

Album review

Daft Punk Random Access Memories



★★★★★

It hasn't been hard for both listeners and critics to interpret *Random Access Memories* as a stand against the state of modern music. With its five year gestation period, huge budget, head-scratchingly diverse list of collaborators and – most of all – the French band's decision to ditch the electro-wizardry of the previous three albums in favour of recording real, live, veteran session players, it seemed the duo's enigmatic robot helmets were trying to communicate something. Something about the plasticity of music, perhaps, a barb in the back of the 'EDM' craze, which it arguably did more to inspire than anybody.

The epic, old-school publicity campaign did little to alter this perception, with short audio clips and behind-the-scenes studio footage teased out for months before the LP's release. When lead single *Get Lucky*, starring Pharrell Williams' voice, finally dropped there was a moment of minor euphoria. Sure this was a throwback alright, but a funky one with hip guitar playing and a chorus anyone on a dancefloor could get down to. But then there was a collective 'huh?' as everyone who ran out to buy *Random Access Memories* off the back of that – or earlier hits like *Around the World* – tucked into the full album. It sure is a curious feast, both a knowing homage to 70s disco and a vision of the future, splattered with orchestral interludes, solo piano improvs, an audio recording of the Apollo 17 space mission – and vocoders.

First, the positives: all that money was well spent – it sounds fantastic. The starring guests each leave an impressionable stamp. Over three tracks Nile Rodgers' guitar playing is as sublime and iconic as ever. The Strokes' Julian Casablancas and house producer Todd Edwards both contribute vocals (to *Instant Crush* and *Fragments of Time* respectively) which, while not outshining Pharrell's, more than hold their own in

unfamiliar climes. But other collaborations are less successful. It's not clear where composer Paul Williams' typically cinematic orchestral arrangements, nor where classical pianist Chilly Gonzales' winding solo spot fit into Daft Punk's twisted view of future disco. Worst still, wheeling out legendary pioneer Giorgio Moroder to talk about his life for the best part of nine minutes (over *Giorgio by Moroder*) may serve as an instructive history lesson, but is not likely to attract repeated listens. And so many competing vocalists mean the songs without a guest, instead left to Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo's vocodered whines, feel somehow undercooked. Perfectly produced perhaps, but lacking in robo-soul.

RAM's greatest failing is simply that it lacks any cohesive thrust, or indeed the statement it's been (perhaps unfairly) tasked with making. While it was no doubt an adventure to capture all these jarring elements, together they often add up to less than the sum of their parts, and you can't quite help wondering how such canny musical minds could end up so creatively confused. What we're left with is a strange culture clash of Daft Punk's newfound nostalgic disco aesthetic, its old futuristic house-pop ways and a whole load of other weird stuff.

But there's no denying this record is an event – a flaming car crash far too fascinating to avert your eyes from.

Rob Garratt

COMPETITION

We have five copies of *Random Access Memories* to give away. For a chance to win, answer: **What accessory are Daft Punk best known for wearing?**

- a) Anklets
- b) Helmets
- c) Capes

Enter at www.timeoutdubai.com/competitions by July 20.

The insider



We dig up the juicy rumours, new openings and hot events in Dubai's music and nightlife scene

Tune mongers, dancefloor divas and musos unite – there are some very special gigs to look forward to. First up, there's news over at the **Abu Dhabi F1**, where UK rock trio **Muse** will be bringing their brand of theatrical rock to the After-Race Concerts on Saturday November 2. They join the previously announced closing Sunday concert by **Depeche Mode**, while we've heard rumours an even bigger female pop singer will play on the Friday night. For the first time, there's also a series of Arabic acts playing on Thursday October 31, headlined by Egyptian **Amr Diab**.

And we're happy to report

that after some well-grounded speculation in last week's magazine, the first two acts to play at November's **Sandance** have been officially confirmed – and it's looking to be an absolute corker. Taking a surprising (but oh-so-on-trend)



Depeche Mode

turn into funkier flavours, both **Chic** featuring Nile Rodgers and **Jamiroquai** have been confirmed for the Friday November 15 event. And it couldn't be better timed – Rodgers may be the most in-demand guitar player in the world right now, after playing on (and co-writing) Daft Punk's *Get Lucky*, which has topped charts in more than 15 countries.

The bizarre business venture we told you about, which mixes urban beats with hairdressing is now live. Hip-hop-themed barbers **Beats and Cuts** hosted a launch party last week, DJ'd by local urban name Mr Shef Codes. Expect to see us stopping by for a short back and sides soon.

UAE alt-rock trio **Kicksound** has announced it is working on a debut album, to be released later this year. From the material we've heard already, there's plenty to be excited about – see next week's mag for more on the band.

Virgin Radio's top 15 tracks

The most requested tunes on The Kris Fade Show last week

- | | |
|---|---|
| 8 Bruno Mars
'Treasure' | 9 Justin Timberlake
'Mirrors' |
| 1 Robin Thicke ft. T.I. & Pharrell Williams
'Blurred Lines' | 10 Macklemore & Ryan Lewis ft. Ray Dalton
'Can't Hold Us' |
| 2 Miley Cyrus
'We Can't Stop' | 11 Jessie J ft. Big Sean & Dizzee Rascal
'Wild' |
| 3 Naughty Boy ft. Sam Smith
'La La La' | 12 David Guetta ft. Wiz Khalifa
'Play Hard' |
| 4 Austin Mahone
'What About Love' | 13 Rihanna ft. David Guetta
'Right Now' |
| 5 2 Chainz ft. Wiz Khalifa
'We Own It' | 14 Taylor Swift ft. Ed Sheeran
'Everything Has Changed' |
| 6 Maroon 5
'Love Somebody' | 15 Daft Punk ft. Pharrell
'Get Lucky' |



KRIS FADE SAYS...

'I can't believe Avicii has never released an album yet. He's had some of the most successful singles around the world (remember *Levels*?). Well the wait is over, he's got an album on the way. It's called *True* and will hit stores on Tuesday September 17. Tune in to hear his brand new single off the album *Wake Me Up!* which features the vocals of Aloe Blacc.' *The Kris Fade Show* airs Sun-Thru 6am-10am on Virgin Radio 104.4FM.