

RAVERS

THE BLACK ROCK COALITION ARTS MAGAZINE

the **15**th + 1st Anniversary
issue

**Sustaining
Self-Determined
Blackness**

writings
by

michael a gonzales
maya mabern
martha redbone
jon e edwards
honeychild coleman
david carr
darrell m mcneill

interviews
with

qadr
(of the muslims)
jahi sundance
aidan connell
(of the daybreakers)

photos
from

petra richterová
sally a. foxen-mcneill
earl douglas, jr.
laronda davis



- 3 E.D.itor's Note by **EARL DOUGLAS, JR.**
- 4 For Those Who Rock Black by **GREG TATE**
- 6 Do-It-Our-Damn-Selves by **HONEYCHILD COLEMAN**
- 8 Chimerical People Time: Alkebulan Diasporic Futurism (And The Death of White Supremacy) by **DARRELL M. MCNEILL**
- 12 The Black American Experience by **MARTHA REDBONE**
- 13/30 Flash Focus: Photos by **SALLY A. FOXEN-MCNEILL**
- 14 Artist Spotlight: BRC Interview with **JAHİ SUNDANCE**
- 16 Keeping Our History in Rock and Roll by **DAVID CARR**
- 1/17/18/22/32 Flash Focus: Photos by **PETRA RICHTEROVÁ**
- 19 Music All Around by **JON E. EDWARDS**
- 23 For Us, By Us: How Black Gen-Z Creates Space for Themselves, On and Offline by **MAYA MABERN**
- 24 Artist Spotlight: BRC Interview with **QADR (of The Muslims)**
- 26 Rediscovering Black Culture by **MICHAEL A. GONZALES**
- 28 Artist Spotlight: BRC Interview with **AIDAN CONNELL (of The Daybreakers)**
- 29/30/31 Flash Focus: Photos by **EARL DOUGLAS, JR. and LARONDA DAVIS**

editor: **EARL DOUGLAS, JR.**
 layout and design: **LaRONDA DAVIS**
 cover photos of Micah Gaugh & V. Jeffrey Smith:
PETRA RICHTEROVÁ

Welcome to the Fall 2021 edition of Ravers!

To coincide with our **35th Anniversary**, this long-overdue issue of The Black Rock Coalition's literary journal addresses an issue that Black folks in the United States have been hellbent on asserting for the past 500 years: self-determination, self-awareness, and self-sufficiency.

This is nothing new to those who have been down with us since day one. And for those just discovering us, it might feel like a homecoming. After all, the BRC was founded by a group of self-motivated, like-minded Black folk who were looking to reclaim, re-recognize, and re-plant our collective freak flags on the world—through rock n roll or whatever other means we deem necessary.

But even as we people who are darker than blue have made strides in the worlds of music, art, TV, literature, film, the political arena and everything in between, we have also seen the ugly faces of racism and white supremacy continue to threaten us just for breathing—at home, in the streets, online, and in the halls of local, state, and federal government.

So as part of the chapter in the never-ending saga for equality, justice and the right to—well—just be, The Black Rock Coalition presents a cross-section of some of the best within our ranks giving their take on how Black folk can—and will—survive, maintain, and thrive through all of these respective minefields.

For the original ride-or-die BRC heads, we have recollections from BRC OG and co-founder **Greg Tate** and incredible stories from Rock n Roll Zelig **Jon E. Edwards**.

For all our word nerds, we have long-time friends and supporters **Michael A. Gonzales**, **David Carr**, and BRC Director of Operations **Darrell M. McNeill** breaking down the history of the Black past, present and future.

Everyone is shooting pictures these days, but no one captures the world of black rock quite like **Petra Richterová** and **Sally A. Foxen-McNeill**, whose work documents a scene that might, otherwise, go unseen.

The Black Rock Coalition would not have been able to make it 35 years without celebrating the diversity within our diversity. Take the literary contributions of two of our most dedicated and hard-working Coalitioners—**Honeychild Coleman** and **Martha Redbone**, both of whom offer insights and advice on how to fight the power through two very different, yet intrinsically connected, communities. Then, next-gen **Maya Mabern** gives us a look at how her fellow Black Zoomers will push us, and the needle, into the future.

Last but certainly not least, we look to the future with three artists who are expanding musical frontiers from both sides of the Atlantic. Singer-songwriter-producer **Aiden Connell**, who put together **The Daybreakers** with the intention of shaking up the British status quo; **QADR of The Muslims**, who continues to make our mouths water in anticipation of their upcoming, not-so-subtly-titled album, 'Fuck These Fucking Fascists,' and **Jahí Sundance** who reminds of us that family runs deep and good music can make family of us all.

35 years strong with no plans on letting up. On behalf of everyone here at the Black Rock Coalition, we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together. More importantly, we hope that you continue to support our never-ending mission to have a seat at the Rock n Roll table.

Peace!

EARL DOUGLAS, JR.
 Executive Director
 Black Rock Coalition
 September 2021



JOIN/GIVE/VOLUNTEER

We believe in creative Black expression—musical or otherwise. We go to war for artists of color who aspire to greatness beyond the mundane. **We invite you to support us** as we support our legacies... past, present and future.



OFFICIAL BRC MERCH/

15+ exclusive designs available on shirts, masks, and other accessories at blackrockcoalition.threadless.com

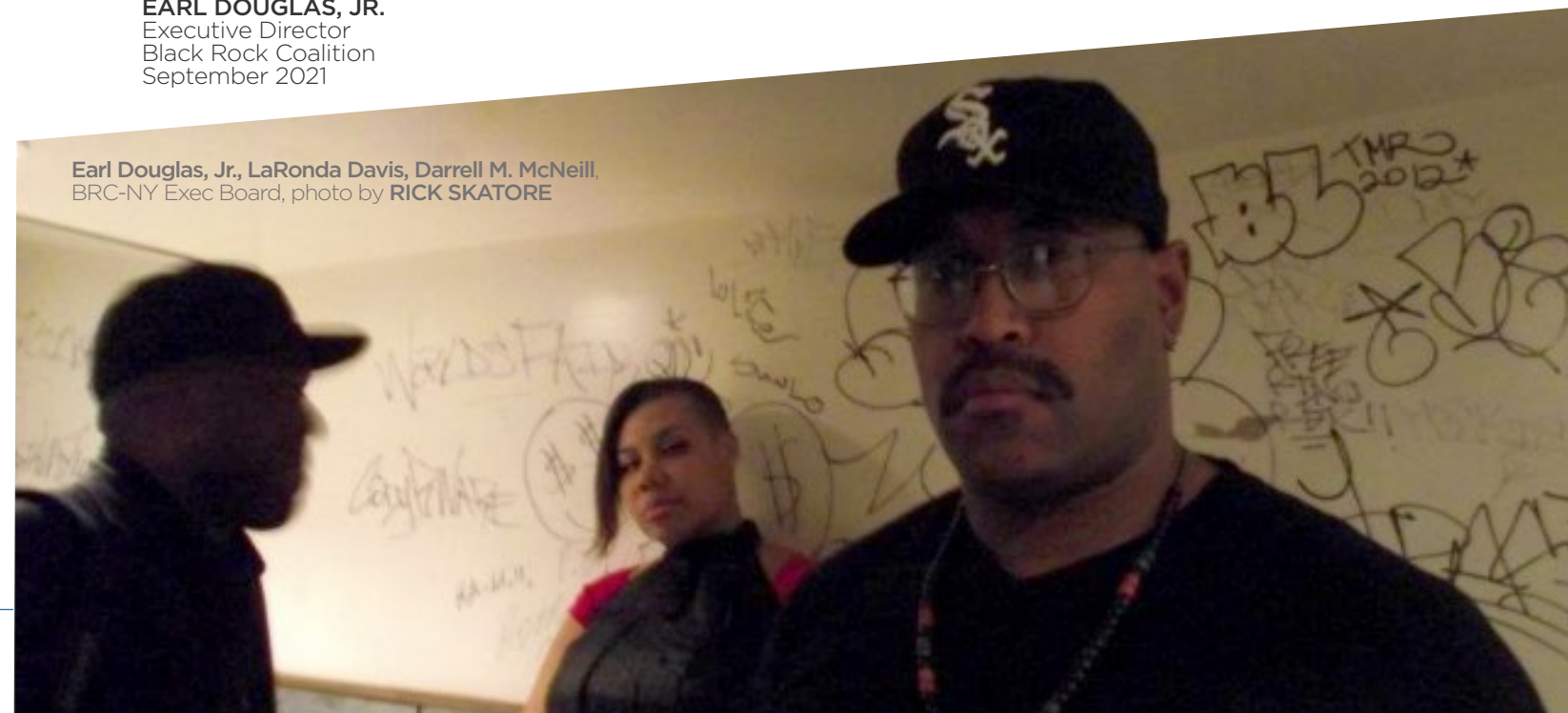


BRC 35TH ANNIV. COMPILATION/

for **FREE DOWNLOAD**—email “code” to BRC35@blackrockcoalition.org

Feat. music from:
 Living Colour,
 David Ryan Harris,
 The 1865, Van Hunt,
 Jackie Venson,
 The Muslims,
 The Family Stand,
 Dope Sagittarius,
 Bruce Mack, Blak
 Emoji, Black Ends,
 Distracted Circuits,
 Taylor C'Mone,
 Marcus Machado,
 The Daybreakers,
 Corey Glover,
 Nikkihortonmusic,
 Three5Human,
 Capt. Kirk Douglas,
 Shane Smith's
 Karmic Unrest,
 Somori Pointer,
 Marque Gilmore
 and BLXPLTN

Earl Douglas, Jr., LaRonda Davis, Darrell M. McNeill,
 BRC-NY Exec Board, photo by **RICK SKATORE**



TEXT “BRC35” TO 22828 to be added to our weekly email newsletter list



Greg Tate

August 15 at 2:26 PM · 🌐



[POSTED: In 2020 on Facebook]

THIS WEEKEND MARKS THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1ST GATHERING OF WHAT BECAME THE BLACK ROCK COALITION AT LINDA GOODE BRYANT'S JAM GALLERY ON BROADWAY AND BROOME, AUGUST 13, 1985.

Vernon Reid put out a call to see if folk wanted to palaver about the resistance to Blackfolk playing rock music: the white skin privileging side of the business telling us flat-out 'niggas can't play no rock and roll', bougie Black-side execs claiming You People, OUR PEOPLE didn't want to hear no rock and roll. We got mad for the first couple hours, then we decided to get pro-actively even, form an organization to combat That BS with a vengeance and with the quickness. Remember suggesting we call it COBRA ("Coalition of Black Rock Artists") before we settled on the less aggro, BRC.

pictured above:
Marque Inna •
Most Gilmore /
Vernon Reid /
Steve Williams /
Jerome Harris /
Jared M.
Nickerson /
Susan Stoval
/ Tracie Morris
/ Greg Tate /
Michael Hill /
Don Eversley /
Andre Anthony
/ Lewis "Flip"
Barnes / and
other friends

We wrote a manifesto demanding conceptual and stylistic liberty, justice and equality to do what the likes of Joni Mitchell and Sting had done—make albums with Black jazz musicians and have them be marketed to the widest demographic imaginable as 'Rock'. We boldly declared 'Rock and roll is Black Music and we are its heirs!' We met every Saturday for the next year and some change at **JAM** thanks to our godmama **Linda Goode Bryant's** largesse.

At that first meeting were **Vernon**, **Konda Mason**—who then managed an all-sisterwoman rock band, **ISIS**, back in that day, **Lewis Flip Barnes**, **Bill Toles**, **Melvin Gibbs**, **Gerri Allen** and, an often unacknowledged founding member, **Craig Street**. Bruh Street worked at JAM as a music curator then went on in the '90s to become a record producer for **Cassandra Wilson** (Blue Light Til Dawn), **kd lang** (Drag), **MeShell Ndegeocello** (Bitter), **Susanna Baca** (Eco de Sombras) **Chocolate Genius** (Black Music, Black Yankee Rock), and **Betty Lavette**, among many others.

Lester Bowie came to our 2nd meeting and graced our mission but added, 'You're going to have a hard time in the music business because you're Thinking People and the business hates that more than anything.'

We held our first public event at JAM, December 7, '85, our 'Drop The Bomb' dance party. Poster for the affair had **Little Richard** and his bouffant screaming over the Japanese rising sun flag. In the early years our growing membership were more non-musicians than players—folk from all walks of life attracted by the BRC's manifesto and political mission. Hella musicians thought being affiliated with the rad rabble-rousing likes of us would ruin their careers. Least until **Living Colour** got signed to Epic and won a Grammy for 'Cult of Personality'.

First big, live-music coming-out event occurred in February at **The Kitchen** courtesy our DC ace boon brutha **Bob Wisdom**, Kitchen's then music curator. (Not long after, he jetted for London then LA to turn actor. The Wire's fandom know him best as 'Bunny Colvin', the instigator of 'Hamsterdam' who later adopted 'Naymond Bryce', son of fan favorite, Barksdale crew enforcer, and prison lifer, Wee Bay'.)

It was Wisdom who proposed the idea of a Black Rock Coalition big band under Vernon's direction. In recognition of the raging and rampaging liberation movement in South Africa we called that premier event '**The Apartheid Concert**'. (We had also begun calling out the FM rock format Album-Oriented Radio as Apartheid-Oriented Radio around this time.)

Our late greats **Sekou Sundiata** and **Ronny Drayton** performed magnificently with us that night on classics like **James Brown's** 'Doin' It To Death,' **War's** 'The World Is A Ghetto' and **Jerry Dammers**, 'Free Nelson Mandela.'

That spring at **CBGBs** we organized '**Stalking Heads**', a rousing two-night festival of our haughtiest bands {**Cookie Watkins**, **JJ Jumpers**, **Kelvynator**, **Michael Gregory**, **Banzai Kik**, **Uptown Atomics**, **Michael Hill's Blues Mob**, **Eye&I**, **Living Colour**, **The Deed**}.

Both evenings culminated with an instrumental guitar-rave-up version of 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' aka 'The Negro National Anthem', featuring those roaring ax-murderers Vernon Reid, Ronny Drayton, and **Dr Know** of **Bad Brains**. Later there was a concert at **The World** in Alphabet City where Bad Brains, Living Colour and Ronny Drayton's band **Sirius** performed. Besides the music, I recall the lone brother in the very small mosh pit stage-diving and cracking his head hard on the wooden floor because all the pink-skin-did dudes parted like the Red Sea when he jumped. No hardcore love to be found. And that resounds to this day as one nasty thunk.

Veteran staff writer **David Fricke** of **Rolling Stone** came down, got very impressed with what he saw and heard, graced the fledgling BRC with a very long, in-depth, spectacularly illustrated feature in the magazine. {<https://www.rollingstone.com/.../back-in-black-2-95063/>} (After the RS article dropped a quite mysterious \$25 membership dues check in a no-return-address envelope arrived stamped Minneapolis. It came with an unsigned note saying, "Really dig what you cats are doing,' or some such. **Prince** never missed a beat.)

It was off to the races, upfully and mightily FOR The Race after all that. And so, here we are, 35 years later, still sowing those seeds and repping hard for The Kulcha, for Those Who Rock Black, for the deep, genre transcendent legacy of Great Black Music 'Ancient and To The Future, and, per our first CD compilation, 'The History of our Future' (title courtesy founding member **Marque the Inna•Most Gilmore**) as for all Black musical artists who gonna do what they love no matter who don't like it.

Vernon was our first President, **Burnt Sugar's** own **Jared Nickerson** and **Bruce Mack** alternately held the position down for a while soon after. In the early '90s, Konda moved to Hollywood to become a film producer and launched our West Coast chapter which brought **Fishbone's Norwood Fisher**, and his **Trulio Disgracious** funk-gang sideproject, into the BRC fold.

Since roughly about 2000, the organization has been under the stewardship of a dynamic trio: Madame President **LaRonda Davis**, Director of Operations, **Darrell M. McNeill** and Executive Director **Earl Douglas, Jr.** They have kept the BRC freak flag waving high and streaming musical glory right into this socially mediated music age of now. Thank them for the grand tour of Black musical history the BRC presented at the **Metropolitan Museum** last fall with **The Family Stand** and Living Colour. More information about all whats occurred in BRC-land since the '90s can be found on the Black Rock Coalition website: blackrockcoalition.org. Those who would endeavor to dig even deeper than that can check out our sister **Maureen Mahon's** book-length treatise, **Right To Rock: Black Rock Coalition And The Politics of Race**, Duke University Press, 2004.

Honeychild Coleman

The 1865 / Bachslider / GKA / Heavensbee

WE HAVE TO TAP INTO OUR INNER CHUCK BERRY AND SING AND PLAY LIKE THE COLOR OF OUR SKIN IS NOT A QUESTION OR KEY FOR INVALIDATION. Rock as if our lives depend upon it, because they do. And bring people with us. Whenever I speak on the roots of black rock, I hear the words of **MC Shan** in my head "I Helped Pioneer This!" because, like our other punk attitude musical siblings in hip hop, we have to remind and often enlighten folks of these deep roots.

Bring other black folks into the fold. The more we can build together and lean upon each other - show up for each other - the energy and enthusiasm of black talent is infectious when we put our minds to it. The system has been against us since the day the first black person minding their own business, strumming away on guitar, was approached and often poached from the community to become a star. Sadly, the stardom path does not always serve the star as much as it lines the pockets of the system. So, perhaps in the midst of this civil and socio-economic unrest it's time we also tap back into our original Do It Our Damned Selves work ethos, and move back towards self reliance. More black and brown owned venues and managed spaces. More of us at the programming helm, and on those teams, in those rooms, sparking those valuable conversations surrounding artistic equity. Black folks have practiced DIY ethos since the beginning of time, as it is traditional in our culture to make do, create, and be inventive.

Some say that kids today don't care about rock music. Yet platforms like YouTube often feature young hip hop heads reacting to the heavy rock and grunge we grew up on and it's encouraging! This generation doesn't pretend to know everything, does not resort to the music snobbery of previous generations - and seem curious enough to really listen when given the chance - and sometimes they get into it - all the way in.

And as long as black folks keep searching for that feeling of connection and representation - and don't settle for the okey doke blase-blase that is constantly streaming and fed to us - keep reaching for the challenge of FEELING what we hear - and moving when inspired to it, even if the tribe around us thinks it's weird or Not Really Black, or Not Black Enough - trust our hearts and our spiritual connection - keep taking those sonic chances and keep our hearts and ears open - then we can guide and reclaim the narrative of black rock.

Most of the music I really loved as a teen rarely made it into the top 50. We wrote down songs and bands we heard and liked. We searched and searched and searched. Physically. This habit from youth I still carry with me now. And honestly it led me to become a DJ. Because I really really wanted to hear some of these amazing black rock artists I had discovered as well as gone to see live and eventually with which my bands played shows - loud and rocking in a bar or on a dancefloor. The underground and DIY scenes are becoming vital again, much like the 1980s when I first moved to New York. Scenes and communities spring up organically out of both desire and necessity.

The **Sistagrrrls** got TIRED of all the hype around the very white Riot Grrrl movement, so we created our own riots. We all rocked loud and hard, played guitars and had bands fronted by brave and bold black women with unique sonic styles and fashion styles. I witness this now in events curated by Atlanta based **Punk Black**, who showcase a variety of ways to be black and have a strong community ethic similar to the early **Sistagrrrl Riot** days as well as **James Spooner's** Liberation Sessions events which set the tone for what became The **AfroPunk** Festival.

photo by **DUWAYNO ROBERTSON**

Respectability Politics have also expired. We are now in the midst of a 21st Century uprising and unrest. The revolution will always need a soundtrack, and there's nothing more American than black music. We as a people have a long standing tradition of shaking the foundation when we put our foot into something. Is all black rock exceptional? Elevating? Breaking new ground? Not necessarily. BUT the freedom to put it out there, unabashedly, no shame, no fear, and no hang ups about what white folks OR other black folks think about you and your guitar and distortion - THAT is the most American thing you can do. BE you. BE Free. And control that narrative.

It may be hard to visualize what life will be like moving forward as far as which venues can re-open and who can "afford" to take a chance on new, unusual, or "weird" black indie music. It's also unnerving to imagine those bars and clubs and music halls so very focused on the bottom dollar that they no longer consider booking artists like us a worthwhile risk. Living in an expensive large city used to have its perks - a wide variety of clubs and neighborhoods to perform in - regulars, fans who travel into town from Jersey, Philly, DC, and CT - and tourist foot traffic. If we don't pool our collective resources and plan ahead, what will become of our opportunities?

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the band **Rebelmatic** made a proactive move, and invested in a sound system. Rallying up a street team to move gear, they hosted nearly a dozen DIY pop up shows on the street in Bushwick. No rules. No promoter dictating

which bands and how many acts to book. They sold merch. They passed a tip bucket. It felt like our monthly residency at **Max Fish**, but out-of-doors. It felt powerful. I see this as an element of the future moving forward as the city gets back on its feet. This outdoors and backyard show culture has existed in other cities for decades. Maybe, in a way, we are getting back to our roots. Only now we have new digital tools to preserve and document the moment. We have instant gratification with social media. Have faith in the audience we are creating for. And each show grows bigger and bigger each week and month.

There are so very many ways to be black. We can reclaim this unspoken freedom.

Freedom to try. Freedom to care. Freedom to not care too much. Freedom to pay homage. To be retro. To be new. To have soul AND be Supa bad. To be rough. To be sweet. To be bitter and abrasive. To express yourself. To live out loud.

Freedom is bold. Freedom is edgy. Freedom is danger. Freedom is wild.

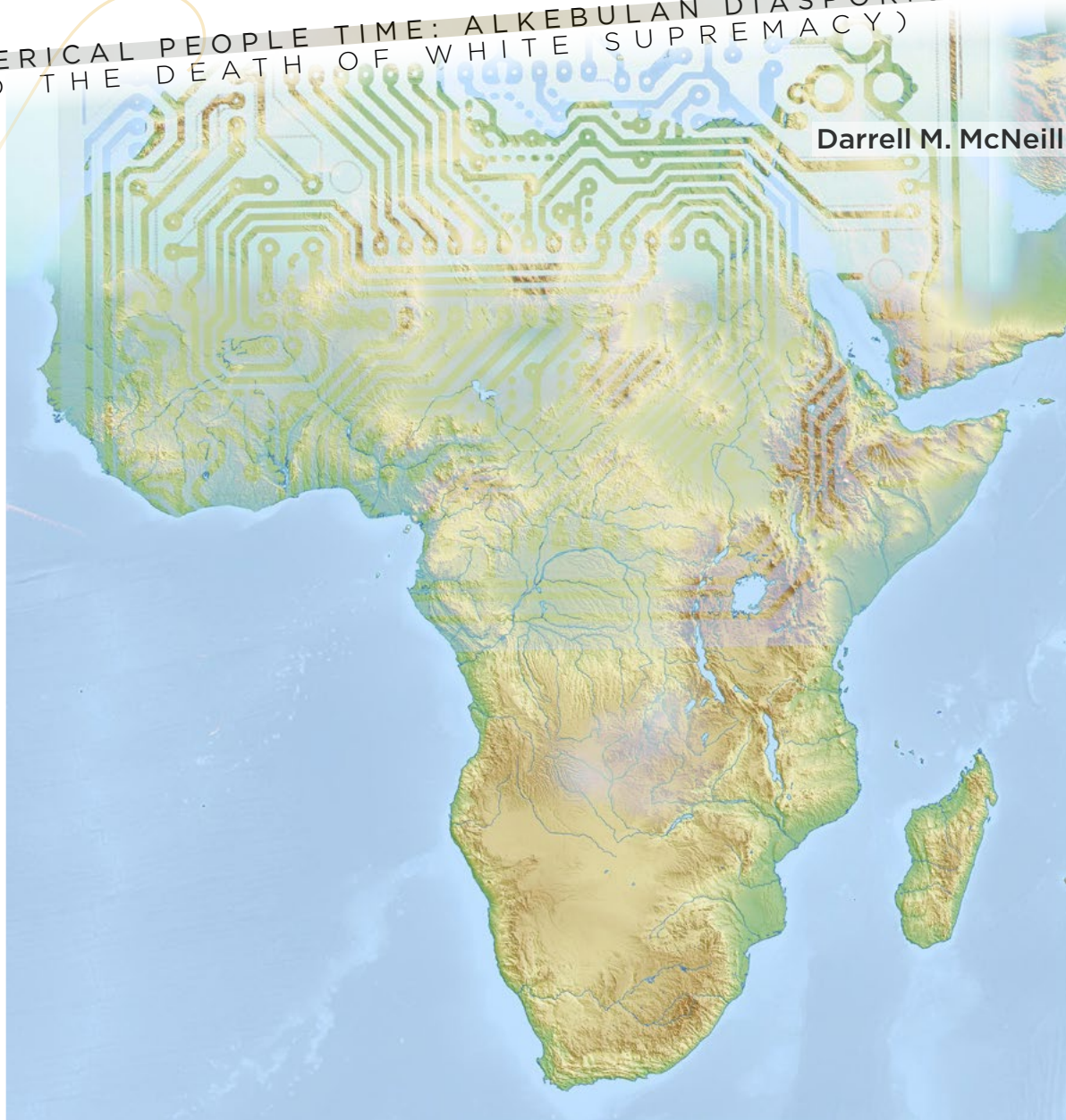
And isn't freedom what rock and roll is all about?

Many of us are still searching for that representation on the airwaves to encourage and inspire us. In the meantime, we can start our own podcasts and playlists and spread that music around like hot butter on an everything bagel. If we build it, the digital audience is there. I keep hearing **Tamar-kali's** quote from James Spooner's AFROPUNK rockumentary in my head.

And I agree with her in the sense that we don't need to convince white people to show up for us - they will always be on the fringe watching and show up because something is cool. We need to keep our lens focused on US. Getting more black folks involved in our communities and scenes - and sharing that sense of ownership and pride - their love and presence is invaluable.

CHIMERICAL PEOPLE TIME: ALKEBULAN DIASPORIC FUTURISM
(AND THE DEATH OF WHITE SUPREMACY)

Darrell M. McNeill



JAMES BALDWIN: I can't be a pessimist because I'm alive. To be a pessimist means you have agreed that life is an academic matter. So, I'm forced to be an optimist. I'm forced to believe that we can survive whatever we must survive. But... the future of the Negro in this country is precisely as bright or as dark as the future of the country. It is entirely up to the American people and our representatives—it is entirely up to the American people whether or not they are going to face and deal with and embrace this stranger whom they've maligned so long. What White people have to do is try to find out in their own hearts, why it was necessary to have a "nigger" in the first place? Because I'm not a "nigger." I am a man. But if you think I'm a "nigger," it means you need him. The question you've got to ask yourself, the White population of this country has got to ask itself—North and South, because it's one country and to the Negro, there's no difference between the North and the South. There's just a difference in the way they castrate you. But the fact of the castration is the American fact. If I'm not the "nigger" here, and though you invented him, you, the White people have invented him, then you've got to find out why. And the future of the country depends on that, whether or not it's able to ask that question...

—Excerpt from interview between Dr. Kenneth Clark and James Baldwin, May 24, 1963, "Perspectives: Negro and the American Promise."

Asé...an expression from **Nigerian Yoruba** with three principal meanings: 1) an affirmation (similar to "Amen"); 2) life force, life energy or spirit; and 3) the philosophy of conceiving the power to make things happen and producing change...

In **James Brown** parlance, it would be called, literally, "soul power."

This is who we as people of Africa—or more accurately, '**Alkebulan**,' the name our ancestors gave the land—are. It's what we do, have done for millennia and continue to do, regardless of our circumstances. And as such, for Africans, what's past always is, always was, and shall forever be, prologue. As long as the Earth and Black people exist, this is Nature's Law...Immutable...Irrevocable... Irreversible...

Eternal.

As the first humans to walk the planet, to develop cognitive ability, to study Nature and harness its energies and resources, and to design the first formal social orders, African people continue to be singular in our very intrinsic grounding to time and the Earth. The corollary between Africans—in all of our glorious, vainglorious and inglorious iterations—and everything we know about this planet has been the core of archeological study, biological analysis, metaphysical deciphering, philosophical reasoning and creative muse. Our actuality has both informed the planet and been informed by the planet. The relationship with the African Diaspora, Earth and time is noun, verb, adjective and adverb, active, passive, objective and subjective.

For all the derisive half-witticisms about "colored people time," Earth has marked its time by us. Africans not only feature in the Earth's most significant chapters, we dominate the footnotes, indexes, glossaries, curios and god-winks. A mere 500 years—a hiccup in 200,000 years of human existence—under the yoke of enslavement and indoctrination by European imperialists and systems designed to keep power in the grasp (and feed the acquired psychoses) of their descendants, haven't altered that truth. For this, it's worth noting the year 2026 will not only mark the 250th anniversary of the United States' declaration of independence from Great Britain, but also the 500th anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade, when the first Portuguese ships arrived on South American shores with hijacked African humans for enslavement... The two most colossal and egregious lies the European and Euro American have EVER told—told Africans, told the world and told themselves—are, in this very specific order: 1) that Africa/Alkebulan and Africans have no history, and 2) Africans were never anything but savages and/or slaves. These deceptions/conceits conveyed three very specific and damning messages: 1) you, essentially, did not even exist until we found you; 2) you are no more than what we say you are, and, 3) you are subhuman. And will continue to be so until we say otherwise. On our terms. By our standards...

Not to make too fine a point about it, but this "non-history of Africans" shite would come off as strange-ass news to the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, senators and tradesmen, The Phoenicians, The Tang Dynasty of China, The Mesopotamian Empire, not to mention the writers, historians, artists and poets of ancient European civilizations who documented volumes of encounters with ancient Africans. To say nothing of the griots of various African nation-states whose sole purpose is to orally document the histories of their respective nations over, literally, countless millennia. Our artifacts have been documented by archeologists as predating the first so-called "developed" nations by hundreds of thousands of years. There are libraries spilling from the walls with material chronicling historical Blackness and its endless achievements as well as the panoply of both externalized and internalized struggles of Blackness navigating a world defined by over 500 years of macro-aggressive White supremacist anti-Blackness...

But whatever... The God Complex... That shit is real...

So here we are now, a full generation into a new millennium, which has proven the burden of being a people defined by struggle is more wearisome and angst-ridden than the struggle itself. Because resigning to such a definition continues to fuel the two colossal and egregious European/Euro American lies of African non-history and African primitivism. As the griot **Amiri Baraka** articulated in his historic tome, "Blues People":

continued...

“So-called ‘non-literate’ peoples (called by Western man, ‘primitive’), whose languages, and therefore whose cultures and traditional histories, are not written, are the antithesis of Western man and his highly industrialized civilization. But the idea of the ‘primordial man,’ or ‘under-developed peoples,’ becomes absurd if we dismiss for a change the assumption that the only ideas and attitudes which the West finds useful or analogous to concepts forwarded within its own system are of any value or profundity.”

And while mortality, economic and educational achievement gaps remain high—mind you, it isn’t confined to as much of a racial conundrum because, based on 2019 data from the Fed, larger segments of White American population are falling behind as well—accomplishment gaps are closing between the races and Black Americans are gradually breaking ground in fields where we have been drastically underrepresented and making strides at the highest of levels. We’ve expanded our presence, our political leverage, influence and wealth in all areas. We have infused American culture with far more intentional (rather than performative) Black ideology and iconography.

Shit, somehow, we even had a Black President. A real, actual Black President. Not just some Bill Clinton ‘Hood Pass Jedi Mind Tricks bullshit. That point cannot be over-emphasized. A Black man was President of the United States. For two terms. And, yes, in the grand scheme, **Barack Hussein Obama** was, at best, a slightly better than average President. And his accomplishments, while beneficial to the nation at large (post-2006 economic rebound; Affordable Care Act; resuscitating several American global corporations; stock market expansion into five digits; unemployment below six percent), most certainly didn’t budge the policy needle for Black Americans. Discriminatory law enforcement against minor or non-offenders continued to drive over-incarceration rates; the wealth gap between Black and White grew despite reduced unemployment; anti-Black and Brown immigration policy was abysmal; and anti-Black attacks and fatalities (by law enforcement, intra-community perpetrators, White supremacy terrorists and assorted racist cranks) escalated. And, if we’re being honest, considering the swath of mediocre to incompetent White men who have held the office and the global power brokers who’ve never been elected to anything, perhaps being President isn’t the aspirational benchmark it’s cracked up to be. It’s fair to say, the Obama Experiment scored more symbolic points than substantive.

But damned if that symbolism wasn’t substantive in and of itself. The fact that a Black man, originated from a people whom the founders of this government (and a large portion of their descendants) viewed as subhuman, was duly and fairly elected to become the President of the United States—again, twice. Setting aside the disillusionment of the reality and the escalating reactionary sentiments and policies frantically trying to put the genie back in the bottle, there’s no adequate descriptive for the helium of sheer possibility and the realization of its actual accomplishment...!

Because the haters will never get it was never about Obama for us. It’s about the enormity of looking into the eyes of a Black child in 2021—who may not have known anything in his or her life but a Black President and is currently seeing a Black woman Vice-President in office—and telling them they can be anything they want to be and be able to say those words with authority and conviction...! Black people can visualize and actualize ALL their ambitions, no matter how hard reactionaries foam at the mouth, legislate and pray us to the back down to the plantation.

For centuries, Black people have been divining the overwhelming amount of data from a deluge of sources, managing sensory overload and filtering through negative stimuli and ephemera like the proverbial blind men attempting to describe an elephant by touch alone. But we are putting the pieces together. We are re-learning our languages and our histories while charting new courses for our people. We are working with the tools we inherited in this still strange and often hostile place, not just to reconnect with our ancestry, but to claim equal ownership of the homeland we’ve hewn here from 500 years of blood and sweat. We’re building the world we envision for ourselves, after centuries of building worlds and fortunes and legacies for others.

No matter where your attitude falls in the spectrum—THAT is revolutionary.

So now we, the very same people whom myopic Euro narcissists have declared as “having no history,” are talking about “the future.” Our future, designed to our specs, built by our hands for our descendants. Without the interference and static of outsiders who would impede or halt our progress. We are talking about the future intentionally and with confidence. Actually, more than just talking—again, visualizing. And actualizing. Designing. Manifesting the future. With swagger.

Black Diasporic futurist conceptualists like **Arthur Jafa, Colson Whitehead, Nalo Hopkinson, Nnedi Okorafor, N.K. Jemisin, Ta-nehisi Coates, Amber Crowder-Hines, Vickie Robinson, Sanford Biggers, Kehinde Wiley, D. Scot Miller, Eric K. Arnold, Shawn Taylor, Ayize Jama-Everett, Davu Flint, Alfonso Wright, Meedie Bardonille, Lavell Flamon, Rudy McGann, Cydnia Young, Sheree Renee Thomas, Katina Parker, Walidah Imarisha, Stacey Robinson, Dr. Lakeya Cherry, Ava DuVernay, Kaye Kadesh, Bryndan Moore, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Rachel Garlinghouse, Kelle Rozelle, Shy Pacheco Hamilton, Kayla Huddleston, Malcolm Shabazz Hoover, Janelle Monae, Bryan Stevenson, Kwan Booth, Richard M. Wright, Devin Barrington-Ward, Joy Reid, Saul Williams, Moor Mother, Hannah Beachler, Ruth E. Carter, Alicia Garza, Cyrus Kabiru, Opal Tometi, Rasheedah Phillips, Janay Smith, Michelle Alexander, Timothy L. Jenkins, Khafran K Om-Ra-Seti, Indigo Mateo, Wangechi Mutu, Tim Fielder, Komi Olaf, Soledad O’Brien, Ryan Coogler, Stacey Abrams, Neil deGrasse Tyson** and an every growing cadre from all ranges of Black life, including academicians, writers (fiction and non-fiction), social scientists, policy makers, legal analysts, artists, engineers, health specialists, engineers, scientists, designers, technologists, architects, financiers, educators, activists, professionals, agriculturists, environmentalists, counselors, entrepreneurs, community organizers, therapists, parents, political operatives, creatives, media experts and influencers are all taking the bread crumbs of our ancestors and creating blueprints and roadmaps for the next steps in self-determining Black Diasporic evolution.

We are firing up new generations of Black imagining with our words on the written page. We are exploding across platforms, big and small, with our vision. We are creating new forms and stimulating senses in ways never before heard or felt. We are deconstructing old world formulas and constructing new world models aligned with progressions in identity, race, gender, sex. We are centering ourselves unapologetically around what our people and culture need, not filtering or diluting them through the cross purposes of others. We are forging ahead irrespective of the White Gaze, no longer requiring the approval, permission or even the opinion of neocolonial systems and thought processes that diminish our full American and African birthrights.

We are divesting from anti-Blackness. And America, as well as the rest of the so-called developed world, MUST get in line with that.

We do this right now at this precise moment because at this precise moment we can actually see the future and it’s closer than we’ve ever dared to allow ourselves to imagine. And, in seeing the future, we’ve lost the fear. The fear that what we dream can’t be done. The fear of the internal change necessary to realize those dreams. The fear of failure and the fall from such height. But most importantly, we have lost the fear of White supremacy—or, rather, the lie of White supremacy. We have lost the fear of the consequences of resistance, because we have nothing of consequence to lose except the lie of a suppliant relationship to this land of our birth. And we have lost the fear of daring to self-love, self-care, self-determine and self-actualize.

This is the most revolutionary thing we have ever done as a people to date. To reclaim ourselves. To affirm ourselves. To recognize the unique life energy within ourselves. To conceive the power to make things happen and produce change. This is the prologue that the past has directed us to...

This is who we are. It’s what we do, have done for millennia and continue to do. As long as the Earth and Black people exist, this is Nature’s Law... Immutable... Irrevocable... Irreversible... Eternal...

Asé... Or, in James Brown parlance, “soul power”...

photo by RALSTON SMITH



THE BLACK AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Martha Redbone

THE BLACK AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS A STORY OF SELF-RELIANCE, INDEPENDENCE, AND RESILIENCE. With each generation, we have reclaimed more and more our right to equality and most of all, humanity. Through centuries of enslavement, followed by segregation laws of Jim Crow, redlining, and other forms of systemic racism, as a people we have reclaimed our culture, our music, invented properties in math, music, arts and science, medicine, and finance and more despite the attempts to extinguish us. Black Rock IS rock n roll, it is the genesis of the Blues, that is the music cultivated by the relationship connections of the African and the Indigenous people of the Southeastern United States, **Muskogee Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, Cherokee and Chickasaw.** From these early social songs and ceremonial songs Black and Indigenous people were forbidden to sing and use their prayers by the fear of the slave owners who thought they were using magic to cast spells against their oppressors. Black people found new ways to continue preserving and maintaining our culture through the generations. As the years continue, more and more information is uncovered and exposes the hidden uncomfortable truths our nation has done to Black people and all that is created by our people. Our music is no different, with others taking credit for the musical achievements that Black musicians have achieved long before our Caucasian brothers grabbed the glory, this too, has been exposed time and time again. For me, the lesson is clear—that in order for us to continue maintaining progress we must remain vigilant in our actions to exercise our human right to equality. We live in a country that is the prime example of a narcissistic, abusive nation towards Black and Brown peoples. The only way to combat a narcissist is to fight back with truth and expose the injustice so that all can see clearly. Our music will always be innovative, pushing forward, celebrating our stories, our struggles and our resilience. This is what we do and that makes me very proud to be a descendant of the numerous warrior bloodlines we have as African American people.



Sheila E, photo by SALLY A. FOXEN-MCNEILL



INTERVIEW

Jahi Sundance

BRC: Congratulations on the latest EP — it's fantastic. What made you make the leap from producer and DJing to spearheading your own project?

JS: first off, thank you, that really means a lot. i have always made little songs here and there while being in the studio, but during quarantine, i really had to face myself and one of the results of that was deciding to get in the studio and put this project together. i was really motivated by the stagnance of covid, and saw this as a time to get this out into the world. i'm happy i did.

BRC: The EP explores the many paradoxes associated with falling in an out of love. Did you find yourself channeling other classic break up albums for this project or were you caught up in the moment of what was going on in your life at the time?

JS: yeah, the title of the ep 'love isn't enough' was said to me by my ex, and it really confronted my view of what love was, and meant. the project, really in total, is about my past relationships. i didn't have to go outside myself for a decent source of heartbreak, hahahahaha. for clarity tho, i do believe that love IS enough, and that there is more than enough for all of us.

BRC: The EP features some of the artists that you have worked with over the years— and frankly, some of the BRC's favorites: **Meshell Ndegeocello** and **Robert Glasper**, among others. How did your paths initially cross?

JS: i come from a very musical family. my older brother **gene lake** (drummer) was in meshell ndegeocello's band for over 10 years, one night she came to see me dj at **hotel chelsea** in manhattan and after the set she asked me to open up for her upcoming shows. that was 2002. since then, i have toured with her off and on as an opener, and in her band as a dj. meshell is a true inspiration, mentor, and important collaborator in my life. i met robert glasper hanging out on the scene in nyc, first through **bilal**, and then through **chris dave**. i ended up performing with the 'rcdc experiment' a few times in nyc around 2007-8 (maybe 2006, i cant remember). after that, rob asked me to be on 'double booked,' which led to touring heavy with him in a lot of configurations. i'm really grateful for rob and the freedom that he grants me on stage, a creative giant, a great friend, and a hilarious dude. chris dave is also on the album, playing drums on 'work to do' we met through being in me'shell's band together and have worked on tons of music together. chris is just an unreal creative force, an amazing storyteller, and also quite hilarious.

BRC: Despite having extensive and impressive resume, you chose to start your own label rather than play the major label game. Was that based on your experiences in dealing with the labels or did you want to have more artistic control?

JS: it was all about my goals as an artist. when i put this all together i said to myself, 'i'm only putting this out because i want my friends to hear it, i want the people around me to like it, it's for them.' if it grows from there, that's beautiful, but i really am happy with the response of my peers and peoples. that's what made me decide to put it on my label, **more than enough**, instead of shopping it around. we had our first release in 2018 with an amazing singer/songwriter **annahstasia** check out her project called 'sacred bull.' our next releases will be from an amazing artist **jay cooper**, and then i'm going to do another ep as well.



BRC: Between social media, and the ability to release music on your own, the ability to independently distribute music is better than ever. What advice would you give up and coming musicians looking to navigate this new landscape?

JS: MAKE LOTS OF CHECKLISTS... seriously, there are so many sites you have to sign up for, deadlines are all different, etc etc. if you can, have a writer friend on your team. someone needs to draft a lot of copy to navigate all these spaces. finally, take your time, all the clocks are fake.

BRC: What's next? Any plans to do a full length album or will focus on release music by other artists on More Than Enough?

JS: i just finished my turntable parts for 'black radio 3' and am looking forward to that coming out. more than enough has 2 upcoming releases this year and touring's looking like it's going to pick up in the fall. looking forward to making more music with the home team and making music with folks i haven't even met yet.

David Carr

So, it goes without saying, these years have been rough! It has been a knockdown, drag out “what the hell is this” kind of time. Between the pandemic, the election, police brutality and the reckoning on race there has been a lot going on. One of the things that has bubbled to the surface is a sense of history. Some have reasoned that the marches and protests in the streets looked like 1968 all over again. I can’t argue that point at all. Another aspect of this has been the idea of remembering and taking ownership of one’s history. This is a vital issue for several reasons. It becomes very important to people of color in the US and it becomes a moral imperative when it comes to Black Rockers! If we as African American Rockers don’t take the time to preserve our history, share our stories and archive them, then we will be told what our history was/is in Rock and Roll and we will leave it to others to tell OUR story. If we want to be an independent entity, then we must make sure we are armed with a sense of self at all times. It might seem weary or even paranoid, but I honestly believe we must always be ready to share and show who we are, how far we have come, and where we are going. The only way to do that is to ensure that we know our history and when I say history, I mean the big stuff and the small stuff. Folks already know about **Chuck Berry**, **Little Richard**, **Jimi** and **Sly**. What we need to do now is make sure we have historical info and data on artists like **Jon Butcher**. What was his tour like with **the Scorpions**? How did the tour with **Ice-T/Body Count**, **Eye & I** and **Billy Brag** go? What was it like for **Follow For Now** to open for **Pearl Jam**? What stories can be shared by **The Family Stand** from the Pink Pop Festival? Let’s hear about **Earth, Wind and Fire** sharing the stage with **Black Sabbath** at the first California Jam. How was it for **Mother’s Finest** opening for **Terrible Ted Nugent**. This is the type of oral history and archival footage we need to always ensure our spot at the table when it comes time to ROCK! We need to do this for every aspect of living in America as African Americans. When we don’t know our own history, we open the door for the majority culture to tell us our history. The **National Museum of African American History and Culture** in DC is a testament to our hard work, sacrifice and struggle in this country and it has a wing dedicated to our place in rock music. This type of homage is outstanding and it must continue. When we share these stories, we build our knowledge, and we ready ourselves to tell a journalist the stories that may have been missed. **Lenny** and **Living Colour** and **Fishbone** are great but there are other bands, artists, and other stories to be told. Back in the day, the **BRC** had two compilation discs that they mounted a tour in Europe to promote [*ed: and many compilations since*]. Times have changed and the pandemic has shut down live music for the time being. This is the time that can be used to plot how to come back full force and really take the DIY methodology of the BRC to the next level. We have a chance to make history, so let’s seize the day. Let’s remind folks about our rightful place to rock and then let’s capitalize on it and get a new generation of Black rockers to do their thing! The history of our future begins now. Let’s own it and share it!



Sophia Ramos,
photo by
PETRA
RICHTEROVÁ



Mikel Banks w/ Burnt Sugar (above), Angelo Moore, Ronny Drayton (RIP), Vernon Reid (below), photos by PETRA RICHTEROVÁ



M

MUSIC ALL AROUND

Jon E. Edwards

MY FAMILY IS FROM THE DEEP SOUTH, TEXAS/LOUISIANA, BUT WE WENT TO HOLLYWOOD WHEN THE EMPLOYMENT EXPLOSION HAPPENED IN CALIFORNIA. I grew up in Los Angeles in a musical household, where music played seven days a week, 24 hours a day, all my life. Growing up in an artists' commune basically with a big family, big Southern family, I started listening to rock and roll as a kid. I knew that there was something different about my home compared to what I saw on TV. **Big Mama Thornton** was going on in my household. I just loved it. It's back in the day where AM radio was mixing up a **Sly Stone** and **Motown** with **Carole King**. It was just open. AM radio was playing most things all the time at the same time.

My parents were educators and artists. My people were all art people. They weren't necessarily in show business, but they were friends with show business people. The Southern family breakfast is a big thing, so it'd be **Little Richard** in the living room having grits at seven in the morning. One of my mom's closest friends was **Ella Fitzgerald**. She'd be over. I'm the youngest. I was told that before I came along **Dorothy Dandridge** was a close friend of my mom's. The Black entertainment world would come over to our house to get soul food and to get gumbo . . . **Papa John Creach**, the great violinist, every Christmas he would come by and bring his violin, and he would play for his Christmas dinner. Every Christmas.

Johnny Otis would come by, and **O.C. Smith**. There was just a lot of music and innovators in music. I got really hip to it at a very young age. I didn't even think it was weird at all these people, who were renowned musicians and entertainers were in my mom's living room, **Arthur Lee**, the singer-songwriter who fronted the group **Love**, was a cousin on my mom's side after he'd been out partying all night, he would show up with his people and basically pass out when they got there. Arthur invented the California sound before The Doors, but his behavior didn't allow him to follow through. Plus, he didn't want to go to Europe when everybody else went to Europe. He was part of the Sunset Strip scene.

I had one of the craziest things happen because my mother wanted me to be Arthur Lee's assistant. So I was riding around with Arthur—he was one of the craziest cats I ever met—that lasted about a week. Arthur pulled a gun on a fan while we were at a place called **Hong Kong Cafe** in downtown L.A. And he was playing a gig and I was his assistant. When I told my mom what Arthur had done, she said, "that's the end of your assistance."

Somehow, before I started being mentored by these out-of-control entertainers—Arthur Lee was one of the most pissed off cats I ever met—my mom thought it was a good idea for me to go to summer camp with **Sun Ra and his Arkestra**. I must've been 12 years old. I ended up on a bus for two or three weeks with Sun Ra Arkestra. I didn't know that they were the craziest jazz band in the world on some spaceland shit. I mean, everybody else had gone to camp and were learning Kumbaya and how to fish and I'm on a bus with 16 Black guys wearing capes. That was my summer camp.

PUNK ROCK KIND OF TOOK US

My parents didn't really want me to be involved in entertainment. They wanted me to be a lawyer or something like that, but it was what it was. As a kid, I knew that soul music moved the world. At least it moved my world.

I met **Stew** [Mark Stewart] and **Art Terry** in high school; Stew went to Hamilton High, and Art and I went to Fairfax, which was known for its performing arts. I ended up hanging with Stew because I was learning how to write lyrics. We made music. There was **Chuck Mosley** from **Faith No More**; we all learned to perform together in Art Terry's garage.

continued..

I had a fake ID, so I had a little juice. Also my family knew club owners. By the time I was 15, I could drive, and I was driving to nightclubs. We all started playing live and the club owners didn't know how old we were. They didn't know we were in ninth grade, tenth grade. My parents had a Seventies-style huge car that we could put the whole band and the equipment in, and we got booked at a college. They paid us what we thought was an astronomical amount of money. So we thought that that's how it was going to go. It took us another five years to actually ever get that kind of money again.

It was crazy. We were in high school and we had a band called **Pending Spectrums**, full band. And we just started writing. We all wrote, and then we all broke out and we did it a whole different way because punk rock kind of took us.

YARD DOG

I started performing in the clubs in California. And I realized that I loved what the punk rockers were doing. And I got to hang out with them, **Black Randy, The Germs, Siouxsie and the Banshees**. And I knew it was really rock and roll when I heard a Motown song and I'd hear it start off with a guitar. Or when **Tito Jackson** played *I Want You Back* and it started off with a rock and roll guitar. I mean, the Jacksons were one of the greatest rock and roll bands in the history of music. You look at the blues and all the cats out of Chicago and down South—I know white cats didn't start this shit.

I thought, "How do I survive in this? I'm outside of mainstream." I was like a yard dog; basically I had to stay outside in the yard always. So I got comfortable in the yard. So I knew when Stew and I, and Art and Chuck, we started getting, you know, little love from the record labels.

They had an epidemic that was going on in California and around the country with drugs. My parents let me leave home right out of my first year in college and go to New York; it was the beginning of the 1980s. **Jean-Michel Basquiat** was a real good friend of mine. When I first came to New York I gravitated to the East Village and Jean-Michel, who was living there at the time, he was the first cat that I met. It's because of my uncles—**Al Loving** and **Bill Hutson**—renowned artists. So they said "there is this young cat who wants to meet you that's your age."

And that's when I met the guys from **Tackhead** and all the original performers from the start of hip-hop, including **Fab Five Freddy**. I started gigging then. I had put together a sound that mixed punk rock with soul with my band the **Uptown Atomics**. We started gigging within a year. We had Art Terry, **Tarik El Hassan, Donald Gilbert, Gemini Hodge, Kevin B. Fabulous, Debra Novell, Jean-Michel Basquiat**. I was told I was too bourgeois and that I wasn't going to make it in New York.

THE BLACK ROCK COALITION

So we had something to prove. Next thing you know, we're playing at the **Mudd Club**. We didn't know anything about publicity. We were just kids doing our thing. And we were making a living on it. I was already about four or five years in the game and a cat named **Bevis Griffin** said, "There's this **Black Rock Coalition** starting a scene of uptown. So I went up there, with Bevis and I say "yeah, man, this sounds like me." So that's how I got tight with them and I started messing with them. I was already doing me.

I met BRC cofounder [writer, musician, and producer] **Greg Tate** in 1982. He wrote for **The Village Voice** so he was downtown. I'd have lunch with him and talk about culture and life. He became a brother to me. So then I met these cats and I started doing shows with them and being cool with them. I felt we were kindred spirits so let me get down with these cats. In a way, they were out in the yard, too.

Before the BRC, I had been to Europe performing. I had met **Chris Sullivan**, the owner of the **Wag Club** and there was this whole New Romantic thing. I got to hang out with the Carter family and **Johnny Cash**; they gave me some money so I wouldn't starve over in London. I was hanging out with **Elvis Costello**, in fact helping, with some lyrics over at the studio. I was doing that before I was in the **Black Rock Coalition**. All of us went from California over to Europe; I went to London and Stew went to Germany and the Netherlands. Art Terry went to Germany.



I had a residency at the Wag Club and I got with **Sony**, had a small deal with them. Then I met the **Black Rock Coalition** (shout out to **Bruce Mack** and **Jared Nickerson** and I went with them and we started rocking rooms, I'm one of the founding members and started rolling with them, and it was bliss while it happened and **Living Colour** got signed and **24-7 Spyz** got signed. And then they went to the West Coast and they got some cats like **Fishbone** and they assembled their army. And I'm like one of the generals, the original generals, you know.

FIRST RECORD DEAL WAS NOT A DEAL

You know how **James Baldwin** and other people of color were ex-patriots and fled to Europe. Well I always say I fled to Europe and then fled back.

With the Sony deal, I made the record and then the engineer, who was being paid well, said "Okay, you've done your job; you guys can go to sleep now I'll take care of the rest." And when I listened to the track the next day, they had airplanes flying through the track. And that's when I decided to not use producers on my records unless I personally chose them.

It got worse. The way they worked it, you would get this advance and you would actually have to pay back all the promotion. You'd have to pay for the secretaries. You had to pay for the meals. And that's one of the reasons I got kicked out of Europe, because I brought that up. The record label would feed me caviar and lobster tails on my dime. A 500-pound meal. But when I asked "Man, why don't you just give me the 500 pounds? I could eat for two weeks on that." They said that they couldn't write me off if they gave me the cash.

I was young; they kicked me out, man. I had a record deal. And then they said, well, the president of the company wasn't going to sign the contract until they were ready and that I should go work at a fish and chip shop.

My family got me a ticket back to New York. I got on the plane the next day and basically I had no money at all. I didn't even have money to take the subway to my house. It was crazy.

I didn't have a record come out for 15 years after that. And what I did was I cleaned up the game, I got to my own name. I would sell tracks to TV shows and movies; that's where the money came from. I don't know what would happen if I hadn't gotten into the movie and television business. I wasn't in the Uptown Atomics anymore. I started working with **Mark Batson, Fred Cash, Donny McCaslin**, who was my horn section leader, **Kevin Johnson, Kenny Rampton** who has played with the **Lincoln Center Orchestra** for all these years; **Bob and Ken Kirschner**. We touched each other.

As far as getting paid, like I said, I'd rather have the money. So then the music executives said **JON E EDWARDS** is a trouble man. He's trouble because he's asking questions that entertainers don't need to be asking. That's just the nature of a business that we chose. As far as the question "how do we take back our music, as people of color"—I don't know the answer because how do we take back what we've always owned? We invented rock and we still got rock and roll. The original American music.



FOR US, BY US: HOW BLACK GEN-Z CREATES SPACE
FOR THEMSELVES, ON AND OFFLINE

Maya Mabern

ON MAY 25, 2020, 17 YEAR-OLD DARNELLA FRAZIER WALKED HER LITTLE COUSIN TO THE CORNER STORE. It was just another Monday in Minneapolis. She had never seen or heard of **George Floyd**, but moments later she would bear witness to his brutal murder by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

She stood on the curb with other witnesses, but pulled out her phone to film what was happening. Her decision to record and post the clip of George Floyd's killing would set the tone for a summer of massive uproar, unrest, and nationwide calls for justice.

Over a year later, Derek Chauvin has been convicted and sentenced, marking a step towards justice for Floyd and his family, and Frazier has been awarded an honorary Pulitzer prize for her actions, which she says changed the course of her life, and her perspective on being Black in America.

Though Frazier's experience is both unique and traumatic, her instincts to use social media as a tool for change is shared among Black Gen Z-ers across the globe. Apps like Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok—as well as independent blogs and websites—have allowed young people to create spaces for themselves to share information, promote activism, and learn more about their blackness. They not only work against police brutality, but fight for Black LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive justice, housing rights and more.

Social media has opened the floodgates for unfiltered discourse, and this has had real-world effects. The California **C.R.O.W.N. Act**, which stands for "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair," was passed in June 2019, as a result of Black people across the nation sharing their stories of hair discrimination in the workplace. Now there are campaigns, including one supported by Dove, to pass the bill in all US states. Additionally, a coalition of Black women, following the lead of **Stacey Abrams**, started a movement online to combat voter suppression in Georgia during the 2020 Presidential and Senate elections, resulting in the state turning blue for the first time in almost 50 years.

Gen Z isn't just using the internet for activism, though. As important it is to make space for issues that affect Black people globally and fight against injustice, it's equally important to make space for Black joy. Every day, content creators on Instagram and Tiktok are building communities online by sharing jokes, creating dances, discussing music and art, and trading natural hairstyle ideas and resources. The internet has become something of a safe haven at a time that has been incredibly isolating and demoralizing for young Black kids. Having online platforms lets Gen Z know that there are others like them out there, even if they don't have a readily available community where they live. Though nothing can be changed overnight, the last few years of the social media landscape have shown that progress begins with young people, and that progress can take many different forms, and come from many different people.

So, to Black Gen Z, the next time someone says you spend too much time on your phone? Maybe don't listen to them.



THE MUSLIMS PUNK BAND | Durham, NC
 LinkTrrë | Spootiifaiy | themuzlimz.com | bandcamp Me3rrch

QADR (of The Muslims)

BRC: Let's start with the elephant in the room, what's the status, if any, of the upcoming album?

QADR: There are a lot of things in the works right now as we sort out maybe dropping another album. Let's just say...it will be quite the bomb drop. :)
 [UPDATE: ALBUM AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDERS AS OF AUGUST 18, 2021]

BRC: This band is about as punk as it gets: It's Black, LGBTQ, Muslim, anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalism and it's based in state that is actively against everything that you stand for. Was this the reason you started the band or were there other factors that led to forming the group?

QADR: The struggles we experience in NC are honestly not much different than anywhere else in the United States of Oppression. Granted, there are absolutely pockets of NC that are hostile, white supremacists, dung breeding grounds, our city is actually pretty lit. The reason we started The Muslims was to speak to all the goonies like us that never felt heard, regardless of where they lived; who felt like outsiders even in their own families; we did this to reach other Munks that needed this hype, rageful & political outlet; to call out racist cop dads; to be our full, joyous selves in the process of fighting white supremacy and speak truth to power. We just want to speak our truth—loud, fast, fun and angry.

BRC: Being in a state that is actively and aggressively against everything that you stand for, how difficult was it to find footing in the local N.C area and build a following?

QADR: Even though we will always be salty that our city isn't in our top 50 list of supporters (how fuckin DARE you), there's a dope community of bands and musicians that welcomed us with open arms. NC actually has pretty kickass punk roots and cool pockets of punk scenes across the state (s/o The Butchies). Take PansyFest in Asheville for example. Its a bunch of crunchy punk queers putting on one of the funnest punk festivals we've played. They're hours away but we claim them so hard. The NC punk scene is still transforming and growing but its been damn good to us.

BRC: In a time where the Black, self-contained band has reached endangered species status within the music industry, The Muslims have managed to not only maintain, but has find a devoted following. What has been the secret behind this and what advice would you give to other artists making politically charged music?

QADR: Outside of gaslighting Munks about the next album, we just keep it real with them. We're whole people with a strong sense of humor and strong politics, and we love sharing it with them. What I'd say to other bands is: don't water down your politics for nobody and don't change for nobody. Be yourself, all the time. The fans who want real music from real punks, delivering real politics...will find you and have you back. For us, its quality, not quantity. We wouldn't want 1 million fake ass fans who don't care about our lyrics or support our identities, and just jam our shit for clout: thats traaaaaash. We love/hate our munks because they really get this shit, understand the importance and necessity of affirming and supporting Black/Brown punks, and can laugh with us and mosh with us. We truly have the best problematic ass fanbase around.

BONUS: The Muslims song "Punch A Nazi" appears on the Black Rock Coalition's Rock 'n' Roll Reparations: Vol 4. Available for free download by emailing CODE to BRC35@blackrockcoalition.org



Michael A. Gonzales

AS A WRITER DOCUMENTING BLACK POPULAR CULTURE, I'VE LONG BEEN A FAN OF DEEP DIVE RESEARCH. Back in the 1990s when I worked for mostly urban culture magazines **The Source**, **Vibe** and **RapPages**, I relished writing those “back in the day” stories about older music artists or films that required visits to the library, conversations with elders and journeys to the locations where the history happened. For me, Black popular culture history, which is so often discarded or forgotten, is important and I've tried to school as many folks as possible with various essays, liner notes and articles. Sometimes I think of the pieces I write as textual bio-pics, constructing the stories as though they were being made into films.

My literary hero, Black science fiction writer **Samuel R. Delany**, once said in an interview that he wrote the kinds of stories that he wanted to read, and that reasoning also applies to my own work. In 1998 when I was assigned a feature on hip-hop founding father **Kool Herc**, I made an effort to walk the same Bronx streets, chill in the same parks and stand in the doorways of the used-to-be clubs, former hole in the walls that had been a few different businesses since the 1970s hip-hop heyday.

While I wasn't, as I was once reminded by a New York Times journalist, “a real historian,” I've long thought of myself as a vessel of communicating our dusty, cobweb-covered stories that will educate and (maybe) inspire.

Over the past twenty years a few of my proudest moments of personal pop-cult writing was done for **Wax Poetics**, where I was able to write long pieces on **Nina Simone** and **Barry White**; **Ebony**, where I documented proto-blaxploitation flick **Up Tight** and female funk artists and the long out-of-print **Beats, Rhymes and Life** edited by **Kenji Jasper** and **Ytasha Womack**, where I wrote about pimp culture from **Stagolee** to the **Shalimar Barbershop** in Harlem to the Superfly guys rockin' the mic in the '80s. In 2014 **Soulhead.com** owner **Ron Worthy** commissioned me to do a column called Slept on Soul where I wrote about diverse recording angels (**Rachid**, **Cree Summer**, **The Veldt**, amongst others), talented artists whose important work has never been covered or praised by Rolling Stone, The New York Times or reissued in prestige editions.

As a voracious reader since I was a kid, it was only a matter of time before I also turned my attention to writing about books. However, the desire to write a column about out-of-print Black books and the writers behind them was born more out of anger. It began when I saw an ad for yet another reissue of some Beat-era scribe and I began to rant that there were so many brilliant Black writers who never received either recognition or reprints. Of course, Black writers who'd been lost in the literary sauce became my next mission.

In 2018, working with **Catapult** editor **Mensah Demary**, I launched a series of columns called The Blacklist, which featured longread essays on Black books and authors (**Darius James**, **Julian Mayfield**, **Charlotte Carter**, etc) who'd been mostly ignored by the mainstream. I found it to be a revolutionary reading experience. Over the past 12 months of the pandemic, I've done a lot of reading including **John A. Williams'** hard-hitting novel on race, writing and life as a Black American expat living in France in the 1950s.



While many of my peers complained on social media that they couldn't concentrate on their work through the reports of sickness and death, uprisings and bizarre politics, I became obsessed with several Black artists including soul/pop saxophonist **King Curtis** and Brit soul man **Ephraim Lewis**. Both men had been killed, with Curtis murdered by a knife-wielding junkie in New York City in 1971 and Lewis falling off a balcony at his Los Angeles apartment building in 1994. The Curtis curiosity grew out of reading about the horn player in connection with **Aretha Franklin**, for whom he worked as her musical director in addition to recording solo albums and session gigs.

Meanwhile the Lewis interest grew-out of repeated listening to his brilliant debut *Skin*, an album that was compared to **Seal's**, though to me it was closer to **Massive Attack's** wonderful *Blue Lines*. However, most people I talked to knew very little about King Curtis and nothing about Lewis. I felt as though it my responsibility to let people know their contributions to the world.

In the attempt not to go too stir crazy in my small apartment, I've used research and writing as means of coping with a world that seems on the verge of literally exploding. These artists deserve to be more than footnotes and to be remembered for their work. On each subject I spent weeks researching, reading various texts (**Rock's Backpages** is always a favorite music writing resource) and interviewing experts. Both stories will be published soon, with the King Curtis essay being posted on the upcoming relaunch of Wax Poetics and the Ephraim Lewis bio will be included in the next **Maggot Brain**.

Many years ago I heard a story about a Black cultural critic who believed that writing about Black artists was below him, because they weren't important in the eyes and ears of the gatekeepers. As a counter to that backwards thinking, I feel it's my duty to do the opposite. Does the world really need more articles on the greatness of The Beatles, William Burroughs or Patti Smith when so many virtuoso Black artists are undervalued, unappreciated and just waiting for someone to reveal their radiance and worth to the world?

Michael A. Gonzales has been down with the BRC since 1986. He has written for *The Village Voice*, *New York*, *Stop Smiling*, *XXL* and numerous other publications. His true crime and noir related stories are at **CrimeReads**. He blogs @blackadelicpop.blogspot.com.



THE DAYBREAKERS BAND | London, UK

Aidan Connell (of The Daybreakers)

BRC: Pandemic withstanding, how did the London music community embrace a Black, self-contained rock band that openly embraces Black culture and its contributions to rock n roll?

AC: Was **Phil Lynott** Black, or Irish, or both? Most Londoners and people with sense in the UK and Ireland don't care about black or white. We're both, I'm both. You get the occasional moron, certainly. Do you know the song by my good friend **Eddy Grant** 'Black Skin Blue Eyed Boys?' Well that probably sums us up. It was a hit for his band **The Equals** plus covered by **The Specials** in 2019. But yes definitely getting a lot of love at the moment, but we work hard so maybe people appreciate that ie the fruit of our labour. So yes we're very blessed.

BRC: How has **The Daybreakers**, a riff-driven, guitar-based band, been able to run counter to a climate that is focused on computer-fueled big beats and an over-reliance on hooks instead of full-formed songs?

AC: We have songs with computer fuelled beats too there's many layers to our music. Actually I'm just uploading the original version of our song 'Black Beatles' on the Radio and it was made as an EDM/Disco track. We always put synths and samples in the mix, that is more typical of Dance music. Most rocknroll of today is boring so I'd rather listen to music that pushes the boundaries like Electronic music or Hip Hop.

BRC: How is the new album coming along? Will it feature the singles that have already been released or will it feature an entirely new slate of songs?

AC: There's a plethora of recordings we've done in lockdown. I guess we just might have to be ruthless and pick the best one. Maybe we'll re-record some for the album too.

BRC: What advice would you give other Black, self-contained bands trying to make a mark in the rapidly changing music industry?

AC: I'd advise them to not think about colour as an obstacle but an advantage. Build a brand with your own money first before you expect others to invest millions. Black people always set trends in music so you're always going to be desirable to the music industry. You've just got to put your own twist on things and be a freak.

BONUS: The **Daybreakers** song "Bury The Hatchet" appears on the **Black Rock Coalition's Rock 'n' Roll Reparations: Vol 4**. Available for free download by emailing CODE to BRC35@blackrockcoalition.org



WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT ISSUE?
Get in touch. Be in touch. Stay in touch.
email us: ravers@blackrockcoalition.org



photo by EARL DOUGLAS, JR.



LaFrae Sci, photo by SALLY A. FOXEN-MCNEILL



Vernon Reid, Sandra St. Victor, photo by EARL DOUGLAS, JR.



DJ Logic (left), Honeychild Coleman, Felice Rosser (right), photos by LARONDA DAVIS



THE BLACK ROCK COALITION ARTS MAGAZINE

INVERS

www.BlackRockCoalition.org

 @BlackRockCoalition

 @BRCnewyork

 @BlackRockCoalition