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Featuring Women in Electronic Music: Estrogenesis

Written by Lynda Arnold and Rena Jones, Digital Bliss Productions
Friday, 10 December 2004

NEWSFLASH

Back from vacation: And I've got a pile of news to post for you in the meantime. The book is almost here. And CDM 2.0, a massive site redesign, is just around the corner. Forget the beach, as we bask in the glow of warm tube-based synths.



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CDM is pleased to get a full report on Estrogenesis, an event in San Francisco highlighting women in electronic music, from its creators, Lynda Arnold and Rena Jones. -PK

This year, we formed **Digital Bliss Productions** to showcase the newest and best in electronic music and multimedia performance. Our first annual event, **Estrogenesis**, gave female digital music creators an outlet for performance and much-needed public attention. **DigitalBliss** found women who are expressing themselves in every genre of electronic-based music and taking different approaches to drum sounds, programming, melody writing, and acoustic instrument treatments. The women of electronic music are truly forming their own unique sounds using the latest and greatest digital technology.



Divasonic (photo by Craig Morse)

The festival presented nine artists at a brand new night club in San Francisco called The Blue Cube on November 13th, 2004. Playing to a full house, **Blevin Blectum**, **Aggiflex** and **Suspect Seen** all used laptops to showcase their dark IDM, experimental and abstract songs. The software of choice for the laptop producers was **Ableton Live** - the most cutting-edge live performance tool for building electronic music sets. **Aggiflex** used the programming language **Supercollider** to come up with new glitch noises. DigitalBliss also showcased live electronic bands. **Rena Jones**, **Divasonic** (aka Lynda Arnold and **Safar Bake**), **Artemis** and **Lila's Medicine** are combining their gifts for melody, songwriting and acoustic instruments with their ability to produce, program and arrange digitally. Rena produces ethno-electronic beats and soundscapes and performs on vocals, cello and violin with her two percussionists. Divasonic performs her eclectic house and downtempo on piano, flute, vocals and effects with co-producer, Safar, on all hardware (Roland 505 and 808, Clavia Nord) and recreates her songs live by re-programming parts from studio sessions. Artemis performs her symphonic trip-hop with a full band, extracting all the parts out of the studio sessions and putting the responsibility on the string, percussion and keyboard players while using Logic, Absynth and FM7. Lila's Medicine uses **Ableton Live** to play sequenced tracks and effect vocals in real-time while **Laura** showcases her unique voice and solid keyboard playing. We're focusing on the technical, but the music itself is fresh, tasteful and represents the future of electronic music.



Audio Angel (Lynda Arnold, photo)

electronic music community.

Estrogenesis had incredible support from the electronic music community, with a big turnout and support from sponsors **Ableton**, **Propellerhead**, **Native Instruments**, **Digidesign**, **Baffert's Gin** and **Ex'pression College for the Digital Arts**. Colleagues, friends and family of **DigitalBliss** created an ultra-hip, supportive atmosphere. Live video projections and visual art on both floors from some of the best women visual artists in the community at the moment added the icing on the cake.

It's obvious that more 'intelligent' women need to be brought into the limelight in the music industry. When it comes to electronic music and digital technology, support from a broader community is crucial. Women producers get excited by the latest new software, hardware, sounds, cutting-edge albums and are obsessed computer nerds, spending hours in front of the computer to come up with their own creations.

DigitalBliss' mission for **Estrogenesis** is to create a larger awareness for women in the

DIGITAL BLISS CHATS WITH CDM

PK: *Electronic music projects this image of being male-dominated. Obviously, you have a festival that demonstrates otherwise, but why do you think people get that impression? Do the guys still outnumber women?*

Yes, guys do outnumber women when it comes to technology in general. It's an age-old question that I think really needs to be looked at on a larger social scale than just the music industry. However the tides are turning and with newer technology, electronic music has become more accessible to the average person, and in turn many women have gotten their chance to stake a claim in music on a more in-depth level.

PK: *What do you think are obstacles to women getting involved with electronic music, and getting recognition?*



Lila's Medicine (Craig Morse, photo)

I think with all people first getting into electronic music there is a huge learning curve that scares a lot of people away or keeps them at a level of being just a hobbyist. I am not sure if there any more obstacles for women then there are for men except that most men have other male friends to geek out with where there is not that kind of community support for most women. Traditionally women often are singers and don't have the desire to dive further into technology. Estrogenesis showcased women who not only were writing electronic music but also sing, play instruments and are constantly honing their craft on many levels.

Where do you see this area going in the future? How would you like to see electronic music change, in terms of the technology? The community?

As more and more software is being made to make it easier and more accessible, we feel there will be a huge shift in the demographics of people making electronic music. Not only women but also people of color and different ethnicities will be involved on a greater scale.

We find this very exciting because we feel there will be a greater diversity of styles of electronic music. We do feel that promoters need to embrace live electronic music though and not focus on just DJ's. Many live electronic acts can dish out the same energy as a DJ and keep people shaking all night long.

That sounds like another topic for us to cover -- the DJ-musician gap. You're both presenters as well as musicians. Did doing this festival have an impact on you artistically in your own work?

Rena Jones (photo by Craig Morse)

Luckily, we both planned for months to make this event run as smoothly as possible. We both felt that if we were



Artemis (photo by Craig Morse)

2 much ACID

Hey there- Yes, my little brother Grant Passmore did write some 90s tracker programs but the ACID 1 ...
Posted by: jackiepassmore [2005-11-25 17:34:30]

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Blevin Blectum (Lynda Arnold, photo)

going to do something like this, we wanted to do it properly. Most live electronic acts are shoved in a DJ booth with an RCA cable to hook their piles of gear into the system. Lynda and I spent months finding the right sound engineers and our lovely stage manager Joni. Between the five sound engineers, stage manager and a crew of about 20 people helping we were more than relaxed to do our performance and were able to slip into a great set. A large goal for DigitalBliss is to also create a larger community support for live electronic music. Often many events put incredible talent in the worst sound nightmare you can imagine, no monitors, feedback hell and it goes on and on. The Bay Area is a thriving electronic music community with hundreds of producers making electronic music in every genre imaginable but no real good place for them to showcase themselves at their best. We hope that we can make an impact on the music scene in a positive way and create community not only between women but join all the hundreds of producers to join together and push the limits of what can be done with electronic music.

Great, thanks to both of you! This is really inspiring to me both as someone who teaches music and produces events, certainly, and readers out there who want to comment on any of these issues, please do as we'll keep this discussion going! Hope to see you all in San Francisco! -Peter

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