



reviews

REVIEWS | ALBUM REVIEWS | FILASTINE | DIRTY BOMB

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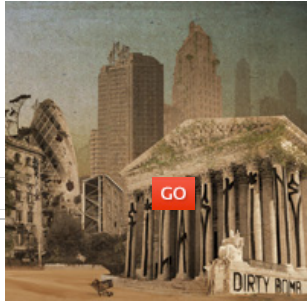
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# Filastine Dirty Bomb

[Soot; 2009]

7.0

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Someone more eloquent than me-- DJ /rupture, actually-- said that while the internet has exposed a wide audience to non-Western music, it's exposed an even wider audience to Western music. Turn on the TV in the UAE and you can watch MTV Arabia, but turn on the radio in North America and the closest you get to Cairo is "Big Pimpin".

I don't bring this up as outcry, just context. I like "Big Pimpin". Plenty. But in an idealized, all-inclusive, post-internet world, a record as diverse as Filastine's *Dirty Bomb* would feel central, and it doesn't-- it plays deep in the margins.

Part of the problem-- if that's what you want to call it-- is that Filastine, a DJ and activist who spent most of his life in Seattle before relocating to Barcelona, is a self-conscious radical. Sampled voices heralding the destruction of bourgeois society and music as the weapon of the future don't sound revolutionary, they sound quaint-- the same **images of punk rock** co-opted for H&M or preserved on wall at the John Varvatos boutique on the Bowery, formerly CBGB's. Culture is a nuanced thing, and for Filastine to treat it like it isn't-- a clumsiness he avoids on **his blog**-- is a little disappointing.

Diversity isn't Filastine's strength, it's his cross to bear. He works over contemporary dance genres-- hip-hop, spiced-up rai, funk carioca, dubstep, dancehall-- like he's running down a checklist. What he might hear as global harmony I hear as forced multiculturalism. Some of his MC choices are great-- Rabah's low-pitched Arabic, for example, fits so snugly into the rumbling "B'talla" that I don't have to know the language to understand the flow. Other guests feel like obligations-- Wire MC and the Japanese ECD swing for the beat on "Hungry Ghosts" like blindfolded kids worlds away from their piñata, and it's hard to fight the feeling that Filastine didn't edit them out because then there'd be nobody to represent Japan and the bush.

But Filastine's rhythmic instinct is awesome and delicate, and when he doesn't seem to be thinking too hard, he turns out hybrids so fluent they defy classification. "Singularities", for example, draws its beat from American hip-hop and its strings from Romani and gypsy records, but its hi-hats twist through a whole series of syncopations that don't call out any genre in particular. "Hungry Ghosts", which can be found unburdened by rappers on DJ /rupture's *Uproot*, borrows from crunk and dubstep but doesn't sound like either or, thank heavens, both. The beats on "Fitnah" morph and contort-- it's like an object whose shape changes depending on the angle you see it from.

It embarrasses me to think that someone might hear *Dirty Bomb* as an ambassador for the genres it borrows from. If you like dancehall, buy a dancehall record. If you like rap, buy a rap record. While it's nice to envision Western acceptance of non-Western music, it's nicer to imagine the universe's collective ass jiggling sympathetically to the best moments on *Dirty Bomb*-- music so thoroughly uprooted that its traditions exist only as pivot points; fragments of sounds we know mashed together so intuitively that we barely recognize them.

— Mike Powell, April 1, 2009

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  6. Swan Lake: Enemy Mine
  7. Peter Doherty: Grace/Wastelands
  8. Lotus Plaza: The Floodlight Collective
  9. I.U.D.: The Proper Sex
  10. The Pains of Being Pure at Heart: The Pains of Being Pure at Heart
  11. Wavves: Wavvves
  12. Mr. Oizo: Lamb's Anger
  13. Gui Boratto: Take My Breath Away
  14. Casiotone for the Painfully Alone: Advance Base Battery Life
  15. Various Artists: Dark Was the Night
  16. Nick Lowe: Quiet Please...The New Best of Nick Lowe
  17. Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys: The Tiffany Transcriptions
  18. Kylesa: Static Tensions
  19. Pan American: White Bird Release
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1. The Dukes of Stratosphear: 25 O'Clock / Psonic Psunspot
  2. Swervedriver: Raise / Mezcal Head
  3. Matthea Baim: Laughing Boy
  4. Various Artists: Pop Ambient 2009
  5. Obi Best: Capades
  6. Mastodon: Crack the Skye
  7. The Whitest Boy Alive: Rules
  8. Sissy Wish: Beauties Never Die

9. **Filastine**: Dirty Bomb
10. **Bosque Brown**: Baby
11. **Peter Bjorn and John**: Living Thing
12. **The Thermals**: Now We Can See
13. **Various Artists**: Soundboy's Gravestone Gets Desecrated By Vandals
14. **Gomez**: A New Tide
15. **Young Dro & Yung L.A.**: Black Boy White Boy
16. **PJ Harvey and John Parish**: A Woman a Man Walked By
17. **Red Red Meat**: Bunny Gets Paid (Deluxe Edition)
18. **Richard Buckner**: Bloomed / The Hill / Impasse
19. **Bibio**: Vignetting the Compost
20. **Harmonic 313**: Dirtbox EP/When Machines Exceed Human Intelligene

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#### Reviews

- **The Dukes of Stratosphear**: 25 O'Clock / Psonic Psunspot
- **Swervedriver**: Raise / Mezcal Head
- **Matteah Baim**: Laughing Boy
- **Various Artists**: Pop Ambient 2009
- **Obi Best**: Capades

#### Track Reviews

- **Black Dice**: "Nite Creme"
- **Rose Elinor Dougall**: "Start/Stop/Syncho"
- **Asher Roth**: "Lark on My Go-Kart"

#### Reviews

- **Mastodon**: Crack the Skye
- **The Whitest Boy Alive**: Rules
- **Sissy Wish**: Beauties Never Die
- **Filastine**: Dirty Bomb
- **Bosque Brown**: Baby

#### Track Reviews

- **Nite Jewel**: "Artificial Intelligence"
- **The Horrors**: "Sea Within a Sea"
- **Freebass 808**: "Sky Ocean"

#### Features

- **Guest Lists**: Eugene Mirman

#### News

- April Fools' Day Round-Up
- Mark Kozelek to Drop Two Live Albums
- Amanda Palmer Tells Her Label: "Please Drop Me"
- Lindström & Prins Thomas Hook Up for New LP
- Osheaga | Cloud Cult | Stórsveit Nix Noltes
- Xiu Xiu's Jamie Stewart Is in a New Band
- Echo Chamber: Lil Wayne
- Trent Reznor Owns April Fools' Day
- The Vaselines to Tour North America
- Diplo's Mad Decent Label Teams Up With Downtown

#### Reviews

- **Peter Bjorn and John**: Living Thing
- **The Thermals**: Now We Can See
- **Various Artists**: Soundboy's Gravestone Gets Desecrated By Vandals
- **Gomez**: A New Tide
- **Young Dro & Yung L.A.**: Black Boy White Boy

#### Track Reviews

- **Suckers**: "It Gets Your Body Movin'"
- **DD/MM/YYYY**: "Bronzage"
- **Lucky Soul**: "Woah Billy!"

#### News

- The National's Aaron Dessner on

- Dark Was the Night
- Echo Chamber: The Cool Kids
- Metric Embark Upon World Tour
- Del | Mission Creek | Vanderslice | Casiotone
- Echo Chamber: Snow Patrol
- iTunes Giving Away John Cage's "4'33" Download
- Crystal Antlers Make Feature Film, Tour Hard
- Joanna Newsom Debuts New Songs at Secret Show
- Echo Chamber: Iggy Pop
- Matt and Kim Postpone Shows Due to Injury

#### Reviews

- **PJ Harvey and John Parish**: A Woman a Man Walked By
- **Red Red Meat**: Bunny Gets Paid (Deluxe Edition)
- **Richard Buckner**: Bloomed / The Hill / Impasse
- **Bibio**: Vignetting the Compost
- **Harmonic 313**: Dirtbox EP/When Machines Exceed Human Intelligene

#### Track Reviews

- **Okkervil River**: "Millionaire"
- **Wave Machines**: "Punk Spirit"
- **Manic Street Preachers**: "Peeled Apples"

#### TV

- **INTERVIEW**: U2

#### Features

- **Interviews**: Fever Ray

#### News

- Wanna Be the New Smashing Pumpkins Drummer?
- Pitchfork on ABC: The Decemberists
- Rivers Cuomo Does Rainn Wilson Collab, Live CD/DVD
- Google Giving Away Huge Amounts of Music in China
- Magnolia Electric Co. Ready Benefit EP
- Radiohead to Headline Reading and Leeds Fests
- Kanye and Spike Jonze Team Up for Short Film
- Echo Chamber: Bob Dylan
- T.V. Eye: March 30–April 5, 2009
- Okkervil River Teach Indie Rock 101

#### Reviews

- **Bonnie "Prince" Billy**: Beware
- **The Juan MacLean**: The Future Will Come
- **The Theater Fire**: Matter and Light
- **An Horse**: Rearrange Beds
- **The Old Ceremony**: Walk on Thin Air

#### Track Reviews

- **Woods**: "Rain On"
- **CFCF**: "Invitation to Love"
- **Bullion**: "Time For Us All to Love"

#### TV

- **ONE WEEK ONLY**: Lightning Bolt: The Power of Salad

#### Features

- **Columns**: Show No Mercy

#### News

- Chin Up Chin Up Break Up
- Santigold Works With Beastie Boys and David Byrne
- Schreiber | Killers | Ramblin' Jack | Bricolage
- Dirty Projectors to Tour With TVOTR
- Echo Chamber: Jamie Stewart

- Gorillaz Doc Heads to DVD, Online
- Flaming Lips Added to Pitchfork Fest
- T.I. Sentenced to Year and a Day in Prison
- Echo Chamber: Mos Def
- Zach Hill Is Hella Busy

#### Reviews

- **Yeah Yeah Yeahs:** It's Blitz!
- **Serge Gainsbourg:** Histoire de Melody Nelson
- **Anni Rossi:** Rockwell
- **Project Pat:** Real Recognize Real
- **Tombs:** Winter Hours

#### Track Reviews

- **Camera Obscura:** "French Navy"
- **Juicy J:** "30 Inches (Remix)"
- **Animal Hospital:** "A Safe Place"

#### News

- Sunset Rubdown's New Album: Dragonslayer
- Celebration I Black Keys I Rock Plaza Central
- Echo Chamber: The Thermals
- Santigold to Tour America With Full Band
- Sinéad O'Connor Reissues Breakout LP
- Metallica Add Dates, Newsted Reunion for Rock Hall
- Warp Records Celebrates 20th Anniversary
- R.I.P. Blender Magazine
- Echo Chamber: Ted Leo
- Echo Chamber: Jim Jones

#### Reviews

- **Röyksopp:** Junior
- **Jeremy Jay:** Slow Dance
- **Damien Jurado:** Caught in the Trees
- **Various Production:** The Invisible Lodger
- **Mt. St. Helens Vietnam Band:** Mt. St. Helens Vietnam Band

#### Track Reviews

- **Passion Pit:** "The Reeling"
- **Lindström & Prins Thomas:** "Tirsdagjam"
- **Wale:** "Chillin'" [ft. Lady Gaga]

#### Features

- **Guest Lists:** Wavves

#### News

- RIAA Teams With ISPs to Uproot Pirates
- Phoenix to Play "Saturday Night Live"
- Green Day | Title Tracks | Kingsbury Manx
- Vaselines Anthology Gets a Deluxe Reissue
- Uriel Jones | Soundgarden | Doe/Sadies
- Stars' Torquil Campbell Starts a New Band
- Arcade Fire Soundtrack Wild Things Trailer
- The New Dinosaur Jr. Cover Will Get You High
- Video: Dept. of Eagles: "No One Does It Like You"
- Mike Watt Drops Album, Tours, Writes Opera