



JAHTARI RIDDIM FORCE!

As Disrupt follows up his acclaimed 'Foundation Bit' album with 'The Bass Has Left The Building', SHOOK caught up with the co-owner of Jahtari to get to grips with the label's roots 'n' culture... Enter Jahtari Riddim Force!

One of the most poignant constituents of dub label Jahtari's output is their obvious Bit Obsessed heritage. They've spent countless hours scrolling frenetically through 8/16-bit processor evolutions to the steady bleep of chiptune soundtracks is distinctly flagged in Disrupt's sound, documented on Jahtari's 2004 debut dub-homage to C64-game SID composer Ron Hubbard ('International Karate Championship') and posted large on the label's Arcadian artwork.

There also lurks a strident affinity for cult B-movies, Sci-fi flicks and '70s Japanese animation; which Disrupt succinctly describes as an attraction to "the timeless themes of man vs. machine", "the struggle" and "the daily social commentary in most of our lives". However, before anyone gets it twisted... Jahtari are first and foremost a "DUB" label.

A point they are clear to labour... "It's not an electronic label doing dub, it's a dub label using new technologies to create something that couldn't or hasn't been done to dub before." A unification of two distinctly opposed principles: the generation of "a non-math, 100% soulful, approach to music," using machine code and processors as the central tools.

However, when Jahtari's owners Rootah and Disrupt first met on a construction site in Leipzig (1998), the friendship was immersed in somewhat different territory. It was Germany's rekindled art house bohemia of warehouse techno parties and the fast mutating Digital Hardcore, Breakcore and IDM scenes of the late '90s that sparked future exploits. Regular trips to Berlin's Hardwax record store are cited as being "massively influential" where they exchanged pay cheques for Detroit techno and Chicago house; before the duo went spiralling into the dubbed minimalism of Basic Channel and vintage '80s synthesiser classics from the store's Wackie's re-pressings.

On straight dub influences, Disrupt pinpoints Lee 'Scratch' Perry and King Tubby, giving 'Scratch' the nod, simply based on an "originality of technique" borne out of limitation. Something also central to Disrupt's own production beliefs: "There is no use having a room full of equipment and no ideas. It's good to have limitations," explains Disrupt.

It would be just these limitations that galvanised Disrupt's early sounds, starting out with a "no save" demo version of Cubase and tentative monophonic arrangements via Noisetracker on Rootah's Amiga 500. A period of experimentation where Jahtari's production blueprint DLR (Digital Laptop Reggae) was conceived, evolving in tandem with advances in audio software and the now standard laptop

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set-up. A streamlined technologically enhanced focus on off-beat riddims and island-centric vibrations.

Poignantly, it's the evolutionary rise of information-technology transfer methods that have been instrumental in Jahtari's success, with the label's first 3 years not seeing one physical release; instead following a net-label based approach. Initially, spurred on by "surprising support" to Disrupt's 'Fist Full Of Dub' files released on net-label Phonocake, Jahtari's own creative-commons roots in 2004 would herald a slew of file releases igniting interest across the globe.

Interest that would finally see Jahtari file output

committed to wax when Werk Discs issued 'Tubby ROM Module' and then 'Foundation Bit' in 2007. Highlighting a demand for physical units, that sees many of the labels essential early releases like 'Jahtarian Dubbers', 'The Elders' and 'Bo Marley Vs. Disrupt' finally getting the pressing they rightfully deserve now. When asked why Jahtari chooses to give its files away freely when many imprints covet files as a source of direct income, Disrupt dismisses the subject stating "It's a compressed reduced quality file. You know? You cant charge money for something that hasn't involved any real production costs; unlike a vinyl record say". Clearly, signalling the label's viewpoint on format choice and belief in a simple coda "the music must be out there"; allowing people to hear, engage and spread the word.

The label views their audiences' signalled response for real products as a natural u-turn on "poor quality technologies". "What you going to do with 50,000 tracks on your hard drive?", "Even the way you select and scan through music is altered". Leaving the Jahtari crews' opinion in no doubt, that "people are turning back to vinyl" with mp3/files used merely as a module for previewing products you want to own.

Although maybe not opinions shared by all, it's this ethos for product exposure that now sees the label with worldwide physical distribution; where the original two man operation has morphed into a growing collective of staff required to handle the workload of production, pressings, distribution and tour bookings. Quite simply it's an example of label research and development executed poetry.

On reflection, Jahtari have bucked the trend with a back-to-the-future manipulation of the once standard label model and inspired a solid "real world" demand for their output catalysed through freely available data. It's really a gloriously human victory in "the struggle" of two 8-bit obsessed dub-producers to connect across the sprawling mainframe, with a Master Control of mega-bytes the lodestar in their search for ghosts in the machine...Press Play if you believe in "the users".