the disunited States, squatting brains, securing allegiance to coffins. The dead refuse to die.

### **A Visitor from Another Meaning**

Away from alienation. Into the arms of the alien: 'I'm not a human. I never called anybody mother. The woman who's supposed to be my mother I call *other momma*. I never call nobody mother. I never call nobody father.' Stockhausen: 'It's an inner revelation that has come several times to me, that I have been educated on Sirius, that I come from Sirius.' Likewise, Ra maintains he was born on Saturn.

This blatant impossibility becomes the precondition of Ra's outer thought, the threshold which opens out into the new world of MythScience. Everything he composes, from '56 to '93, exacerbates this impossibility, extends it across 200 albums to eclipse everyday reality: 'The Impossible is the Watchword of the Greater Space Age,' he announces in '60. 'The Space Age cannot be avoided and SPACE MUSIC is the key to understanding the meaning of the IMPOSSIBLE and every other enigma.'

*The Mothership and the Fathership are coming for me. Come and snatch me, motherfuckers! Take me away for a little while*

**01' Dirty Bastard <> Osiris**

### **Basic Instructions for Leaving Earth**

To listen to Ra is to be dragged into another sonar system, an omniverse of overlapping sonar systems which abduct you from Trad audio reality. By becoming alien himself, Ra turns you alien. Afro-American history is white mythology: therefore Ra pursues James' operating system to its final program: Reject history and mythology. Assemble countermythologies. Assemble science from myth and vice versa. In '72's *Space is the Place*, the camera cuts to a girl with afro puffs: 'How do we know you're for real?'

Ra: 'How do you know I'm real?'

Teenagers chorus: 'Yeah.'

Ra: 'I'm not real, I'm just like you. You don't exist, in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights.'

Camera cuts to girl who smiles with her eyes, until her mouth registers pained recognition.

Ra: 'You're not real. If you were, you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So we're both myths. I do not come to you as reality. I come to you as the myth because that's what black – ' [Camera cuts in close as he holds up a crystal up to his face and stares at it] ' – people are, myths. I come from [stressed] a dream that the Black Man dreamed long ago.'

Camera cuts to mid shot flanked by Anubis and Horus.

Ra: 'I'm actually a present <> presence sent to you by your ancestors.'

### **The Age of MythScience**

In his '92 *Chronicle of Post Soul Black Culture*, mainstream critic Nelson George dates the Death of a redemptive and affirmative Soul culture – the one characterized by Civil Rights-era optimism, gospel and Motown – to '72, the era of Blaxploitation, the state decimation of Black Power and Nixon's election. But the Arkestra is launched back in '55. Ra's posthuman MythScience precedes not only the postsoul era, but many of the all-white futures of the 50s, the pristine towers of Frank R. Paul. MythScience starts with Ra's '55 futuropolis *Brainville*, where Jazz provides the material for 'a spacite picture of the Atonal Tomorrow'.

Jazz becomes the platform for Supersonic Fictions, for cosmopolitan possibility spaces: 'In *Brainville*, I envision a city whose citizens are all intelligent in mind and action. Every principle used in governing this city is based on Science and Logic. Musicians are called Sound Scientists and Tone Artists. Yes, Brainville is a wonderful city and we like the thought of it.'

### **The Possibility Space of Outer Thought**

Sun Ra's impossible state as an offworld alien opens up the possibility space of a 3rd-Planet music. Because he listens to Earth from offworld, he gains the satellite's perspective, that point of hearing that Killah Priest grasped when he crooned in '95 that the 'Earth is already in space.' This arkestral perspective, the offworld audition of Spaceship Earth opens the possibility space of the head: 'INSTRUCTION TO THE PEOPLE OF EARTH. You must realize that you have the right to love beauty... You must learn to listen, because by listening you will learn to see with your mind's eye. You see, music paints pictures that only the mind's eye can see. Open your ears so that you can see with the eye of the mind.' After Ra, music becomes an Unidentifiable Audio-Object.

*We didn't have any models so we had to create our own language. It was based on sound. It wasn't just something you could pick up and physically deal with. Space is a place, and you had to think space*

**Phil Cohran**

### **Operating System for Spaceship Earth**

As the pilot-composer of the Arkestra, Ra is captain of Spaceship Earth: Destination Unknown. The synthesizer turns the producer into a navigator, moving through fictional space. Iannis Xenakis: 'With the aid of electronic computers the composer becomes a sort of pilot: he presses the buttons, introduces coordinates, and supervises the controls of a cosmic vessel sailing in the space of sound, across sonic constellations and galaxies that he could formerly glimpse only as a distant dream.' The Arkestra is this 'cosmic vessel sailing in the space of the sound', the sonic spaceship which leaves Saturn, travelling to Plutonia, to Nubia, Atlantis on an Intergalactic Space Travel in Sound. After the Arkestra come the audiovehicles of the 70s: The Upsetter's Black Ark, Creation Rebel's Starship Africa, Parliament's Mothership –

and artist Robert Springett's Moogship, on the sleeve of Herbie Hancock's '74 *Thrust*. The Futurist builds conceptual soundcrafts, new arks for exploring unheard soundworlds.

### Entering the Synth Race

Whoever controls the synthesizer controls the sound of the future, by evoking the alien. In '70, Xenakis renames the synthesizer the Sonotron. Every synthesizer is an instrument that emits sonorous particles and generates sonic molecules, a machine which transmits waveforms, firing Sonic Rays, Essr'ays.

In the 50s such protosynths as the Theremin evoked Monsters and the alien. Ra had been turned onto electronics by watching monster movies and hearing the unearthly Theremin. In the 70s disco's synthetic metronomes were attacked as automatic and inhuman, as clones of a superior robotic force.

By the late 60s, Ra has already landed on the Moog. The spacerace becomes the synthrace. With the Electronic Jazz of Herbie Hancock, Larry Young *et al*, space turns from a 19th C weightless sublime towards a polyrhythmspace shower. In *Space is the Place*, despite himself, a teenager wants to know: 'Are there any whiteys up there?'

Ra: 'They're working up there [*hesitant*] today. They take frequent trips to the moon. I notice none of you have been invited. How do you think you're gonna exist? The year 2000 is right around the corner.'

The synthrace and the spacerace converge into harmonic progressions, which Ra synthesizes into sonotronic propulsion processes: Multiplicity Adjustment, Readjustment Synthesis, Isotope Teleportation, Transmolecularization, Frequency Polarization.

### The Technology-Magic Continuum

Traditionally, 20th C science sterilizes all myth: myth starts where science stops. But the recording medium acts as an interface *between* science and myth. Every medium opens up a continuum from technology to magic and back again. Magic is just another name for a future, an as-yet unknown medium, a logic identified by both Arthur C. Clarke – 'Any sufficiently advanced technology becomes indistinguishable from magic' – and Samuel R. Delany: 'At the material level, our technology is becoming more and more like magic.' Ra's MythScience extends the technology magic continuum into sound. Concepts cluster into overlapping MythSciences, into new world systems and parallel

cosmologies: 'In fact, I've been talking about the omniverse, and that is about a multiplicity of universes.'

From Marconi to Tesla to Moog to Ra, electrification opens up a discontinuum between technology and magic. Why a discontinuum instead of a continuum? Because alternating current transmits across gaps and intervals, and not by lineage or inheritance. From now on, Electronic Music becomes a technology-myth discontinuum. Traditional Culture works hard to polarize this discontinuum. Music wilfully collapses it, flagrantly confusing machines with mysticism, systematizing this critical delirium into information mysteries.

### **The Composer Is a Tone Scientist**

Music is the science of playing human nervous systems, orchestrating sensory mixes of electric emotions: the music of yourself in dissonance. Ra hears humans as instruments, sound generators played by the music they listen to. The tone scientist's role is to engineer new humans through electronics. In his '91 poem *I am the Instrument*, Ra abstracts the soundmachine into a social machine: 'I am an instrument. But man is an instrument too. The people are an instrument.'

### **The Audience Is a Medium**

The crowd is an instrument played by electronics, and Ra is an instrument played by the Cosmos. The crowd is synthesized into a new state by electronics. Sinewaves pass through the medium of the synthesizer, amplification travels through the Arkestra's instruments, through the crowd and then back, in an alternating sonotronic circuit. Dances correspond to constellations, each one a positioning satellite in a navigational astronomy. The Arkestra is an instrument of tone therapy that conducts emotional current through audiences.

### **MaSonic Scientists in the Arkestral Monastery**

Ark + Orchestra = Arkestra. Sun Ra used to tell his tone scientists that their job was not so much to play as to manipulate tone colours. They colorize a new emotional spectrum, program sensations without names. Discipline is the motor of Space. The Arkestra is an all-male orchestra run as a Military Monastery: 'When the army wants to build men they isolate them. It's just the case that these are musicians but you might say they're marines. They have to know everything.'

### Enterplanetary Concepts

Ra uses electronics to generate a pantheistic cosmology. Electronics amplifies the archaic Pythagorean system in which the cosmos is a correspondence of harmony and number. '72's *Astro Black Mythology* is assembled from transchronic inputs: Egypt, Nubia, Europe.

Machine Genealogist Lewis Mumford presses the Control key on the Assemblage file: 'Only one thing was needed to assemble and polarize all the new components of the megamachine: the birth of the Sun God. And in the 16th C, with Kepler, Tycho Brahe and Copernicus officiating as accoucheurs, the new Sun God was born.' On the cover of '65's *The Heliocentric World of Sun Ra Vol 2*, next to Copernicus, Galileo, Tycho Brahe and Kepler, there's an illustration of Ra. By travelling back in time and inserting himself into the 16th C, Copernican heliocentricity is turned into European sunworship. Renaissance astronomy becomes a thriving branch of Egyptian god worship. Egyptian MythSystems abduct the Christian universe. Their cosmology serves Ra's ends.

### Polyrhythmazes

In Pythagorean MythScience, all the spheres harmonize. With Sun Ra, the polyrhythmaze replace harmony, acting as an astrotherapy to heals the mind's internal empires. Cosmic tonemagic is what Rhythim is Rhythim's Derrick May will later term a kao-tic harmony: a harmony of spears as much as spheres.

### Ionosphere

'72's *Astro Black* uses electronics as an aerial to tune into the ionosphere until the sound spectra of the universe become audible. Electromagnetic storms, ionospheric disturbance, the doppler shift of lightning arcing through space, crashing though the geomagnetic field, generating white noise; all this Cosmic sound is materialized through the Moog. Radio transmissions, satellite signals, pulsar frequencies, quasar emissions, all these transmit through the patchbay of the Moog in an interstellar tsunami.

*Astro Black* throws you into the squall and squeal of horns, pitched so high they turn into emergency sirens, piedpiper panic. Bass clarinet becomes a sinister sidewinder. Bass is bowed into drone textures that mirror and mutate foghorn flock and bassoon honk.

The polyrhythmaze volatizes the weightless zero of traditional space music with the perpetual motility and runaway complexity of molecular

rhythm. Fields of percussion that distribute the beat into slipsliding turbulence. This agitation results from rethinking Space as polyrhythm and paradox. 'Space is a place,' Arkestral trumpeter Phil Cohran argued, 'and you had to think space.'

### Engines for AudioTravel

Every instrument is a sound machine which transmits energy.

The Moog oscillates between shortwave static and whale spume, white noise and meteor showers, NASA test patterns and crashing metal, rocket takeoff and squealing string sections. Electronic instruments are engines for audio travel: the cosmic tone organ, the astro space organ, the Solar sound organ, the solar piano, the Jupiterian flute.

Percussion is the multitime generator, the rhythmultiplier: solar drum, cosmic side drum, sky tone drums, dragon drums, thunder drum, spiral percussion gong, Egyptian sun bells, solar bells, space gong, sun harp. Percussion scrambles time and transmolecularizes space. Throughout *Cosmic Tones for Mental Therapy*, percussapella turns into a labyrinth.

### Black to Comm

In *Adventure Equation*, polyrhythm reverberates into a webbed maze, a treacherous rhythmshower that compels you to supply a stabilizing beat. Rhythm multiplies and perplexes, confounds the space between sounds with the shapes of sound. The polyrhythmaze was AutoCatalysed by an Ampex taperecorder. It drew Thomas 'Bugs' Hunter, the Arkestra-recordist-drummer into its shifting sands: 'I was using an old Ampex 601 or 602 model tape recorder... What it had was this thing where you could take the output of the tape you'd recorded playing back, and feed it into another input. I was just fooling with it once... and I got this weird reverberation. I wasn't sure what Sun Ra would think of it when he heard it, I thought he might be mad — but he loved it. It blew his mind! By working the volume of the output on the playback I could control the effect, make it fast or slow, drop it out.' In '72's *Space is the Place*, an offscreen voice asks: 'What is the power of your machine?' Jumpcut to Sun Ra framed against a blue backdrop, as he answers: 'Music.'

Calmly, with soft hesitation, an elaboration: 'This music is all part of another tomorrow. Speaking things of blackness. About the void, the endless void, the bottomless pit surrounding you. It's the music of the Sun and the Stars. You're all instruments. Everybody's supposed to be playing their part in this vast arkestry of the cosmos.'



# MOTION CAPTURE (INTERVIEW)

"AfroFuturism comes from Mark Dery's '93 book, but the trajectory starts with Mark Sinker. In 1992, Sinker starts writing on Black Science Fiction; that's because he's just been to the States and Greg Tate's been writing a lot about the interface between science fiction and Black Music. Tate wrote this review called 'Yo Hermeneutics' which was a review of David Toop's *Rap Attack* plus a Houston Baker book, and it was one of the first pieces to lay out this science fiction of black technological music right there. And so anyway Mark went over, spoke to Greg, came back, started writing on Black Science Fiction. He wrote a big piece in *The Wire*, a really early piece on Black Science Fiction in which he posed this question, asks 'What does it mean to be human?' In other words, Mark made the correlation between *Blade Runner* and slavery, between the idea of alien abduction and the real events of slavery. It was an amazing thing, because as soon as I read this, I thought, my God, it just allows so many things. You can collapse all of these things; science fiction and music, they're the same. And then from there, it was pretty much out. It was out – and various people started using it in various ways. And Dery, through the Greg Tate route, simultaneously started doing it in '93, but he had no idea that there was anyone in London following it.

"*More Brilliant than the Sun* is a number of things. First of all, at its simplest, it's a study of visions of the future in music from Sun Ra to 4 Hero. One of its big strands is Breakbeat science, and Breakbeat science, as I see it, is when Grandmaster Flash and DJ Kool Herc and all those guys isolate the Breakbeat, when they literally go to the moment of a record where the melody and the harmony drops away and where the beats and the drum and the bass moves forward. By isolating this, they switched on a kind of electricity, by making the beat portable, by extracting the beat. I call it Motion Capturing: in films like *Jurassic Park* and all the big animatronic films, Motion Capture is the device by which they synthesize and virtualize the human body. They have a guy that's dancing slowly, and each of his joints are fixed to lights and they map that onto an interface, and then you've got it. You've literally captured the motion of a human; now you can proceed to virtualize it. And I think that's what Flash and the others did with the beat. They grabbed a potential beat which was always there, by severing it from the funk engine, by materializing it as actually a portion of vinyl that could be repeated. They switched on the material potential of the break, which had been lying dormant for a long time. So I follow that, that isolation of the Breakbeat through different spheres. Through Grandmaster Flash and the invention of skratcadelia.

"When scratching first came out people thought it was a gimmick first of all, then they thought of it as an interesting effect. And then, if you look in books, when most people talk about skratcadelia, about scratching on vinyl, they say it's a rhythmic rubbing of the vinyl in a percussive way, so as to accompany the rest of the song. And they read back vinyl in terms of some kind of rhythmic process. But actually a rhythmic process isn't really what's going on. What's going on is a new textural effect. There's no parallel to scratching; it never existed before being used in this incredible way. Scratching is more like a transformation sequence, more like the audio parallel of *The Thing* or *American Werewolf*, where you see the human transformed into a werewolf, and just before they finally become a werewolf you suddenly get a glimpse of the human, then it flashes away again. That's what skratcadelia does. It's this unstable mix of the voice and the vinyl. It's this new texture effect. You could say the voice has phase-shifted into this new sound. So I follow skratcadelia through Grandmaster Flash into Electro, with another group called Knights of the Turntable. And I follow it through to

Goldie and 4 Hero, specifically in terms of graffiti, in terms of Breakbeat's involution via Wildstyle. Because Wildstyle is like this cryptographic language, in which the single letter turns into a typographic environment that you enter. It's very much a perceptual gymnastics, looking at Wildstyle. And there's a big interface between graffiti and the break. Goldie says, 'My beats are sculpted in 4D, in 4 dimensions.' And, similarly, there's this famous graffiti guy called Kaze 2 who back in '89 was already talking about the step beyond Wildstyle. Wildstyle was 3D, but Kaze 2 was talking about 5 dimensions, he was talking about Computer Style. He said, 'In my work I do the Computer Style, I do the 5th-dimensional step-parallel staircase.' This is straight out of Escher. So I follow Breakbeat science right from this isolation of the rhythmic DNA right through to its Escherization, right through to its moment of involution – and then I follow that into Drum'n'Bass where, of course, because the beats are digitalized, it's information to be manipulated. I follow Breakbeat science, I follow it to the conclusion of tracks of people like 4 Hero, specifically *Parallel Universe*, where I turn the emphasis and focus on the science in Breakbeat. And the thing I notice about Breakbeat science, about the way science is used in music in general, is that science is always used as a science of intensified sensation. In the classical 2 cultures in mainstream society, science is *still* the science that drains the blood of life and leaves everything vivisected. But in music it's never been like that; as soon as you hear the word science, you know you're in for an *intensification* of sensation. In this way, science then refers to a science of sensory engineering, so *Parallel Universe* announces this, when it has titles like *Sunspots* or *Wrinkles in Time*, these are the points where the laws of gravity and the laws of time and space collapse, and they're simultaneously saying rhythm is about to collapse when you enter these zones. So you've got someone like Goldie who does *Timeless*, and *Timeless* is obviously referring to simply the infinite loop of the Breakbeat, which Goldie's trying to tap into.

"Then there's the synth race, entering the synth race, which is Techno, the whole interface between the first Detroit guys and what I call the Import Ear. The guys listening to this stuff coming out of Europe, coming out of England, listening to the whiteness of the synthesizer and using it because that sound would make them alien within America. That's the secret behind all of the early Detroit records. All those guys – Model

500, Cybotron – they've all got these affected Flock of Seagulls-type accents. Why do they have this? Because they want to be alien in America. How do they do this? By singing like white New Romantic English kids. So it's the idea of white music being exotic to black American ears. So it's trying to turn the exotic eye back onto the English, because that's part of the process that happened. Also what happened, Techno was happening without the registering mark of the UK media, without the traditional steps in which America comes out with an original music, and it's usually bastardized in England and Europe and mixed, remixed, and then sent back. That was reversed; in this case, it was America bastardizing, taking English music and doing strange things with it. Hence the famous embarrassment when English journalists would head over to Detroit to say, 'Where's this music come from?', only to find out this music had come from where they'd just been, only to find out that *they* were the origin. This is the first explicit case where white music is the origin, and where the black American musicians who are the adulterators and the bastardizers. So Techno's a complete reversal of the classic 60s myth of the blues and the Rolling Stones, the entire rock heritage which starts out with this famous myth of Muddy Waters and the Rolling Stones. In Techno, you've got an immediate reversal. In Techno, Kraftwerk is the delta blues, Kraftwerk is where it all starts. In Techno, Depeche Mode are like Leadbelly. A Flock of Seagulls are like Blind Lemon Jefferson. So Europe and whiteness generally take the place of the origin. And Black Americans are synthetic; the key in Techno is to synthesize yourself into a new American alien. So I look at the synth race in terms of various developments of that, for instance, there's a whole Darkside with Detroit which I talk about. And then I go into Underground Resistance, especially, who've developed an entire war, an entire military assault, a whole kinaesthetic of war based around the release of their single. How each single becomes like a missile launched in war against the programmers.

"But the main point is that I'm trying to bring out what I call the Sonic Fiction of records, which is the entire series of things which swing into action as soon as you have music with no words. As soon as you have music with no words, then everything else becomes more crucial: the label, the sleeve, the picture on the cover, the picture on the back, the titles. All these become the jump-off points for your route through the music, or for the way the music captures you and abducts you into its

world. So all these things become really important. So a lot of the main sources of the book are from SleeveNotes; they're the main thing. A lot of the book talks about SleeveNote artists. It talks about the guys who did the covers for those Miles Davis sleeves, this guy Mati Klarwein, another guy Robert Springett, who did the covers for Herbie Hancock's early 70s albums. There's different interfaces between different Sonic Fictions, between the title and the music. Hendrix would say, 'What I'm doing is a painting in sound.' And you can say reversely with the SleeveNotes. The reason the SleeveNote pictures capture you is because they're a sounding in paint. If you listen to them, you imagine them as weird visions conjured up through the music. It's really strange.

"Part of the point is very much to reverse traditional accounts of Black Music. Traditionally, they've been autobiographical or biographical, or they've been heavily social and heavily political. My aim is to suspend all of that, absolutely, and then, in the shock of these absences, you put in everything else, you put in this huge world opened up by a microperception of the actual material vinyl. What immediately happens, in almost all accounts, people immediately look over, they literally look *over* the vinyl to whatever transcendent logic they can use, instead of actually starting with the vinyl. The book is very much a materialization of this. So I'm looking at all these Sonic Fictions, I'm looking at all the different levels of science that exist within the material object.

"Motion Capture sounds like a mechanical operation being conducted. Part of the thing is that all these terms are already familiar to a lot of us. They constitute an unofficial mythology at the end of the century, this entire range of Sonic Fictions. There's pretty much a shared language amongst a whole generation of people. The difference between the over-40s and the under-40s is a real familiarity with different dataverses or polyverses stacked on top of each other. There's all kind of fascinating implications, which I want to work out in the book. Things like the 21st-century nervous system. If you go back to Norman Mailer, *The White Negro*, he talks a lot about building a new nervous system. And then if you read on a bit to Ballard, Ballard often talks about the conflict between the geometry and posture, the competition between the animate and the inanimate and the way the inanimate often creeps in and wins.

"To me, it makes complete sense to see action movies in the same stratum as skratchadelia. There are the same velocities, the same vectors, the same sounds: the sound of a car as it skids round a corner is the same sound the wheels of steel make as they ride around. You're captured, abducted by the same sounds in each. It's this fantastic sound of velocity, as 2 surfaces in friction literally converge and then shoot apart at fantastic speeds. It's an incredible excitement. These things are happening concurrently – at any moment in time it's really easy to see that's where sonic invention has gone. It's part of being captured by tiny moments of time, being obsessed with tiny moments of time. Part of what happens with sampladelia is that you've got a lot of music based on sampler memory, so that a lot of the hooks, a lot of the music that abducts you, will have to be 4 seconds or 9 seconds. So there's this huge psychedelia based upon disguising these seconds; it's like Mark Sinker says, finding the universe in a grain of sound – and that's what the sampler does. There's this huge psychedelia grown up in which you're able to fall into a universe of sound and it's granular, microphonemes of sound. In *Abbaon Fats Track* by Tricky, there's this woman who whispers to her kid, 'Can you fly fast as you can to be with Jesus' – she really whispers it. That whole sample must last, I dunno, 5, 7 seconds, 8 seconds, 11 seconds, but there's something so incredible about it. It abducts you so *much*, because you can hear an atmosphere in it, you can hear an ambience, you can hear levels of foreground within that sample. You can feel yourself getting abducted by it. So there's a way in which the visual really seems to suggest that. Then there's this whole thing I was reading by Michel Chion. Chion is a really interesting guy, this student of Pierre Schaeffer who started by composing *musique concrète*, who then became a theorist. So he's the best person on film and sound ever. Part of my relation to sound is that Chion talks about sound in film, and I'm only just realising now that a lot of my favourite samples are from sound in film.

"So sampladelia opens a continuum between visual sound and audio sound. Visual sound is always feeding in from one to the other. Which is why I love a lot of film samples. Probably why I love the visual so much is that it's always being grabbed anyway by the music. By extinguishing the visual output, the music is switching it on elsewhere. It's as if the eyes start to have ears, as Chion would say. Your ears have had their optical capacity switched on. In a strange way, your ear starts to see.

Chion is saying that *each* of the senses have the *full* capacity of all the others. It's simply that hearing happens to go through the ear, but all the other senses can go through the ear as well. The ear is meant to hear, but it can do all the other things as well, if it was switched on to the right capacity.

"A similar thing that happens a lot is a big transference to tactility, which I talk a lot about as well. Whenever sound gets subdermal, whenever in Drum 'n' Bass the sound gets very scratchy, with lots of shakers and rattlers, there's often a lot of sounds where the percussion is too distributed, too motile, too mobile for the ear to grasp as a solid sound. And once the ear stops grasping this as solid sound, the sound very quickly travels to the *skin* instead – and the skin starts to hear for you. And whenever the skin starts to hear, that's where you feel all creepy crawly, and that's when conduction creeps in, when people say, 'I felt really cold', or that the music is really cold: which is because their skin has dropped maybe a centigrade as the music has hit it, as the beat has pressed across it. So I follow all those kind of things. I think with light and sound, there's a stratum across which both elements cross all the time. They've both become versions of a sampladelia. And that sampladelia, by definition, lets you analogize a lot of things. And not only does it analogize, it lets you mutate and recombine.

"Sampladelia is a *mandate* to recombine. That's what it is, that's how it works. You start to realise that when most people try to praise something, they praise it in terms of something that's gone 30, 40 years ago. You start to see the drags people place on the emergence of the new, the way people constantly put the brakes on any kind of breaks. So if I'm reaching for parallels, I'll always try and reach for parallels that are actually ahead of what I'm suggesting. Hence, don't think of Breakbeat in terms of some kind of ancient technique which has been resuscitated. For instance, you see a lot of people saying the Breakbeat is the African drum, the return of the African drumming sound, but really it's the other way around. The Breakbeat should be moved forward. Think of it in terms of a motion-capture device being made on vinyl, before there was any digital equipment to be made. If he could have been, Grandmaster Flash would have been a computer designer; if he'd been an animator, he'd be doing motion capturing. He's just doing it on vinyl first.

"So these are the kinds of things I tend to look for. It's all about trying to establish kinaesthesias, because that's really what's happened. I think with almost all the different varieties of rhythmic psychedelia, there's a warzone of kinaesthesia been established. There's a sense in which the nervous system is being reshaped by beats for a new kind of state, for a new kind of sensory condition. Different parts of your body are actually at different states of evolution. Your head may well be lagging quite far behind the rest of your body. In Drum'n'Bass, there's obviously quite a lot of attention, through dub, to the stepper. There's the idea that the feet may well be more evolved, and hands obviously, feet and hands. Terminator X spoke with his hands. Other djs yelled with their hands. I've got this brilliant skrotchadelia album called *Return of the DJ*, put out by *The Bomb* magazine in Frisco, and it's all done by djs, it's a brilliant album. One guy's done a track called *Terrorwrist*, so his wrist is a terror, his wrist sends out terrifying bombs. The idea of a terroristic wrist action is fantastic. That's a predatory wrist. So you can see in that the dj has really evolved the hand that sends terror by a flick by the way it touches vinyl. So I often think that the actual body is at different stages of evolution. There's a constant war on.

"A lot of mainstream media's main job as what I call a futureshock absorber is to maintain a homeostasis, maintain traditional and inherited rules of melody over harmony, beats over rhythm, beats over melody, to maintain matters in terms of proper music, or true music, or respectable music – and that's always a way in which people try and hierarchize the body. Part of my big thing is to talk about dance music simultaneously as a kinaesthetic and a headmusic, because it tends to be both. As soon as you listen to dance music at home, its repetitiveness becomes headmusic-like. I've never understood why they can't be, why they *aren't* the same thing.

"Part of this thing is that HipHop is headmusic, not stage music, HipHop never works best on stage. And that's because it's using all these Sonic Fictions; so there's a whole kinaesthetic direction, and simultaneously a head continuum. HipHop even has a term, 'heads', which is more or less saying that HipHop has its own hippies and progressive music. So I talk about Cypress Hill, HipHop and its whole drug-tech interface. Simultaneously, I say that John Coltrane is the first hippie. I look at John



Coltrane's last records, records like *Cosmic Music*, *Interstellar Space*, *Om*. Coltrane famously tripped in '65, then did this record *Om*. Manuel De Landa has this line, about when you trip you become a liquid computer, because your brain liquefies, and I think that's what happened to Coltrane in about '65. He starts using 'Om', the Indian chant, and he's trying to assemble a universal music, and the whole thing about the Om is that it turns the human into this huge, giant, vibrating powerstation really. Om is this operation to turn yourself into this energy field. So you have this late 60s jazz where all these guys were turning themselves into power generators – and this incredible music that was trying to bootstrap a universal sound. And it worked. I look at that whole strain of music, from Coltrane through to Sun Ra, through to Alice Coltrane. A whole kind of holiness through volume, a holy amplification.

"The reason I don't talk about the literary is that there's just no need to, what with thinking about amplification and the sensory environment of amplification, of loudness in itself, the sensory impact of volume, the sensory impact of repetition, of broadcasting, all these things. There's so much to talk about, just at the level of volume, of pressure. There's a way in which you can directly connect those with everything else. You can talk about the audio-social and immediately you've connected the sound to everything else; the literary just never really seems to appear, except as different kinds of Sonic Fiction. In which case, precisely because they're on record not in a book, they don't come out as literary, they come out as more like the difference between reading a paper and hearing it read out on the news. You get the idea of hearing a voice coming at you through various channels: just as you never hear the news directly, you always hear an audio feed, you always hear a voice transmitted through a whole series of other things before it ever gets to you. That's what happens to fiction once it gets on vinyl; you hear it through the studio. So it's not literary – the literary doesn't work in that space at all. Simultaneously, there's no need for representation, for the signifier, or for the text, or for the law. There's no need for any of that.

"But of course the way to introduce theory is to realise the music is theorising itself quite well. For example, there's a concept I like called percussapella, which is percussion and accapella and percussapella is just the beats on their own. Some dj thought up a term which describes this sampladelic alloy of percussion going solo, of percussion as an

accapella. And it's just brilliant. So I can use that, and as soon as music's instrumental, these things suddenly loom into shape and you start to use them. And there's so many concepts already extant in the music that all you need do is extract them and use them to build the machine you want to build, to use them as parts in the giant connection machine that you want to build. You just hook a concept on and solder it onto the next concept that you want. So part of the whole drive is very much written as a book of emergence. It's not a history at all, it's very enjoyable to resist the urge to history, because, especially in Black Music, there's a whole drive towards history and tradition and continuity, and this book is explicitly about the breaks, about the discontinuum. Marshall McLuhan talks about the twentieth-century discontinuum. Well, this book is all about the breaks and the cuts. Inheritance has been extremely overstressed in ideas of Black Music. By bringing up first the machine then second the actual vinyl, all the different qualities move between the machines, and become as much effects of the machines. So this is the idea that the sonic can produce identities in itself. For example: George Clinton is black but the Star Child is an alien animatronic figure – it's hard to say what colour the Star Child is, the Star Child is pure animatronic. And part of the book always looks that way, always looks to see which hallucination the sonic engenders and then chases that. I never try and collapse the sonic back into the social, and precisely because this is such an almost unanimous tendency, I've gone quite far the other way, I've exaggerated it entirely. When you read someone like Sun Ra, Sun Ra would talk a lot about cosmic music. And I think in cosmic music, he meant it in the sense of, What would cosmic music be? It would be the music of the electromagnetic field, the music of radio transmissions, say, crossing the electromagnetic field. It would be the music of electrical disturbances, the atmospheric cosmic disturbances that exist in the sky. And if you listen to Sun Ra's *Astro Black*, those are exactly the sounds he's making with his Moog, he's turning the Moog synthesizer into something like a circuit which can act as a giant alternating current between the people listening, the Arkestra and the cosmos itself. The Moog is the amplifier that directs current in and out. On one hand, there's a very material way in which he does this because the actual Moogy sounds are really similar to – if not identical to – the sounds of the cosmos. So it's really fascinating, because Sun Ra often said, like 'I am an instrument' and 'the Arkestra is an instrument'. On one hand, he said the Arkestra were tone

scientists, sonic scientists; on the other, the Arkestra were his *instruments*. So you get this idea of music as this sonic production circuit through which – as Gilles Deleuze was saying – molecules of a new people may be planted here or there. That's very much what Sun Ra's doing: he's using the Moog to produce a new sonic people. Out of this circuit, he's using it to produce the new astro-black American of the 70s.

"So that's absolutely what I do all along. I extend the sonic outwards, thereby getting at this feeling of impossibility which this music often gives you. At its best, any music should strike you with its impossibility, and its complete evasion of the rules of traditional fidelity to a live sound. And the way to get at the strangeness of music – rather than to habitualize that music via any other kind of field – is to exaggerate the sonic, to use the sonic as a probe into new environments. Because every new sonic sensation that I can magnify is simultaneously a *new sensory lifeform*. So there's this constant play between the sonic and the sensory, which become the same thing often. It's partly a shift between scales. Often you can open the scale and the sound really wide and then you disappear into a sound. Often you can shut the scale back up and withdraw to look at the vinyl, or withdraw to look at the sleeves. There's a constant telescoping of perception from very close attention to a record to pulling back to looking at the vinyl. I think this is new and fresh. Because vinyl is often ignored. The things most immediately pleasurable about buying a record are the things which are always ignored. It's bizarre. So by bringing that to the front the book should be written with a sense of familiarity. People will take it to their hearts. The book's been designed to have a very tactile feel, in the same way that your fingers hunger for a sleeve. When you see a sleeve that you like, your fingers reach towards it, they can't help themselves, they really want that. It's quite obvious that this is what I'm trying to do – every object is a machine of subjectivity. The record player is, the record is, the book is. I simply want my book to become a machine for producing subjectivity. It should be a machine for putting music together.

"In the last ten, 20 years, there's been no gap between science, art and music, they all form the same thing. It's simply that at any one time things tend to be blocked, and when you have moments of rhythmic psychedelia, it's easy to see what can be dislodged and brought out and made into connection machines with other things. And other times,

things seize up. Breakbeat has opened various retroactive chapters. Similarly the breakdown of the longheld notion that Techno's origin point is Kraftwerk means that people can zip between the 70s and the 80s in a much freer way, move between Krautrock, say, and Herbie Hancock. There's a certain openness in music.

"The key thing to do now is to move into a new field. I've stopped calling myself a writer: for the book I'm just going to call myself a concept engineer. That makes the whole thing much fresher, much more exciting and much less known about. Because that's what I'm really doing. I'm engineering, grasping fictions, grasping concepts, grasping hallucinations from my own area and translating them into another one, mixing them, and seeing where we go with them. I use these different concepts to probe new areas of experience, to anticipate and fastforward different explorations into new fields of perceptions which are always there, but whose strength lies in that they don't exist in traditional mainstream terms. Traditional mainstream terms are still completely bound up with the literary, and the 2 cultures – and thank God for that, because that means that they can't get in on what's going on. Which is just this sudden glance at the end of the century. I've renamed all the instruments: I've renamed the synthesizer the Sonotron. Iannis Xenakis called the synthesizer the Sonotron in his book. That's perfect because Sonotron just sounds like a superhero comic, so a convergence of sound into ballistics. And the drum machine should be renamed what it actually is: a rhythm synthesizer. I call this problem [r]earview hearing. The drum machine *isn't* a drum machine. It's pulses and signals synthesized into new pulses and new signals. There are no drums in it. That was a weird thing that confused me for years and years, until I worked it out. You'd listen and they'd sound *utterly* different from drums. The movement from funk to drum machines is an extremely incredible one: people's whole rhythmic perception changed overnight. And people of course pretended that nothing had happened, but it was a major shift, hearing bleeps and signals and different kinds of alternating current as sound. It was a huge shift. In a similar sense Edgard Varèse called the drum machine a rhythm synthesizer, and that's a good way to describe it. So all those kind of things, all those concepts, make a sense that the mainstream is just completely incapable of really grasping at all.

"There really is a sensory involution away from traditions, and from

whatever the divisions of art as supposed to be. It's very much like Sadie Plant says, it's not high or low, it's just complex, because it has so many travelling and spiralling arms that you can hook onto. This is why when the Americans lament about the virtualization of the body, it just seems bizarre, because it feels like we're doing the opposite, it feels like we're just beginning on this journey into the centre of our senses. It seems the opposite: science always means a *hypersensoriness*. Traditional science still means a depletion, cold scientists, extreme logic and all these corny cliches. But in musical terms, science is the opposite, science is intensification, more sensation. Science is rhythm intensified, rhythm estranged. And that's how a whole generation understands science. Then what they mean by abstract is sensations so new there isn't yet a language for them. So the shorthand is to just call it abstract. There's a whole generation who're grown used to thinking of sensory emotions without having a language for them yet. Rhythmic psychedelia's the psychedelic aspect of any particular scene. So it could be anything: from House to trance, to Breakbeat to jazz, it could be any scene – but I'm interested in the rhythmic psychedelia aspect of each scene, not the scene itself. I'm interested in the points of maximum rhythmic hyperdelia, that's what I'm really interested in. So it could be any of these...

"Postmodernism doesn't mean anything in music at all. It doesn't mean *anything*. It hasn't meant anything since at least '68, when the first Versions started coming out of Jamaica. As soon as you had the particular social condition of no copyright, this 19th-century copyright was already gone, instantly you had the freedom to replicate, to recombine. That encouraged a Wildstyle of rhythms which would attach themselves and recombine. And as soon as you had that, that's postmodernism accomplished and done with, right then in '68. Ever since then by definition you've had postmodernism and it hasn't been any big deal at all, it's just already been accomplished. For instance, Walter Benjamin's traditional 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction': this argument doesn't work any more – because one of Benjamin's main points [or the one his admirers use over and over again] is that in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction there's no aura left, the single, unique aura has gone. But of course as soon as you have the dubplate then that's all gone out of the window. The dub plate is where you've got the reproductive process, the mechanical process of pressing vinyl onto the plate that's being played, and suddenly in the middle of

that you've got the one-off remix, you've got the track that there's only one of in the world, but it's *not* an original, it's a copy, a third copy. So you've got this thing that's never supposed to exist in Benjamin's world: you've got the one-off copy, you've got the one-off fifth remix, you've got the one-off tenth remix, you've got the one-off twentieth remix. There's only one of it. So the dubplate means that the whole idea of the aura being over doesn't make any sense, because the aura is reborn in the middle of the industrial reproduction. Hence the jungle acceleration, the intensification of the dub plate; the dub plate is reborn as this Music of the Future. You're hearing music that won't be on the streets till ten months, 11 months later, immediately this gap opens up between you and now in 1996: you suddenly imagine yourself in '97, going 'Where will I be when I buy this?' – and of course you never will, but listening to a dub plate does this little projection on you. You feel yourself 18 months ahead, you literally feel ahead, you're on a plane of acceleration, you're moving faster than you are. So for that reason alone postmodernism just hasn't existed and as soon as you have a state of remixology – well, what happened is that remixology got held up in different areas. In jazz, for instance, you had Alice Coltrane remixing John Coltrane, but jazz tradition hated this and said it was blasphemy. You had the Beach Boys remixing their stuff and it being refused. So in the major corporations remixology was always stopped, and in Jamaica remixology just became the immediate state of play, first of all because it's simultaneously hyperpredatory as well, it allows a kind of agglomeration of rhythms, a ruthlessness of rhythms, a break war, what jungle producer Andy C calls a break war. People bid for breaks, or just steal them. There's this wild frontier, this wild break war going on, rhythms just going mad. So we're far beyond postmodernism here, and immediately all the traditional arguments drop out of the window. The idea of exhaustion, for example that's just gone, because music doesn't work in that way. It's already a gene pool, so it's not going to exhaust itself.

"And then a whole series of things – the idea of quotation and citation, the idea of ironic distance, that doesn't work, that's far too literary. That assumes a distance which by definition volume overcomes. There is no distance with volume, you're swallowed up by sound. There's no room, you can't be ironic if you're being swallowed by volume, and volume is overwhelming you. It's impossible to stay ironic, so all the implications of postmodernism go out of the window. Not only is it the

literary that's useless, *all* traditional theory is pointless. All that works is the sonic plus the machine that you're building. So you can bring back any of these particular theoretical tools if you like, but they better work. And the way you can test them out is to actually play the records. That's how you test if my book works, because I want it to be a machine. When I say works, I mean I want it to engineer a kind of sensory alteration, some kind of perceptual disturbance. I think I'd really like that very much, because even a tiny sensory disturbance is enough to send out a signal which can get transmitted.

"I think the combination of the dj and the writer makes a lot of sense. I think that both are different kinds of remixology at work, and that all we're really doing is bringing writing and putting it onto the second deck and just accelerating it as much as a record. I think because so much traditional Brit prose is so matey, and so blokish, and so bluff and non-sense, that encourages me in always going for the impossible, which can be registered as what the future feels like as sensation. That's why the key things in this book are McLuhan and Ballard, the guys I was reading throughout. McLuhan's famous lines about the human being the sex organs for the machine world, those lines are crucial. The Kraftwerk chapter is all about Kraftwerk as the sex organs of the synthesizer.

"The whole series of things about accidents, about bugs, about the producer being someone who can nurture a bug, who can breed a bug. Simultaneously most of the key musics have been accidents, they've been formed through errors. They're software errors in the machine's programming, and they form these sounds – and the producer's taken these sounds and nurtured this error, built on this mistake, and if you grab a mistake you've got a new audio lifeform. It's quite common: back with Can in the 70s, Holger Czukay was saying machines have a lifeform, repetition is the life of machines. So there's a whole thing about machine life that already exists with musicians anyway. Producers have *already* started working out a theory of machine life. As soon as you look at what they've been saying – magnify it, and start to use it – you realise that there's this series of Sonic Fictions and scientific fabulations, all of which I just call Sonic Fictions. There's 20 years of speculation on the machine as a lifeform. There's 20 years of music as cosmic fields, so what I'm doing is using this stuff, activating it, switching it on. That way the whole book feels alive: by using a lot of

producers who are living now and connecting them up to ones in the past, you switch on the sonic, you switch on a whole sonic register, a whole unofficial register. Nobody quotes Lee Perry as an authority, it's always the grotesque thing of Heidegger and then George Clinton, it's *never* the other way around. But it was Clinton that came up with mixadelics: the theory of mixology as a psychedelia, the theory of the mixing desk as a psychedelia. In 1979, there it is, mixadelics. That's his concept: he thought of a psychedelia of the mixing desk. So you don't *need* any Heidegger, because Clinton's already theoretical. So what I've done is extract these concepts and set them to work: they work because they're tied to records. And that's because the vector that a lot of this works on is the record player. It's the habitualness, you have to look at yourself as a machine programmed, as a biocomputer programmed by the decks. The motions you have to make to put a needle onto the record as the flight of the stylus takes across the groove: think of the hundreds of thousands of times that you've made that motion, the habitualness of putting it on. Here's a way to see this very clearly, for instance: when you're listening to a rare groove original, say there's a track you know really well, and you're listening for the first time to the original of it. You suddenly realise that the bit you *know* is only a tiny bit, just like a 3-second bit, and then the record just plunges, usually, into a disappointing mediocrity, before the next sound that you recognize comes up, and then it plunges again, before the next bit comes up. Sometimes with Parliament tracks you can hear about 5 of these in the first 2 minutes, and these bits, they recognize you, because what they're doing is recognizing your habitualness in putting them on. When you hear a sound, you have a memory flash, but you almost have a muscular memory, you remember the times you danced to it. You don't just remember the times you danced to it, you remember the times you bent over to put the needle on the record to play that bit. Sometimes you love that bit so much, you even remember going over and over and over that bit again. So when you hear that sound that you love, when you hear the recognizable sample in the middle of alien sound, that sound is recognizing your habitualness, and it's really incredible, you suddenly get a glimpse of yourself as a habitform, as a habitformed being, a process of habit formation. You suddenly see yourself over the years, how you loved this record. It's incredible, the sound takes a picture of your habits; it snaps your habits. And you suddenly see it very clearly. How many times have I put that on? That's what I want to get at. These



are new sensations which have never existed before, that feeling of being recognized by sound. That's new, it hasn't happened before. By definition, it *could* only happen in the sampladelic generation; by definition it could only happen to people who listen to sampladelic music. And those kind of things just haven't been written about, they haven't even been captured yet.

"So by extending the sonic further and further, I'm on the hunt, I'm chasing for, I'm trying to find out new perceptions: perceptions that have always been there, but haven't yet been grasped and haven't yet been connected to anything else yet. It's this exploration into the unknown.

"By now, I've stopped saying 'Black culture'. There's always been a much stronger perception in America of black culture and that's obviously partly because it's been counter-defined against the traditional knowledge apartheid structure which has been in place in America. And you can tell almost all American writers are working against this knowledge apartheid, which has been really firmly laid out. After all, everybody should know that most black Americans couldn't even get to art school until about 1969. That's how severe American apartheid was, from the knowledge structure on down. So most black Americans write in a way that assumes a unified black culture, then goes on to explain the dissensions between it, or not to. But sitting here in England, in London, it's much harder for me to even assume a unified anything, let alone a unified black culture. I tend to start from the opposite. I tend to think of things more freefloating, and there's various strange attractors trying to agglomerate things, there's various inertia-producing forces which are trying to centre, and trying to attract material to black culture, petrify it, solidify it, reterritorialize it, and then usually this gets called tradition, or it gets called history.

"I look at black culture much more as a series of material that's been agglomerated on one hand, and on the other, it's much more like a series of techniques. A lot of the producers and engineers I talk about see themselves as scientists or technicians. I tend to think of black culture then as an instrument or an environment that *they've invented*. I'm very much looking into the synthesizings, looking into new black synthetic versions. I can never think of a unified black culture out of which everything comes. To me everything now looks like it's synthesized.

There's obviously stuff that's been around long enough so that it feels solidified, calcified, but actually it's all synthesized. Because I'm looking at emergences, and by definition they're going to be really synthetic, like Techno. Because I bring the machine into it. It makes things much more complex because instead of talking about black culture, I'll talk for instance a lot about Ghanaian drum choirs, or talk a lot about the African polyrhythmic engine, the polyrhythmic percussion engine. And those will be very particular African traits. Sound is a sensory technology, so I talk a lot about black technologies. They're machines – and if we're talking about 19th or 18th century Africa, then they'd be machines built a long time ago and passed down. But in the present, it's more like black culture is this series of machines built here and there. The dub plate was one, built in Jamaica. The Breakbeat was another, built in New York.

"I haven't yet pulled back to make commanding statements about what it is in black culture that produces these kind of synthetic technologies. I haven't yet been able to pull back a stratum to the big what-if question. And that's probably because I don't think it really exists, because I'm so consumed and amazed by the teeming variety at the other end of the telescope that I can't pull back to see the view. Probably because I distrust the idea that there's views, but it would be more like a shift in tempo or scale. So shifting to a horizon view then switching back. But it could be that, one large thing Greg used to say which worked really well, was that the Middle Passage, out of Africa into America, forced culture to become immediately mental. All of the other things were by definition left behind, left ruined: architecture, everything else. So culture immediately became mental, immediately became dematerialized. So oral culture is all the things you carry in your head, and that's *it*. And then it has to be rematerialized, first through hitting the hands, or through the mouth. It had to be passed on again, and reinvented all over again. So there's that whole strain. And there's the key thing which drew me into all this: the idea of alien abduction, the idea of slavery as an alien abduction which means that we've all been living in an alien-nation since the 18th century. And I definitely agree with that, I definitely use that a lot. The mutation of African male and female slaves in the 18th century into what became negro, and into the entire series of humans that were designed in America. That whole process, the key thing behind it all is that in America none of these humans were *designated* human.

It's in music that you get this sense that most African-Americans owe *nothing* to the status of the human. African-Americans still had to protest, still had to *riot*, to be judged Enlightenment humans in the 1960s – it's quite incredible. And in music, if you listen to guys like Sun Ra – I call them the despots, Ra, Rammellzee and Mad Mike – part of the whole thing about being an African-American alien musician, is that there's this sense of the human as being a really pointless and treacherous category, a category which has *never meant anything* to African-Americans. This is particularly true with Sun Ra – just because Ra pushes it by saying that he comes from Saturn. I always accept the impossibility of this. I always start with that, where most people would try and claim it was an allegory. But it isn't an allegory: he really did come from Saturn. I try to exaggerate that impossibility, until it's irritating, until it's annoying, and this annoyance is merely a threshold being crossed in the readers' heads, and once they unseize, unclench their sensorium, they'll have passed through a new threshold and they'll be in my world. I'll have got them. The key thing to do is to register this annoyance, because a lot of the moves I've described will provoke real annoyance, the lack of the literary, the lack of the modernist, the lack of the postmodern. All of these things should provoke a real irritation, and simultaneously a real relief, a relief that somebody has left all stuff behind, and started from the pleasure principle, started from the materials, started from what really gives people pleasure."

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## Thoughtware: Synthesizing the Omniverse

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- [155] 'The people have...', Sun Ra in *Space Is the Place*; 'It's after the...', June Tyson, *ibid*
- [156] 'New Philosophy of...', James, 1992, pp153-160; 'even the dead...', Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in Benjamin, 1992, p 247; 'turns to the...', Fanon, 1967, p169; 'very beautiful and...', *ibid*, p169
- [157] 'If you launch...', Rammellzee, Peter Shapiro, *The Wire*, April 1997; 'a reasonable citizen...', Ellison, 1984, p355; 'I'm not a...', Sun Ra, *Fallen Angel* in *Oasis Semiotext(e) Volume IV, Number 3*, 1984, p115; 'It's an inner...', Stockhausen in Nevill, 1989, p18; 'The Impossible is...', Sun Ra, *Sleevenote Manifesto* from Sun Ra and his Solar Arkestra, 1992
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Co Pilots: Steve Beard, Edward George, Mark Sinker.

Optimizers: Grandpa, Adelaide Eshun, Joe Eshun, Esi Eshun, Araba Eshun, Ekow Eshun, Helen Boateng, Tony Boateng, Angela Ackun, Sam Mensah, Kwesi Eshun, Thomas Eshun, Janet Karikari, Josephine Eshun.

Accelerators: Sadie Plant, J. G. Ballard, Marshall McLuhan, Simon Reynolds, Greg Tate, Fred Vermorel, Paul Beatty, Archigram (Ron Herron, Warren Chalk, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Peter Cook, Michael Webb), David Toop, Ian Penman, Chris Marker, Jack Womack, Filippo Marinetti, Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Maya Deren, William Gibson, Samuel R. Delany, Yambo Ouologuem, Manuel De Landa, Pat Cadigan, Ben Sidran, Masumune Shirow, Lynn Margulis, Rene Menil, Ilya Prigogine, Arthur Jafa, Isabelle Stengers, Rodney Brooks, [Orphan] D[rift], Neil Kulkarni, Peter Shapiro, Dave Tompkins, Suzanne Cesaire, Samuel Butler, Vera Chytilova, Nic Roeg, Daniel Dennett, Ishmael Reed, Jean-Luc Godard, Michel Chion, Tom Wilson, David Henderson, Geert Lovink, Aime Cesaire, Erik Davis, Bruce Sterling, Jean Michel Basquiat, Robert Rauschenberg, Gilles Deleuze, Frantz Fanon, Felix Guattari, William S. Burroughs, Paul D. Miller, Paul Virilio, Matthew Barney, Colson Whitehead, Bridget Riley, Christof Steinegger, Brian Eno, Nick Land, Francis Bacon, Wong Kar-Wai, Oswald de Andrade, Leslie Fiedler, The Wire, Wyndham Lewis, Katsuhiko Otomo.

Intensifiers: Ian Sen, Deirdre Crowley, Duke Odiachi, Stella Kane, Jim McClellan, Travis, Jeni Glasgow, Tony Marcus, Matthew Collin, Bethan Cole, Rupert Howe, AnnMarie Davy, Matt ffytche, Melanie Beer, Pippa Moreau, Nadja Abdelkader, Dego McFarlane, John O'Reilly, Sharon Bowes, Black Audio Film Collective (David Lawson, John Akomfrah, Reece Auguiste, Avril Johnson, Lina Gopaul), Orly Klein, Simon Hopkins, Raymond Oaka, Stephen J. Metcalfe, Joy Press, Heiko Hoffmann, Thaddie Hermann, Michael Cornelius, Peter Kruder, Ulf Poschardt, Robert Jelinek, Hans Kulisich, Richard Sen, Lynn Leaver, Dympna Sherry, Mark Fisher, Anne Greenspan, Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, Richard Thompson, Viv Boyd, Elaine O'Donoghue, Olywn Doran, Helen Leary, Helen Mills, Martin Takawira, Gideon Hollis, Adele Yaron, Kevin Martin, Rob Bulman, Sean 'P-Ski' Pennycook, Howard Hageman, Adrian 'Blunt' Hughes, Hector Heathcote, Mick Kirkman.

In Memoriam: Michelle Stavrino