



HUSH YOUR MOUTH Renault tiptoes into dance production by re-editing disco.

Disco driving

Reedit alchemist Jacques Renault turns nu-disco producer. **By John Dugan**

Disco edits are all the rage these days. We're not talking about the well-worn extended versions that genre-pioneer Tom Moulton cut from recording tape back in the day, but rather fully customized versions of '70s disco obscurities. Edits can be something of a misnomer, though, because today's producers are just as likely to play over the sampled rhythms, rendering them slightly more sinister for underground clubs.

New York's Jacques Renault is experiencing a steady rise via an edit called "Shadows," which he's released under the name Runaway with minimal-techno producer Marcos Cabral. It's been featured on the BBC's popular *Essential Mix* show and is slated for release on upcoming Fabric and Glimmers mix-discs. While "Shadows" is something of a hush-hush hit, it samples a no-name disco tune from the Warner Brothers catalog, so Renault's not seeing a dime from the licensing. But that doesn't mean he isn't on to something. Renault spins a nu-disco night at Lumen on July 26, and recently took time to chat with us about his journey into the nu-disco frontier.

At 28, Renault is too young to have discoed the first time around. The Bethesda, Maryland, native grew up on D.C. punk while he trained on the violin, and succumbed to drum 'n' bass as a teen attending the Cold Rice DJ

night at D.C. reggae bar Kaffa House. When he arrived in Chicago in 1997 to study sound and graphic design at the School of the Art Institute, he landed a job as a buyer at Gramophone Records. He held a Monday-night residency at Smart Bar and played jungle nights at venues like Café Lura and Red Dog under the name J. Initial. The disco seed was sown once Renault was exposed to what new chums like Derrick Carter were listening to. He was further inspired by new disco-mining artists like Metro Area. "You realize that disco doesn't mean 'Do the Hustle,'" he says. "You realize there's

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amazing, original music that people just sampled to make house music, and it's like, Ah, I should be looking for this. Once I got to know the history and classics, that's when it all started. In 2001, I just became a record digger—and it never stopped."

After relocating to New York in 2002, he found work as a set designer, and simultaneously discovered a disco scene that had stayed true through the lean years. Renault took on residencies at Tribeca Grand and Soho Grand (he also just started a new night at 205 on the Lower East Side) and watched disco consciousness sweep into the dance-punk scene via friends from the

DFA label. Now—with a close-knit community of Net radio shows, club nights, micro labels and reedit-crazy producers—New York is in the midst of birthing a nu-disco era.

As a DJ, Renault favors tracks with the live funk bass of American disco over the pure electronics of Italo, but he's more free ranging on Net radio shows (online, "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?" is even fair game). Renault has been no stranger to Chicago—playing the Funky Buddha Lounge seasonally—but he's only recently become a nu-disco poster boy worthy of *Paper* mag's beautiful people list.

The next step—becoming an original artist—has been a natural one. Working on edits led to creating productions that didn't need the vintage samples that inspired them. "Sometimes, by the time you're done, you have a full original, and that's really exciting," he says. Renault has two new singles due in the fall, and is even making use of his band-camp skills—playing strings and trumpet on his recordings and heading to D.C. to record on his mother's piano.

But he's not that old-school. He has a deal with the new digital-only RCRD LBL and a Runaway mix-CD coming soon. He's just started thinking about a full-length of originals—but from a DJ's point of view. "It would be cool to do an album because it's kind of like a radio show: You play a little bit of everything and that shows something about you."

Jacques Renault spins at Shake Your Pants at Lumen on July 26. See venues and check next week's listings.

Bjørn Torske

★★★★★
Feil knappe (Smalltown Supersound)

Lindstrom and Prins Thomas might be the pioneers of the new space-disco movement emerging from the land of fjords and Lutefisk, but Norwegian dance has been doing its own thing for quite a bit longer.

Torske is considered a godfather on the scene, having issued a slew of singles and a notable off-kilter house album, *Nedi Myra*, back in the '90s. Based in Bergen he stoked an electronic party scene that's still (supposedly) raging. At the end of the decade, he was a familiar name in elite international house circles, having released records on the Sveik and Tellé labels. Today, with Norway charting a course for us into new, cosmic dance territory, it's only fitting that Torske return as captain of the vessel.

He cruises some very strange waters on this full-length. *Feil knappe* is adventurous, overflowing with dubby, playful tracks like "Spelunker," with its video game intro; and heavenly, exotic tunes like "Møljekalas." *Feil knappe* betrays a restless mind that's been soaking up a lot of Studio One. There's evidence that Torske may have played by house rules at one time, as on the warbling jazzy number "Loe bar." But when he opts for damaged banjo on "Ørkenrotta," there's not much precedent. In fact, it's the nonelectronics—guitars, hand drums, tape echo and bells—that make up the almost psychedelic layering on the top tunes here, like "Møljekalas."

Elsewhere, Torske captures the spirit of rediscovery that the best dance DJs are passing on these days, with references to vintage cosmic and Italo production. What's more, he delivers it with such laid-back, sun-kissed ease that it all goes down like your third Tequila Sunrise, rather than a history lesson.—JD

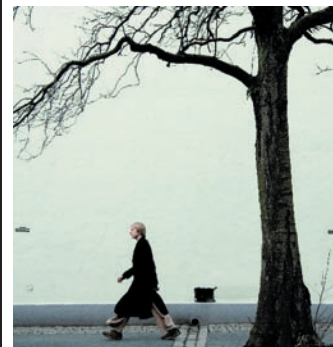


PHOTO: TOP: LEFT, ROB DOTSON; BOTTOM RIGHT, AMI HORTHBURY