

FREQUENCIES

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Sasha tests out the Maven at Avalon in Los Angeles.

SASHA, THE INVENTOR

DJ mixing from a laptop has always been somewhat of an awkward job. After all, DJs are limited to the point-and-click functions of a mouse and computer keys. But Sasha has just changed all that with the Maven, a one-of-a-kind controller specific to Ableton Live. The idea came to him at a WMC 2004 Global Underground boat party. Journalists were asking to hear material off his upcoming *Involver* (Global Underground, 2004) album, but the tracks weren't finished yet. So Sasha improvised a set straight from his hard drive and used Live to re-edit and mix on the fly. At that point, "A lightbulb went off in my head," he says.

Sasha returned home and spoke to manufacturers about creating a specific controller for Live, but in the end, he decided to make his own. All told, the process took about nine months. Sasha and a friend scoured the Internet for parts and found a metalworker to create the Maven's sleek casing. The result is a piece of gear that has opened Live's interface to multiple simultaneous edits. "I'm buzzing off it," Sasha says. "It's completely re-energized what I'm doing."

The Maven communicates all audio and MIDI information directly into Sasha's Apple Mac G4 laptop via FireWire. Its physical interface looks like a standard mixer, with a volume crossfader in the middle and rows of knobs and faders that are configured with EQs, filters and effects. Beside each volume knob is a button to control what Ableton calls Clips, which can be loops, tracks or individual elements within a track. A second version, due late this month, will lessen the Maven's load and shorten its size. Sasha's prototype is by no means perfect; its problems hark back to the days when DJs' rigs would blow in the middle of a set. On a few occasions, the Maven overloaded with Clips, and the system froze. "With a computer, still, it's difficult to snuff out the problem," Sasha admits. The benefits, though, are worth the minor glitches. The Maven's ability to harness instant creativity has Sasha "relearning how to be a DJ."—Deana Morgan

DANCIN', DANCIN', DANCIN'!

If you have ever felt sluggish or down about yourself, watch this 15-minute slice of inspiration. *B-Girl: The Movie* (Two Camels Films, 2005)—directed by Emily Dell—is a short film about a female breakdancer, Angel (played by Jules Urich), who works both her mind as a physics student and her muscles and coordination as a b-girl. Breaking is still very much a boys' club, and her coach (Carlos) and crew are having some doubts about Angel while she struggles with the six-step. Her competitors, too, are having a laugh just thinking about how easy it'll be to beat Angel and her teammates. But as with everything involving life's dreams and goals, hard work tends to pay off. After a zillion push-ups and many long hours practicing, Angel kills it in competition.

Moreover, in a motivating precompetition speech, she juxtaposes her study of physics with the art of breaking, tying together the laws of Sir Isaac Newton and the passion and energy of breakdancing. "It's the revolution of my body in revolution," Angel says. Even the acting is unexpectedly good. If you weren't doing headspins before, you might just be attempting some after seeing this. For more about the film, visit www.bgirlmovie.com.



IMPRINT

PLUG RESEARCH

Style: Downbeat, electronica, rock, folk, hip-hop, soul, jazz, world music

Established: In 1994 by Allen Avanesian in Los Angeles.

Artists: Damon Aaron, Adventure Time, Ammoncontact, Build an Ark, Calamalka, Camping, Chessie, Daedelus, Dntel, Thomas Fehlmann, Headset, John Tejada, Languis, Milosh, Najite Olokun Prophecy, Nobody, Soulo, Mia Doi Todd

BRADLEY MENZ



Nobody

COURTESY PLUG RESEARCH

Essential Listening: Adventure Time, *Dreams of Water Themes* (2003); Ammoncontact, *One in an Infinity of Ways* (2004); Build an Ark, *Peace With Every Step* (2004); Chessie, *Overnight* (2001); Daedelus, *Invention* (2002), *Of Snowdonia* (2004); Dntel, *Life Is Full of Possibilities* (2001), "(This Is) The Dream of Evan and Chan" (2002); Thomas Fehlmann, *Lowflow* (2004); Headset, *Space Settings* (2004); John Tejada, *Logic Memory Center* (2004); Milosh, *You Make Me Feel* (2004); Mia Doi Todd, *Manzanita* (2005); Various Artists, *Dublax Presents: In the Loop 2* (2005)

Manifesto: According to Avanesian, Plug Research seeks "fresh and interesting genre hybrids and beautiful and entertaining music for the world."

A&R Philosophy: "The label is mainly a family of artists that we love to work with," Avanesian says. "And we accept demos, but please be original with what you're trying to pitch."

Upcoming: New releases are on the way from Damon Aaron, Dntel, Nobody, Mia Doi Todd and Build an Ark.

Contact: Plug Research; 4519 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90029; (323) 662-1435; info@plugresearch.com; www.plugresearch.com