

Deceptikon - Press

textura

Greater Cascadia LP - Textura

Greater Cascadia, the latest dispatch from Zachary Wright under the Deceptikon moniker, is actually an updated version of an identically-titled 12-inch released earlier on Merck Records with seven tracks newly added to the original's eight. Though Wright recently relocated to Tokyo via Seattle, the album itself was recorded in home studios throughout the Cascadian region (Seattle, Olympia, and Vancouver), hence the title. Almost five years in the making, Wright's solid Lost Subject follow-up finds Deceptikon redefining himself as an electronic artist dedicated to instrumental hip-hop than anything IDM-related.

The album's fifteen snappy struts are stitched together from crisp beats, synth basslines, samples, field elements, and chiming keyboards but act fast 'cos they're available in a pitifully minuscule run of 200 copies. On the rhythm front, funky breaks, lurching clip-hop beats, and sputtering glitch-hop abound, while sparkling keyboards and accordion provide the elegant and sometimes wistful melodies. It's great material, teeming with fresh ideas and both sonically svelte in design and lush in character. Wright keeps the material uncluttered while also warming his head-nodding beats with melodic sparkle (the marriage of hiccupping beat flow and gossamer string shimmer in "Almond Groves," for example). CCO hip-hop outfit CYNE blows verbal fire over the bleepy head-nod of "Montana," and even fragments are worth recommending, like "Backward Forward Reverse," which Wright chops into sweetly stuttering hip-hop funk, and "Evergreen," whose piano- and clavinet-based hip-hop indicates Wright's fully qualified to be a next-level hip-hop producer. Get this man some more MCs!



Greater Cascadia LP - Okayplayer.com

77/100

Greater Cascadia represents the second album release from Zack Wright alias Deceptikon, an album of pleasant electronic instrumentals not unsympathetic to the hip-hop ear. A blending of samples, synths, and live instrumentation, the overall effect is often organic, melancholic harmonies waxing and waning over steady rhythms and simplified-sounding breakbeats. The general consistency of mood and texture is both strength and weakness, however; subtle, ever-evolving arrangements make for a compelling, unifying listen, but also create a soundscape wherefrom the mind is given to wander.

Attention seldom wanders far ---some change always occurs that hooks and reels the listener back in, whether it is the lilting piano samples in "Evergreen" or the guest appearance of hip-hop act Cyne on "Montana." Several of the tracks are of a fragmentary nature, and the disc could almost pass for a beat tape if not for the

variation within individual pieces. Consistency in mood should not be mistaken for lack of composition.

The compelling aspect of the album lies in the arrangements, both of the tracks themselves in relation to one another and within individual tracks. Songs are composed of seemingly simple individual parts that are then layered and introduced in very varying ways, creating a Zen-like emphasis on the overall effect in spite of the constant variation. The same applies to the entire album; the feeling of the whole lingers more than the tracks. This from an album that was supposedly composed and recorded over a five-year period, in several locations! There is clearly an individual presence and personality to be felt, albeit one who reveals himself in a slow, unfolding way rather than directly pointing at himself with every measure.

Only 200 copies were made of this CD, which at 15 tracks nearly doubles the tracklisting of an earlier-released and similarly-named 12-inch. An unfortunate scarcity, when compared to the decent quality of the music. It appears that his website sells mp3s, which may be the only way for the interested to hear.



Greater Cascadia 12" - Okayplayer.com

Not to overstate the man's influence on up-and-coming producers, but Dilla comparisons might be in order for Japanese (sic) beatmaker Deceptikon as well. Granted, there's also a pretty significant amount of Prefuse 73-ish-ness to many of the compositions on Greater Cascadia, his newest releases, out now on the the now defunct Merck Records, too. But a track like "Almond Groves" has all the organic warmth and grit, in addition to the subtle synthetic undertones, of a Ummah-era Jay Dee production. All eight tracks on the disc are instrumental, with the exception of "Montana," which features the Gainesville, Florida-based Hip-Hop crew Cyne kicking lyrics over Deceptikon's stuttering drums and electro-bass programming.

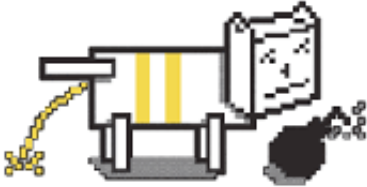


Birds Of Cascadia - Textura

Zack Wright's Deceptikon site indicates that his handmade Japan tour CD Birds Of Cascadia is already sold out-not that that should surprise anyone too much, given that it was produced in a ridiculously small 100-copy run (those who missed out won't have to wait too long for new material, though, as Wright's prepping a new full-length, Greater Cascadia, for an early 2007 release). The tour CD might be a patchwork of unreleased songs and remixes (Machine Drum, Blamstrain, Tiki Obmar, Direkt Jive, Winnie The Shit) but its 40 minutes sounds great nonetheless.

A delicious amalgam of hip-hop, soul, and electropop, Birds Of Cascadia is unpretentious and, seemingly by design, modest in ambition yet never less than satisfying; a cut like "Footsteps In The Fire," for example, with its laid-back vibe, silken strings, and funky turntable effects, charms effortlessly. Some cuts hit harder (the remix of Blamstrain's "Alive In Arms (Japan re-edit)" while others are as warm and enveloping as the softest blanket (Wright turns the

lights way down for the gorgeous treatment of Tiki Obmar's "Akeney, Iowa"). With its sputtering bass lines and jaunty rhythms, the Machine Drum overhaul "Inner Outer Offs" encapsulates the collection's generally jubilant spirit, while "Dre Will Have His Day" features some memorably funky voice edits and squealing boom-bap. The Deceptikon formula is actually fairly straightforward-"Defenestration" essentially gooses a phat bass and funky hip-hop beats with a heavy snare slap-but the tunes' sing-song melodies and techni-colour sound provide a constant source of pleasure.



Greater Cascadia 12" - Boomkat

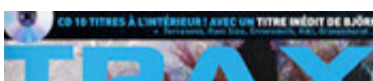
Originally harking from Portland Oregon, producer Deceptikon has decamped to the towering urban expanse of Tokyo - a move that has in no way diminished his keen eye for loping beats, heavy atmospherics and disrupted melodies. With the Merck imprint finally laying down its head for an eternal sleep, this 12" helps see the label off with some aplomb - as Deceptikon further tunnels a successful furrow between the output of Machinedrum and Proswell. Opening with 'Greater Cascadia Unified', loping yet sprightly beats soon part to reveal a landscape of rolling breaks and video-game flourishes that are hip-hop to the core but a distant relative to the sonic tail-chasing that characterises much of the genre. At eight tracks long there's plenty of value for money, with Cyne showing up on 'Montana' to bestow some carbonated Miami vibes, whilst 'Moaning Logic' ups the breaks per minute for some vibrant party attitude. Welcome to Cascadia...



Lost Subject review - Grooves Magazine #14

Strip away the MC, and hip-hop can very easily walk the border of bland and even bad: it's not ambient, it's not for dancing, and there's only so much stoned head-nodding you can do before your neck cricks again. When there's nothing to grab hold of but smoke, things can easily slip through your fingers. Portland-based Deceptikon largely avoids drifting into the ether, though, by grounding his debut album in an earthly love of jazz and melody that posits him not many miles away from Britain's premier laptronica whiz kid, Four Tet. Opener "Narcissus" proves that more people should make use of things that sound like a Theremin, while glitch and noise are used to add concentric layers of groove rather than to subvert melody and structure. On "Autumn Storm", a jerking, smiling beat is piled with flutes and a broken acoustic guitar (or maybe banjo, or maybe zither!) to winsome effect. Tracks are kept mercifully short and concept free, allowing melodies to shine briefly and keeping beats from ever reaching tedi um. Swells of keys add space and distance, double bass brings some swing into the proceedings, and occasional majestic horns and mournful strings ("Ox Conservatory") make the playful into the profound. It's a very fine line, but Deceptikon walks it well. Heads will nod.

Nick Southall



Lost Subject 2 review - Trax Magazine #77 (France)

Dans un entrelacs de rythmiques luxuriantes et de melodies



ludiques, Deceptikon, jeune musicien basé à Eugene en Oregon, optimise la renaissance d'un hip hop instrumental, confesse sa préférence pour les loops avenantes et encourageantes, ainsi que pour les ambiances lounge parcourues de voix fantômes. Abstract hip hop s'acoquinant avec l'électronica, Deceptikon met tout son talent au service d'une musique privilégiant la respiration, le souffle, au vagabondage de terrasse. Avec "Germanic", "Autumn Storm" ou "Figural Phonograph", on découvre la brochette gagnante: l'alliance impeccable de DJ Shadow, Cinematic Orchestra, Funkstorung, et Boards of Canada.

Laurent Guerel



Lost Subject review - Portland Mercury / Seattle Stranger (7-1-04)

3.5/4 stars

As Portland's first laptop battle winner, Deceptikon has a winning combination--solid beats, cool sounds, and interesting songwriting. His ability to keep heads bobbing with hip hop rooted breakbeats and a large palate of sounds helped him win the battle; these are both what makes his debut full length so hot. The songs flow together with rhythmic patterns and of melodies that can be playful, eerie, and beautiful. The arrangements show a mature restraint by not getting bogged down in too many layers or complexity, but they're far from formulaic. This is an exciting debut, especially because he can represent it all live, and there's got to be more heat on the way.

Aaron Miles

Lost Subject review - Inpress (Melbourne, AUS)

Lost Subject is the chilled out debut of a Portland based producer Deceptikon. Creating smooth jazzy downtempo beats, his music is evocative and atmospheric, equally drawing upon hip hop and jazz elements for his gorgeously produced carefully crafted grooves. Utilising numerous techniques, yet regularly arriving at a similar funky location, Deceptikon effortlessly creates the kind of highly composed beat orientated instrumental hip hop pieces championed in recent times by Ninja Tune via the likes of Sixtoo or Blockhead. Whilst not necessarily pushing the sonic envelope, Deceptikon is peerless in his ability to get a groove on, though he is at his best on cuts like *Treghost* where he doesn't rely solely on the beats, utilising acoustic guitar and synthesizer to create an intimate sense of longing. Composed over the last few years, Lost Subject is a journey that fits perfectly into the lounge room. Funky basslines, crackling trip hop beats and lush gentle atmospheres that act as a relaxing tonic to all the stressors of daily life.

Bob Baker Fish

Lost Subject review - Jackpot Records (Portland)

All of Portland should be proud of this one--super resonant, jazzy headnoddery from this NW producer who seems to have fully digested the catchiest and most lyrical elements of the last fifteen years of hip hop and built his own tribute to them. At once nostalgic and far reaching, these instrumentals are as warm and rich as anything we've heard since "One Time For Your Mind."

Lost Subject review - Igloomag

I can still recall the day my Lost Subject 12" arrived via UPS at my office. My boss signed for it when I had stepped out for a quick second and as he walked up to my cubicle, he said "your Commemorative Elvis plates have arrived" with a snickering tone like he knew what was waiting for me inside the large flat cardboard container. I got over my embarrassment quickly after discovering I had been sent one of 500 copies on gold vinyl. Elvis would be glad for me, especially now that Merck has released an expanded version of Lost Subject on CD with a welcoming blend of fresh new tracks mixed in with selections from the excellent original.

Deceptikon paints his world with strokes of sound from a wide palette of found clips and snips all applied with a skewed clip-hop groove rooted in melodic jazzy downtempo. "Chords Beats Coffee" dishes out its delicacies exactly in the order the title implies with stuttering samples of strings followed by casual beats, then chunky pads form the bass line, only to be digitally scrambled midway through the second course. "Autumnstorm" has an Asian-flavored hip-hop vibe minus the tiresome rapper with a couple of 99-cent throwaway rhymes in his notebook while "Figural Phonograph" demonstrates the possibilities of what occurs when you stumble across quality virtual turntablism. My favorites from the original 12" are here as well; "Treeghost" starts off with eerie Yma Sumac-like vocals then subtly switches gears to old-school funky urban beats while "Way of the Samurai" twists and contorts a music box sample over more old-school beats and finally, the smoky "Bossanova-style A" still makes me thirst for cool cocktails in a crowded lounge.

If Lost Subject doesn't make you a believer of Deceptikon, then his brilliant live shows recently featured in the Raiders Of The Lost Crunk tour - as well as his status as Portland's first laptop battle winner - surely will.

John Reveles

Lost Subject 12" review - Boomkat

The new Merck 12" comes courtesy of Deceptikon, and a deep number it is too. The opening track has lush Rhodes keys over sparse hip hop beats that rolls superbly, the beats are crisp and mix with the large analog basslines very tightly. The second track opens with jazz sample, organs and horns looped and layered subtly to give an almost live feel to the track. This is a more organic release than Merck have put out before, and there is a real hip hop feel across the 12", a bit of scratching, some beat drops and a few ace samples that work extremely well. The flip offers the superb 'Way of the Samurai' which could have been lifted from the Ghost Dog soundtrack, lush keys and woodwind samples are mixed perfectly to generate an eastern atmosphere, the Rhodes making another appearance with freestyle keys played over the top, but kept to a groove and not overused. Check!

Show write-up - Seattle Stranger (5-19-05)

Portland producer Zack Wright displays a DJ Krush-like grasp of rhythm and melody on Lost Subject (Merck), his debut album as Deceptikon. The disc exhibits IDM producers' common infatuation with hiphop beats coupled with esoteric jazz, funk, and easy-listening samples. The overall vibe is smooth, sophisticated, and engaging in that 1997 Ninja Tune way.

Dave Segal

Show write-up - Real Detroit Weekly (10-6-04)

Subterranean Soundscapes

In celebration of its third and fourth releases, Detroit Underground will take over Foran's on Friday, October 8, hosting Merck and Fourthcity recording artists Deceptikon and Zapan on their Raiders of the Lost Crunk Tour. Those familiar with Jimmy Edgar's Kristuit Salu vs. Morris Nightingale work on Merck will have some idea of what to expect from Deceptikon - though the latter is decidedly less glitch-oriented. Think Express Rising meets Scott Heren.

Terry Dwyer

Show write-up - Portland Mercury (2-19-04)

(Holocene, 1001 SE Morrison) IDM alert: Portland All-Area Laptop Battle Winner Deceptikon feeds his careful beats to the shredder, samurai-chef style. Result: a lot of studied flailing, beats that cut like a scapel, and bits of melody for flavor. AKA the stuff of champions!

Julianne Shepherd