

## Coldcut

### Biography

Coldcut: Jonathan More and Matt Black

Coldcut are still Ahead of Our Time...

From 1987 with their ground-breaking debut single 'Say Kids, What Time is it?' - the first sample-built record in the UK - to the development of their own video sample software, VJamm, Coldcut have blurred and challenged the rules of zentertainment - constantly ignoring boundaries and restlessly trying new techniques.

Ex-art teacher Jonathan More and computer programmer Matt Black have been a team since the mid-eighties, DJing on pirate radio stations, playing legendary clubs like Shoom. They first teamed up on then pirate Kiss, and started their 'Solid Steel' show, following the release of 'Say Kids', which opened the way for MARRS "Pump Up The Volume". In 1987, Coldcut defined the term 'remix' on Eric B and Rakim's 'Paid in Full' cutting and pasting Israeli singer Ofra Haza's vocals in a notorious reworking which became a worldwide classic. Coldcut's talent in reformulating and producing were recognized by a 'Producers Of the Year' award by the BPI in 1990. Their debut album, 'What's That Noise' went silver.

Ninja Tune was germinated during a trip to Japan where Matt and Jon made a discovery: "We found a book about cut-out-and-keep Ninjas. They build these amazing houses where they have special traps so they can disappear and reappear somewhere else. They were all about artifice and hidden identity." They wrapped up their major label involvement in 1993 with the album 'Philosophy' containing the ambient ballad 'Autumn Leaves' - a French jazz perennial, which foresaw the current 'French Connection' epitomized by Air, and the emergence of 'easy listening' as a cool thing. The next 3 years were spent slowly building the underground Ninja organization.

Ninja Tune's reputation grew through the 'Jazz Brakes' collection by the ubiquitous DJ Food, a unique, exclusively instrumental mixture of breaks, jazz licks, Latin rhythms, dub, and hip hop roots. "We invented Food as the frontman for a breakbeat series" - recalls Jon "and without realizing it we laid seeds and fertilizer for the thing which evolved into trip-hop." Coldcut gathered around them open-minded young DJs and musicians and nurtured them. The resulting innovative, laid-back, collection of artists, includes the old school London Funk Allstars, the jazz-fused hip-hop of The Herbaliser, the out-there pervbeat contortions of Funki Porcini, the slo-mo abstract beats of DJ Vadim, the Latin party vibe of Up, Bustle and Out, and more recently, the fun inspired sounds of the inimitable Mr Scruff. Also scratchappy Kid Koala, Chocolate Weasel and Ambient ambassador Mixmaster Morris.

In October 1995, Ninja Tune almost by accident started the hottest club in town. The party organized for the launch of DJ Food's 'Recipe For Disaster' at the Blue Note, London was so successful that they continued with a monthly residency: Stealth. For the first time all the Ninja DJs were playing together in the same venue. Stealth was 1996 'Club Of the Year' in NME, The Face, and Mixmag. Shortly afterwards Coldcut decided to halt Stealth at the height of its glory: "All good things must come to a trend" commented Jon.

Coldcut were still doing their legendary 'Solid Steel' show on Kiss every Saturday keeping up the traditional mixed bag and acquiring awards including a Sony Award for Specialist Show. Their 'Journeys By DJ' mix album, '70 Minutes of Madness' was released to rave reviews. Mixing with ease the Dr Who theme into Red Snapper, moving gracefully from Harold Budd to Mantronix to Photek, it was one of the albums of the year in Muzik, Mixmag and Melody Maker, and No. 1 compilation of all time in Jockey Slut, 1998.

"We mix things, over as broad a spectrum of activities as possible", describing activities at Ninja: hence Stealth, 'Solid Steel', 'Journeys By DJ', the historical and rated Pipe web site initially written by Coldcut themselves in 1995, and multimedia experiments with Rob Pepperell as Hex. "Researching the next step in DJ activities manipulating multiple sound and vision sources; creating a live synthesis between visuals and sound." Coldcut expanded the interactivity developing toys and art installation pieces. Early works

included the 'Top Banana' computer game, and a CD Plus collection, a format pioneered by Hex.

In 1996, Coldcut and Hex developed 'Generator' for the Glasgow Gallery Of Modern Art and also created 'Synopticon' for the JAM, a major exhibit at London's Barbican. Coldcut were mixing art and music together. During this period, Matt Black was pioneering the concept of VJing at diverse parties such as the legendary Telepathic Fish, Sabresonic, and The Big Chill and began to envision what became the VJamm software.

While spending the early 90's building this diverse, avant-garde collage of activities, Coldcut were maniacally preparing their own musical breakout. In and out of the studio, experimenting with sounds and visuals: it was all making sense and taking shape. In January 1997, Coldcut released their first single for 3 years, 'Atomic Moog 2000'. The CD single frustrated format definitions by including a scratch video with Hex 'Natural Rhythm', which has to be seen to be understood, and was censored on MTV Europe. Being ineligible for the UK singles chart due to the inclusion of a video on the CD format, "Atomic Moog" steamed in at No.1 in the Indie ALBUM charts, a typical Coldcut result!

In 1997 Coldcut unleashed their fourth album, 'Let Us Play' the first on their own label Ninja. A single - 'More Beats and Pieces' - a radical celebration of their 80s classic track credited with "inventing Big Beat", was released reaching 37 in the CIN singles chart. It was a stunning demonstration of their mixing skills, and an instant chemical monster (No.1 in DJ Big Beat chart), including diverse versions from Tortoise, T Power and Kid Koala. The album, reaching 34 in the CIN album chart, featured collaborations with highly political ex-Dead Kennedy Jello Biafra, legendary funk drummer Bernard Purdie, rising stars Jimpster, ambient activist Bongo, poet Salena Saliva, and - one of Coldcut's biggest inspirations - Steinski. The album came with a free CD-ROM, that featured videos of 8 tracks, related info, games, and iconoclastic musiccreation toys. Rated as the best music CD-ROM ever by many.

'Timber', the third single from 'Let Us Play', released in February 1998, a collaboration with Hex. 'Timber' is a unique audiovisual collage, not an audio or video track, but both. What you see is what you hear: in 'Timber' all sound components co-exist with their video sources... the result: an intimacy of sensory stimulation that is compelling and hypnotic. Check the chain saw solo! 'Timber' is also a protest song, campaigning for an end to industrial logging; footage for 'Timber' was made available by Greenpeace. Sleeved in recycled card 'Timber' won the MCM [French national TV] Best Video Editing award, and has received international acclaim. Since 'Timber' is primarily an audio visual piece Coldcut got four video remixes done by video cut-up originators such as EBN, who are well known for their work with U2 'ZooTV'. Though crucial to the concept of the 'Timber' single these extra videos rendered the CD formats ineligible for the singles chart. Another Typical Coldcut result: 'Timber' enters the Guinness World Book of Records for most video remixes of a single in 1999!

To promote their work live, Coldcut designed their own VJ/DJ software VJamm, allowing the live re-creation of whole audiovisual pieces. Video can now be jammed or scratched with as easily as sound, and the generally gob-smacked reactions to over 100 packed tour dates in the last 3 years has confirmed this direction. Coldcut call the show CCTV; key gigs have been Barcelona 'Sonar', Montreux Jazz festival, and Glastonbury Dance tent, all well rocked. Recently they've wowed audiences at Creamfields (in Liverpool and Belgium), Roskilde, The Queen Elizabeth Hall (as part of John Peel's Meltdown), Steve Reich's remix project launch party in New York and the Darklight Digital Film Festival in Dublin - to name but a few. Peel incidentally has been a staunch supporter and Coldcut have done 3 Peel sessions to date.

In January 1999, Coldcut released a remix album 'Let Us Replay'. Expanding the multimedia front, it came with a free CD-ROM containing a PC programme called VJamm, which loops, scratches and chops audiovisual samples. This is the same software Coldcut use for their live show and is currently kicking off Audiovisual collage as a new art form. The user of the free version gets to remix Coldcut videos at the touch of a key. Coldcut released a full version of the VJamm software via the [www.ninjatune.net](http://www.ninjatune.net) website, and then spent the year touring Australia, Europe, New York and the United Kingdom showing audiences what can be done with their DJamm and VJamm software. The American Museum of Moving Image put VJamm on permanent display in their Interactive Games Room from positive software reviews.

As the decade drew to a close, the BBC's "Tomorrows World" challenged Coldcut to create a song on the internet in under an hour. Utilising Resrocket virtual studio technology, the challenge was met by musicians jamming together in realtime in London, San Francisco, South Africa and Los Angeles. Coldcut spent the rest of the year developing audiovisual streaming for the internet via their experimental television network piratetv.net, streaming activist video information alongside new musical jams created by in-studio guests. This culminated in streaming a complete Coldcut set from the comfort of their studio spacelab in London via the net into the Young Writers Electrofringe Squigital Festival in Newcastle, Australia.

In March 2000, Coldcut were invited to join the BBC's new radio station London Live, and their new show, comprising a mixture of their own and guest mixes, is net cast every Monday night via the [www.bbc.co.uk/londonlive](http://www.bbc.co.uk/londonlive) website from 12am to 2am GMT, adding another legion of worldwide listeners.

In a crucial period that has seen hip hop, house, techno and jungle cross over to the mainstream, Coldcut are still showing the way. The revolutionary CD ROM releases have defined these as important new formats, and the release of audiovisual software like VJamm that lets people create for themselves is the way forward for the 21st century generation. The maxim "fuck dance let's art" points to their new synthesis of art and dance culture and they are currently working on new software, music and art installations.