

# C-Mon & Kypski

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Two tape decks are better than one, an interview  
with C-Mon & Kypski

Take one talented turntable artist, pair him with a talented beatmaker, make them both fall in love with hip hop and sample based music and you have C-Mon & Kypski, two of the most interesting Dutch artists right now who have been making a lot of noise (and the right type too) this year with three major releases including two albums. C-Mon released his solo producer album, Cereal, featuring the cream of the Dutch lyrical scene whilst Kypski released the Mazturbation Tool alongside his crew, The Waxwankers, and finally they released their second joint album, Static Traveller, as well which follows nicely from their first album, Vinyl Voodoo. So no rest for these guys who have also been touring the new album with a show that needs to be seen with turntables, sampler, live bass, guitar and drums and much more. In between all this work we took the occasion to speak to them via email about their recent work following a hook-up through Turntable Radio. So sit back and find out exactly what all the fuss is about. Trust us these guys' music is well worth your time and money as you're about to find out.

Ok, well the best place to start is by letting people know a little bit about yourselves I think. Where are you from, how long you've been DJing/making music etc...?

Kypski: Well, I'm Kypski, born and raised in Utrecht, a little village in the centre of Holland. 26 years old, been skateboarding since I was 12. Started drumming at 8, scratching and producing at 14. I make music for a living.

C-Mon: C-Mon, kind of had the same childhood as Kypski. Same age, same primary school, same neighborhood. But we're not family, and don't have the same girlfriend!

How did you two meet and how did you end up working together?

K: We met on the street corner when we discovered we both had a skateboard. C-Mon was living around the corner. We started skateboarding on that corner.

C: We met each other skateboarding, and found out we did the same things with the pause-buttons on a tape deck. Then we joined forces, because you can do more with 2 tape decks than 1.

What was it that first attracted you to scratching and sample based music?

K: For me, that has to be Public Enemy 'Brothers Gonna Work It Out'. I already was interested in sampling, but PE's production work (Bomb Squad) really blew me away. I was about 14 then. I didn't have the slightest idea about what Chuck D was yelling and screaming about, I just HAD to know how that background music was made, including the scratching.

C: Again, PE was also one of the first things for me that got me really stoked. All the layering of samples intrigued me. Also NWA and 3rd Bass were inspiration.

How would you describe your music to someone who has never heard it?

K: To be honest, I always have a hard time when someone asks me that. I'll probably say something in the line of: 'Uuhh... well its, uhm, like hiphop, but not hiphop, jazz but not jazz, uh, everything basically...'

C: When I want to get rid of people I tell them it's instrumental, hiphop based, filmic music. But I think it's not a definitive description.

How do you work together in the studio? Do you share the duties producing, scratching etc... or do you split work between

the both of you?

K: When making Vinyl Voodoo, our debut album, we both composed and produced our songs together, 2 guys sitting in a little studio discussing what direction the song should go to, how we should chop this sample up, smoking a joint, etc. We didn't really split tasks or anything. Having worked together for such a long time, there are things that grow into the working process though. C-Mon to me has now become a great 'overseer', overseeing the structure of a song, overseeing the overall sound, arrangement, or mood of a song, should this be scratched or not...While I may be thinking about putting in that melody I have in my head, or this sound that I think would work great. We both do Pro Tools work and I do the scratching. If I'm behind the turntables, C-Mon might do more Pro Tools work. Static Traveller though, was composed and (sometimes) produced by 4 people instead of 2, and we worked more separate from each other as opposed to Vinyl Voodoo. For example, C-Mon composed the first sketch for 'Cravings Of A Solemn Soul' and 'Evil Needle' on his own, and the four of us elaborated on that. I composed the first sketch for 'Shitty Bum' and ' Geile Sheisse' on my own, and the four of us elaborated on that, exchanging sessions, working in two studios at a time. With C-Mon & Kypski, composing and producing go hand in hand.

Do you find it easier to work together or solo to achieve what you want musically?

K: I think, to get a C-Mon & Kypski song, you'll have to have C-Mon & Kypski creating it together, regardless of the composing method (exchanging sessions or 2 in the studio). I could never do on my own what we do together, or better yet, what we do the 4 of us.

C: True, but in most cases, one of us comes up with a basis, and then we work it out together. So there is a level of solo work.

What would you say are the main differences between your first LP and the new one, Static Traveller?

K: There's the difference in working methods, as I explained earlier.

C: Vinyl Voodoo was more sample based, Static Traveller contains more self recorded instruments such as piano, drums, horns, everything. When we started making Static Traveller, we wanted to come out heavier, not only down tempo chill stuff. We had a deadline for it too, which put a little pressure on us, which I think worked out well.

How has the inclusion of the other musicians, Jori and Daniel, helped you on this album?

K: Quite a lot. A lot of songs were created out of live improvisations, which we recorded and made songs out of in the studio.

C: Because we had already played together for a year, we felt the same thing about the music. It was just great to record all the live instruments; the record became more personal.

The blend of scratching, beat production and live instrumentation you have on the album, while not something new as such, is very refreshing because so few people have really been exploring that alley as of late. What was it that pushed you to go in this musical direction?

K: Well, what really got us started doing that, was us being fed-up with rappers. We had a little rap group when we were 16, and at one point we were like: 'fuck this chorus-verse-chorus shit, let's quit making rap music so we can really do what we want to and have musical freedom!'

C: Yeah! From then we started sampling like hell and exploring the possibilities of composition. The scratching has always played a key role in our music, because Kypski is so damn good at it. He still surprises me with new patterns. From sampling to recording your own instruments is a logical step I think, because the music comes alive, and it gets more personal. What we do is actually make our own samples.

Regarding your live work and performances, how would you describe the show to someone who has never been? What can they expect?

K: They can expect the Static Traveller songs to be performed live, energetic, moody, dynamic, with crazy visuals, turntabling...live looping... drumming... improvisation as well as structure... light beams... smoke... fire... Come check it out!

C: People always tell me that they love to see how we communicate on stage, and the energy we put into it. It's all live on stage. We use the Electrix Repeater, the real-time looping machine. So we sample some shit live on stage, for instance guitar parts or whatever.

What would you say is the balance between rehearsed/prepared work and improvised work in your live shows? Do you prefer one or the other?

K: I like both. Our old show sometimes was all improvised, real spontaneous, I liked it. Now it's less improvised. I like that too because the dynamics are dramatically increased and we can decide ourselves whether we're going to improvise or not.

C: Yeah me too. Improvising is a lot of fun, but when you do that every time you have a gig (1 hour), it's sometimes hard and exhausting. If you prepare your stuff, you can tell beforehand what's going to work, and what isn't.

More and more we are seeing artists like you guys producing music that is scratch based or incorporates scratching and then performing that music on stage as well as in the studio. Do you agree that

it's important for artists like you to be able to reproduce or interpret the music you create in the studio, on stage?

K: Hell yeah! I once saw Exploding Plastix perform live in Utrecht. I was crazy about their CD, I must have played it a hundred times. I went to the show and it was boring... A real deception because I liked their music so much and there they were: a laptop running and two guys tweaking the same filter sweep over and over... Naw man. You have to be able to bring it to

the people live, in an exciting way.

C: It's still the best way to promote your music.

Do you think/agree that in a way being able to work live and in the studio helps to further validate the music?

K: Yeah man. It's working in circles. Live improvisations turning into songs in the studio, studio-composed songs turning into live improvised remixes, or turning into even other songs... It's great.

C: Jah man.

It seems to me that with this new album you've achieved something that has been missing at times from the 'scratch'/turntablist scene. And that is people making music that you could dance to, music that has a lot of energy and which doesn't just rely on the scratching aspect, either musically or in a closed-in way. Do you agree that your music, and this album, has that quality to it?

K: Yep. Why should it be all scratching? Scratch music, to me is music where the turntable has a significant and important role in the music. Not just all-scratched songs are scratch music. I consider a band like Fingathing to be scratch music too.

C: What you see sometimes is that people are so deep into scratching, and the techniques, they lose overall view. We just try to make songs, and incorporate scratching in the songs.

Do you agree that as the musical aspect of the artform develops there are still many musical avenues left to explore?

K: Of course, because music is endless.

C: yeah, but I don't like the invention of a new genre every time somebody farts (ed note: LOL!). Music is music.

Are there any such avenues you would want to explore but haven't had the chance yet?

K: Yeah for example, were going to work together with the Amsterdam Klezmer Band, to explore the 'klezmer-avenue'... (ed note: well I asked for it)

C: For me it's a challenge to get a dope track with scratching at a high level into the charts someday.

What are your best memories from making this album?

K: Ha-ha that HAS to be the space cake. We had recording sessions in Maastricht in a huge land house in the midst of nature, to compose and record various live instrumentation, drums, piano, guitars... We brought along some space cake that we had bought in a coffee shop in Utrecht. One night we were like 'let's eat them shits!' There was a lot of weed in them, and I mean A LOT. And they were THICK fuckin chunks of cake...Before I knew it, I was in the most bizarre trip of my life. I think the other guys were too. Everything was spinning around, laughing my ass off. C-Mon, Jori and Daniel were somehow still able to pick up an instrument, run Pro Tools and make 'music', while laughing insanely. I was just glued to the couch, enjoying the wonderful colours and togetherness... aw... man... That shit was just too heavy. It was certainly the most crazy memory.

C: he said it

What are your favourite track(s) on the LP?

K: Mine has to be Geile Sheisse, Dazed & Confused (live) and Shalom... Although I think all songs are real, real dope.

C: I don't like any of them. Maybe Shalom.

What can we expect next from you guys both live and in the studio? Any more albums, EPs, projects, tours etc...?

K: The Amsterdam Klezmer project is coming up. Working on new songs. We're trying to get some gigs in Germany in October, Gunkhole's booking agency is helping us out with that. There's an EP coming out soon, with four or five tracks on it from the Static Traveller album. Shitty Bum and Evil Needle, of course, will be on there. I'm working on the Clocktave record right now. We really need more foreign gigs! England would be dope!

C: I'm producing some tracks for Senna, also featured on 'C-Mon Cereal'. She'll release her own EP and album, that's going to be dope! I also still have to finish my study (Arts and Media Management).

How would you describe the scene in Holland to someone who has never been? (by scene I mean both the 'turntablist' scene and the hiphop/music one). I remember going to Rotterdam for a week last year and being really surprised and impressed by the strength of the scenes and dedication of the people involved.

K: Okay, the hiphop scene: small, but growing. Turntablist: even smaller, much smaller, but also growing. People are definitely taking shit serious here, though these scenes are very underground. I'm not really excited about the media though. It seems like there is only kiddy music and commercial crap on the

radio and TV. Radio stations in Belgium have more taste and guts I think.

C: Lately there is a lot more attention for hiphop acts, there's this rise of Dutch spoken rap. So the scene is growing, but kids still try to copy American shit.

What is your setup like in the studio and at home?

C: home=studio: Apple G4, pro tools (digi001), yamahaCS20M, Korg Delta (both vintage synths), Mackie 8 bus analogue deck, lots of turntables, and some effects. That's about it. When we need it, we bring in guitars, sitar, percussion, more keys, whatever.

What's your favourite bit of kit and why?

K: The turntable, this speaks for itself. After that, the Apple G4 and our Electrix Repeater. The repeater is the ideal tool for what we do on stage. Its real-time looping with multiple outputs, stretching, shifting, editing, syncing, all real-time.

C: Mine is the Yamaha synth. I love the analogue sound.

Where do you think the 'scene' is going right and/or wrong and why?

K: If you mean the turntable scene, it's going great right now. A friend of mine sells turntables and mixers in Amsterdam and he's doing good business. He even started scratch workshops in his store because of all the youngsters want to scratch.

C:...

Where do you see yourselves in a few years time?

K: Still releasing quality music, touring around the world, doing exciting projects and collaborations...living off music.

C: same for me, also producing music for various artists I like.

Cereal questions:

What was the original idea behind doing this LP?

C: Brian, a friend of mine, came up with the idea for me to make a producers album, which would feature Dutch rappers. I thought it would be cool to go back to the roots of producing tracks for rappers, so I started making beats. Soon I discovered again why Kypski and I decided not to work with rappers anymore... so I decided to also make tracks with singers. I like melodies and harmonics. But the idea was to have a feature on each track.

How did you go about working with so many different artists? Did you work with each separately or did you work on your own and then gave the music to them?

C: Yeah basically I made a beat, and then I would send it to the artist. They would write stuff, and then we recorded it at

my house. It was real fun to work with all these totally different artists.

Did you find the fact that there are so many different artists on this LP a good thing? Would you have preferred working with maybe only one or two, or a few of them?

C: No that was the idea behind it. Also, it was like a showcase of what I can do with these different styles. I think I would get bored making an album with just one of them. I like the variety because hiphop is put in another daylight, in between melodic hiphop based stuff. Even my grandmother likes it: "wow, that kid can talk real fast!" - on 'Inhuman Being'

How long did it take you to get the whole thing done?

C: Couple of months, I think 4? But I've been working a year on it, with breaks.

What track are you happiest with on the LP?

C: Ooh, that's hard... Muzik with Senna if I had to pick one... but they're so different, I can't really tell.

The LP is great in the way that it represents the variety of the Dutch hiphop scene in its tracks. Would you ever consider doing similar projects with artists from other countries?

C: Yeah that would be dope. I'm thinking about part 2, with all international artists. But that has to wait a while.

Are there any artists from other countries that you are working with now, or would want to work with in the future?

C: I haven't really thought about that yet. It also depends on what's reasonable, I mean, I might want to work with Michael Jackson, but that's not going to happen. There are a lot of real dope artists in UK, but I'm not in contact with anyone yet.

Kypski solo questions:

How did you approach putting together the Mazturbation Tool? What would you say sets it apart, if anything, from previous scratch records?

K: Well, as a group, we already had a plan to release a break record two years ago. Problem was, we didn't have a label to put it out on. At that time, I assumed that Supertracks (their label) didn't want to release it; I just didn't think it could be an option. I almost released Mtool as merchandise to a theatre project Broky (DJ Broky B) was scratching in. The deal was almost done, but I thought; I just GOTTA try and ask Supertracks, I prefer them releasing it, because then the possibilities with the record would be much greater (I would have total creative control, no wack theatre logo's on the sleeve, international distribution etc), compared to just releasing it as a theatre merchandise item. By that time, the record was 80 percent finished. I asked Supertracks, and they were like 'Yeah of course!!' I was like 'okay dope!' a little surprised of their enthusiasm. So I called the theatre, and said 'sorry dudes no can do'. They didn't even care about it ha-ha! It sets apart from other scratch records, maybe a bit because it's melodic and at the same time has battle sentences, but definitely because of the clocktave system DJ Sjam brought up. I also like the warm, raw funk sound it has.

You've mentioned working on a record that will be packed mainly with your clocktaves system. Could you explain in a bit more detail why you think this would be useful for people making music on turntables?

K: First of all, DJ Sjam came to me with the idea, I just made up the name 'clocktave' and produced the concept. It's a new way to scratch melodies. I noticed that a lot of time scratchers are TRYING to make a melody using the pitch control, which still is really unpractical and, most of all, takes a lot of technical effort to create a fairly basic melody. Even in the creations of turntable melody by pioneers like DJ 8-Ball and Kid Koala I hear this 'trying' sound. With clocktaves, if you understand the system, you can play more complex melodies intuitively, like you would on a keyboard. Therefore, it takes less effort to get a more advanced melodic sounding result. Then, it doesn't sound like you're TRYING to play a melody, it sounds like you're playing a melody. It has also become easier to add more rhythm and funkyness to the notes, because you're literally scratching every note. I've proven this point in the video clips on the C & K website, where I played various scales and chords while keeping my hands on the platter almost the whole time. It really depends on your project though as to whether or not clocktaves will be of use. They are meant to create melodies and harmonies, and you don't always need that in music. It really depends. Eventually, scratchers will have the choice to compose music using reverse engineering, forward engineering (clocktaves or some future melodic turntable) or using both methods at the same time. Anyhow, clocktaves are the melodic next step in turntablism, in these times where that 'melodic turntable' still hasn't been made.

Having battled in the past what is your opinion of the battle scene right now?

K: I'm really not up to date with battles anymore, but I know it's still out there and that people are still doing crazy shit. I know there's some talk about battles being 'dead' but that's bullcrap. Battles and scratch music were alive 6 years ago, and both still are alive today. I hope battles never die, they're great.

Do you agree it's become a shadow of its former self? It doesn't represent or embodies the artform the way it used to?

K: No, as far as I know it still represents the artform. Maybe judges will take musicality a bit more serious right now, I don't know. There never have been a lot of battles in Holland. I wish there were more.

What other scratch related projects are you

working on at the minute? Can we expect anything this year from yourself, solo or along someone else?

K: Of course, I'm working on 'The Clocktave' which is the follow up to the Mtool. I'm composing new songs on my own, with C-Mon and with DJ Lah. Watch out for 'A Nightmare On Next Level Street' (ed note: which should soon be premiering on turntable radio).

Who would you want to work with that you haven't had the chance to yet?

K: Tony Allen, on the scratch tip ha-ha!  
He's one of the sickest drummers out there.

Prince. Now that's a genius!

Ace (of Gunkhole), we used to just make practice tapes, but I'd like to do something more song wise with him sometime in the future.

D-Styles, that would just be real dope.

Q-Bert, he's really underrated right now by the way.

To you what is the future of 'scratch music' / turntablism?

K: I think the place of the turntable in the future is in between traditional instruments. On the same level. The future isn't going to be about all-scratched albums or all-scratch songs. Remember, when the Moog synthesizer came out, there suddenly were these 'ALL-Moog' records? Every instrument created by, and played on the Moog? 'Wow, that Moog thing sure is amazing!' everybody said. After a while the moog synth found its own place in the realm of musical instruments. All-scratched albums remind me of those old records. Explorations of a new instrument. Logically, that's not going to be what its all about in the future, the future will be a combination of turntables and traditional musicianship, most definitely.

You can find out more about C-Mon & Kypski at their site which includes demo videos for Kypski's clocktave system. You can purchase all their music at [www.supertracks.nl](http://www.supertracks.nl) and also be sure to check out July's turntable radio show for a taste of both albums and Kypski's clocktave system.

Finally you can see the video for the Shitty Bum song from Static Traveller right here <http://www.supertracks.nl/video/Shitty-Bum.html> and check some live audio at [www.euphonic.nl](http://www.euphonic.nl).

Many thanks to both of them for time. Photos courtesy of Supertracks.

## Reviews

### Static Traveller

With their blend of production, scratching and live instrumentation C-Mon & Kypski have hit the right note and delivered a highly refreshing album that manages to surprise you on every level. Their fusion approach works perfectly on tracks like Shitty Bum and Shalom, as they weave in and out of styles with great ease and leave you wondering if you did just hear that breakdown right. Other highlights for me include the tracks Money, Money with its sitar-laced hip hop overtones and Geile Scheisse with its quirky electronic melodies, to name just two. Simply put this is an album that manages to break boundaries and bring to the front an eclectic mix of influences that just fit perfectly together even when your brain is telling you that they shouldn't. Their fusion of traditional and modern instruments further shows their musical open minded-ness and vision of a music that has no boundaries, something that we need more of in today's ever growing bland popular music landscape. And personally I think they've managed to deliver an album that keeps you interested, entertained and most important of all makes you smile and realize that music doesn't need categorising to be

enjoyed, it just needs to be.

## Cereal

C-Mon's solo outing sees him team up with a fine selection of Dutch talent both on the rapping and singing front. His use of singers and rappers is one of the things that makes the album most appealing, as he deftly avoids the pitfalls of so many producer-led rap albums. And don't let the fact that this album features Dutch talent put you off, as not all tracks are in Dutch. The production is wide and varied from soulful overtones to more straight-forward hip hop beats via eclectic slow rhythms with rock influences. Cereal really shows C-Mon in his element as he makes each track fit the vocalist to a t, no mean feat for an album featuring so many diverse vocal styles. Highlights include the first single, Muzik featuring Senna, Inhuman Being featuring Unorthodox and Beggars for Sun featuring Benny Sings. With its varied styles and influences this album will please the more eclectic music lovers as well as the hip hop fans and is a great taste of what the Dutch scene has to offer in 2004. Go on get your cereals, your mom told you so!