Pushing the boundaries of electronica

By Shawn "Speedy" Lopes
Advertiser Club Columnist

The Funk Phenomenon. The Godfather of Speed Garage. The Hero of House. The Sampleslaya. Call Armand Van Helden whatever you want, whenever you want. Just be prepared to leave a message after a near-eternal tone: *Beeeeeeeeeeeep.*

These days, the tireless deejay, producer and dance-music maven is fielding more calls than he can possibly accommodate, most of which inquire about his renowned remixing services, which command upwards of $50,000 a pop. He's worked his nimble-fingered magic for everyone from progressive pop acts like Tori Amos, Sneaker Pimps and New Order to electronica's elite, including Goldie, Ultra Nate, Wamdue Project, as well as fat-pocketed chart toppers in dire need of street and dancefloor cred (Puff Daddy, Real McCoy, Vanessa Williams and Ace Of Base come to mind).

Coastal Collective 2001

Features deejays Armand Van Helden and Roger "Junior" Sanchez

9 p.m. Saturday

Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park

$30

591-3500 or 944-FREE(3733)

Listen to "Business as Usual," a montage of Van Helden's numerous answering-machine messages from the 1999 album "2 Future 4 U":

"Armand Van Helden, this is David Morales."

"This is for Armand. Josh Wink."

"Yo, Armand. (DJ) Sneak . . . wassup."

"Helleew, I'm calling on behalf of Mick Jag-gah."

In the life of one of electronica's hottest commodities, irony abounds. A superstar in dance-mad Europe, Van Helden still works out of New York, yet he's disgusted by its uninspired, profit-conscious club scene, which he contends has never progressed past the hard house sound of the early '90s. He's credited with single-handedly originating speed garage, a dance subgenre melding the skittish percussive elements of drum-and-bass and the simplistic four-four tempo of house, though he swears he'll never touch that stuff again, dismissing it as yesterday's news.

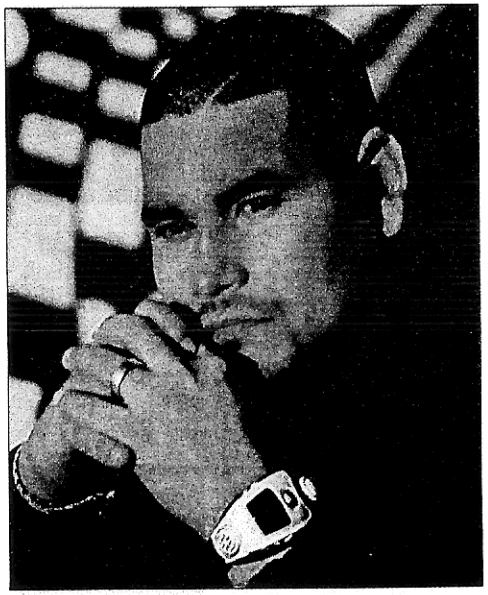
As an Air Force brat born to a Dutch-Indonesian father and a French-Lebanese mother, Van Helden traveled the globe as a youngster, immersing himself in a variety of sounds from classic rock to hip-hop to freestyle (anyone remember Sweet Sensation, Cover Girls or Stevie B.?), and in the eighth grade, took his first leap into deejaying by manning the turntables at a dance for the big kids at the local high school.

Now an internationally acclaimed deejay and producer with an ever-expanding repertoire of musical styles, he continues to champion the proliferation of forward-thinking, rump-shakin' sounds. House is in desperate need of some new life, he says, while regional preferences and elitism is killing electronica, and radio is "the biggest enemy of dance music," straight up.

One of the select few individuals who can match Van Helden's integrity and passion for club music is fellow deejay, Grammy-nominated remixer and occasional partner in crime, Roger "Junior" Sanchez, originator of The Mongoloids, a select group of house music's finest minds.

Sanchez's list of remix work is no less impressive than Van Helden's (Michael Jackson, Soul II Soul, Byron Stingily, Frankie Knuckles, Chic), and his schedule is easily as crammed with deejaying dates.

Incredibly, both will appear on the same bill this weekend for Coastal Collective 2001, with support from Richard "Humpty" Vission, DJ Reza, and a host of club jockeys from Hawai'i and the Mainland. From all appearances, Coastal Collective 2001 looks to be the first major coup for Hawai'i's electronica enthusiasts in the new year.



TOP: Deejay Armand Van Helden thinks house needs new life and warns that elitism is killing electronica. ABOVE: Roger "Junior" Sanchez racks up an impressive list of remix work.

Billboard hits

Compiled from a national sample of sales reports collected by SoundScan, radio lists and radio monitored by Broadcast Data Systems.

TOP 10 SINGLES

1. "Independent Woman Part I," Destiny's Child
2. "He Loves U Not," Dream
3. "It Wasn't Me," Shaggy
4. "Case of the Ex (Watcha Gonna Do)," Mya
5. "With Arms Wide Open," Creed
6. "Ms. Jackson," OutKast
7. "The Way You Love Me," Faith Hill
8. "Dance With Me," Debelah Morgan
9. "If You're Gone," matchbox twenty
10. "Liquid Dreams," O-Town

TOP 10 CDs

1. "1," the Beatles
2. "Black & Blue," Backstreet Boys
3. "Now 5," various artists
4. "Human Clay," Creed
5. "Hotshot," Shaggy
6. "Chocolate Starfish and the Hot Dog Flavored Water," Limp Bizkit
7. "Greatest Hits," Tim McGraw
8. "Oops! ... I Did It Again," Britney Spears
9. "Tha Last Meal," Snoop Dogg
10. "No Strings Attached," 'N Sync

TOP CDs — HAWAI'I

1. "1," The Beatles
2. "Lovers Rock," Sade
3. "Hapa Collection," Hapa
4. "Tha Last Meal," Snoop Dogg
5. "Now 5," various artists
6. "Hotshot," Shaggy
7. "A Day Without Rain," Enya
8. "Greatest Hits," Lenny Kravitz
9. "Country Grammar," Nelly
10. "Island Warriors," various artists

clubbed to DEATH

(Insert Lame Title Here)

It is a rare occasion indeed when I abuse this sacred "Clubbed to Death" space for a political message, but some thing needs to be said. Perhaps you clubland denizens have noticed a new neon-emblazoned club called "Blue Tropix," in the vicinity of the Convention Center, kind of across from 7-11, next to Quiksilver?

I'm not sure what kind of gimmicks these guys are going for, but one thing stinks, and that is the monkey that they keep in a aquarium-turned-cage behind the bar. It doesn't stink literally, but the animal's misery casts a wicked spell on the whole place. The night I was in there, the cat-sized monkey spent most of the evening cowering on a fake rock, in front of a painted background, under florescent lighting. You can imagine its terror at the vibrations of pulsing music, enduring stares from a legion of club-goers clad in tube tops & shiny pants. Sheesh, that scares *me*! Imagine how the monkey feels! Plain and elle simple: that's not cool!!

At least we human beings can choose whether we want to spend our evenings in a smoky environment with a Rumors-like feel, poor wait service and superficial people (the door guy was nice, but still). We have a choice. That poor monkey has no suckin' choice. He/she is at the mercy of our banal evening! Call P.E.T.A.! Call the Humane Society! Call the freakin' zoo, because even that prison would be better than the hellhole that poor simian currently endures! Talk about clubbed to death ... **FREE THE MONKEY!**

Sheesh. What's next? Cock fights in the club? (Not that kind of cock, silly! We have plenty of those ... Bitter Beto Bittle, hahahaha.) OK, OK, sorry — kinda buzzed as I write this. ... What else is going on?

Oh ya, I went to **Havana Cabana** (remember that place?) last Thursday ... drove all the way from Kaimuki to Downtown without my lights on — ooooops. But the **QUADROPHONICS** gang had plenty of spark to light the way. I think sometimes because our scene is so small, we tend to take things for granted when we have too much of a good thing. Quadraphonics is a perfect example.

Imagine you're visiting San Francisco. Your friend takes you to this funky lil' joint where a bunch of laid-back people are chilling out and dancing to the sound of a freestyle-mellow groove-experimental-acid jazz-ish-sounding band. The stand-up bass player's a beautiful lady, the emcee innovates constantly, the drummers are mad skilled and the guitar loops it all together. You take it in and realize the night is one of the best you've had in a while. Maybe you're even thinking, "They don't have anything like this in Hawai'i."

Well guess again because we do! Quadraphonics is a class act, and if you haven't seen them for a while, please go so. Besides Havana's, they've dropped in at **Mānoa Garden's** Friday afternoon — a great pau-hana party — and play regularly, or semi-regularly, at all the hot and cool spots around town. Keep an eye on the Weekly calendar listings, then drop that been-there-done-that attitude and check out the show! It's never the same twice!

In case you haven't been to Havana Cabana's for a while, they tore down the inner walls and the middle cigar vault, so the place is much more open and friendly. A good night to grab a few friends and go check it out is Monday at Groovesology with DJs Gonzalez and Vince. Cover's only $2 and they have $2 draft beer all night. Expect down-tempo trip hop and trip hop ... and maybe some reggae or dancehall if you're lucky. If you're feeling a little more up, there's always Consentrations at **Auntie Pasto's** on Kapahulu. The late-night open mic down there has been building a little following lately, but the crowd remains easy-going.

According to Venus correspondent **Tina Cambell**, last Thursday at Venus was PACKED with clientele bussed in from North Shore surf competitions. The line-up for the evening included **J. Smooth, Essentially Mikey, Vertigo & Penguin** (tag-team-set), **Free, Rayno, Keebler and Necron 99** of the Basement Addicts.

"J. Smooth from NY was awesome! He played some intelligent jungle that broke down every now and then into some cool hip-hop tracks! He rocked and pleased the surfer-type crowd!" said Tina the next day after dragging her semi-hungover ass into work, late. You never really know what you'll get at Venus from one week to the next, but given how fickle people are, maybe that's a good thing.

Before I'm out, there is one correction of my last column. I messed up the names of Seph and Microscopic Syllables, as they are properly called. Mahalo to their poetic frontman and the other elements: **"Tino** on keyboards (**Go Jimmy Go, 7th Enkounter**), **Kell'i** (7th Enkounter) on drums, turntabalism by **DJ AZZ**, horns by Go Jimmy Go's **Eric** and **Fern**, and my personal fave the bass player, **Josh** (aka **KORE** from SF's infamous DANK MOB graffiti krew [who] back in the dayz represented)." Thanks to Sunshine C. for kindly explaining that in her email correction. P.S. — I don't title these columns, the *Weekly* editors do that.

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