

Bittles' Magazine



To end our epic trilogy of interviews we have the extremely talented and funky **Ikonika**. Now, you know when lazy journalists are writing about female producers they always point out their gender and how hard it is for a woman to succeed in a male-dominated industry? Then when you've finished reading the article you find out they haven't once bothered to mention the actual music? Luckily **Ikonika** has never had this problem for one simple reason, which is that her music is so good that you simply have to talk about it, discuss it, and show it off to all of your friends. By **JOHN BITTLES**

She first burst onto a diversifying and expanding dubstep scene in 2008 with *Please*, a brutal shock to the system with deep underlying beats and alien synths. It instantly marked **Ikonika** out for hipsters everywhere as a name to drop. The two tracker was released on the cool as fuck *Hyperdub* who have maintained a close relationship with her since and are still releasing her music to this day.


In 2010 an eager and hungry world was presented with **Ikonika's** debut album, the dark, gritty and playful *Contact, Love, Want, Have*. Electro blips merged seamlessly with dubstep rhythms and 8Bit beats to create a fresh fun listen that was perfect for making your body jerk. Critical acclaim followed as the scenesters (i.e. me) who had championed her all along were proven well and truly correct (smugness ensued).

Now, on the 29th of July in the year of our Lord 2013 **Ikonika** is giving us her second album *Aerotropolis*. And while the sound on this record is a lot clearer and cleaner than some previous releases it still contains her trademark funk and wilful experimentation that is tailor-made for heads and feet everywhere. The long-player is a more focused and listenable experience than her debut with elements of house, electro and soul all shining bright.

Opener *Mise En Place* sets the tone with an almost nonchalant air giving the listeners some soundtracky vibes before single *Beach Mode (Keep It Simple)* introduces some much appreciated house-like rhythms. Newcomer **Jessy Lanza** provides soulful vocals for this number which together with the sunny keys help give the track a lush goose pimple inducing Chicago like feel.

Mr Cake is perhaps a little bit more like what you would expect from a *Hyperdub* release and contains a lovely deep synth line that positively begs you to shake that ass. *Eternal Mode* continues the dancefloor thread yet also contains subtle links to early 90s IDM while ambient number *Manchego* is almost **Aphex Twin** like with its angular melodies. *Let A Smile Be (Y)our Umbrella* isn't just a great song title but a great track full stop while *Lights Are Forever* is sunshine house in a song.

Containing a wide array of influences is all well and good as long as you do something original and thrilling with them. And while *Aerotropolis* does contain multiple influences each is chopped up, screwed with and spat out to create something that sounds like very little else around. In a short interview with **Ikonika** we were able to discuss the new album, her record label and, most importantly of all, cloud people. Just remember that you read about them here first.

 *For those people out there who have been living with their head in a cloud over these last few years, can you start by telling us a little bit about who you are and what you do?*

Hello to the cloud people. I'm a DJ and producer from West London, signed to *Hyperdub Records*. I also run

the label *Hum + Buzz* with **Optimum**. My music is synth orientated with influences from UK Garage, Grime, House, Techno and Early Pop.

Your new album Aerotropolis is coming out on the 29th of July and is a pretty funky listen. How did the album come about?

It came about by playing around with a few drum machines and classic synths.

The production sounds so much smoother than with Contact, Love, Want, Have. Is this the result of you evolving as a producer?

I think *CLWH* was a very raw album, I made it after my Hardcore/Metalcore band split. Also I'm not a very angry person anymore, so that helped with the evolution of the sound.

What made you decide on Aerotropolis as the title?

Because I live 10 minutes away from Heathrow Airport and I fly to places to DJ. It's my homage to that lifestyle, if I can't fly out to play somewhere I end up feeling somewhat impotent.

Aerotropolis is your second long-player to be released on Hyperdub. What's it like working with them?

It's the best, I never feel like I'm selling my soul to make a quick buck. They challenge me yet give me 100% creative freedom.

Lead single Beach Mode (Keep it Simple) is a pretty amazing track and has been getting some rave reviews. Was it always the plan to release this as the first single?

I think we chose it after mastering, it made sense to release the vocal. It deserves to be out there on its own 12" vinyl. Jessy deserves to be in the spotlight on that one.

*Where did the name **Ikonika** come from?*

From the word iconoclast.

When you're working on a track do you start with a clear idea of what you want it to sound like, or do you just go with the flow?

Go with the flow and translate your feelings via sounds, patterns and space.

As well as producing and DJing you're also running your own record label Hum + Buzz. What is the ethos behind the label?

It's about freedom, collaboration and positivity.

If a DJ plays a fantastic set yet no-one is dancing, have they really played a great set?

Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

Finally, if you could change one thing about the electronic music scene in the UK what would it be and why?

I'm not one to dwindle. I think the roots were planted well, but nowadays it seems like it can do with a bit more care and nourishment.

Anyone looking to listen or buy any of **Ikonika's** rather fab tunes should either go to their local record shop (don't be lazy. It's not that far away!) or go to the *Hyperdub* website at <http://www.hyperdub.net/>. Enjoy!

(Photo: Georg Gatas)

| JOHN BITTLES