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AND INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS ALLEN



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LIGHT SURGEONS

A cultural revolution is gradually gathering pace instigated by an ever-evolving collective known as The Light Surgeons. Their manifesto is to conceive of sound and vision as an integrated medium in order to create coherent AV work with feeling and, above all, a message.

The work of film score composers such as Ennio Morricone and Craig Armstrong is rightfully critically lauded. However, how much more powerful could the overall work be if, for example, Morricone was involved in every step of the creative process, from filming to editing to scoring? The answer can be found by taking in a performance by The Light Surgeons.

APB (All Points Between) is a prime example, and arguably The Light Surgeons defining moment thus far. Knowledge has been lucky enough to catch it twice, once in the seated, hushed calm of an art-house cinema, while the

second at this year's Big Chill involved all manner of festival debauchery. On both occasions, with infinitely different audiences, the reaction was of awe-inspiring astonishment (in a good way).

APB encompasses themes which are rarely addressed in dance music and club culture - for example multiculturalism and September 11th - yet it's not rammed down your throat or worse, patronising. Pupils dilate, ears prick up, grey matter is stimulated and thoughts provoked as in one small segment of APB, London's multicultural, polyglot vibe is transmitted via hand-held, shaky imagery of Brick Lane against a backdrop of driving, sitar-laced drum & bass.

It's a far, far cry from patterned, kaleidoscope visuals being looped on drapes in nightclubs, so just how did the idea of APB come about? Chris Allen, the 28-year-old founder of The Light Surgeons, explains: "I think overall we wanted to



combine all our joint skills and experiences in providing visuals to create something with more meaning, something that was more socially aware rather than the endless abstraction that seemed to be happening in both music and VJ culture."

The 'we' in question is specifically, fellow founder Jude Greenaway (recording alias Scanone) who provides much of the audio material and animation, James Price - the video-meister, Rob Rainbow who brings 2D print sensibilities and Becky Gates, manager of the whole shebang.

Initially born out Chris's desire, almost a decade ago, "to create a visual form of hip hop that drew on my graffiti and graphic design references," after getting together with Andy the momentum quickened - resulting in The Light Surgeons providing visuals for Ninja Tunes' Stealth residency at Blue Note.

Before long, a much more defined objective emerged, as Chris details: "Initially, I began sampling and referencing visual culture in general, using the assembly of looped visual samples to create a visual experience, a fusion of graphic and moving images designed to work with and illustrate the music. This creative melting pot fuelled my company's growth into producing and touring visual displays for music based events and live performances internationally."

Work for artists such as Cornershop, The Herbalizer, Zero 7, The Bays and UNKLE soon followed; plus corporate clients including Sony, Benetton and Channel 4. Very modestly, Chris declines to reveal any more high profile collaborations, as "you would just think I was name dropping."

With audio and visual equipment becoming ever cheaper, and particularly independent digital low budget filmmaking equipment, The Light Surgeons - with an average

age of 28 - have only really made a pin-prick in the Pandora's Box they have created. They are off to Japan for Tokyo's onedotzero festival and for talks about animation on Japanese TV. Then there's the forthcoming DVD releases of The Light Surgeons projects so far, though Chris is quite keen to continue along the lines of APB. "We are exploring the production of music and video along with a narrative story, our own form of documentary dance music, AV with a message. Something that entertains and makes people think. I hope the message that people gain from our shows is positive, I think it is but we have made people cry before... with joy I hope."

There's never been a revolution in which only tears of joy have been shed, but one thing is for sure: this is one revolution that will be televised... looped, projected, spliced, animated, layered, sampled, mixed and soundtracked. | ☐