

## 33 1/3

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIOT WILDER, AUTHOR OF 'DJ SHADOW'S ENDTRODUCING'

By Eliot Wilder

Each week, One Week To Live puts the Word out on the street and shares pearls of wisdom, history and entertainment taken from the plethora of books about dance music culture. This section contains syndicated extracts from texts which take a close-up look at the dance, urban and electronic music scenes. Hopefully, you'll find some nuggets of wisdom and information here – or at least a new perspective on the places and sounds that shaped clubland and the music industry as a whole.

For the last five weeks we've been looking at extracts from the mighty 33 1/3 Series from Continuum Publishing. Focusing on seminal albums throughout the history of recorded music, celebrated journalists discuss and dissect each masterpiece,

interviewing a huge range of artists and affiliates involved with the making of the record. We've looked at 'The Beastie Boys' Paul's Boutique' by Dan LeRoy; 'Stevie Wonder's Songs In The Key Of Life' by Zeth Lundy; 'Prince's Sign 'O' The Times' by Michaelangelo Matos; 'James Brown's Live At The Apollo' by Douglas Wolk; and ended with 'DJ Shadow's Endroducing...' by Eliot Wilder. To close the 33 1/3 series we caught up with Eliot to talk about his experiences working on 'Endroducing...' for the 33 1/3 series, his three months of conversations with Josh Davis, aka DJ Shadow, and also his views on the two full length Shadow releases since. There was the epic journeyman tales of 2002's 'The Private Press' and last year's more eclectic offering 'The Outsider'.

### Hi Eliot, shall we start at the beginning - what's your background?

I'm a musician and grew up in LA during the late 70s, early 80s punk era. But my journalistic background came from working at the LA Times. It was a different time back then, when they had copy kids, or copy messengers. Essentially we were getting coffee and donuts, but the pay-off was that they allowed you to be mentored into the industry and see how a newspaper operates from the inside out. That doesn't really happen anymore. I moved up and managed to become an editor, but I was also doing freelance writing and about ten years ago I really made the decision that I wanted to pursue being a writer rather than an editor because being an editor is more of a latent experience, it's kind of like being a producer, ultimately it's not your stuff. It's still rewarding

wasn't MC Hammer taking the whole of Rick James and adding one line. Getting to know Josh, he really is just like an archaeologist. It's the ultimate post-modern thing where he takes it and creates something completely new. But he's also super respectful of the artists that he took it from.

### Definitely a lot of forgotten greats and obscure musicians...

Take David Axelrod, the great arranger and composer from the late sixties and early seventies. He had fallen on really hard times, he was almost at the point where he was homeless. But thanks to Shadow's popularity, he's seen a new life. Giving new life to artists who the public may have forgotten about. And in general, that's what hip hop has done. Al Cooper – the professional organist that played on Dylan's 'Like A Rolling Stone', I met him when he contributed

in Sacramento that Shadow always went to called Records and I called there and left a message to pass on. It was through that connection that I was able to get a hold of him.

### What were your experiences like of talking to Shadow?

He was a very cordial, straight talking, articulate guy. There was no bullshit. We talked most Sundays for three months. He wanted to walk through the whole process of making the record too. What really sets Josh apart is that there's something really emotional about his music that really moves people. It's very real and there's so little of that about.

### What do you think about 'The Private Press'?

Personally I think it's a really great album. It's not 'Endroducing...' part two, but he's definitely taking his craft to another level. 'Private Press' also came out so long after 'Endroducing...' that who knew what it was going to be about? I know that he was concerned that it wasn't as well received as 'Endroducing...' I think in a lot of ways it's smoother and more integrated.

### And 'The Outsider'?

I remember reading that people hated it and thought it was completely schizophrenic. But that's basically been his thing. I don't know what the big problem is. Listening to it again now, the album does go from the manic hyphy and Bay Area stuff through to the track with Chris James from Stateless that almost sounds like Coldplay at times. It's always been his thing to integrate lots of different styles. I really like it, it's got a lot to offer and people should give it another listen. When I was talking to him, he hadn't even started that record and at the time he was getting into a lot of 50s psychedelic music... there's that release 'Diminishing Returns', which is a mixtape of really obscure psychedelic music, kinda like what 'Brainfreeze' did with soul music. But I guess that was abandoned and he went in another direction. He's also said before that a lot of when he goes in with an idea he'll come out with something completely different. But in a lot of ways that's what an artist does. You start with a feeling, but that flows into something else and you find yourself somewhere completely different. But as long as you're into it, so what?

The whole 33 1/3 series including 'DJ Shadow's Endroducing...' by Eliot Wilder is available from all good bookshops or by phoning 01202 665432.

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www.continuumbooks.com  
www.eliotwilder.com



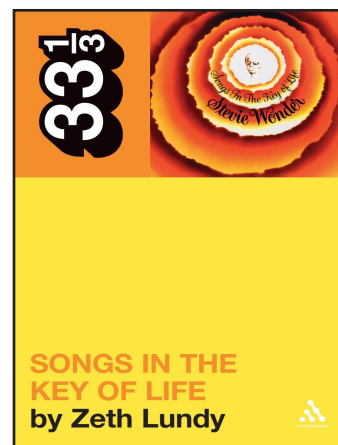
Eliot Wilder



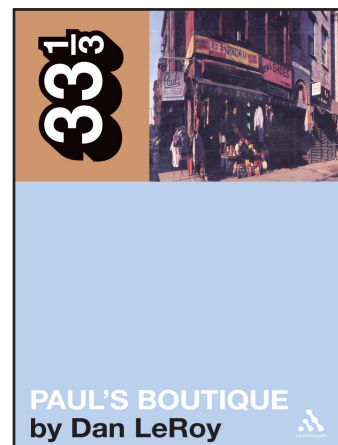
ENDTRODUCING...  
by Eliot Wilder



SIGN O' THE TIMES  
by  
Michaelangelo  
Matos



SONGS IN THE  
KEY OF LIFE  
by Zeth Lundy



PAUL'S BOUTIQUE  
by Dan LeRoy

**"What really sets Josh apart is that there's something really emotional about his music that really moves people. It's very real and there's so little of that about."**

though. I moved to Boston, also about ten years ago and started working for the Boston Phoenix. There I also became a writer and then editor of a music magazine called Amplifier. That's where I really got a free hand in writing about artists that I really liked and respected for change. People who were not just personalities – but were artists.

### And now?

I'm a Dad! I'm also working on my own music and I just finished an album 'The Sentimental Education Of Eliot Wilder'. I love recording whilst I still can afford to.

### Can you remember your first thoughts when you heard 'Endroducing...'??

Well when I first heard it, to be honest, I didn't really get it first. All I knew was that there was something spectacularly different about it. It wasn't 'til I moved to Boston a couple of years later and I had it on my headphones a lot that I really started to hear what it was about. That's when I realised that album was going to be some sort of lynchpin in my life.

### So what was it that really got you involved?

I guess it was the fact that all these samples were like a patchwork quilt of different periods of music, it

to Amplifier, well, he was on hard times and one day his former record company rang him up and told him that they had a really big cheque for him. A hip hop artist had sampled his stuff and had paid their respects and suddenly he was making money again off of that. He was saying: "My songs are like my children and now they're coming back to support me in my old age!"

### What's the story with how you got involved with writing the book?

The 33 1/3 series was just starting up and I was interviewing Joe Pernice from the Pernice Brothers and he told me that he was writing a book on The Smith's 'Meat Is Murder' and he was writing it as a fiction book for this series 33 1/3. He gave me the name of the editor, David Barker, from Continuum New York. I was thinking on the way home on the subway that if there was one album that I'd really love to write about it would be 'Endroducing...'. By the time that I'd got home I was already emailing the guy and pitching him exactly what I'd like to do.

### Were there any major obstructions?

Well he was impossible to find, I called his distributor in New York and Los Angeles and nobody knew anything about how to get in contact. It was so strange. I had read this article about this record store