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RJD2's psychedelic adventure

This was never meant to happen. According to dance music lore, hip-hop alchemist RJD2 is all about sample-based instrumentals.

But with new album *The Third Hand*, he's made a psychedelic pop record that has more shades of Beck than DJ Shadow, to whom he's often compared.

For RJD2, born Ramble John Krohn, the development of his sound was more of a natural progression than a conscious shift in approach.

"To anyone who's listened to all my solo records, *The Third Hand*'s not going to come completely out of left field," he says. "The biggest change is that my first album, *Dead Ringer*, was 95 per cent samples and this record is all live except for the drums, which are all done on a sampler."

If the revision in the way in which the Ohio native creates music has been organic, the move away from relying on samples gives him the added bonus of not having to worry about being prosecuted.

"It was just Lego"

"I have been sued for using uncleared samples, so that fear proved to be very apt," he admits. "When I started making records in the late 90s with all these New York independent labels, it was just a different climate. Nobody was clearing samples as nobody was expecting to have a big hit with one of their records."

"And it became so tedious working with samples. I could more clearly accomplish what I wanted to do sound-wise by having a studio and using instruments."

Krohn finds it difficult to enjoy his own music after he finishes working on a song.

"When you make a record, it's very hard not to hear songs as just the sum of their parts," he says. "It's like building something from Lego."

"When you buy it, you just see all the little parts. And once you build it, it's impossible to look at it without remembering it was just Lego."

But it's videogames, not Lego, that are an enduring influence on RJD2. "I played a lot of videogames as a kid and I think it was one of the best things I ever did," he says.

Remixer of choice

"Games can challenge you from a problem-solving perspective and can force you to use logic and reason. All of that applies to making music."

In between making music and playing videogames (current favourite *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*), RJD2 has made a name for himself as the credible artist's remixer of choice. He has remixed songs for bands as diverse as *The Polyphonic Spree*, *Elbow* and *Massive Attack*.

But next up is a three-month live tour across the US, followed by UK dates in the summer. "I'm going to take the plunge and have a band," he says. "It'll be strange singing live for the first time but I'm excited."

Not that Krohn has any particular inhibitions about performing. He grew up in an artistic household in which his mum was a dancer and his father a mime artist. For the young RJ "it just made being an artist normal".

"I didn't have any reason to rebel," he says. "If I was going to rebel, I'd have become a lawyer."

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