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Back To Vinyl with Legendary House DJs Bad Boy Bill & Richard Vission

FEATURED INTERVIEWS | 08/04/2016

Bad Boy Bill (Chicago DJ legend) and **Richard Vission** (Los Angeles DJ legend) have stayed relevant since the 90s, grown with the trends, but have not forgotten how it all started. They are both currently on their 26 city **Back To Vinyl** Tour to remind the Dance Music scene, and themselves, how magical it is to truly play records in the moment. Since the 70s when DJing took the form as we now know it, it has been a sacred art-form to many in cities where hard work during the week is rewarded with a spiritual night on the dance floor over the weekend. This was true of Disco, Hip-Hop, House to the more recent Mashup scene. Over the past five years as DJ's become superstars, the craft has taken a back seat to stage antics and opened the profession up to some major criticism. The backlash to this has generated a new appreciation for collecting vinyl and the origins of what is now aspired to as a career path to gold.

I spoke with Richard Vission and Bad Boy Bill about the tour (upcoming dates are below) and technology's impact on DJing, an art they still feel passionately about.

The Couch Sessions: So, why do an all vinyl tour when the standards and expectations for DJs doesn't demand more than CDs these days?

Bad Boy Bill: Basically we felt that [recently] everything had gotten a little to pre-programmed. Kind of not fun. We really kind of miss what we started on, which was vinyl, and we felt that a lot of kids now-a-days haven't seen anyone mix on vinyl. The underlying sentiment was to get back to our roots and what inspired us in the beginning, which was vinyl and turntables.

Richard Vission: We didn't want to be called button pushers and we kind of saw that term floating around for all DJs. Technology made [DJing] easier, and at the same time as things became easier the craft got lost. It's like playing Guitar Hero and actually playing guitar. Anyone can play Guitar Hero after playing it a couple times but not everyone can play a solo on electric guitar. Now, we're all for the advancement of Technology, but the [craft] became simplified and dumbed down. So we thought, "how cool would it be to take a step back to remember the art-form."

BBB: The main positive of technology for us has been to be able to make a track in the studio and then play it that same night without having to go press an acetate up or a reference lacquer. That type of advancement was probably the coolest thing, to test records as you're working on them. For us up in Chicago, a lot of guys were making their own tracks in the early House Music days. [To play it live] some guys would play tracks off of reel-to-reel, you could blend in because most reel-to-reels would have a pitch control. Some guys would bring drum machines to the DJ set just to rock drum tracks. Technology has always been more than turntables in Chicago, but the turntable has always been the foundation.

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TCS: Today's festival crowds expect a lot of engagement from the DJ, which is easy when everything is pre-edited on CD and synched by the CDJ turntables and software. Can you still throw cakes or strike a Jesus pose while mixing vinyl?

RV: [laughter] You still have time [to interact with the crowd] but you do it in a different way. Because you're locked in. So the difference is, if you're playing bass in a band there's no time to jump up and down crazy, you still have to play the groove. Now you find time within the groove to hit the Jesus pose but it's done in a different way, a whole different feel. When you're playing on turntables it's like playing in a band. Everything is breathing with each other, and I think digitally everything is not breathing with each other. You just hit the button and I can run onto the dance floor and dance and the song will still be fucking mixing! Then I can run to the bathroom, check on my car, come back in and the song's still fucking mixing then I finish the mix. With turntables it's like playing a song live with other artists playing with you.

TCS: Will there be any tricks and turntablism in the show

RV: From the stuff that [Bill's] doing now and the stuff that he was doing before, the guy is on a mad surge. He's KILLING it with repeats and he's KILLING it with tricks and it's just awesome to watch. It's really dope!

TCS: Without the comfort of having an entire library on your laptop, how did you prepare and pick records to physically pack and travel with?

BBB: The initial problem with doing the vinyl tour was we didn't want to play all older music. A lot of the new music is only coming out in digital form. Our programming started months ago when we started hitting up producers saying "hey, send us your new music that's gonna be coming out. We're doing this vinyl tour and actually gonna press up vinyl specifically for this tour so we can play new music." We run a gamut of different styles of genres of House so we'd have a selection to choose between but all the songs were selected a couple of months ago. All the [vinyl] pressing plants are now really backed up with the resurgence of vinyl, luckily we found Capsule Labs in Los Angeles who were willing to work with us and push us through a little quicker. That's how we went about [preparing music for the tour].

TCS: You said you're running a gamut of styles. What sub-genres are you playing?

RV: I call it big room House Music. I don't know if that's the term. Is there a term for it right now Bill.

BBB: If we had to pick terms it'd be House, Tech House, it'd be Deep House, G House... you know everybody's got a label for stuff but we're not stuck to one label.

RV: The best way is [to say it's] House Music.

TCS: What has the response to the tour been so far?

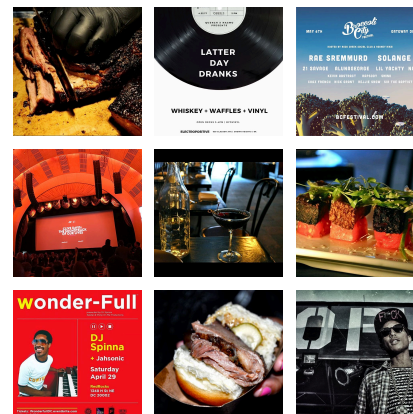
RV: The cities that we've [performed in] so far... everyone was gone! People are just flipping out because there hasn't been an all vinyl tour, at least not that I'm aware of. We're getting two generations, the new generation that wants to see it [for the first time] and their flipping out, and we're getting the generation that have experienced it and want to come back and see it again. The people are responding differently, because the people on the dance floor don't have to question, "ahh are they really playing?" The question is out of their minds, so there's a different energy on the floor.



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Visit www.BackToVinylTour.com for tour info, exclusive Back To Vinyl EP record, T-shirts and DJ slip mats.

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8/06: Los Angeles, CA – Sound

8/07: Houston, TX – Proof

8/11: Chicago, IL – Studio Paris

8/12: El Paso, TX – 301

8/13: Austin, TX – Kingdom

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9/24: Albuquerque, NM – Effex

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