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Automato: Automato

★★★★★ First essential hip hop album of the year?
(Labels UK, £12.99)

Sarah-Jane
Sunday March 21, 2004
[The Observer](#)

Fans of Outkast, Anti-Pop Consortium and DM & Jemini will love Brooklyn six-piece Automato's long-awaited debut. Produced by James Murphy and Tim Goldsworthy (who also produced the Rapture, LCD Soundsystem and Black Dice), it's a compelling and ambitious album that fuses the duo's trademark post-punk with early electro and widescreen hip hop. Rappers Jesse Levin and Ben Fries take turns to drop funny, razor-sharp rhymes about love, loss and growing up in the Big Apple, while the rest of the group layer intriguing loops, beats and samples with extremely funky guitars, drums and keyboards. Expect to hear it everywhere from clubs to catwalks.

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Returning mem

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automato
labelslisten to FULL tracks: my casio walk into the lightto access audio and video on collective you need [real player](#).**The DFA drag hip-hop onto the dancefloor.**

This is the tale of what happened when DFA, The Rapture's celebrated production team, sprinkled their magic upon a six strong New York hip hop crew. To call this underground hip hop would be way too simplistic. Sure the punchy wordplay and juddering beats are cleverly splattered with Moog, guitar and orchestral skits, but it's DFA's angular sensibility which wrenches this onto the dancefloor. From the booty bounce of The Let Go to the squawking single Walk Into The Light, Automato are firing the future.

Anna Chapman 08 April 04 **Automato - Automato, released 05 April 04 on Labels.**

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Automato



sample:
Hope

Automato's debut album works on two different basic levels. On one level it's as groovy as a Curtis Mayfield sperm bank, for mother's who desire designer sprogs with the funk. Automato have the ish to break your pencil tip, and what's more they could surely make people pick up their mats and dance with all 11 tracks on this completely divine record.

On a second level their eponymous debut is a geek's wet dream. Musos everywhere will thrill at the constructions, the way rhythms are infused with scratching, atmospheric pianos, funky bass, inconceivably good percussion, oddball guitar, glockenspiels, cowbells... The basis for most of the tracks are stark, organic hip-hop rhythms, layered with well thought out instrumentation and production (DFA are at the desk), and topped off by Jesse Levine's wised up pontificating about the state of the planet. Contained within are some of the most glorious slacker anthems we've heard in some time.

"Drive up to Canada just for the cannabis / I'm just about blow up like the planet is / I don't wanna die I just wanna live, I'm trying to survive I'm not a communist / I'm no socialist," he tells us on 'My Casio' before admitting he's lost all faith in politics and frankly no longer gives a flying one about anything very much at all. "I just wanna drink all night / forget life and pretend that it's all alright." There's definite intentional pathos in his disaffection, almost desperation, which he deliberately disguises with nonchalance.



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On 'Cool Boots' we get nearer to the truth when he humorously discloses: "All I ever wanted was truth, peace, harmony, and anti-gravitational boots".

The shuffling rhythms from this New York sextet sound vital, often brutal. Opener 'Focus' is edgy, with a kind of festival atmosphere to the track. It makes for compulsive listening, and contains a repetitive guitar line you don't even realise is there until the very last bar. 'The Single', too, is compulsive in a Beasties 'Check Your Head'-era kind of way, especially with its off kilter syncopation, and catchy "If it ain't soul music then it ain't my music" line . The rapper delivers the same lyrics belatedly just off the tune to make it sound faster, and, well, groovier, giving it a definite 70s funk shtick. See how it brings out the latent geek?

And 'Walk Into The Light' and 'Hope' are works of stunning ambition that punch their way out of their genre, then turn around with dukes at the ready, asking for more. As hypnotic as they are addictive, Automato will leave their peers playing ketchup for sure.

Jeremy Allen

reviewed on 21 Apr 2004

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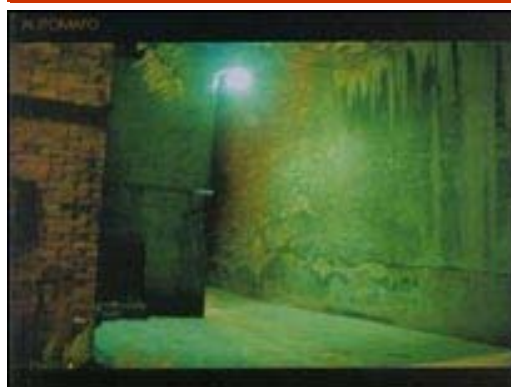
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Can five white guys from New York really be as slick as RZA, as cool as Outkast, as menacing as Dr. Dre or as politically conscious as Dead Prez? No? Well, that's not too surprising in the circumstances.

In fact, they're a very different hip hop beast. They're not 'characters', they're not 'playas' or 'gangstas' but a group who accompany their own raps, not by cuts from a DJ, but with guitar, keyboards, bass, drums and a whole range of effects courtesy of the DFA production team.

As a result, the Automato sound isn't stark or stripped down, or solely built around one hook per track. This album bursts with good tunes and groovy musicality.

And, unlike other hip hoppers I could mention, they're not prepared to give you one good musical idea when they can change tempo, style and sound anytime they like: Cool Boots

review: [Steven Long](#)
out on [Labels UK](#)

tracklist:

1. Focus
2. The Single
3. My Casio
4. Walk Into The Light
5. Gold Of Desert Kings
6. Cool Boots
7. Hollywood And Vine
8. Capes Billowing
9. The Let Go
10. How To Read A Person Like A Book
11. Hope

rating: **7/10****What do you think of this album?**

- Absolutely top
- Excellent
- Average
- Dull
- Waste of money

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fuses west-coast rock, Acid House bleeps and is one of the best rap tracks I've heard this year; Focus sounds like a collision between The Shadows and Wu-Tang; Walk Into the Light, is hip hop post-rock! You get the point.

Automato are eclectic and musically ambitious, but skilfully don't let their debut album sound like some strange, ungainly compilation album. If you like your hip hop packed with tunes and loads of stunning and smart musical moves this is the album for you. Automato are that good.

Now have your say:

Koen, Rotterdam

This is a great album, if you love music with "real" instruments and hip hop, you gotta love Automato

Sarah, Newcastle

Intelligent hip-hop with a spattering of soul. I love Automato already...

Gareth Jones, Droylsden, Manchester

Rotten Tomato I would say. Like the Shadows without Sir Cliff, all juice but no pips!

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Automato - Automato (Labels UK)

UK release date: 12 April 2004


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track listing

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Automato are a hip-hop sextet from New York. Without mention of "niggers", "bitches", or even "ho-s", Automato's refreshingly alternative take on hip-hop screams originality and intelligence.

Focus introduces their style well, but it is track two, The Single, that is the first real sign of brilliance. With powerful bass and the sound of a screaming soulful chorus, the listener is warned of Automato's excellent musicality, and a clear confidence in what they are doing. Indeed it is this song that seems odds on to be the next single off the album.

Cleansed of gangsta clichés and obscenities, they fill the vacant space with creative weirdness. Track three, My Casio is structured around a portamento bass-line that threatens to fall through even the most heavily fortified of floors.

By the time debut single [Walk Into The Light](#) is over, it is clear that Automato are loaded up to the gills with creative juice, with use of odd time signatures, complex rhythms, diverse instrumentation and originality in form. Their debut album becomes truly exciting to listen to at the realisation of such expertise.

Further variation is brought with the moody drum 'n' bass influenced Hollywood And Vine. Automato's songs ooze confidence from every note, beat and bar. That their songs are in no hurry to finish is testament to this - Automato operate on a waste not, want not policy, squeezing every last drop of creativity from their never boring songs. They're not simply going to sit back and stretch a song out of a nice chord sequence, they will take it to within an inch of its life, poke it a few times to check it's still breathing, then move onto the next song. It is precisely this that makes Automato sometimes hard to listen to, and this album is certainly not for the musically closed-minded. That said, there is never a dull moment here.

The album closes with the epic Hope, a journey through noise where the excellent production is hammered home. Automato's debut album is produced by the DFA (Tim Goldsworthy and James Murphy), renowned for their production prowess and they certainly haven't held back their skills on this album. In fact, Automato's sound is so vast that it takes something special to capture it. This perfect marriage between artist and producer is of the sort seen between [Muse](#)'s epic Absolution and Rich Costey.

Snippets of this album at times sound like Kid A / Amnesiac era [Radiohead](#). Are they the Radiohead of

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hip-hop? Quite possibly - Automato must be applauded for their imagination, skill, and cold, hard creativity. They have done hip-hop a huge favour, opening another door for it, and who knows where it will lead? A must for any music enthusiast.

- *Jamie Harper*

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Sunday, April 15, 2007

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Automato

Automato

added: **29 Mar 2004** // release date: **12 Apr 2004** // label: **Labels UK**
 reviewer: **JST**



If you're wondering where hip hop can possibly go these days without repeating the tried and tested clichés that have almost started to stagnate the scene in recent years than you should check out artists such as Sage Francis, Beans, Edan and the Anticon crew such as cLOUDDEAD, Boom Bip and the like. However, if the occasionally avant gard approach of those guys is a little too unpalatable for some tastes then Automato are here for your listening pleasure.

Merging intelligent samples and interesting rhythmical structures with a forward-thinking approach to recording (using real instruments where necessary), this NYC six piece have already started to cause a stir in certain circles before their debut album is even released. The interest is well deserved. The self titled album is a self-assured collection that flows from beginning to end and mixes funky percussion with elements of electronica and even flourishes of folk (yes, folk) with its occasional acoustic guitar layered up in the mix. Add to this the laid-back but informed vocal delivery and lyrical stylings that seem to ride the music but never dominate and you have a pretty faultless slab of progressive hip hop goodness.

With their use of a real band sound on many tracks, Automato could be accused of riding the coat tails of acts such as the Roots but the impressively broad spectrum of samples, sounds, beats and rhythms on the album keeps it from falling into easily comparable categories. The closest reference points on tracks such as the closer, 'Hope', are Warp acts such as Prefuse 73 (which is an achievement in itself) but 'Aut be viewed in a genre all its own. (How does PROG-HOP sound?)

With a few live dates in the UK on the horizon, the Automato star is definitely on the ascendant. Ta Dre.



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Automato - Automato

Review: Jack Foley

FOR many people, Brooklyn six-piece, Automato, have delivered the first genuinely essential hip-hop album of the year.

Delivering the same sort of retro-sliced, feel-good rap which made the likes of DM & Jemini and Outkast so cool, the NY outfit provide compelling evidence as to why their arrival has been so keenly anticipated.

Fusing the Big Apple's current lust for post-punk, with early electro and old-school hip-hop elements, not to mention the funk/soul style of the 70s, the rhetoric is left to Jesse Levin and Ben Fries, while the remaining members contribute layer after layer of exciting loops, enticing beats and samples featuring guitars, drums and keyboards.

The result is a hopelessly hypnotic hip-hop gem, which almost effortlessly puts the mainstream likes of Usher and N*E*R*D in the shade.

Produced by James Murphy and Tim Goldsworthy (who have also worked with The Rapture and Black Dice), *Automato* (the album) is as attitude laden as you might expect from such an urban outfit, but it shows a nice line in humour too.

The tracks take in the outfit's life in New York, as well as the usual observations on love, life and growing up - but all do it with a vibrancy that

Track listing:

1. Focus
2. The Single
3. My Casio
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10. How To Read A Person
- Book
11. Hope

is lacking in so many of the more attitude-laden, hardcore hip-hop albums.

Like DM & Jemini, this harks back to a time when hip-hop was fun, and, as a result, it's difficult not to like.

Stand-out tracks include the current single, *Walk Into The Light*, with its catchy chorus and rich instrumentation, which sort of sets the formula for what to expect from the album.

By keeping things so busy, and bringing in some well-chosen guitar riffs, bass lines, and piano loops, the track is constantly evolving, so that it never falls into a rut.

The piano, in particular, is an essential component of the album's success, being used to similarly explosive effect, on tracks such as *How To Read A Person Like A Book* and *Capes Billowing*, as the NY Dj, Blockhead, does on his debut album.

But there are also nods to the funky, Seventies-style guitar and bass of Lalo Schiffrin numbers, as well as the smooth vocal style of those Outkast boys, on the slower, sleeker *Hollywood and Vine*.

In short, this is a hip-hop masterclass to sit right up there alongside the best that the movement has to offer. Make sure you get acquainted with it.

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Anti-Gravitational Boots

Some very rough guides to living in a nation that won't share and will never be the same

by Robert Christgau

May 14th, 2004 6:00 PM

Pick Hits

AUTOMATO

Coup de Grace

A hip-hop band, only not funky like Stetsasonic and the Roots. Or then again, a rap-rock band, only not heavy like Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park. White, I assume, I'm positive about the rapper, who I met before he became an alienated teenager, and Jewish names predominate among his bandmates. The DFA production is enhancement only the music is Automato's. Less accomplished and sensational than the Rapture's, it's a lot trippier when it comes together and also when it threatens to jump the tracks, both of which happen plenty. Usually the chapstick-packing rapper figures out what to do with it, too. "All I ever wanted was truth, peace, harmony, and anti-gravitational boots," he confides, only then: "Truth is a bitch when you're living in sin." So be glad he got the boots. **A MINUS**

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO THE MUSIC OF KENYA

World Music Network import

Kenya isn't just diverse tribally, the way all African nations are diverse. Among the larger ones, only Nigeria sustains such a pronounced Christian-Islamic split, with the Muslims holding sway over pan-African Swahili and the arriviste Christians aligning with the animists their grandparents once were and also with Congolese rumba speculators come east to rake in the shillings. Traversing generational boundaries as well, this is a travelogue. But Kenya is a populous place with a prosperous history whose music has made few international inroads, and compiler-annotator Doug Paterson has ears. So here's chiming benga never heard stateside, traditional Swahili taarab and upstart Swahili rumba, distinctly Muslim hooks, rappers worthy of the name, and, best of all, really, three modern female voices on the first six tracks. The country's a mess; Daniel arap Moi saw to that. But its spirit would appear to be strong. **A MINUS**

PIPI SKID

Funny Farm

Peanuts & Corn

From secret hip-hop hot spot Winnipeg, just what the genre needs: an angry Caucasian with space and germ issues and rotting teeth he can't afford to fix. Plus, for that urban touch, a producer from Vancouver. By adding elegance and eloquence to Pipi's congested utterances and anti-American analysis: check the basslines, which are sometimes organlike, once I think bowed, and always mixed to accentuate melody: McEnroe makes the rapper seem fully socialized. No hip-hop lyric this year will get more done than "5:20 AM," which is when Pipi wakes up for his job in the nursing home. **A MINUS**

PATTI SMITH

Trampin'