

## Danish Dance Music Explained and Explored

Blink, blink, blinkety blink. The huge town hall square at the centre of Copenhagen is surrounded by flickering neon. Life Insurance. Health Insurance. Tuborg, Carlsberg, Coca-Cola. Mitsubishi Motors, Canon Photocopiers. The only useful information is the time, 00:52, large and urgent in red. Sunday morning has started, so now Saturday night can begin. Here the dancefloors are always empty until 1 am.

The hippest club in the city is, or was, Klub Sputnik, held every Saturday night in a chic basement bar called U-Matic. Nobody knew it at the time, but the night I was there was to be its last. The owners mysteriously decided to close it down the next day. Such is the pace of life in Copenhagen. The dance scene is experiencing a period of rapid growth, and the only thing constant is change.

There are three main dance labels here, lots of DJs, a few raves, a handful of artists, three or four producers and one specialist record shop. Until last Saturday there was also Klub Sputnik. Henrik List, one of Sputnik's promoters, sat with me in his huge dusty decorations warehouse and, surrounded by the deformed dummies and stuffed budgies that he uses to create 'atmosphere' in his clubs, efficiently summarised the state of Danish dance.

"If there is a 'Danish' sound," he explained "I think you can separate it into two elements. It's the Soulshock and the Cutfather sound, which is the Soulpower sound - they have a style and a way of programming the drums that you can always recognise - and the Kenneth Baker sound. Kenneth has been instrumental in creating a techno scene in this city."

The music doesn't really divide quite that neatly of course, but it's a good starting point.



Cut'n Move



Soulshock, Yasmin, Cutfather and Depete



**Soulshock and Cutfather, producers.**  
**'they are to Denmark what Frankie Knuckles is to house music... sort of godfathers of hip hop.'** (DJ Delgado)

**Soulshock** and **Cutfather** are two young white DJs who have developed from world class mixers (both have placed in the top 3 at the DMC world championships) into remixers and producers. Their work includes 4 tracks on the Laitifah album, 'Nature Of A Sista', and remixes for Living Colour, De La Soul and Massive Attack. In the words of Halib, one of Copenhagen's top DJs '...they go Class A production. The sound is totally perfect.' Their label, **Soulpower**, features two Danish dance acts with major international deals: **Cut n Move** and **Yasmin**. Of the two, Cut n Move are likely to be the most familiar. Their single 'Get Serious' was recently in the top 30 of the DJ Dance 100 and is a major club hit in the States, while highly commercial Boilerhouse remixes of the follow up, 'Spread Love', are to be released in the UK shortly. Yasmin is more of a long-term project. Her unique style of breakbeat jazz is more for getting off than getting down. She is young and White, but her voice is deep and dark. Other Soulpower acts include **Youngblood**, a rapper, a mysterious hardcore artist called **Ghando**, and **Soul Trance**. Soul Trance are a street-soul collective with an album and worldwide record deal in the bag: the only thing they lack is a singer. "Singers don't hang on trees in Denmark," explained Soul Trance's **DJ Delgado**. Interested vocalists should call Soulpower on 0104531 17 17 03. Those without soul need not apply.

# Wonderful Wonderful Co







Phase 5

## Phase 5, producer. '... he's down with the Funky Buddha!' (JB Bisgaard, DJ/Journalist)

The other main soundwave in Copenhagen emanates from the offices of the city's third dance label, **Solid Productions**. Solid's sound is essentially hardcore hip hop, and their main producer is **Phase 5**. Like Soulshock and Cutfather, Phase has his roots in DJing (he used to work at U-Matic) and has developed a major-league reputation as a producer/remixer. His magnum opus is a 12 minute mastertape remix of Queen's 'Another One Bites The Dust', due for global release later this year and, in partnership with another Danish producer, **Dr Jam**, he has produced Lifer's Group, a four-track EP featuring some of America's death-row inmates. Dr Jam, meanwhile, has 4 tracks on the current Vanessa Williams LP 'The Comfort Zone', and Phase 5 has remixed the title track for release as a single. Other Solid Productions artists include **Bass and Trouble**, a strong, tight acoustic reggae band and **J-Sun**, a pro-skateboarder turned rapper from California.

J-Sun's arrival in Copenhagen signifies an interesting change in the pattern of Danish dance music. It is the country's strong DJing tradition that has carried it to its present position in the world of dance. Now there is an abundance of producers and remixers but a distinct lack of singers and rappers. While Denmark's best rapper, **Lucas**, pursues fame in the United States (his incredible first album 'Rap My World Around You' has just been released Stateside by Uptown MCA), Copenhagen's labels are having to import vocalists from overseas (J-Sun probably won't be the last) and Denmark's producers are making more and more frequent journeys abroad to produce foreign artists. Phase 5's trips to America and Soulshock & Cutfather's recent excursion to London to produce Yazz, provide cases in point. And, as Henrik List points out, "it has only just begun."



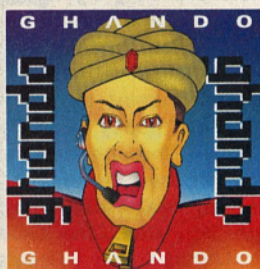
J-Sun

**BASS AND TROUBLE**



Bass and Trouble

# openhagen



MC Youngblood

## Kenneth Baker, producer and artist 'Kenneth was and still is a kind of guru for the rave movement here in Denmark.' (Martin Dodd, Mega Records)

Kenneth Baker



Soulshock & Cutfather



**Kenneth Baker** is a man of many parts. Via his 'Coma' organisation, he introduced house parties to Copenhagen in the days before they were called raves, and then went on to found a dance label, also called Coma, featuring his own act 'Dr Baker'. Coma's speciality is house music, and Kenneth's speciality is promotion. As one national radio DJ put it, "If anybody can break an underground record then he's the guy." Dr Baker enjoys success in Denmark, Germany, Italy and Spain. While the rest of Denmark goes wild about hardcore (called techno here, presumably to avoid any confusion with the kind of pornography Denmark sells so freely), Kenneth has turned his back on the style to produce more commercial music and confidently predicts that "my next single is going to be heavy metal." Henrik List, for one, believes that this is entirely possible. "I think Kenneth has the skills to develop his style away from the more frozen limits of techno," he explains. Other Coma hardcore acts include **Mental Generation** and **Overloads**, while Coma's parent company, Mega, are developing a dance act called **Wisdom n Motion**. **Kevin Ashton**

