

ANTIGRAVITY

VOODOO 106
[your new orleans music and culture alternative]

Mixing and mastering with the
THE FLAMING LIPS



VOODOO '06

JAMIE LIDELL

BY STEVE GAROFANO



Equally at home delivering stripped-down classic soul as cranking out frenetic electro-dance rhythms, Jamie Lidell eschews the glitzy for the warmth of swinging humanity. His most recent album, *Multiply*, speaks to hearts and feet more than cerebra, and in person, his performances are engaging and lively. Antigravity recently caught up with this son-of-Motown-via-Britain-via-Berlin at an early morning hour that your humble correspondent, a late-night studio-dweller, never knew existed.

ANTIGRAVITY: So you're in Paris now?

Jamie Lidell: Yeah, I've been here for a bit. I'm staying here for a little while, visiting my girl. Doing something different for a bit. Making a little bit of music in the kitchen.

AG: I saw you at the Bowery Ballroom in NYC in April, and it seemed like the kind of show that all the electro-heads could bring their girlfriends to and hold hands. You don't hide behind your gear; you really connect with an audience human-to-human.

JL: I think, with the way I'm playing, I'm kind of winging it a lot. I'm an improviser, so I need to feel like the crowd's with me. Otherwise I don't feel comfortable to bare my private parts to them, you know what I'm saying? Metaphorically speaking. Or perhaps literally, I don't know. It's really important for me to get that feeling. It's just reaching out, doing a couple of songs that are really solid, and showing some vulnerability. But it does take a while to build it up. I've been doing that kind of show for a few years, and it's just road experience, having confidence on the mic. We all have good and bad nights though, right? It doesn't always go so well. That Bowery show was a good one. It was a great response. When you don't get anything back, you start to ask yourself, "Why am I gonna put 100 percent in if I'm only getting like 10 percent back?" It's like a little deal you strike up with the audience.

AG: Ever played New Orleans before?

JL: Nah, man.

AG: People here are pretty warm—we definitely appreciate improvisers. I saw that you have a link to Quintron's Drum Buddy on your website.

JL: I love Quintron. I haven't seen him for years. I heard all his shit got ruined in the storm.

AG: Yeah, his Spellcaster Lounge in the Ninth Ward just reopened.

JL: I really like his energy. I only met him really quickly, but it was contagious.

AG: If you'll permit a gear-geek question, what kind of equipment makes up your rig? Samplers, software, synths?

JL: It's basically my own thing. I've sort of devised a private system, because everything I found on the market was too slow or too complex, trying to do more than I wanted it to do. I ended up actually having to build that bloody thing, you know? So I kind of got my nerd glasses on and programmed it. It's on a computer, but I just wanted it to be as transparent as possible—to feel and look as much like an analog thing as possible.

AG: That's always a challenge with electronic music: making the technology serve your art, rather than having the equipment determine your sound.

JL: I did plenty of experiments. One thing I've come to learn is that the thing I've built is really simple, but just learning what the edges of it are, and how I can think with it, has taken years. It's like playing an instrument, getting familiar with a guitar or something. You know certain things that are particular to it that work. Christian Vogel, who I used to do a lot of work with [electro duo Super Collider], he taught me to look at machines in that way. To think of them as instruments in a really traditional way.

AG: You're more about communicating, less about twiddling knobs.

JL: It's funny—a little bit of that can go a long way. That's what I learned: You just don't need to show your cock the whole time, you know? Just a little glimpse, maybe. [My gear] is not really capable of doing that much in the way of really fucking up sound. It can do a bit. But there are more advanced ways.

AG: Do you think that's the way electronic music is headed, incorporating more live performance elements?

JL: I would like to see that, as a musician. There's some things I've heard recently that sound really crazy—I like that shit. Some people are crazy craftsmen of that style, and it's always a pleasure to witness it, like the turntablists. I like that every now and again. But with turntablism, there comes a point where you wanna hear a groove. The acrobatics are real sweet, but you've got to stop and get on with something else. Sometimes some crazy, explosive, acrobatic sound shit is exactly what I want, but maybe just in small doses. That's how I see it. 15 minutes of the craziest shit is enough; I'm pacified with that and want to get on with something else. People's attention span is fucking short these days as well, you know?

AG: What's going on with the Berlin scene these days? I know you've spent a lot of time there.

JL: Places open up and close down every second in Berlin. Being a touring musician the last few years, I'm not the best person to ask. I'm not a scenester anymore. I gave all that up. I hang out with my friends. What I love about Berlin is that you can do your own thing in your own time there. It's really accommodating to the artist's lifestyle—it doesn't run on a really heavy clock like Paris does, or London or wherever. Those cities feel like cities, and Berlin feels like it's for the losers, in a good way. Unemployed people always on the streets, eating breakfast at 12 in the afternoon.

AG: You're going to feel so at home in New Orleans.

JL: [Laughs] Yeah, I bet. I can't handle it any other way. You get up in Paris and try to have a breakfast at 11, they're like, [fakes French accent] "Fuck you!" It's Fascist or something, I can't take it. The winters are brutal in Berlin, though.

AG: I wonder why you don't find more progressive cultures in warm climates.

JL: It's too easy, isn't it? There's nothing to fight for. You just sit outside and drink rum all day.

Steve Garofano is changing the face of modern music and food-additive technology with his band, Triple Delight.

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BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE

BY RYAN ROGERS



As forebears of Canada's new musical socialism, Toronto's Broken Social Scene can be blamed (or credited, depending on your POV) for the fact that having five-plus members now makes any band an artier-sounding "collective." But with anywhere from 10 to 15 ancillary regulars, they're one of the few who aren't fibbing. Despite the power in numbers, the Scene does have its leaders: co-founders Kevin Drew and Brandon Canning, whose loose conducting leads the group through elastic, blissful stretches of blurred-together jazz, pop and rock.

ANTIGRAVITY called Canning to talk about the challenge of putting his Scene back together again for another tour.

ANTIGRAVITY: You're about to kick off the new tour, right?

Brendan Canning: Yeah. Today's the first day. We're up in Pittsburgh.

AG: Is the whole crew on board for this one?

BC: How many people are with us ... 10 or 11, maybe? We've got Do Make Say Think as well, as a supporting act on our tour. They're not playing New Orleans, but we've got some of them with us.

AG: It looks like you guys have become regulars on the festival circuit. Do you enjoy playing them?

BC: Yeah, some are better than others. We played a really great festival in Japan called Fuji Rock. We also played, obviously, Lollapalooza ...

AG: I saw that the Hold Steady said your show there was their favorite concert in recent memory ...

BC: Oh yeah? We actually saw those Hold Steady guys when we played a festival with them in Australia.

AG: And you just played your hometown festival last month, right? The Virgin Music Fest?

BC: Yeah ... The thing is, we do our own version of that festival. It's on Toronto Island, and you take a ferry ride

across to get to the island. But we did one in June with us, Bloc Party, Feist, us backing up Dinosaur Jr, and one of our local bands, Raising The Fawn. So our festival was better than Virgin's festival. So it was kind of hard for us to go back and play what we feel is our turf on V-fest's terms. We were a last-minute replacement for Massive Attack because they didn't have their paperwork together. I think one of the guys has a criminal record or whatever. [Laughs] I don't know, man ... How else can you not get into a country? Plus, we used to have their tour manager, so we've heard all kinds of stories.

AG: It's exciting to have you back in New Orleans. It's been a few years, right?

BC: Yeah, when we last played New Orleans, we played the Howlin' Wolf—back in March of 2004. It's still one of the best shows we've done. We had such a classic night: Once the gig was done, we had an after-the-show jam on Calexico's stand-up bass. And no one in the club cared that we were still hanging out there; like, most clubs want to kick you out immediately, right? They were just so mellow. The next day, we had such a great day. It was my best New Orleans experience.

AG: Where did you go?

BC: We just walked around down in the French Quarter. It was during the day, but there were plenty of bars open. Lots of blues bands with a heavy metal guitar kind of thing. [Laughs] This one woman, she was the organ player in the band. I remember her the most because she played this one-note solo that was just fucking really great. For all those reasons, we're happy to be coming back to New Orleans—to see one of the best cities in America try to be back to what it was.

AG: Talk a little about your process in the studio. On a lot of songs, like "Looks Just Like The Sun," you leave in all the vocal cues, the counting-off and what not, that other bands edit out.

BC: I guess that was originally intended as a scratch vocal. You record it and you're recording the vocal along with it, and everyone knows when the parts are coming up. Generally, you intend to go over that vocal. But with a song like that,

we just felt like, "oh yeah, I think he nailed it." That's the vocal performance. And the fact that there's counting in it and whatever, it just gives you a little peek-hole, a little insight into the recording process.

AG: It sounds like there's a lot of improvisation going on. Do you have everything pretty well laid out before you head into the studio?

BC: It goes both ways. There's stuff written beforehand, and after the fact, there's lots of ideas that happen in the studio. And obviously, when it comes down to mixing, you can go any which way as far as the complexion of a song.

AG: The thing I love about the last record is that it's not predictable at all. It sounds like constructed chaos.

BC: It's chaotic for sure. We just try and make sure it all makes sense, that it's a viable piece of music. There's a lot going on, a lot of ideas going on.

AG: What projects are you working on right now?

BC: A couple of us are doing a score for a film. We've done a few: one for Half Nelson, too. That's a great film—you should check it out. The new one is for this Canadian director, Bruce McDonald. It's called *The Tracey Fragments*. It's a macabre tale; it's not the most happy story that's ever been told. But I think it's a really good film, especially the editing of the film. It's a really interesting piece of art, so I hope we do a good score. I think it could become an indie classic.

AG: And what records are you playing now? Anything new in the stereo?

BC: The last record I bought was Mr. Lif—you know, Definitive Jux and Aesop Rock. There's also a record by the El Michaels Affair, I think it's called *Sounds Of The City*, that's really great.

AG: Anything special in the works for this visit?

BC: Just our own brand of Voodoo. See if we can't kick the Wu-Tang Clan's ass.

Guitarist Ryan "Deuceman" Rogers is currently putting back together his own broken social scene, local rock band Antenna Inn.

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BY BERNARD PEARCE

THE FLAMING LIPS

Thank god the punk rockers started taking acid. Otherwise, we may never have been blessed with such space-pop paragons as *Transmissions From The Satellite Heart*, *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots* and *The Soft Bulletin*. The Flaming Lips turned 23 years old in 2006, meaning they've graduated from college (rock), gotten a job (as festival-circuit regulars) and gotten serious about things (see anti-Bush statement record *At War With The Mystics*).

ANTIGRAVITY called bassist Michael Ivins for the latest Lips' shtick.

ANTIGRAVITY: The band is working on a movie soundtrack, right? Are you involved in that?

Michael Ivins: Pretty much. It's sort of Wayne [Coyne]'s baby, really. Doing the movie is just like us doing a soundtrack. And all the other stuff, it's something different than just being a rock band. Or even a weird rock band. We've been at it for so long, it's more interesting for us to think, "Oh, what if we made a movie? What if we have music floating around that wouldn't fit on a record, but would fit on a soundtrack?"

AG: Will we be seeing that soon?

MI: The filming is all done. We still have to do the editing. I think we're hoping to be devoting a lot of January and February to the movie. Our latest story is sometime around South by Southwest.

AG: I wanted to ask you about the last South by Southwest. What was with the secret performances? I heard all of your appearances were unannounced.

MI: Unannounced, sure, but I don't know how secret they were. But those are usually the best kind of secrets. I think at first we were going to be part of the festival, but somehow separate. We've played Austin so many times, we wanted to make it special.

AG: You don't get down to New Orleans very often.

MI: It's sort of a shame, really. Obviously it's not as ... I don't wanna say remote, but in a weird way, it is geographically remote, in the same way that Miami is remote. But I think that's a lot of it. It's kind of out of the way, in a weird way. It's unfortunate because it is such a great city. My wife and I actually

spent our honeymoon/first anniversary week in New Orleans. And our co-producer, Dave Fridmann – I can't remember who started it – was like, "It's New Orleans. We should go to the Tape Op conference." I had worked with Dave Fridmann on an engineering level—I do a lot of that stuff within the band.

AG: I noticed you get some credits. How many records did you engineer? I noticed on Yoshimi you get an engineer credit.

MI: On *The Soft Bulletin* and *Zaireeka* ... Well, actually, I had to bake some tapes of our older stuff from the late '80s. And I was looking at the track sheets from the older stuff, and I was like, "Wait a minute—that's my handwriting."

AG: [Laughs] Did you get credit?

MI: Well, you know, it was just sort of what needed to get done. A lot of engineering is really tedious and boring, but someone has to do it. I find it really interesting, especially a project like *Zaireeka*. We don't really use DAT tapes anymore, but if you're doing a record, you might have 10 DATs, tops. But we were doing four records, so it was 40 DATs. And there was a time there where we were basically getting to the end of *The Soft Bulletin* touring cycle, and Dave Fridmann called me as said, "Hey, do you wanna move up" to Western New York, to be his assistant. So I spent a little over three years working pretty intensively with Dave as an engineer. I figure, just doing that, I probably crammed eight to ten years into the three years. He was always working. And technically, being the assistant, you work 30 days out of a month. And during that time, we were working on *Yoshimi*, and Steven [Drozd] and Wayne would come up and we'd do our week or two weeks. Then they'd leave and I'd clean up, and the next day we'd be doing *Luna*, or something like that.

AG: You did some mastering, too, right? Mastering is one of those vague, wizard-like things—sometimes someone can take a record and really do something for it.

MI: Oh yeah, for sure. But the big school I'm a part of is the Tarbox [studio] school. Say the engineer or the producer comes in and says, "What do you think about this idea? How 'bout we go in this direction?" And the band says, "You know,

we wanna do this, this and this." And it depends on whether you want to take that battle and fight it because you think this could really help the song or whatever. You're the artist, it's your band, you're paying the money. I don't subscribe to quite the Steve Albini idea of capturing a performance; to me, that's what playing live is for. The studio is where—don't get me wrong, magic happens on stage—but the time to be creative and push the boundaries, I think, is in the studio. Live, you're really there to put on an entertaining show and play the songs so that people actually know what the songs are. Because that's the worst: When someone's changed all the words and you can't recognize the song you came to hear. To me, there's no excuse for that.

AG: I think it's amazing that during the Soft Bulletin you started playing with pre-recorded material. Now people I know are going up to CMJ with Pro Tools.

MI: At the time, Steven started playing more guitar and keyboard, and we didn't actually have a drummer. So we were like, "Well, why don't we tape the drums?" One of the worst things to sit through is a drum check. We've seen people that take a year off your life.

AG: Is that still the case?

MI: We do have a live drummer augmenting now. I think we've found, after a while, there is something about the visceral experience of actually seeing someone flail away at drums right in front of you. I think it makes the show better.

AG: You like to play seated, right? Very stoic. How did that come about?

MI: At some point we saw a Public Image video. Jah Wobble was sitting down, and me and Wayne watched it and were like, "That's really cool." I think around 1989, at the height of my Jesus and Mary Chain infatuation, it seemed like that would be cool if I sat down. Totally the opposite of someone like Flea, this maniac jumping around. And that suits his personality. But I think I'm more on the John Entwistle side of things.

Bernard Pearce is at war with himself as experimental noise outfit One Man Machine.



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ARTISTS

Contributing Writers: Marty Garner, Lisa Haviland, Carolyn Heneghan, Leo McGovern, Sally Tunmer

Ballzack

He's been called many things, like Wanker, joker and heartbreaker, but Ballzack has never let his Westbank origins hold him back. His most recent release, '05's *Chipmunk Dream Machine*, set the tone for a progression from clever rapper to artful lyricist, and the self-proclaimed "Palestinian New Orleanian" is set to release a N.O. bounce throwback in '07. **LM**

Big Sam's Funky Nation

Big Sam's Funky Nation stands out because of the, well ... funk. The combination of bass, guitar, brass and percussion allows your joints to loosen and your body to start groovin'. *Take Me Back* is the new album, which like *Birth of a Nation*, "ain't nothin but a party." **ST**

Ray Bong & Mad Mike

More often than not, keyboardist Ray Bong & banjo-toting bassist Mad Mike are dubbed "experimental," given their irreverent and at times chaotic combination of sarcasm, twang, noise and unpredictable verse-less tunes. And frankly, m'dears, they're enjoying themselves too much to give a damn. **LH**

The Brand New Heavies

This Delicious Vinyl mainstay started in 1985 as a London-based acid-jazz instrumental ensemble before adding several female vocalists, most notably N'dea Davenport. In 1992 the group incorporated hip-hop into its sound for *Heavy Rhyme Experience, Vol.1*, which featured guest spots by Pharcyde and Gang Starr. Davenport returned to the Heavies for a track on 2000's *Trunk Funk Classics: 1991-2000* and recently reunited with the group indefinitely. **LM**

Jon Cleary and the Absolute Monster Gentlemen

Guitarist Jon Cleary, backed by the Absolute Monster Gentlemen, has been a local staple since landing his first gig with Walter "Wolfman" Washington back in the day. The AMG came together when Cleary crossed paths with producer John Porter, an original member of Roxy Music, at a Connecticut barbeque thrown by Keith Richards. The ensemble continues to turn it out, most recently with the album *Pin Your Spin*, recorded in five days at Piety Street Studios in the Bywater. **LH**

Ferry Corsten

This Dutch DJ dignitary appropriately entitled his latest release *L.E.F.*, or *Loud Electronic Ferocious*, which still only envelops a snuffle of what this

mixing maestro, currently ranked the #5 DJ in the world, has to offer Voodoo Festers. For 17 years, Corsten has been taking the music world by the jugular and continues to attract fans and collaborators with his unprecedented DJ spectacles worldwide. **CH**

Cowboy Mouth

2006 is the tenth anniversary of *Are You With Me*, Cowboy Mouth's major label debut, as well as their most recognizable and oft-twenty-minute-live track "Jenny Says." The self-described "unrelenting emissaries of New Orleans music and spirit" celebrated by releasing a new album, *Voodoo Shoppe*, earlier this year on North Carolina indie label Eleven Thirty. **LM**

Drive-By Truckers

The Drive-By Truckers have made a name for themselves by playing legendary three-hour sets and writing poignant and intelligent narratives about the South. Put briefly, they're the kind of Southern band that Yankees adore and pretend to understand. Either way, the Truckers will be the loudest band at the festival, and probably the drunkest. These guys are worth seeing for the charisma of frontman Patterson Hood alone, but the portraiture of Jason Isbell and "Stroker Ace" Mike Cooley are not to be missed. **MG**

DURAN DURAN



There was a time when it wasn't cool to think Duran Duran was cool, but a lot of us did anyway, singing along to glam-pop stylings such as "Shake up the picture, the lizard mixture, with your dance on the eventide," like some new romantics looking for the TV sound because, under the oppressive '80s reign of hair metal, who could resist? The nostalgia endures into the new millennia on the strength of synth hooks and tongue-in-cheek quips. **LH**

Ellipsis

Warming the stage for such high profile acts as Incubus, Jack Johnson, Better Than Ezra, and the Funky Meters, Ellipsis readies themselves to take the stage yet again at one of their hometown's most renowned music festivals. Alternative and southern rock blended with two parts reggae and two parts retro create an undeniably attractive line of music much more mature than their age might allow. **CH**

Fatter Than Albert

Settling down after a summer chock full of East Coast touring and their sophomore album release *Erin's Runaway Imagination*, local ska-core legends Fatter Than Albert are now ready to preserve the crowd-skanking in front of the Preservation Hall stage. FTA draws hundreds of fans both young and old to their local shows, and one can only wonder what kind of crowd will engulf them during their first Voodoo performance. **CH**

Hot 8 Brass Band

Hot 8 Brass Band is another group of young, hip musicians with impressive organization and a powerful, effortless sound. The colorfully titled "Skeet Skeet" rolls with the same theme as Kanye's "Gold Digger," and "Fly Away" is a beautifully harmonized gospel song. Each varying style eventually morphs into triumphant jamming. **ST**

Jack's Mannequin

Piano-rumbling quintet Something Corporate lends their vocalist and keyboardist, Andrew McMahon, to his latest side project, a collection of much of his music and emotions unexpressed in his original band. Experience this fresher, hidden side of McMahon, a facet of his music he plans to reintroduce to Something Corporate in the future. **CH**

Shooter Jennings

Somewhere out in Voodoo land, tight pants'd college kids who came for Broken Social Scene and are staying for Social Distortion will be faced with a dilemma. Shooter Jennings, whose records land barely on the right side of the pop / authentic country line, is sandwiched between the current indie darlings and the legendary punkers. Shooter's made rock-infused country his stock-and-trade for the last few years, sharing the stage with David Allan Coe and Willie Nelson and playing that strain of country made especially for outdoor festivals. Could he be the Gonzaga of Voodoo Fest? **MG**

VOODOO '06 ARTISTS

Kinky

Electronica *tropicana* hails from Monterey, Mexico in the form of Kinky, a unique group built on a foundation of alternative coloring and instruments that are sure to ignite crowds straight into extreme *bailando*. Whether your dancing's fit for an upscale club, Mexican *discotheque*, or indie rock show, Kinky will have you grooving for hours after they exit the stage. **CH**

MORNING 40 FEDERATION



Forty-ounce enthusiasts take a break from their breakfast bacchanalia to intoxicate Voodoo with their quirky amalgam of jazz, punk, *laissez faire* and true New Orleans-style inebriation. *Ticonderoga*, released this past June, continues in their gut-busting path of booze and NOLA community-themed music for which they've become so locally acclaimed. **CH**

OZOMATI



When a band from L.A. has ten members and features horns, a turntablist and two MCs, as well as "normal" guitars and drums, two things are evident: their music will be eclectic and their voices will be opinionated. Ozomatli has been both for eight years and have won two Grammys, most recently for '04 release *Street Signs*. **LM**

Noomoon Tribe

The Noomoon Tribe, often in collaboration with the Pain Tribe, bring it with what they've dubbed "ritual suspension mayhem and noiz" — fitting scenes for the NOLA landscape. Led by Daniel Sheridan, this group pushes the boundaries of pain versus pleasure and also churns out its own line of clothing. **LH**

The Preservation Hall Jazz Band

The Preservation Hall Jazz Band is a group of musicians that has built a staggering reputation as one of the world's foremost authorities on New Orleans jazz. Since the Hall's opening in 1961, the band continues to bring the music unique to New Orleans to the most prestigious venues all over the world. The range of ages in the band spans 60 years. **ST**

Kermit Ruffins

Kermit Ruffins is the trumpet king of New Orleans with a mighty Armstrong-influenced voice. Hearing his name puts a smile on any native's face. Every Thursday there's a party at Vaughn's in the Bywater, where Ruffins cooks his own BBQ and toots his own horn while accompanied by an all-star local lineup. **ST**

Social Distortion

Social D. began mashing up the L.A. punk/hardcore scene back in '78, releasing their self-titled debut in '83 and representin for sick boys everywhere. Singer/guitarist Mike Ness and then bassist, later-guitarist, Dennis Danell (who passed away in 2000) endured the dissolution of the L.A. hardcore scene, revolving band members, extended hiatuses and MTV. **LH**

The Soul Rebels

The Soul Rebels are New Orleans culture. The brass-hop hipsters can be found wherever the great traditions live: leading jazz funerals, packing local venues without fail, playing old favorites and making their own versions of modern jams. Seeing the Rebels in action alleviate any concerns about trying times and remind you what the city is all about. **ST**

Trombone Shorty

Back in the days of the Treme, when the kids were just having some old-fashioned fun, Troy Michaels was a leading member of the neighborhood club, the Trombone Shortys. He adopted the name solo and, all grown up at 16, he's already performed internationally and played with all the New Orleans jazz veterans. **ST**

WU|TANG|CLAN



These Shaolin warrior-inspired hip hop nothin-to-fuck-wit'-ers, including the late Notorious B.I.G., RZA, GZA, Ol' Dirty Bastard, Raekwon, Ghostface Killa, Inspectah Deck and others, have fully emerged from their early '90s beginnings to now being referenced as the best hip hop group of all time. Who knows which members of the Clan may or may not appear, but the only clues we have is Masta Killa and Method Man should be touring the Carolinas around the time of Voodoo. **CH**

ZYDEPUNKS



Bywater-bred yet worldly-influenced, the Zydeponks effortlessly weave the sounds, dialects, and energy of countless countries, cultures, and genres into every one of their New Orleans tinged tracks. Voodoo onlookers can expect throngs of hand-clapping, dancing fools orbiting into an entirely separate cosmos of zydeco, punk, Irish, Cajun, Yiddish music and beyond. **CH**

