

The Rise of Electronic Dance Music

An in-depth look at the current state of EDM

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Table of Contents:

3 – *Waiting for the drop: the meteoric rise of EDM in the new millennium*

- 4. Underground to Mainstream
- 6. Blurring the Line: Cyberpunks and “Get Laid”
- 8. Moombahton, U Street Music Hall & D.C.: a case study
- 10. The business of it all: Tittsworth and U Hall
- 15. Source list

16 – Selected EDM articles

- 16. Listen to Emancipator’s *Dusk To Dawn* (Review)
- 18. An open letter to the LA Times: Sorry, but EDM isn’t going away (Editorial)
- 23. Cyberpunks: The Men Behind the Masks (Interview)
- 27. Zeds Dead deliver “Bass-Laced” Essential Mix for BBC 1 (Mix Review)
- 29. Get your neo-soul glitchfunk groove on with Australia’s Cheshire and ‘The Funkd Up’ EP (Review)
- 31. Moonrise Artist Spotlight: Flux Pavilion & Doctor P
- 33. Markus Schulz gives Echostage a reason to scream (Event Review)
- 36. Moonrise Artist Interview: Tittsworth
- 41. It might get louder: Moonrise Festival replaces Starscape as premier DMV electronic music festival

Waiting for the drop: The meteoric rise of electronic dance music in the new millennium

WASHINGTON – In 2002, at the age of 15, UK-born Oliver Jones obtained a pirated version of then-popular music production software Fruity Loops and began to construct electronically manufactured beats. Finding inspiration in the underground scene that was U.K. garage, Jones – stage name Skream – soon found himself at the forefront of an entirely new genre of electronic dance music, or “EDM”. As his all-music.com bio puts it, “(Jones) took the tension and release formula of dance music, removed the release and layered in more tension instead.” (Macgregor). Just like that, dubstep was born.

“I can still remember – at that time, at least – just being completely blown away,” said Michael Hogan, a music blogger for Overkill Entertainment and a long-time dance music aficionado. “More than blown away, I was excited. It’s like meeting someone for the first time and realizing you’ll someday be best friends. It was a turning point in electronic music, no doubt about it.”

The rise of Skream – and similar artists like Benga and Rusko – isn’t an exception but an emblem of the state of dance music in the new millennium. As technology has evolved, making electronic music hasn’t necessarily gotten easier, but accessing the tools to do so certainly has. Gone are the days of being forced to dig through crates of old records to find that one sample you’d love to use more than anything, or spending hours on a clunky desktop trying to master one or two tracks in a day. Programs like Reason, Logic, and Ableton have soared in popularity – Ableton just

released the ninth iteration of its touted “Live” production suite, and high profile DJs like Deadmau5 and Bassnectar swear by it.

“I use Ableton Live for both live performance and in-studio,” Bassnectar (real name Lorin Ashton) said in an interview with NUVO. “It’s great and I’ve learned how to use it in many different ways.” (Schmid).

Whether it’s the emergence of new genres like dubstep or moombahton, the resurgence of once-popular genres like trance and techno, or subgenres/combinations like electro-house and trap, electronic music is reaching levels unprecedented in its history. Thus begets the obvious question: why? Technology certainly played a part. Economics are also a huge part of the equation – when something is as popular as EDM, the commercializing interests are always close behind.

When you have a question about steak, the best place to start is the butcher, and what follows is a chronicle of my attempts to understand where our electronic fixation comes from – as well as where it’s headed – by going straight to the source.

“Underground” to “mainstream”

While the focus here is on the recent explosion of the genre, electronic music has technically been around since the 1930s. The first electronic song to ever be reproduced was John Cage’s “imaginary Landscape #1”, all the way back in 1939. At the time it fell into a category simply called “noise” – because there really was nothing like it up to that point (Bozarelli). It wasn’t until the development of the first Moog synthesizer in 1964 that the concept of electronic music really began to take hold. With that in mind, the history of dance music goes from a brief, almost flash-in-the-pan span

of a few decades to nearly 75 years worth of build-up – making the question “why now” all the more relevant.

In the mid-to-late 90s, the “rave” scene became synonymous with drugs, promiscuity, and secret warehouses. These connotations may well have affected the subsiding of the underground and a push towards mainstream/“legitimate” venues. While some 90s dance music had crossover appeal – look no further than Eurodance outfit Eiffel 65’s stuck-in-your-head-for-days “Blue (Da Ba Dee)” which reached the sixth spot on Billboard’s Hot 100 list – dance music on the whole was rarely on the public radar.

“I recall being pretty indifferent when the whole ‘underground scene’ was peaking,” Hogan said. “I was barely a teenager when the new millennium hit, so it may have been a function of age, but all I heard about these warehouse events was bad news.”

Then, as Hogan notes, something strange began to happen.

“Dance music just started popping up everywhere. It was in songs by people like Britney Spears and on television commercials...I couldn’t figure it out at the time, but I guess it was when electronic music was sort of reintroduced to the mainstream...albeit in a more easily digested package.”

Of course, electronic elements had existed in music ever since the synthesizer was introduced, and artists like Kraftwerk were making “electronic albums” as early as 1971 (Bozarelli). But this felt different: it wasn’t just small-time artists experimenting with electronic tinges. This was a concerted effort to hire top-notch producers and tailor a sound that was specifically and irrevocably electronic.

This doesn't mean EDM as we see it today is a product of the mainstream, though. While steady beat electronica – anything with a non-interrupted four-on-the-floor beat seen in house and trance music – was slowly becoming more accepted and embraced by Top-40 performers, the underground seemed much more interested in the breakbeat genres that were ever-emerging. Drum 'n' bass, jungle, breaks, garage...the list goes on and on; these were the genres that would soon evolve into dubstep and electro-house and fidget and a myriad of other now-popular strains of EDM.

Electronic music, then, evolved in two separate yet intertwined threads: the high-gloss, low-risk mainstream productions, which exuded electronica but never strayed too far from the norm, and the underground genres which dipped in popularity with the fall of the 90s rave scene but still held core followings in many cities around the world. It was only a matter of time before the two collided, and in the mid-2000s the underground began to grow in size. It wouldn't be long before it would rise to such prominence as to blur the line between the two entirely.

Blurring the line: Cyberpunks & "Get Laid"

On February 9, B.A.D.A.S.S. Raves held a legitimate warehouse event called "Get Laid 2: Sloppy Seconds". Questionable name aside, the event featured both local and international talent, and over 1,500 people attended. The headliner was a group called Cyberpunks – an electro duo from Italy – who have played festivals and venues around the world. Of note here is the interesting juxtaposition of more mainstream talent in Cyberpunks and the "underground" feel of the show. B.A.D.A.S.S. has been around

for more than a decade, and their shows weren't always legitimate events in licensed venues.

In "Get Laid" we can almost see a metaphor for the scene at large, the "blurring" of lines mentioned briefly above. As Fabio Liuzzi – one half of Cyberpunks – tells it, it's much different than he's often used to.

"The shows in Europe, they're very different," Liuzzi said. "(Get Laid) was a warehouse party, not a club party like we're used to in Italy."

But while the party took place in a warehouse, and certainly had the old-school feel of a 90s rave, it was in a sanctioned venue and run to the strictest fire codes. Tickets were even sold online – something unheard of in the old scene.

"People didn't buy tickets to raves," Hogan said. "You got the address from a guy you met at a bodega, after giving another guy a secret password and being led down an underground tunnel." He laughed and said, "Well, maybe it wasn't that serious. But it had to have that level of secrecy because the things they were doing weren't strictly speaking legal endeavors."

Massi Arena – the other half of Cyberpunks – is much younger than his 35-year-old companion Liuzzi. Having not experienced some of the more wild parties of the 90s, he found Get Laid to be a unique experience.

"It's crazy, for sure...I'd heard of these things happening (back in the day) but to see them happening now is strange," Arena said. "I figured warehouse days were more or less over."

So many factors are at work here. An old-school company throwing a quasi-old-school event with modern day safety precautions and a much more mainstream

headliner; this isn't out of the ordinary for B.A.D.A.S.S., who have events like this almost once every other month. This blend of old and new is emblematic of the evolution of dance music – the fusing of the mainstream and the underground, as the latter rose to meet the former.

Moombahton, U Street Music Hall & D.C.: a case study

If you're walking along U Street and you feel the ground shaking beneath your feet, don't cry "earthquake,"; you're probably just feeling the bass from U Street Music Hall, the District's premiere, low-key dance club. The venue has gained a foothold in the District's burgeoning nightlife scene by offering quality, no-frills service and a return to focus on what matters most: the music.

"I've been going to U-Hall since they opened their doors about three years back," Hogan – also a D.C.-area native – said. "The music is always great and the sound is equally top notch."

Although its only been opened since the spring of 2010, industry experts have come to the same conclusion; the club placed second on the "10 Best Soundsystems in America" list compiled by electronic music website Beatport. The article calls the 500-person capacity venue a "bass dungeon, designed with sound as the top priority." (Bernard).

Artists love it just as much. "U-Hall has the best soundsystem in America!" veteran electronic producer Skream espoused via Twitter after playing there last February. "It's so good to play bass music and actually *feel* the bass!"

The venue can thank its ownership for this level of commitment to high fidelity. Founded by a pair of DJs – Will Eastman (one-third of The Volta Bureau) and Eric Hilton (half of Thievery Corporation) – and co-owned by Eastman and Jesse Tittsworth (another local DJ), the mindset veers away from the money first, music second attitude usually applied to the club scene – and often, EDM writ large.

“I felt there was a need for a dance club with a rock club feel and attitude,” Eastman said in an interview with Music Is Inspiration. “No dress code, no velvet rope, no attitude, affordable drinks, affordable cover...but I wanted a top-notch dance club soundsystem.”

From the monthly parties like Moombahton Massive and Eastman’s own “Bliss” series of indie dance events, U-Hall has developed a devout following among many D.C.-area residents.

As such, it’s not just the music that brings clubgoers out in droves. The scene in the D.C. area is tight-knit, and nowhere is this more evident than U-Hall.

“I see a ton of the same people at shows every weekend,” frequent concertgoer and promotor Mikk Nuth said. “It’s cliché, but it’s like a big family.”

Nuth most recently attended one of U-Hall’s famed “Moombahton Massive” genre-specific parties, hosted by dance music duo Nadastrom.

Moombahton is a uniquely D.C. musical innovation, much like go-go before it. Dave Nada (one half of Nadastrom) created the genre on the fly while performing at a basement party. Taking the Dutch house track “Moombah” and slowing it down to reggaeton tempo (about 110 beats per minute), Nada spawned a phenomenon, which has since graced massive electronic festivals and topped music charts worldwide.

The monthly Moombahton Massive parties, begun shortly after Nada pioneered the genre in 2010, showcase a culmination of all that U Street Music Hall strives to deliver: excellent music, a deft mix of local and international talent, and above all a familial and friendly environment.

“I haven’t missed a Moombahton Massive in over a year,” Hogan said.

“Nadastrom and Sabo (another local DJ) always put on a great show, and the acts they bring in never disappoint.”

“Moombahton Massive is always where I see the most familiar faces,” Nuth said.

“It’s just so low-key. Dave Nada’s mom is even selling empanadas at the bar. It doesn’t get more ‘family’ than that.”

U Street Music Hall and the rise of moombahton – both in D.C. and around the world – are a perfect microcosm of the EDM scene today. The newness of it all, whether it’s the venue or the genre, speaks volumes to people just getting into the scene. The spontaneity of the genre’s creation is a testament to the limitless possibilities of dance music, ever more easily exploited with the rise of technology. And while money is always a factor – with EDM permeating the Top-40 charts now more than ever – it’s a mixture of the closeness of everyone in the scene and great new music that’s consistently pushing EDM further and faster as the genre moves into the future.

The business of it all: Tittsworth and U Hall

On any given Saturday, you can find Jessie Tittsworth twenty feet underground, standing on a cork-cushioned dancefloor, drink in one hand and gesturing wildly with the other, in the middle of a friendly conversation with a fan or a friend at U Street Music

Hall. This isn't the exception, it's the norm; for a guy as attuned to his fanbase as Tittsworth, this is all part of the job.

"I never thought I would be a club owner," Tittsworth said. "But U-Hall will always have a special place in my heart. There's nothing like it, and I feel lucky to be able to come home to it regularly."

At 34 years old, the DJ/producer who calls Washington, D.C. home has seen plenty since he got his start back in 2004. He's toured the world – first as a big name in Baltimore club music – when it was still a relatively underground phenomenon – then as a moombahton pioneer. He's even founded a label (T&A Records) along with fellow artist DJ Ayres. Safe to say, he's a busy guy.

"Well the first thing I had to do was trade whiskey for coffee," Tittsworth said with a laugh, "It's tough to balance it all, but it's rewarding."

Tittsworth got his start spinning warehouses and small venues in Baltimore, riding the resurgent wave of popularity of Baltimore club music in the early 2000s. The genre, a blend of hip-hop and chopped-up house music, is a far cry from the moombahton and electro he's well known for today – an indicator of how he's evolved as EDM has moved into the spotlight.

"I've always liked a wide range of music...I don't know that I made the conscious effort to force diversity, I think I just have love for all kinds of music," he said. "My iTunes is mad OCD."

As he made the transition from Baltimore club to moombahton his stock began to rise steadily.

“I still remember seeing Tittsworth at one of the first Moombahton Massives,” said Hogan. “The genre was fledgling but he already seemed to have such a handle on it, a sense of how to put together a great set, to get the crowd moving.”

Whether it was luck or great timing, moombahton was soon gracing mainstages at festivals around the world and featuring in mixes compiled by some of the most popular DJs. As the genre boomed, so too did Tittsworth’s career. Upon the release of his debut full-length album “12 Steps”, Tittsworth – and EDM – were on the verge of something huge.

He found that something with moombahton. In 2011 he released “Two Strokes Raw” in collaboration with another D.C. native Alvin Risk; met with critical acclaim, the album featured the song “Pendejas”, which was especially well-received and saw Tittsworth’s fame skyrocket.

“To go from seeing him in an intimate, 400-person room to seeing him on a festival stage playing to thousands of people...it was something to see,” Hogan said. “I’ll still always see him as that guy who throws free shows at U Street Music Hall and always has time for a picture or an autograph.”

And this, perhaps, is Tittsworth’s greatest coup de grace; now, more than ever, he’s the exact same down-to-earth guy he was when he set off on this journey almost a decade ago. The only thing that’s changed recently? His place of residence; Tittsworth moved to L.A. a short time ago to keep up with the ever-changing face of the industry.

“I love L.A., even though the nightlife scene here is a little different,” he said. As the industry expands, it becomes increasingly monetized, and it’s become somewhat of

a “spend big or get left behind” mentality. New festivals pop up every year, artists explode overnight, and all the while EDM rakes in millions.

Despite his great successes, he speaks with an undertone of what feels like gratitude or even debt; he’s still focused on the people who listen to his music as his number one priority.

“U-Hall and the people (of D.C.) will always have a special place in my heart. I feel very lucky musically, personally, and from a family standpoint to be able to come home to it regularly.”

“I play music because it’s what I love,” he said. “And nothing beats the scene here in the District. It’s intimate, educated, appreciative, not snobby, sweaty, and fun.”

And perhaps here is where we can find the best indicator of the future of dance music. It’s true that many are involved with money as their top priority, with ticket prices for festivals like Ultra and Electric Daisy Carnival coming in at well over \$300. And many investors are jumping on the bandwagon with dollar signs in their eyes – Robert F.X. Sillerman of Live Nation recently acquired HARD Events (an L.A.-based promotion company) and has plans for over \$1 billion in total electronic music acquisitions (Sisario).

But the future seems to be in artists like Tittsworth and the Cyberpunks. The former came up from the old scene, where family and a tight-knit circle of show attendees was common and respect was stressed, and the latter began after this era had ended but still share its sentiments. When the dust settles and the money stops changing hands, electronic music fans will come back to those that respect them, not

just the bottom line. So while the mainstream and the underground may have melded, it's still to be seen which notion – economics or integrity – will prevail.

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Michael Hogan: mike@asavamusicgroup.com, (301)-706-2896

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Listen to Emancipator's 'Dusk To Dawn' (Review)

Written by Kevin Madert

You're in the wilderness, a hundred miles from any civilization. A light breeze blows through your hair, carrying the scent of a nearby fire on its wispy fingers. Embers simmer and spark as the wood burns, the crackling echoing through the otherwise silent trees. You close your eyes, allowing your remaining senses to bask in the utter tranquility of the moment. You open them again...

You're in your bedroom, or your office, or your backyard. That's what listening to downtempo virtuoso [Emancipator](#)'s new album 'Dusk To Dawn' is like; a 45 minute aural journey, accompanied by lush strings, ethereal vocals, and an ever-present backbeat.

The third studio effort from Emancipator – real name Doug Appling – follows in the footsteps of 2006's 'Soon it Will Be Cold Enough' and 2010's 'Safe In the Steep Cliffs', providing a deft blend of trip-hoppy goodness. This time around, though, it's clear Appling has it down to a fine art. From the violin solos on 'Minor Cause' and 'Merlion' – courtesy of frequent accompanist and live companion [Ilya Goldberg](#) – to the shades-of-Gramatik jive beat on 'Dusk to Dawn', there's not a purposeless note on the entire album.

That's not to say there aren't plenty of pleasant surprises among 'Dusk To Dawn's' ten tracks. 'Valhalla's' elevator-muzak intro and subtle hints of slow-pulsing bass caught my ear upon first listen. The choir vocals and gentle bounce of the title track, which also features a bluegrass-tinged violin accompaniment, were another standout. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention 'The Way', which contains otherworldly vocals

and a sax solo from none other than Dominic Lalli of [Big Gigantic](#).

Appling's music has always had a special place in my heart – 'Soon it Will Be Cold Enough' has gotten me through a lot of long, late-night drives – but 'Dusk To Dawn' is something special. "Labor of love" is the cliché I keep returning to, and it feels like the right one. While this album will probably fly under a whole bunch of radars, it should be smack dab in the middle of yours.

Grab a good pair of headphones and check out the album in its entirety/purchase it [here](#) through Loci Records.

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/listen-to-emancipators-dusk-to-dawn-album-review/>)

Originally posted on WhiteRaverRafting.com

An Open Letter to the LA Times: Sorry, But EDM Isn't Going Away (Rave Scene Editorial)

Written by Kevin Madert

[An article](#) posted earlier this week by the [Los Angeles Times](#) has caused quite a stir among concert promoters, artists, and electronic dance music fans (*this music fan included*). The article, supposedly the culmination of a “Times investigation” in progress for several years, attempts to conjure a highly contestable link between drug related deaths and the electronic dance music scene. I won't boil your blood with every detail, but a few highlights include:

- 1) The headline – “A fatal toll on concertgoers as raves boost cities' income”.
- 2) The strong implication that [Pasquale Rotella](#) and Reza Gerami – owners of Insomniac, Inc. and Go Ventures, Inc. respectively – are in some way personally responsible for the deaths of “at least 14 people who attended raves produced by (the two companies) since 2006.” Insomniac responded to the article in a [statement on their website](#).
- 3) San Bernardino city attorney James Penman's observation that “a rave without drugs is like a rodeo without horses. They don't happen.”

Let's set a few things straight here. First of all – despite what many believe – *these are not raves*. Major music festivals and events put on by companies like [Insomniac](#) and [Go Ventures](#) often have budgets well into the millions of dollars, with upwards of fifty or even a hundred thousand attendees. Whether you like it or not,

you're attending electronic dance music concerts, put on by production and promotion companies who pay taxes, advertise heavily and publicly, and go through all the proper legal channels to ensure their events run smoothly. For better or worse, and with the rapid mainstream integration of the EDM scene, true underground "raves" are growing fewer and farther between.

This tidbit of misinformation can be blamed just as much on a fractured scene clinging to its past as it can be on outside observers. That's not to say EDM should forget its past as it rockets into the future; underground raves had a huge role in crafting the scene's evolution. From the attitudes of "Peace, Love, Unity and Respect" to the simple fact that people once got together just for their love of great electronic music, we can still feel the ripples in the pond from stones tossed many years ago.

WhiteRaverRafting.com chose its name in part to pay homage to the many incredible things which were born of the underground rave scene, so we're as attuned as anyone to its undeniable influence.

For something to "evolve", it must move forward, and this is where the "rave" correlations end. When you pay top dollar to see [Deadmau5](#), or [Bassnectar](#), or [Swedish House Mafia](#), or any one of thousands of other artists, you're paying for a show. The days of dimly lit rooms and 5 dollar covers are all but gone, replaced by massive spectacles like [Ultra Music Festival](#), [Electric Daisy Carnival](#), [Electric Zoo](#), and so on. While the positive ideals and focus on the music (hopefully) still remain, the negatives often associated with "raves" – the unsanctioned venues, the heavily publicized drug use, the lack of concerns for patron safety – have in reality disappeared.

This evolution is the sticking point for many unaccustomed to the scene.

Speaking on raves, the Times writes that the audiences “are no longer a few hundred revelers but tens of thousands.” They even point out that Rotella and Gerami began calling their events “electronic music festivals” instead of “raves” as “safety requirements that were missing from the underground scene (were implemented)”. In writing this, they utterly bypass the minimal leap in intellect it would take to disassociate an old-school “rave” from a modern day show.

Kaskade had a wonderful rebuttal to the article posted on his Tumblr entitled “[No One Knows Who We Are](#)”, and I’ve borrowed a snippet below to hammer home my point.

“Today, massive events are being held on terms that have been scrutinized by engineers, civil servants, fire chiefs, policemen, and all manner of bureaucratic safety hoops. As EDM’s numbers have become larger, we’ve become more accountable. No longer hiding in an abandoned warehouse, we’re paying taxes, paying dues, and stimulating the hell out of each cities’ economy that hosts an event. Before the doors ever open, there is a string of green lights that have to be run through by people whose business it is to keep these events safe. The same codes put into place for every other genre of music applies to EDM. To say otherwise is untruthful and adheres to dangerous stereotyping.”

“Dangerous stereotyping” is a perfect segue into the Times’ egregious insinuations regarding drugs and drug-related injuries/fatalities at electronic dance music events. Unfortunately, Their “reporting” fits snugly into the news media’s predetermined storyline when it comes to EDM-related topics.

The fact that 14 people have died “during or shortly after concerts” produced by

Insomniac and Go Ventures since 2006 is not something to be taken lightly. Nor is the fact that many of the deaths were “linked to ecstasy or similar drugs.” It doesn’t matter how hard law enforcement officials, event promoters, security and medical staff work to fight it. Drug use and abuse will continue to occur at concerts and festivals. So long as there is a demand, people will find a way to fill it. And so long as that demand is being filled, people will find a way to overdo it.

But drug use doesn’t only occur at events put on by Insomniac or Go Ventures. Nor does it only occur at electronic music events. Drug use occurs at events of all genres. To paint the EDM scene as some sort of safe haven for the free and open peddling of illicit substances is wildly inaccurate, as is any implication that it’s the only subculture in music where drug use takes place.

On this point, the Times seems to completely discount the level of effort that goes into making events on such a scale happen. These aren’t shoddily prepared warehouse “raves”. These are massive productions planned out to the minutest of details. Security and patron safety are chief among those details. It’s why we’re searched thoroughly upon entry at 95 percent of the events we attend. It’s why security patrols the grounds of music festivals and the dancefloors of clubs. It’s why many festivals and venues hire world-class medical staffs and have ambulances and police cruisers on call, ready at a moment’s notice. I don’t know how to make it more clear: *safety is paramount at dance music events.*

Look at it like this: You’re sitting in a restaurant. You see an electrical outlet on the wall. You decide its in your best interests to approach the wall, lick your finger, and stick it directly into the outlet. How much sense does it make for you to blame the

restaurant for the shock you receive? This may be a rudimentary example, but it works for our purposes: blaming the event promoter for the independent actions of a miniscule minority of their patrons is illogical. Even with the plethora of safety precautions and preparedness measures put in place, accidents can happen. Contrary to the LA Times' portrayal these accidents are the exception, not the norm.

People ask me all the time about the “future of EDM”. And I don't have an answer for them; how can I ascribe a singular path to something so limitless? The rapid rise of electronic music in popular consciousness coupled with the explosion of technological advances, musical and otherwise, has been an incredible journey to observe. As with any movement – and especially in an age where truth and accuracy seem to require less and less proof – the speed of EDM's rise has brought with it a trove of false information and misunderstanding.

But electronic music isn't going away, and I'm tired of hearing the same bogus story trodden out in opposition of the EDM scene. So here's looking at you, Los Angeles Times and the mainstream media at large: Stop validating false claims. Stop repeating outdated, biased information. Stop focusing on the negative aspects of a scene you don't understand. Stop talking and listen; maybe you'll learn something.

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/02/05/an-open-letter-to-the-la-times-sorry-but-edm-isnt-going-away-rave-scene-editorial/>)

Originally posted on WhiteRaverRafting.com

Cyberpunks: The Men Behind the Masks (Interview)

Written by Kevin Madert

A shroud of fog rolls slowly off the stage, engulfing the crowd. The light catches it at odd angles, refracting it around the room in disorienting patterns. Then, a fist appears out of the mist, followed by another. They pump in time as the bass begins to thump out a four on the floor rhythm. The air clears, revealing two masked figures clothed entirely in black. One turns knobs deftly as the other taps out a frenetic rhythm on a midi controller. The build reaches its pinnacle, then drops as the two figures lead the crowd in epic undulations.

This was the scene during the [Cyberpunks](#) set at a warehouse rave in Washington, D.C. over the weekend. The Italian duo – comprised of Massi Arena and Fabio Liuzzi – have been creating music together since 2006, when they met at a nightclub in Milan and bonded over a shared love of music. Their high-energy sets and unique hard electro sound has already garnered them widespread support in Europe, and now they've got their sights set on the US.

I had a chance to catch up with Liuzzi the morning after the group played “Get Laid 2: Sloppy Seconds” in D.C., and we spoke candidly about music, Cyberpunk culture, and much more.

You met in 2006 and began what eventually became the Cyberpunks – a group you've said is not only about electronic music, but about fashion and performance as well. When did you decide the group would be about more than just making music?

There's photography and fashion and performance, but first is always the music. Our idea was to combine the Cyberpunk culture and the music, but it all came out of the music. Massi and I began the music with tech house...we started out not with pure electro but with tech house, our first production was a tech house production. We decided to change in 2007 because we felt the waves of the electro music coming in Europe – from outside of Italy – and we decided to become more pure electro. Our first production was a remix for an Australian group, Earthboy, and the first real electro stuff was a remix for Toxic Avenger. It's not EDM, our music, it's electro, because our music is different. Especially with the Cyberpunk culture, **it's a mix of machine and human.**

And that's why you have the masks, right?

Yeah, that's why the masks. The paintball masks are a very good way to explain our culture, the Cyberpunks culture. It is similar to a robot mask, but different in that there's no lights, there's less focus placed on the mask and more on the music.

You say your sound is “pure electro” and it's also been described as “cyberelectro”, but I know you don't like the box created by genres. Your recent Illegalmix II, for instance; there's so much variance on there. How do you bring all these different sounds and influences together?

We listen to music from all around the world. Right now glitch hop music is close to our idea of electro music. DJs like Skrillex and Flux Pavilion and Noisia and Nero, we love all that kinda stuff. We prefer to play that at shows because it's close to our idea of

electro music. Making mixes, though...we love making mixes. And it's different because it's like a gift – to our friends, to our fans – and we love to mix many different kinds of music in that hour or however long we have. It's cool, it's proper to play different kinds of music in mixes, but we stick mainly with electro and glitch hop. Yesterday we play a set in DC and we play some of that...and the fans fucking love it. This is a bit surprising for us – usually people like the banger music, not so much the lower bpm – but they really enjoyed it.

So if you had to compare some of your earlier shows, your European shows, with the show you played last night (their first show in Washington, D.C.), what would be some similarities and differences?

The shows in Europe, they're very different. The show last night was a warehouse party, it wasn't a real club party (like most in Europe are). The soundsystem was cool, there were plenty of drinks onstage...I guess I don't like to compare parties because every party is different...but we love the glow of the lights and the rave style of United States parties.

Let's talk about your shows for a second; they're super high energy. How do you bring that energy to the stage? What's the craziest thing that's ever happened at one of your shows?

The craziest thing? A lot of drugs...*(laughs)* No no, I am kidding you. Listen though, I'm not too much young; I'm 35 years old, but I have a lot of energy inside of me. I want to share it with all the people coming to our parties – I wanna jump a lot, I wanna scream things like “Are you ready motherfuckers?” – and the people give us back that energy. And I can see that

energy, when I play in front of a thousand people like last night or tens of thousands of people at festivals around the world. I just love to share that energy with people, and love even more to get it back.

Got any songs right now that are absolutely essential in your sets?

We love to play some of the newer stuff from Skrillex, as well as a lot of our stuff. We played our new remix for Designer Drugs last night, that's a big one...Theo and Michael are our good friends, we did that remix for them and it should be coming out on Ultra records in March. We like to collaborate with artists here in America because we would like to build up our hype and spread our intentions, the Cyberpunks culture. There's a big market here – every day there is a party – and we want to come back here always. Hopefully in the next month!

So do you have a dream collaboration? Someone you'd love to work with right now?

Well, we don't make collaborations that often...maybe we'd do something with Chuckie...we love the Dutch sound of Chuckie. Maybe we can mix our sound with his, I think it would be cool. We don't usually make collaborations because our idols (the ones we'd love to work with most) are, you know, Daft Punk, Justice...it'd be very difficult to do a collaboration together. *(Laughs)* But hey, nothing is impossible right?

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/cyberpunks-the-men-behind-the-masks/>)

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Zeds Dead Deliver “Bass-Laced” Essential Mix For BBC 1 (Mix Review + Free Download)

Written by Kevin Madert

When BBC 1 asks you to compile a two hour mix for their long-running, world-renowned Essential Mix radio show, you say yes. The Pete Tong-hosted program is one of the professional pinnacles for electronic musicians, an accolade to point to and say “yeah, I’m where I want to be in this industry.” So it was no surprise to me to hear Canadian dub/electro duo [Zeds Dead](#) was given the keys to the Radio 1 studio over the weekend; DC and Hooks have been on the warpath of late, and an Essential Mix feels like a logical next step.

[Click here](#) to listen to Zeds Dead BBC 1 Essential Mix.

At first glance, the two hour mix is standard Essential Mix fare: plenty of Zeds Dead originals, some unreleased material, and a few “here are our influences” drops. But as I listened once, and then again, I was further encapsulated in the true thrust of the mix. It hits the ear as equal parts an adventure through their career and an emulation of their live experience – a frenetic thrill ride of tracks mashed so tightly together the listener barely has time to recover from a drop before the next one slaps them across the face.

DC and Hooks had this to say about the mix:

“We looked at this Essential Mix as a way to do something that we’ve always wanted to do, which was to bring the listener into an entire world of Zeds Dead...We comprised the mix almost entirely out of our own material, some of which has never

been heard before...We wanted to highlight our diversity in musical taste as well as productions by including tracks from all different tempo ranges and genres."

As advertised, the mix is diverse: there are plenty original Zeds Dead dubbed-out bangers like "1975" and "Rude Boy" interspersed with interludes of hip-hop, electro, and even a brief foray into drum 'n' bass. The mix's X-factor, though, is the slew of unreleased tunes slipped in between familiar tracks. "Monkey", with it's slow, high-pitched wobble, and the throwback dub-down-low "Womb" – which segued beautifully into Skream's classic "Dutch Flowers" – were two personal favorites.

Sure, there were a few moments when I wished the tracks were allowed a little more room to breathe – "Coffee Break", with its smoothly oscillating basslines and distorted Aretha Franklin vocal cut, only has about 45 seconds of solo time – and I'll admit I shook my head the few times I heard an air horn, but every mix can't be [Mat Zo-flawless](#). But I'm more than willing to settle for "well above average," (or more colloquially "totally ratchet and super dope"). You can grab the mix as a free download via Zeds Dead's [Facebook page](#).

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/03/06/zeds-dead-deliver-bass-laced-essential-mix-for-bbc-1-mix-review-free-download/>)

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Get Your Neo-soul Glitchfunk Groove on with Australia's Cheshire and 'The Funkd Up' EP

Written by Kevin Madert

Soundcloud surfing is risky business; between the overabundance of low-quality half-finished tunes and countless remixes of "Clarity", you can never be too careful. Sometimes, though, a little digging yields all you were searching for and more. Stumbling upon Cheshire – an Australia-based producer of soulful glitch tunes – felt like winning the underground EDM lottery. Here's a guy who's got all the sampling prowess of [Pretty Lights](#), the soulful hip-hop sensibilities of Gramatik, and the funky bounce of Opiuo or KOAN Sound all rolled into one well-produced final product.

[Click here](#) to see what Cheshire is all about.

That's "Robin's Rocket", one of the four tracks available on Cheshire's "The Funkd Up" EP, which dropped yesterday on Adapted Records. Glitchfunk dominates the EP, with soulful lyrical samples complimenting each track's unique bounce. The attention to detail is stunning; from the copious infusions of brass instrumentation to the perfectly timed dynamic shifts and vocal breaks, Cheshire had my ear for the EP's full 15 minute run time.

I could fanboy on forever, but I'll say this instead: Buy this EP. Follow Cheshire on Facebook and Soundcloud. Tell your friends, and have them tell their friends. A talent like this doesn't deserve to get lost in the wash.

You can grab “The Funkd Up” EP on Beatport [here](#). Give Cheshire a listen on Soundcloud [here](#) and stay up to date with him on Facebook [here](#).

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/get-your-neo-soul-glitchfunk-groove-on-with-australias-cheshire-and-the-funkd-up-ep/>)

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Moonrise Artist Spotlight: Flux Pavilion & Doctor P

Written by Kevin Madert

Peanut butter & jelly. Batman and Robin. Cute cats and the internet. Some things just go better together. Add one more duo to the list: [Flux Pavilion](#) and [Doctor P](#). The pair of UK natives – co-founders of Circus Records, pioneers in the UK dubstep scene, and childhood friends – have playing back-to-backs and collaborating down to a fine art, and we're pleased to welcome them to the inaugural Moonrise Festival this June 8th and 9th at Sun Park in Baltimore.

But how did Flux and Doctor P go from a couple of young Brits with a dream to spinning a back-to-back set on the Ultra Music Festival main stage? Let's take a look.

From a ridiculously young age (try early teens) Shaun Brockhurst loved music. Soon after receiving his first Yamaha keyboard, and upon spending "hours upon hours" with PlayStation's "Music 2000" software, Brockhurst began to create his own music, seeing his first release – "The Lawnmower Tune", a collab with Trolley Snatcha – under the alias Sound Destructive on Cyntax Error Records in 2006. With roots in drum 'n' bass – he spun and produced DnB under the name DJ Picto – Brockhurst soon took interest in the sounds of producers like Rusko, and began producing dubstep in the same vein with his track "Gargoyle". With new sound comes a new name, so Brockhurst shortened Picto and apparently attended medical school, giving us the Doctor P we're familiar with today. With his most recent EP, "Animal Vegetable Mineral Pt. 1" Brockhurst once again showed us how far ahead of the bass-music curve he truly is.

[Here's a link](#) to "Flying Spaghetti Monster."

Joshua Steele, aside from having one of the best inadvertent porn names in EDM, is responsible for some of the more classic big-room dubstep tracks of the past five years. If you've attended a show in the past year, chances are you heard "Louder" or "Gold Dust" or "Cracks" or "Got 2 Know"...the list goes on and on. Steele began producing music as Flux Pavilion in 2008, but much like Brockhurst his interest in music was piqued at a young age, and his talent on multiple instruments and as a singer have greatly informed his production career.

With "Blow the Roof", his most recent EP, Steele showed the EDM world he wasn't content with letting his music lie on the status quo. Turning the knob to 11, he put his spin on trap – "OneTwoThree (Make Ya Body Wanna)" – moombah – "Blow the Roof" – and even took a turn at re-imagining himself – the couldn't-be-more-appropriately-named "I Still Can't Stop". As lifelong friends, we can rest assured that Flux & Doctor P have something special in store for Moonrise Festival.

[Here's a bonafide classic](#) from Flux Pavilion.

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/moonrise-artist-spotlight-flux-pavilion-doctor-p/>)

Originally posted on SteezPromo.com

Markus Schulz Gives Echostage A Reason To Scream

(Event Review)

Written by Kevin Madert

[Markus Schulz](#) is on top of the world. And why wouldn't he be? He's a week into his cross-country North American 'Scream' bus tour, where he gets to spend weeks behind the decks – a place he's called home for over two decades. His most recent target? Washington, D.C., where he entertained the masses at Echostage – the District's premier concert venue – over the weekend.

With a smile permanently plastered on his face and his hands outstretched, he coaxed the crowd assembled at Echostage on a balmy Saturday night for every ounce of energy they could muster. As he conducted his audience in rhythmic undulations timed to the beat of the kickdrum, it was clear that the emotion of the room was controlled by those hands, whether they were reaching for the ceiling or flying furiously over the mixer.

Sometimes that emotion was, brooding; for example, when he played his recent collaboration with [Ferry Corsten](#), 'Loops & Tings' – a tributary rework of a classic 1993 track by Jens. Other times, it was like all the greatest moments in your life were being swirled into a ball and exuded from the speakers in the form of amplified sound. Uplifting tracks like Corsten's 'Live Forever', featuring the ethereal vocals of Aruna can attest to that. Often, he ran the gamut from one to the other in a matter of minutes.

Simply put, Schulz is a master of his craft.

The D.C. stop of the tour began with a progressive-heavy set from [KhoMha](#) –

after Glow resident DJ Roberto Gonzalez warmed up the bass bins for a few hours – and as a relative newcomer to the young Columbian’s take on trance and house I was blown away by his track selection and reading of the crowd. Then again, as Schulz’s Coldharbour Recordings “Artist of the Year” in 2011, I probably shouldn’t have expected much less.

With little interruption, San Francisco’s genre-defying [The M Machine](#) took the stage. My experiences with the trio are the exact opposite of my experiences with KhoMha; that is, I’ve had a slight obsession with them ever since OWSLA put out their ‘Metropolis, Pt. I’ EP back in spring 2012. A year later and hot on the heels of ‘Metropolis, Pt. II’, The M Machine landed a touring gig with Schulz, bringing their full live experience to the stage in support of the trance mainstay.

While I’ll admit I scratched my head somewhat when I saw the trio on the bill in support of Schulz, any doubts about clashing stylistic choices were erased from my mind about two minutes into their set Saturday, and I got down for the remaining 58 minutes. The M Machine’s hour-long journey of industrial-meets-electro served as a perfect introduction to Schulz. When the last few notes of their powerful ‘Locked Out Of Heaven’ remix faded away, the lights dimmed and the anticipation was palpable.

It was time to slay some unicorns.

Markus Schulz took the stage to blasts of compressed air and an explosion of confetti cannons, with the now-packed dancefloor roaring its approval. He wasted no time diving headfirst into a nearly three hour set filled with a roller coaster ride of builds, ambient fills, and deftly timed drops. In the brief moments he had to revel in the energy he was exuding, Schulz was like a kid in the midst of the best day of his life; he waved

to the crowd, he clutched his head with his hands in feigned disbelief, and he even stepped back from the mixer and played airplane in a moment I can only describe as “adorable and endearing”. This wasn’t a man doing his job. This was a man loving his life.

At a certain point late in the night – or perhaps early in the morning – I felt the urge to step away from my perch beside the stage and wandered into the crowd. Maneuvering through the beaming faces and wide eyes, I found myself leaning against the back wall of the main floor, the entirety of the spectacle laid out before me. The track reached a moment where it lulled to a whisper, and I closed my eyes. I felt the warm glow of the stage lights on my eyelids as they came up slowly, matching the rising roar of the audience.

The bass came in first, a sweeping low-end that shook me from the ground up. I counted off the build in my head, tapping my foot in time, and opened my eyes just as the twang of the synth pierced the air. Through the sea of hands I could just make out Markus, head down, concentrating on this transition like a man possessed. More and more hands reached skyward, filling the air as the build reached a climax. It kicked. We jumped. “Oh my God, Washington, D.C.” Schulz’s voice floated over the crowd for the first time as we bounced to the beat, “I love you guys so much.” I think it’s safe to say the feeling was mutual.

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/04/14/markus-schulz-gives-echostage-a-reason-to-scream-event-review/>)

Originally posted on WhiteRaverRafting.com

Moonrise Artist Interview: Tittsworth

Written by Kevin Madert

Pioneer. Musician. Entrepreneur. Just a few words that could be used to describe Jesse Tittsworth (yes, that's his real name), the D.C. native who's been tearing up the decks since 2004. We got the chance to talk to Tittsworth about his music, his ownership of U Street Music Hall, his feelings on Moonrise Festival, and more.

Steez Promo: Hi Tittsworth, thanks for taking the time to talk to us. You're the co-owner of a club that is arguably the best in DC; with a combination of a no-frills set up, a killer sound system, and an overall excellent vibe. What does U Street Music Hall mean to you? How did you end up as a co-owner of the club?

Tittsworth: I never thought I would be a club owner. I remember being on tour in Australia, experiencing some inspiring venues and wanting the same for my city. It occurred to me – and Brian (Miller, DJ and architect) and Will (Eastman, of the Volta Bureau) – that we had access to the team to make it happen. Even though I live in LA, U-Hall will always have a special place in my heart (and on the top of my foot). There's nothing like it and I feel very lucky musically, personally, and from a family standpoint to have the opportunity to come home to it regularly.

Steez: I think its safe to say that you're one of the busiest people in the music industry; owning one of the best clubs in the country, owning T&A Records,

producing, and DJing all over the world. First off, how on earth do you handle all of it? And do you have anything in particular that you enjoy working on the most?

Tittsworth: Haha, I traded whisky for coffee for starters. I've been really in studio mode lately. Used to be I loved to play out (still do) but sometimes I had difficulty focusing in the studio. But not now. Also, I've been lucky enough to have so many homies showing me some shortcuts in the game to getting those chops up. That way I can cut down on the technical BS that can sometimes get in the way of creativity.

Steez: If you had to describe the D.C. scene to someone who had never experienced it before, what would you say? How does it compare to the scene in LA, where you've been spending a lot of time lately?

Tittsworth: I love LA but the nightlife scene here is different. I've yet to find a place here that has what U-Hall has, at least on a regular basis – intimate, educated, appreciative, not snobby, sweaty and FUN.

Steez: You're all over the place as far as genres go. You have of course played a huge role in the moombahton movement, Baltimore club, everything really. Does this diversity come from anywhere in particular? Do you have any specific genres that have stuck out as personal favorites?

Tittsworth: I've always liked a wide range of music, as far back as I can remember. I don't know that I make the conscious effort to force diversity; I think I just have a lotta love for most types of music to be honest. My iTunes is mad OCD. Really been into dark

big-room and techno a lot. Low-fi and noisy American rock on the listening tip too. And slow bounce.

Steez: Speaking of moombahton, tell us about Moombahton Forever. That was a huge release a few months ago, and people are still talking about. It's still in regular rotation for me. How did that come about, and did you expect it to have such a great response when you put it out?

Tittsworth: Ayres had the idea, so did Le Doom and Bro Safari independently. It was great to see the community come together. I was just talking to Disgraceland about this good group of folk Dave put together with moombhahton.

Steez: It seems like there is always something new coming up with Tittsworth, and 2013 has already been a big year for you. Do you have anything else on the horizon for this year? Any new releases, tours, special shows at U Hall, etc.?

Tittsworth: Excited to get back to D.C. for some 4/20 festival'ing (at Get Loud 2). Should be a nice warm-up for Moonrise. Really looking forward to EDC Chicago, getting back on tour this summer and getting these new tunes out!

Steez: I'm glad you brought up Moonrise; are you looking forward to playing this brand-new festival at a virgin venue? What are your expectations – if any?

Tittsworth: Starscape has some big shoes to fill but Steez Promo usually doesn't have a problem with that. Very much looking forward. Starscape was easily one of my favorite gigs of 2012.

Steez: If you were to pick a few artists on the Moonrise bill that you're stoked to share the stage with, who would they be, and why?

Tittsworth: We got the moombah crew – Nadaström, Jen Lasher, Sabo, Gent x Jaws, Bro Safari, Torro Torro, Alvin Risk – and so many of my LA hood homies – CRNKN, Terravita, Schoolboy, Etc! Etc! (the artist, not the term...well both haha). It's gonna be a blast seeing my two home towns get up and go off.

Steez: Who are you personally going to be checking out at Moonrise? Any recommendations for the fans on who they shouldn't miss?

Tittsworth: GTA.

Steez: Do you have any surprises in store for Moonrise attendees? Should we be on the lookout for sneak peaks or new tracks?

Tittsworth: Absolutely. I have ton of new tunes that have been slowly showing up here and there in A-list sets and BBC shows.

Steez: When you play a festival, do you go in with a different mindset than when you play a show at a club or venue?

Tittsworth: Yup, go hard or go home. I'm coming out swinging with some big tunes y'all. I really appreciate everyone for the Starscape support throughout the years.

Steez: Thank you so much for your time! We're all really looking forward to catching your set at Moonrise Festival in June, and back at U Hall on May 1st with Willy Joy. Anything you would like to add in closing?

Tittsworth: Is there a nearby body of water for raver bathing as per Starscape tradition?

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/04/16/moonrise-artist-interview-tittsworth/>)

Originally posted on SteezPromo.com

It might get louder: Moonrise Festival replaces Starscape as premier DMV electronic music festival

Written by Kevin Madert

WASHINGTON – It was early June, 2012, at a park just outside of Baltimore, Maryland. Amongst the remains of an abandoned naval fort, nearly 12,000 people danced until the sun rose at the fourteenth iteration of Starscape – a primarily electronic music festival put on by Steez Promo and Ultraworld Productions. Held annually, the festival was unique in that it took place over the course of 16 nonstop hours, from two in the afternoon to six the next morning. Over the years it became a hallmark of the dance music scene in Baltimore, with industry professionals praising it for a diversity of talent and its gorgeous location, Fort Amistead Park.

While no one attending the festival knew it, this Starscape would be the last.

“City officials told longtime Starscape promoter Lonnie Fisher the festival’s 14-year run at Fort Amistead had come to an end,” wrote The Baltimore Sun about a month after the festival took place, citing multiple drug overdoses and overcrowding as proof the event had “outgrown the venue,” the article said.

While Fisher denied any allegations of overselling – “The government is capable of presenting a case that seems so extreme when it wants to serve its agenda” he was quoted in the article – the fact remained that there was no way Starscape would be allowed to remain at Fort Amistead, or anywhere in the city for that matter.

“With great regret, we must inform you that the Starscape Festival on June 8-9 will be the last Starscape for the foreseeable future,” Steez Promo posted on their

Facebook page shortly after the Sun article was published. “We will continue to provide you with the best in dance music, and will have something huge in the works for next summer,” the post continued, “but until we find a suitable venue for Starscape, we will not be putting it on anymore,” it said.

Just what did Steez have planned for the summer of 2013? At the time, no one knew – including Steez.

“We were scrambling there for a minute,” marketing assistant and promoter Mikk Nuth said. “Whether it was venue concerns, noise permits, fan backlash...it was a pretty tense winter at the Steez office,” she said.

But in early March, Starscape’s website was replaced with a cryptic message: “The next era is coming”. Soon thereafter, the announcement was made: the replacement for Starscape would be Moonrise Festival.

“This two day event will feature three main stages hosting a wide range of EDM talent, visual artists, and massive production bigger and better than any we’ve ever done,” the festival’s official website said. “This event will start in the day and culminate with the rising of the moon,” it said.

The festival – slated for June 8 and 9 from 11 in the morning to 11 at night at Sun Park in Baltimore – will be a triumphant return for Steez after the unfortunate end of Starscape. At least, that’s the plan.

“We’re bringing in about sixty world-class acts, expanding to two days, christening a virgin venue...it’s going to be a huge deal in a lot of ways,” Steez employee and music blogger Michael Hogan said. “A lot of fans weren’t too happy with the last Starscape, or with the canceling of all future Starscapes...well they’ll be happy

when they see Moonrise,” he said.

Among those world-class acts? Old-school rapper Snoop Dogg, electro-hip-hop maestro Pretty Lights, trance legends Gareth Emery and Paul van Dyk, and jamtronica kingpins STS9. These and the rest of the acts on the lineup will perform for a total of 24 hours over the course of the festival’s two days – eight hours more music than Starscape. And the brand new venue is one that Steez assures will not have similar problems to Fort Amistead.

“We took great care in selecting the venue,” Nuth said. “We made sure it was spacious and easily accessible...we didn’t want another Starscape,” she said.

“While it doesn’t have the trees and the secluded feel of Fort Amistead, Sun Park is a new look for a new festival,” Hogan added. “It’s a festival with Baltimore as the backdrop. And it still has plenty of waterfront (one of the most complimented features of Starscape), so people might still end up swimming,” he said.

If Moonrise brings the heat like Steez says it will, they may have more swimmers on their hands than they think. You have to stay cool somehow, right?

Sources:

Michael Hogan: mike@asavamusicgroup.com, 301-706-2896

Mikk Nuth: maybeismikk@gmail.com, 301-471-9803

Moonrise official website: www.moonrisefestival.com

Kevin Rector, “City officials: Starscape’s 14-year run at Fort Amistead is over”

(Article link: <http://riseofelectronica.wordpress.com/2013/04/29/it-might-get-louder-moonrise-festival-replaces-starscape-as-premier-dmv-electronic-music-festival/>)