

Junglism

Go cruising in a car that sounds like a powerful hi-fi on wheels and get under the skin of the mysterious, pounding dance music known as jungle.

CUTTING EDGE

Junglism is the result of a collaboration between a number of the country's most innovative multimedia companies. Produced by Zone UK, it also uses the considerable talents of Lush, Dodeca, Shoevegas and Future TV.

Here's a brief lesson if you're unfamiliar with the most innovative noise since punk. With its beats-perminute at over 150, jungle sounds like the world collapsing in on itself. It's the sound of dangerous neonscorched streets after midnight; of the inner city spewing concrete disaffection from its bedsits; of the oppressed and the marginalised making sense of their world. In terms of style, it is a scattershot collision of drum and bass that bangs heavily over the top of traditional soul-based dance music. It should be loud, aggressive and hypnotic. It is not music for your parents.

The critical acclaim jungle has received since its initial volcanic burst a couple of years ago has done several things. On the one hand it has led to acceptance into the mainstream of culture, such as the chart success of acts like Goldie and Baby D, and the well-recognised use of a sanitised version of its form in television commercials, for instance the recent 'Touch and Fresh' advert. On the other hand it has forced the genre to move on, re-invent itself and push ever closer to the edges of what we consider to be music. For something that remains largely an underground phenomenon, it's strange to see a CDROM devoted to jungle's roots and history but with Junglism that's exactly what you've got.

Upon loading you are greeted by a smiling, fasttalking MC and dumped into the driving seat of a jungle version of James Bond's Aston Martin. You select a track from the on-board virtual car stereo, let the pedal hit the metal and drive. And what a drive it is. You glide coolly through a stunning virtual city landscape where the neon flashes harshly onto your windscreen and the office blocks blur in unison with the unsettling beats of the music. It's Saturday night, you're completely in control and you've never felt better in your life. The makers have clearly done their research.

Rather than merely being all vibed up with nowhere to go, however, you must search out signs of the jungle sub-culture -places to visit, people to see. You take a left, pull up at a record shop and step inside for a while. Here you'll find detailed information on the jungle scene - flyers for gigs, a magazine, artist biographies and a selection of white

label records like X-Celle's 'Why' and Medicine Man's 'Scream In the Jungle' to be spun on the virtual turntable. It's a little unresponsive but involving nonetheless.

Who are these people that make this inspired racket? You need to find them and fast. You jump back in the car and head for a block of flats on the other side of town. Here you'll find scratchy video footage of jungle artists describing how and why they make their music, develop an affinity with their motivation and go even deeper into the scene. Now it's getting late and you're ready for the real thing. You head straight for the club, flash your pass at the door and enter the place where jungle truly makes sense. Here you'll see video footage of jungle in action, a sweaty mass of juddering bodies brought together in mutual celebration of the drum and the bass. You retire, exhausted; it's been one hell of an evening.

Where Junglism succeeds is in its originality and its street-level approach to the subject. It has obviously been made by fans of the music. Too often, though, the nature of this cruise leads to unpredictability and you find yourself driving down the same streets twice, searching desperately for a destination among the flashy graphics. Moreover, because of the evershifting nature of the beast, the music that appears on this CD-ROM is already outdated. For this reason Junglism can only be recommended if you wish to brush up on your knowledge of seminal moments in British subculture - it's not worthwhile if you're already converted.

Gil Gillespie

Price: £24.99. Out: now. Requires: LCII or better, 4Mb of free RAM, System 7; 13-inch, 256-colour monitor, double-speed CD-ROM drive.

Contact: CD Vision on 0181 503 0589.

MACformat Rating 74%