

Words Sean Griffiths

*As Random Access Memories is finally unleashed on the world, we caught up with **Daft Punk** to talk EDM, working with Kanye and the reaction to the most anticipated album of the century*



◆ DAFT PUNK'S FOURTH studio album is so hotly anticipated, you get the feeling that if Jesus Christ made his first earthly appearance in over two millennia, he might struggle to draw attention away from the two enigmatic Parisian robots. Days after the album - 'Random Access Memories' - was streamed to the world, Mixmag caught up with one half of Daft Punk, Thomas Bangalter, for their first interview since the album was unleashed. We found out what they think of the response to the album, why they're happy for fans to remix their tracks and why we can expect something completely different from their forthcoming work with Kanye West.

The album streamed on iTunes a few days ago and then leaked to the world. How have you felt about the initial reactions now the album's out there?

It's been great. The most depressing reaction for an artist is indifference. We don't want to be in the middle ground where people just say, "Oh, it's OK" and give it five out of 10. Also, I hate consensus. I hate it when everyone just raves about something and there's nothing else to add to the discussion. Art and music are about triggering debate and different reactions. That some people seem to love it,



“The album is a reminder of the true spirit of house music”

while some people seem to hate it at the same time is extremely healthy. Another interesting thing is that since we've been reading people's reactions, we've noticed everyone seems to disagree on what their favourite tracks are which is really interesting. When we released 'Discovery' the initial reactions were very similar to this and time usually tells with these sorts of things.

Some reckon 'Random Access Memories' is positioned as an antidote to the kind of functional, and some might say soulless, EDM that's predominant at the moment. Is this a deliberate move?

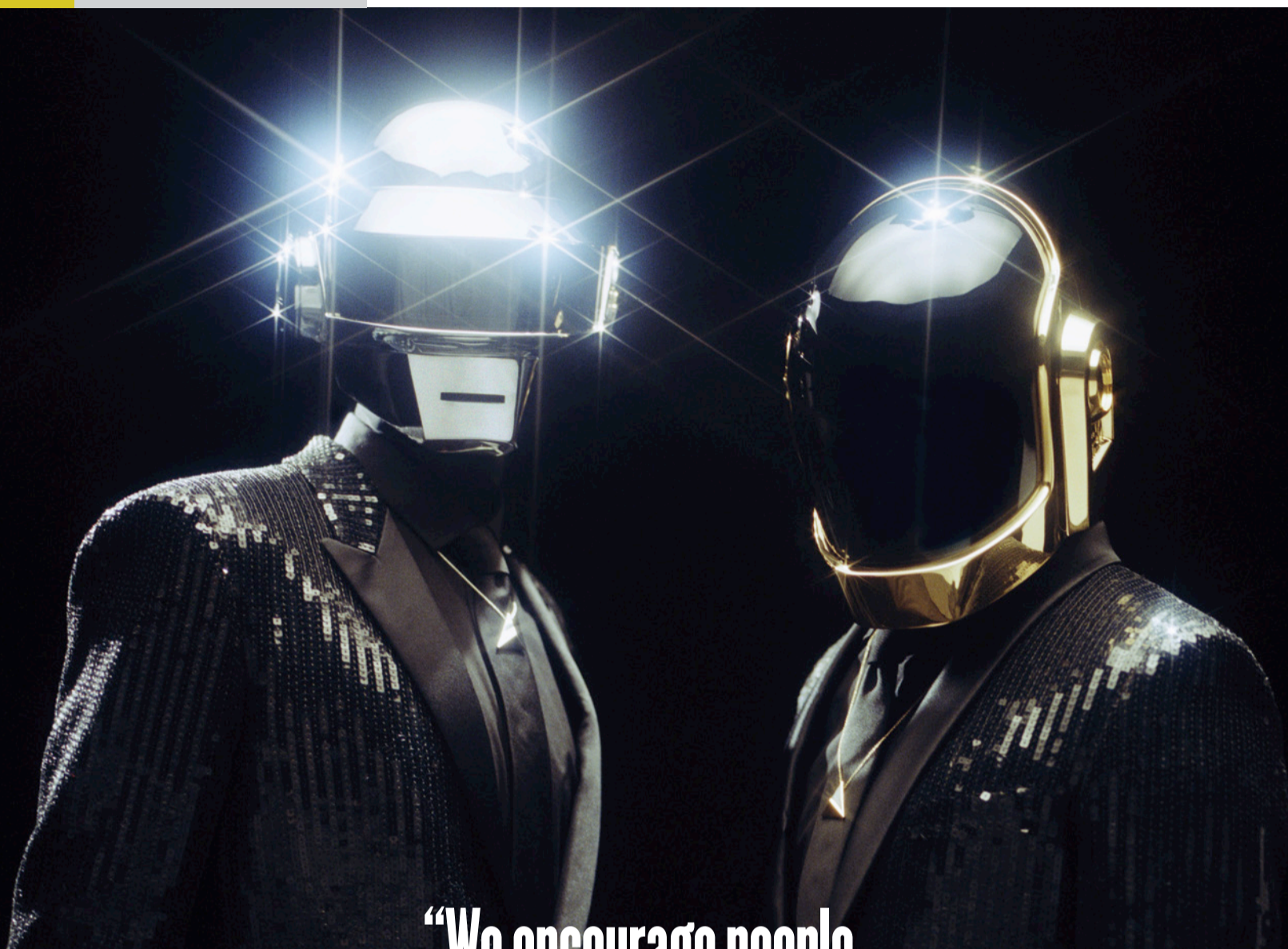
No. We don't consider this album

to be an antidote to anything but rather an offering of something that's different to what's around at the moment. You could say it's a reaction to its environment but it's not necessarily against it. On a more ideological level, it's a reminder of the true spirit of house music. We came from the house music scene and for us it was built on two pillars. One was people trying to keep disco alive in little basement clubs, using cheap synthesizers and drum machines, while the other was eclecticism. DJs would play a Marshall Jefferson record followed by Prince followed by Led Zeppelin. It was about accepting everything; all race, gender, sexuality and all types of music. Now the focus is very much on high-energy music and we felt maybe those principles were fading away.

So do you think there's an element of educating younger listeners by getting people like Nile Rodgers and Giorgio Moroder involved?

I don't think we're in the right place to be giving people lessons but having Nile and Giorgio on there, it demonstrates how dance music has evolved over the last 40 years. This album is us making the music we've always dreamed of making but might not have had the means to do it before.

You told Pete Tong recently that ►►



you plan to remix tracks from the album. Will there be a whole remix album or will you just remix individual tracks?

Right now, the first track we're remixing is 'Get Lucky'. That will be out at the end of June. It's one step at a time, so we don't have plans to do a whole remix album at the moment. Nowadays it's really easy for people to take loops from the album and remix it themselves and we really encourage people to do that. In the past we took loops of disco records, put drum tracks on them and it wasn't something people were able to do at home so easily. But today, there's the ability for everyone to do this in their

"We encourage people to remix the album themselves"

bedrooms. When the first 15-second snippet of 'Get Lucky' came out on Saturday Night Live and people were making remixes out of it, it was very exciting. Now that the creative means is so open to people, we have to try and make music that people don't have the means to do in their bedrooms to offer a show and spectacle.

You've said that you have no immediate plans to play live. Are you reluctant to rush into playing live because it will be difficult to

top your Pyramid shows?

With the Pyramid show we felt that we were five years ahead of what was going on at the time. You look around at dance music live shows now and you can see that it has been very influential which is great. But we have to think about what we can bring to the table at this particular time. We don't want to do the same thing again. We want to focus on exploring uncharted territories.

Are you interested in taking Nile and Pharell on the road with you and playing as a live band? That is something we would love to see.

Not at the moment, for us the focus is not on the stage. If we go on tour again it will be around the ►►



idea of creating certain circumstances that are not around at the moment.

Was there anyone you felt filled the Daft Punk void while you were away?

For us, the most important act of the last five or six years was MGMT. That's a band who created a very strong visual identity and had an amazing sense of musicality which are both things we look for in music. 'Electric Feel' is the best song of the last decade for us. Going back to talking about the antidote. When we were young, say 18 or 19, we were angry and reacting against things that were happening or had gone before. Now we are looking for a new

generation to do this. To a certain degree, I think someone like Skrillex has been successful in doing this: in breaking a formula that was already in place.

You've also been working on the new Kanye West album?

Kanye came to our studio in Paris and we worked on loads of different ideas together. We're not sure how many tracks we will have on the album yet. The music we worked on with Kanye was super-primal and raw and super-violent. It was the opposite of our new album in lots of ways. It was really exciting to do something completely raw.

'One More Time' was voted the Greatest Dance Track Of All

Time in Mixmag's recent poll. Do you agree?

We are very humbled. Sometimes our favourite tracks are the ones people like the least because we're very protective of them. Going back to the original spirit of house music, that's something we tried to capture on 'One More Time' and we've tried to do it again with tracks like 'Get Lucky' and 'Lose Yourself To Dance'. It's that mixture of nostalgia and melancholy and something that's very celebratory. Dance music is very much defined by trends and the newest thing - so to have a track like 'One More Time' that can still make people happy ten years on is very pleasing. ☺