

DJ Yoda goes to the movies

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May the farce be with you, DJ Yoda goes to the Movies live at Cargo, 11/03/05

Imagine that the last 30 years of cinematographic and TV history and the last 100 years of recorded music are at your fingertips, imagine that you're a DJ with a fixation on cut and paste with a comedy touch, imagine that you've already worked on projects that fuse your love of movies and TV with cut and paste and (so may say bad) humour... and now imagine that someone creates a device that allows you to manipulate not only the audio but also the visual aspect of all this material, something not easily possible until now... lastly imagine your name is DJ Yoda and you've just got your hands on Pioneer's new DVJ deck which allows to cut up DVDs with the same ease you've been cutting CDs or vinyl. So what do you do? You go to the movies of course, presenting the public with the funniest, most interesting cut and paste experience in recent years. Cargo in East London was the setting for a memorable night where Yoda did indeed go to the movies in full, leaving in his trail a happy, drunken audience who could barely believe their eyes or ears...

Following a few years of cut and paste extravaganza, which saw him release 3 themed 'How to cut and paste' CDs and some one-off live re-scoring performances of movies such as 'The Goonies', Yoda is embarking on a nationwide tour prior to his first album to showcase his new toy and the ideas and possibilities this has opened for someone like him. Since its inception during the 20th century, cut and paste, especially in hip hop, has generally always been kept to the realm of the audio, with visual attempts left to VJs and video addicts. Now the game may very well be about to change with Pioneer's new DVJ deck opening up an insane amount of possibilities for people like Yoda, who can now take their humour and expansive knowledge of TV, film and music history and mash it all up in a delicious serving for the masses, whose general attention span is constantly shortened in this day and age anyway.

It's saturday night at Cargo and the place is packed to the rafters with people waiting to see Yoda go to the movies. As the time comes and goes, people fret and finally Yoda steps on stage, in front of a giant screen and equipped with two turntables, a CD deck, a DVJ and two mixers as well as a TV for monitoring. Cue claps and cheers from the audience and the screen fires up with the Lucasfilm logo, tagged over into Yodafilm. The intro to Star Wars comes up next, and just as the text starts to crawl on screen, we're treated to the first manipulations as Yoda scratches over the legendary yellow introduction text, making it come and go on and off screen in tune to the music. Next up is the now ubiquitous light saber training scene from the same movie, with Luke playing around with his saber under Obi Wan's tutelage... However this time round the light saber is not only handled by Luke but by Yoda as well, who proceeds to offer the first hilarious moment of the night, as he crab scratches Luke playing with the light saber, sending him in a frenzy and catching the audience's attention for the rest of the night. Cueing up various tracks on his turntables and CD player, Yoda scored over two hours of movies and TV extracts (which he collaged on his own DVD for use on the night), doubling the soundtrack of the visuals with his own, and scratching the visual and audio elements of the DVD in time to his own scoring.

As the night drew on we witnessed a staggering amount of late 20th century popular culture being absolutely trashed about, mashed up and reworked into a collage worthy of any pop culture junkie's attention. Everything got a scratch: Star Wars, the Muppet Show, Gremlins, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Scarface, Gladiator, Kindergarden Cop, The Running Man, Big Trouble In Little China, Shogun Assassin, Crouching Tiger, Enter the Dragon, Fueris Bueller's Day Out, Back to the Future, The Wedding Singer, Beat Street, Billie Jean music video, TRON, The Big Lebowski, Ghostbusters, Rocky, Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor stand up routines, Revenge of the Nerds, Evil Dead, Blues Brothers, various DMC winning sets, 16 Candles, the original Batman and Spiderman TV series, Elf, Cheech and Chong, Conan the Barbarian, Beverly Hills Cops, some random Z horror movies, He Man, Transformers, Beavis and Butthead, Titan and more all mixed up and re-scored with plenty of classic funk and soul breaks, 80s classics, Roots Manuva, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Blackalicious, East Flatbush Project, Theme tunes, some electro, big beat, Chemical Brother's 'Push the Button' and even an ending scene with Doc Scott's seminal 'Shadowboxin' and I Kamanchi's hectic 'Circus' over the Running Man's last scene.

From all the above Yoda cleverly used small samples to segue from one scene to the next. For the extended scenes, he re-scored them on his decks while manipulating them on the DVJ. These ranged from the gruesome decapitation scene in *Gladiator*, which he scratched back and forth making the head pop to the beat, to the final shoot out in *Scarface*, which also got treated to some funny scratching as Tony Montana ate bullet after bullet. *Crouching Tiger and Enter the Dragon* also received a more 'classic' treatment, re-scored to hip hop while Yoda got busy scratching the kicking. He even managed some cringing moments with extracts from *'Texas Chainsaw Massacre'* and *'The Exorcist'* which really made your stomach turn in drunken stupor. Yet he also managed to pull out irresistible comic moments, such as the snorting scene in *Cheech and Chong*, which he played around with to the amusement of all present. Whilst he may not be the finest scratcher out there, Yoda's always had an innate talent for hilarious cut and paste with turntablist elements and the DVJ has clearly opened a whole new world for him to play with and re-appropriate in his own fashion. The expertise with which Yoda assembled over two hours of movies and TV into a digestible concentrate, which never really lost your attention and kept you laughing and gasping is really something else. Even though he missed some of his cues and had some slight problems throughout (no doubt due to having to adapt his rehearsed set to a different setting every time), it was still the most entertaining audio-visual show I've seen in years. The crowd, in all its forms and from all backgrounds, loved it and so did he, a massive grin appearing on his face everytime a new scene or good bit was about to be scratched and messed up.

Pop culture is fast and trashy these days, bootlegs are more popular than singles, bands come and go faster than you can sneeze, yet cut and paste is still the ultimate post modern way of consuming the last decades in an easily digestible format which anyone can latch onto. In two hours Yoda did prove that in a remarkable way, letting the audience share nostalgic memories of a time gone by in an age where most of us don't laugh enough anymore or revisit those magical places of our youth. His new live show has it all: nostalgia, humour, intertextuality, good and bad music, good and bad (sometimes very bad) movies and just the right amount of turntablist skills to make you laugh or nod your head some more. All the while making me think that if this is his first attempt at a project like this, the future may indeed be bright for cut and paste.

Many thanks to Luke at Cargo for the hook up. For more info on Yoda check out the Antitode Records site. His new album should be out by the autumn and watch out for Yoda going to the movies in a town near you. For more on Cargo check out their site.