

Just be prepared to dance!

Bittles' Magazine | Interview: Pink Skull

It is not often that a dance album makes me sit up and take notice on the very first play. But that is exactly the effect that *Huitlacoche* by the band **Pink Skull** had on me. Coming out on *My Favorite Robot Records* on the 10th of February the record, the band's fourth in total, is a raw, dirty, funk-filled delight that is perfect for headphones and dance-floors everywhere. An Interview with **Pink Skull** by **JOHN BITTLES**.



Tracks such as *Invijt* and *Trans Gender Express* are positively drenched in acid squelches and can't help but send shivers up and down the spine. In short *Huitlacoche* should be instantly sought out since it is easily one of the best house albums I've heard in years.

First formed in 2004, the band have undergone a few personnel changes in their time although the main core of Julian Grefe and Justin Geller are the two constants throughout. It was these two who brought out debut album *Zeppelin III*; a mixture of big beat, hip hop, acid, rave and every other form of music you could care to mention. As an introduction to the wider world it worked a treat, highlighting a talented group whose work included a much desired element of fun.

A hook up with the label *RVNG* was accompanied by a new direction for the guys. Expanding into a five piece **Pink Skull** became known as a fully functional live band who brought some rather fine boogie wherever they played. Releasing two albums with this line-up it seemed like they had found their sound and that huge success would follow. But the thing was, Julian and Justin had been making a name for themselves remixing the likes of **Toro Y Moi** and **Bear in Heaven** with simply devastating effect. These remixes took the essence of the originals and brutally dragged them onto the world's druggiest of dancefloors. Tastemakers and connoisseurs alike joined together in crying out for more.

So when news broke that the core duo of the band were gonna take **Pink Skull** back into a more electronic direction even the most reclusive of techno-heads fist pumped the air in delight (well I did at least). Gone were the live band, to be replaced by the rather talented production might of Joe Lentini. Out were the vocals, funky guitar licks and classic funk flavours to be replaced by a raw, stripped back acid house sound. EPs for the likes of *Throne of Blood*, and *My Favorite Robot* followed that signalled the band's robotic intent.

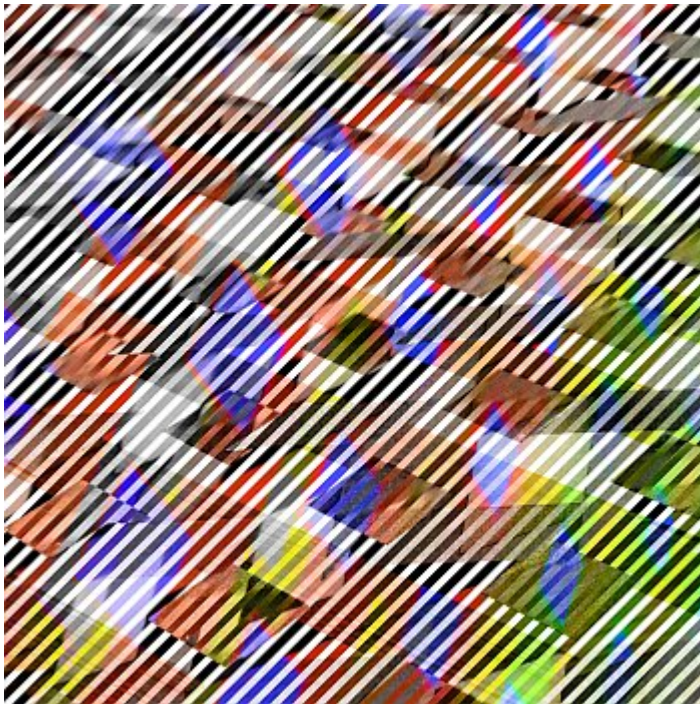
And now the band are about to release what is quite possibly their best album yet. Containing 13 tracks of

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techno lunacy and tech house goodness the use of purely analogue equipment really gives the music a sense of raw urgency that makes it almost impossible to play this record and not want to dance. In essence this is house music as it should be: deep, raw, jacking and with enough of a human emotion to make the melodies swell within your heart. Trying to sit still while the likes of *Ryryryry*, *Abalone* and *Invijt* play isn't easy! But when the music sounds this good who wants to be sitting still anyway?

Opening tune *Burmese Engines* recalls vintage **B12** or some lost early 90s IDM. While final track *Sabayon* dips its feet into icy yet surprisingly groovy ambience which serve as the perfect comedown after the previous storm. All of which illustrates how these guys are a lot more than one-trick ponies. Over the course of the record we get elements of Detroit techno, **Hardfloor**-esque acid, groove-laden deep house together with everything else you would want to hear on a dancefloor

In a short interview I was able to chat with the band about the new album, touring, drum n' bass and a whole lot more.



[Just to begin, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?](#)

Julian Grefe, Justin Geller and Joe Lentini. We've undergone several incarnations over the last 10 years or so. The latest is just the core duo of Justin and myself with some Joe sprinkled on top. We make electronic music (the music part is debatable).

[You have changed your line-up and sound since your last full-length. How does it feel to be working with purely electronic sounds again?](#)

It feels good. A huge relief in many ways - finally getting the chocolate out of our peanut butter.

[To me *Huitlacoche* sounds like three friends trying out new sounds and having a lot of fun with the results. Is this a fair assessment?](#)

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Yeah. I'd say that assessment is spot on. We got pretty high and sat around with a bunch of synths and made a record. It WAS a lot of fun.

If Huitlacoche was a book what would the blurb on the back say?

I think the word 'BLURB' pretty much sums it up.

Ryryryry is one of my favourites from the album with a wonderful baseline that immediately brought a smile to my face. How did this track come about?

Ryryryry is also my favorite track of the record. It just popped out one morning around 4 or 5 am. Sometimes I get fixated on a particular piece in the studio. I was obsessing a bit over the slew limiter on our modular that week. It's named after the illustrious Ryan Grotz aka Grotzy Versace, the persistent crown prince of late night/early am Philadelphia.

The likes of Invijt and Trans Gender Express have some acid squelches that simply take the breath away. What is it about the acid sound that is so enduring?

If you've been totally zonked and heard those changes in timbre, then you know why it's become a mainstay in drug music.

The album ends with a chilly blast of ambience that is the perfect come-down from what came before. Have you ever considered making a purely down-tempo album?

We did make a rather unsettling sounding ambient record some years back under the moniker '**CLEAN PLATE**' for *RVNG*. We just finished a more blissful LP under the same name for *Sean Hocking's Metal Postcard* label. It'll be out fairly soon. The album art is comprised of stills from video synth sequences generated by the audio.

Are you going to tour the record? If so, what will the live set-up be?

We are planning to tour for the upcoming record and we're in the process of putting together a compact, mostly analog set up that should do nicely. XoXbox, CR8000, 707, Virus B? To be honest, I think we'd rather DJ, as it's kind of impossible to take the key pieces we have safely out on the road. Half of them are a bit dodgy.

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Pink Skull; Photo: (c) Heather R. Phillips

[How helpful were the people at My Favorite Robot in developing the record?](#)

Jared and everyone have been great. Supportive and critical at the appropriate times. Their feedback was extremely vital in shaping everything.

[What was it that originally got you into house music?](#)

Julian: For me it was **The Sloppy Twins**, who recorded for *Select Records* back in the day. They showed me how to program an SP1200 and make a track. Amazingly talented guys. They recorded under **Pathfinders** for *Plastic City*. Justin was a drum and bass guy. so let's not talk about that.. just kidding..

Justin: This is true. I was a drum and bass guy in the late 90's but while working at *611 Records*, our friend and a very talented dj, **Carl Michaels**, helped me develop an appreciation and love for house music.

[Were there any specific events that made you decide to start up a band and/or create music?](#)

Nothing specific. It's always been a part of my life. I've been playing music since I was 6. I think it's the same for all of us.

[How did you learn to produce?](#)

Julian: **The Sloppy Twins**

Justin: By messing up a lot. And continuing to do so.

[What's the best thing about electronic music right now?](#)

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Julian: **James Holden!**

Justin: I was going to think of something clever but that's a pretty good answer.

[And the worst?](#)

Julian: That's a million way tie for last. Where does one begin?

Justin: Purists

[What's the most important thing you've learned in your career this far?](#)

Not to take any of this very seriously.

[Have you any final words for our readers?](#)

You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here.

[Thanks a lot for your time!](#)

And that's it folks! Needless to say you should be streaming the album right now, and/or pre-ordering it on *Bleep*, *Kompakt*, *Beatport* or any other quality online retailers. Just be prepared to dance!

| JOHN BITTLES