

Gianni Abbott  
Nick Bernstein  
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## DJANK YUCCA: A Culminating Experience

DJANK YUCCA is the Culminating Experience of Gianni Abbott and Nick Bernstein, two producers from California. The CE is comprised of the DY Performance System and DY's debut EP, *LEGEND OF DJANK YUCCA*.

The DJANK YUCCA Performance System utilizes a production technique that DY has coined audio-quilting. Audio-quilting involves aspects of DJing – threading together short musical fragments into a larger, cohesive musical journey – and yet, audio-quilting involves production along with performance. Rather than focusing on producing complete tracks, DY focused on creating segments that would fit together and move the narrative forward. This catalogue of segments can be arranged in a variety of sequences in Ableton Live's session mode, all the while maintaining cohesion and momentum.

DY developed a unique four-filter crossfade system to thread the audio-quilt together seamlessly. Typically, DJs attempt to mix their tracks together using several controls. As the DJ crossfades, he often filters one track out, filters the next one in, and applies reverb to smooth the transition. On the common mixer, this event requires four different controls: crossfader, two filters, and reverb. The DY four-filter crossfader packs all of these parameters into a single control. An additional control is used to determine whether the first track is high-pass filtered out and the second is low-pass filtered in, or vice versa.

Visual production was another important part of the DY Performance System. The duo created visual accompaniment using Adobe After Effects, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Resolume Arena 4. DY first compiled original footage and stock footage, then edited and applied effects to make them more compelling and fit the DY aesthetic.

Realizing that one computer did not have enough processing power to run Ableton Live and Resolume simultaneously, DY created a unique network so the software could communicate over two computers. This closed network utilizes a Thunderbolt bridge to send midi clock and notes through the IAC Driver Bus from Ableton on one computer to Resolume on another. This kept Resolume in sync with Ableton Live, regardless of tempo, and enabled midi sequences in Live to trigger video clips in Resolume in real time. The network solved the problem of audio-dropouts, crashes, and latency. Without any strain on processing power, DY could affect visuals, the audio-quilt, and live instrumentation in real time. DY premiered this fully developed Performance System at the Lago concert series on April 17, 2015.

In addition to our performance system, the other major part of our CE was the conception and formulation of not only an EP but also our brand/artist identity. This process took heavy consideration and constant deliberation but ultimately culminated in a product that we are not only happy with, but has a definitive sound and distinct direction.

The name DJANK YUCCA essentially formed itself during a conversation one night of Fallas. A group of us were talking about yuca (aka cassava) and how delicious it is. There was debate amongst the group about whether yuca (an edible root) and yucca (a desert plant) were the same thing. With the help of Wikipedia, it was confirmed that indeed, the two were different. The one thing we did agree on though, was the appealing

nature of the phonetics of the word “yucca.” As our conversation morphed into a discussion on the aesthetics of phonetics, we arrived at the word “jank” (slang for something that is broken or shoddy). By some stroke of fate, the terms “jank” and “yucca” were somehow formulated together and the name was born; although we weren’t immediately sure it was the right name for us. We played around with a bunch of other names, often seeking out random word generators for inspiration. After spending weeks deliberating and coming up with an assortment of random names (Click Bang Boom, Beta Rainbow, Riot Sandals, Leaf Hamb, Bacon Volcano); we kept coming back to the phrase “jank yucca.” It was the one name that not only sounded phonetically pleasing, but also incorporated the right amount of ambiguity and absurdity we were looking for. We eventually decided to further exaggerate the ambiguity by adding a silent “d”; actualizing the final evolutionary form: DJANK YUCCA. With our name finally solidified, we began to delve into conceptualizing and creating our debut EP.

In creating our EP, we decided that we wanted to develop the sound and image conceptually. This required personal and collective soul searching and examining our interests and influences. We recognized that we drew influence from everything from Super Sentai (the original Japanese “Power Rangers”), to Tim and Eric’s Awesome Show Great Job! (an absurdist TV show that features bright colors, quick camera cuts and extremely obscure, deadpan humor). Although these things seemed seemingly unrelated at first, upon deeper introspection we recognized a common set of characteristics that united these seemingly disparate elements. They all shared a certain form of intensity, a sense of vividness, an underlying complexity, a veiled of ambiguity, and a strong sense of absurdity.

Ultimately, this introspection led to conversation about Jean-Michel Basquiat; a 1970s street artist from New York. We discussed the fact that his work had often been labeled as “primitive” or “primal” by critics and fans alike, and how this label was known to bother him. In thinking deeper about this topic, we decided to use our project to explore the label of “primal” as a compliment rather than a criticism. We were also heavily drawn towards Basquiat’s ability to fuse the primal/primitive with the contemporary in his aesthetics’ as well as his overt messages. It was this main quality (primal vs contemporary) that we wanted to explore in our EP and overall image.

This discussion prompted us to ponder the question, “What would primal vs. contemporary sound like in musical form?” We eventually laid out a few guidelines for what a primal vs. contemporary sound might include: heavy percussion, fast tempo, foley/found sounds, time stretching, granular synthesis and African and Polynesian polyrhythms.

In addition to thinking about the sound of primal/contemporary, we also tried to envision and implement what those themes might look like when creating our album art. We decided to incorporate a mixture of natural (forests, space, etc.) and digital imagery (circuitry, Sentai-style logo, glitch, etc) as a means for conveying this idea. Unfortunately/Fortunately, Disrupcion Records was not as much help as we would have liked them to be, thus we were forced to create our own album art and press release. Having limited knowledge and skills with Photoshop and Electronic Press Kits, we had to do a lot of learning very quickly. Although this was frustrating at first, it ultimately, gave us a more complete experience in creating and promoting an album from start to finish.

We are now planning to release the EP on June 22nd on all major distribution platforms (iTunes, Spotify, Soundcloud, etc). We will be having an EP release party at MINI Club July 2nd, and intend to go back to California and use our contacts to book a tour as soon as possible. In addition we plan to continue releasing more music and evolving the DJANK YUCCA sound and image.

Overall, we accomplished all of the goals we set out to complete: creating a live show with visuals and live instrumentation as well as catalogue of material that culminated with the release of an EP. We overcame a number of obstacles in the process (CPU bottlenecks, conceptual mental blocks, lack of artwork/press release, etc.), and overcoming those obstacles equipped and enriched us as artists as well as individuals.