

Artist: **Hypnobeat**

Title: **Prototech**

Format: 2x12"EP

Label/Cat. No.: Dark Entries DE-179 / Serendip Lab SERLP007



Everyone has their own idea of who started Techno. You might trace it back as far as the Buchlas and Moogs of this world. The motorik thrill of the kosmische movement had its part to play, while the British industrialists, the New York disco dancers and electro breakers could all claim a slice of the pie. The austere Acid tracks of Chicago shouldn't be overlooked, and obviously there's the genre's true flashpoint in Detroit. Somewhere in this tangle of jack leads patched into various western cultures came Hypnobeat.

James Dean Brown and **Pietro Insipido** formed Hypnobeat in 1983, but it was the addition of **Victor Sol** only a few months later that found the project reaching, as Brown puts it, "*the desired level of technical sophistication.*" In time, **Tobias Freund** also lent his talents (and equipment) to this loose-fit sonic scheme, where the protagonists sought a new, electronic manifestation of mankind's tribal music roots. Two cassette releases surfaced – 1985's "Huggables", and "Specials/Spatials" the following year. By this point the Frankfurt-based group had already explored fiercely mechanical creative expression through various configurations of hardware and personnel, revolving around core ingredients such as the TR-808, TB-303 and MC-202. The project lived on in spirit as Brown activated **Narcotic Syntax** in the 90s. While a more modern, digital concern, rooted in the Perlon label family, NS still channeled the Hypnobeat concept of a "new tribalism", not least on their "Provocative Percussion" double 12" released in 2006.

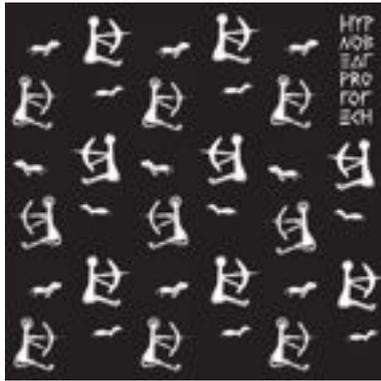
However, things came full circle as the hidden wonders of the 80s tape scene inspired a new generation of diggers hungry to find any possible gems buried in forgotten spools. Hypnobeat was back on the radar and Brown was invited to perform a live set at Serendip Festival in Paris. At the same time Pietro Insipido flagged up Helena Hauff's first single as sharing many qualities with the original Hypnobeat sound. After contact was made, Hauff came on board with Brown to bring Hypnobeat back to the stage, and so the pair have performed on a 'true-to-the-roots' set-up of three 808s, a 707, two 303s and effects in many esteemed spots around the world. Recordings from this modern manifestation of Hypnobeat have been captured on labels such as Arma and Pluie/Noir, with certainly more to come, but it has taken until now for the first official vinyl release of the original material recorded in the period of 1984-86. This is "Prototech".

For all the punky veneer, there are instances where these tracks reach staggering levels of sophistication, not least on "*Slash! Buffalo Eats Brass*" with its intricately programmed 303 lines and nimble beats that sound a far cry from most machine music made in 1986. Prescient "*Can God Rewind?*" is also dazzling in the complexity of its percussion and the richness of its synth lines in C as they throb out a bastardised version of acidic Disco straight out of the rhythm collider. Elsewhere, some tracks are more primal in their execution. Visceral opening track "*The Arumbaya Fetish*" was a cathartic venting of Brown's least favourite sound on the 808, the iconic cowbell, while the astounding proto-Acid miniature "*Moon Jump*" places limber 303 lead lines in a hail of thunderstruck patterns. "*Kilian*" has a stripped down quality that speaks more to the industrial era that Hypnobeat was conceived in, and "*Mission In Congo*" is a raw, reverb-soaked drum workout that captures the percussive-obsessive nature of Hypnobeat perfectly.

Six of the seven tracks selected on this collection were primarily powered by two 808s. "*I am amazed that the release sounds like we really had a plan back then...*" states Brown, but this accidental magic is in fact the raison d'être of Hypnobeat. They weren't the only ones prefiguring the next big revolutions in electronic music in the mid 80s, but there certainly weren't many artists stumbling across modes of expression that sound so relevant today.

Take "*Donna's Gift #2*" as the perfect case in point. The track was created live as an accompaniment to a friend's reading, but due to a lack of a microphone the music had to be performed at barely a whisper. It was only on bringing a recording of the performance home that Brown was able to surmise what a deftly executed performance he had given. In modern terms you might call it electro funk of the highest order, but back then, such happy accidents didn't have a context to attach them to.

All songs are remastered for vinyl by George Horn at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley. Housed in a jacket featuring cave engravings by Pietro Insipido of an archer and animal printed in a wallpaper pattern style designed by Eloise Leigh. Each copy includes an transparent insert of an x-ray photograph from 1984 of Romulus Cœurque holding the circuit board of a BOSS DR-55 rhythm machine.



A

The Arumbaya Fetish

rec. 1984 | RC: rhythms, dub treatments | PF: synths, dub treatments
previously unreleased version

Moon Jump

rec. 1984 | RC: rhythms | PI: TB-303, drum synth
released on "Huggables" double cassette set, 1985

B

Slash! Buffalo Eats Brass

rec. 1986 | RC: rhythms, TB-303, synth, noise, treatments
previously unreleased version

Kilian

rec. 1985 | RC: rhythms, treatments | PF: rhythms, synth, bass guitar
released on "Huggables" double cassette set, 1985

C

Donna's Gift #2

rec. 1986 | RC: rhythms, treatments | AT: MC-202
previously unreleased

Can God Rewind?

rec 1985 | RC: rhythms, TB-303, synth, perc, treatments | PF: rhythms, MC-202, synth, syncussion, perc, treatments
previously unreleased version

D

Mission in Congo

rec. 1984 | RC: rhythms, syncussion, dub treatments | PF: dub treatments | PE: rhythms
previously unreleased version

Romulus Cœurque | Porn Flake | Pietro Insipido | Pink Eln | Adrian Thorym

Recorded at Secret Twitchdance, bureaublanc, and elsewhere

Basic rhythm programming on all tracks except A2 are performed on two TR-808s

Engineered by Tobias Freund at Non Standard Studios

Mastered by George Horn

Artwork by Pietro Insipido

X-ray image of Romulus Cœurque holding a DR-55 circuit board by RC

Designed by Hypnobeat and Eloise Leigh

Coordinated by James Dean Brown, Josh Cheon and Fred Serendip, with thanks to Victor Sol