

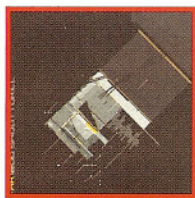
★★★★  
CLASSIC

★★★★  
IMPRESSIVE

★★★  
SOLID

★★  
FORGETTABLE

★  
AVOID



**AK1200**  
**Shoot to Kill**  
★★★★

**The big man leads all-American drum & bass to the Promised Land**

(Lakeshore/Run) We never let the Limeys forget that we pulled their fat out of the fire in the "Big One" (that's World War II to you, buddy). Similarly, they rejoice and coddle us with the fact that drum & bass first walked the earth over on their "Isle of Enchantment." So be it. As one of the only Americans in the scene who's feared and respected abroad, AK1200 has chosen to collaborate with UK jungle legend Rob Playford (Moving Shadows, Goldie) on his first artist album. *Shoot to Kill* veers wildly about the various flanks of drum & bass. Hip-hop beats and jazzy vibes chill happily alongside head-banging peak-time rave-ups. The breaks and hooks are masterful, psychedelically brilliant even. Inventive walls of synth and sampler noodlings set the album apart from the average rabid drum & bass wolf pack while lending it a certain Miami flavor. "Dawn Raid" and "Seared Rare" have a reflectively sweet, almost sentimental vibe. "Fake" (featuring the heavenly voice of Terra Deval) is one hell of a vocal charge, and Last Emperor rapping on about Klingon warships on "Contact" is a must for any discerning purveyor of jungle vinyl.

No other genre in electronic music has more often been declared dead only to rise again as jungle. With this LP as a battle plan, AK1200 is spearheading the charge to the top of the big sonic mountain from decidedly colonist shores. God help the Queen.

**Mark von Pfeiffer**



**Aspects of Physics**  
**Systems of Social Recalibration**  
★★★

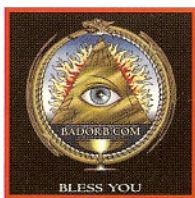
**A span of music equal parts Autechre, Gang of Four and Commodore 64**

(Imputor?) Rattling software drums and gentle, spacious guitar strums open *Systems of Social Recalibration*, the debut of San Diego, California's Aspects of Physics. The quiet storm of that opener, "Pulse Width," proves to be as duplicitous as we are, and then it's launched into the head-spinning "Level 4.2," which at 17 minutes could comprise an EP of its own. Several well-chosen synth chords evolve achingly slowly and eventually collapse in a heap of fuzzy digital processing that evokes both Stockhausen and Autechre. "Level 4.2" is maximized minimalism that encourages the listener to don the headphones and philosophize out.

Aspects' leader Jason Soares and cohorts feel no compunction to stick to genre rules, so they may attack with Commodore 64 sound chips, massive synth-and-guitar sweeps or a robot voice intoning the weather at any given time. Each track is organized by a few key melodic ideas that are allowed to spin slowly out of control, subverted by dissonant elements that drift in and out of the track. It's so subtle that it seems garish when "s.id" begins with discordant bleeps, but it's more an eye-opening interlude than a song.

Aspects of Physics emerged from the same San Diego post-rock/electronic punk scene that spawned The Locust and Lesser, and they wear punk politics literally on their sleeve. *Systems of Social Recalibration* supplements its thought-provoking music with a booklet of essays, blurbs and set of shout-outs that reveal Aspects as a kind of plugged-in Gang of Four, mixing anti-corporate ideals with *Slashdot*-style tech awareness.

**Rob Geary**



**Badorb.com**  
**Bless You**  
★★★★

**Dr. Alex Paterson reissues collectible progressive dub-house excursions**

(Shanachie) After a decade and then some fighting one record label after another for creative control of the vision behind his excursive dub house music, the Orb's Alex Paterson has finally made peace with the record industry by starting his own label — Badorb.com. The initial premise behind Badorb.com, which launched in May 2001, was intriguing: For one month, in-the-know peeps place online orders for a featured release by one of Paterson's musical inner circle, then Badorb.com presses up exactly the number ordered and deletes the release from the catalog immediately. Instant collectible. But inevitable business goof-ups and escalating demand have pushed Paterson to initiate reissues and yes, this compilation. So, for those who missed out the first time, the double-CD *Bless You* is the best way to get a taste of Paterson's unfettered creativity.

And it is Paterson's creativity; while each release features a different artist name, Paterson is involved in most of them. Loophead's dense driving dance fuel on "Firefly" comes from him reconnecting with System 7 mates Steve Hillage and Miquette Girady. Multiverse's quixotic sample psychedelics on "Puffin' in Paradise" bear the mark of Paterson in *Pomme Fritz* mode. And while he gives brother Martin Paterson free reign on the Creatures tracks, Paterson's remixes of Creatures' "Stuffed Hostage" and "Ow Much?" along with two all-new Orb cuts blossom with the crushing progressive abstract dub power of the Orb's greatest singles, "Assassin" and "The Blue Room." And that's such a nice thing to hear — an elder electronic genius like Alex Paterson offering up great creative ideas again.

**Heath K. Hignight**



**Cage**  
**Movies for the Blind**  
★★★★

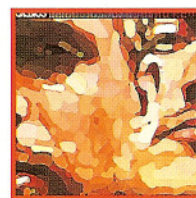
**Harrowing pulp fiction from the "horror-core" hip-hop stalwart**

(Eastern Conference) "Horror-core" hip-hop never quite measured up to expectations, but even as that sound went the way of the upteenth slasher sequel, it was the insidious Cage who kept its creative potential alive, locked up and chained to the goth-hop rhythm of 1997's "Agent Orange" or any number of hyper-violent verses kicked on last year's *Smut Peddlers* debut.

On *Movies for the Blind*, Cage finally gets the solo vehicle that he deserves, kicking the LP off with a fitting nod to Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* ("Morning Dips") and then following through with some of the most harrowing pulp fiction this side of a dollar book bin. Most striking among these "movies" is the RJD2-produced "Among the Sleep," during which Cage advances half a plot and unveils a world of hurt with four well-calibrated lines: "I picked my head up with a face full of drool/ Look around the classroom, now I'm some geek in high school/Get fucked with in the hallways, can't do shit/But write names on bullets and fill a few clips."

Production partners have always played a key role in unfurling Cage's dementia, and this time around, assistance comes in the form of Mighty Mi's elusive time-bomb ticks on "Suicidal Failure" and the devil-may-have-played strings of J-Zone's "Stoney Lodge." With an unhealthy lean toward debauchery and misogyny, cuts like these won't do your brain any literal kind of good, but expect the darker recesses of your imagination to experience a marathon of activity by the time the closing credits roll.

**Rehan Mirza**



**Cassius**  
**Au Rêve**  
★★★

**Sacre bleu! French house favorites keep it consistent**

(Astralwerks) It's been established: Cassius is indeed in the house. Their album *1999* as well as its stand-out singles like the title track and "Feeling for You" propelled the Parisian duo of Boombass and Philippe Zdar outside the scope of the French house scene and onto the path of a global magnifying glass. Three years of exposure later, the Frenchmen face the dreaded sophomore feat of following up their famed filter electro-house debut with even fresher and more sexified production. Somehow, the French make everything look so easy.

Those in touch with Cassius' sampled methods (via their alter-alias La Funk Mob or Boombass' Motorbass identity) will soak up the album's shinningly sharp synths, well-managed vocal treatments and Cassius' all-around flirty personality. Stronger tracks include "I'm a Woman" (featuring the goosebump-inducing guest vocalist Jocelyn Brown) or the tense ride driven by Wu-Tang's Ghostface Killah on "Thrilla" (the boys got their start as hip-hop heads). Fans will groove to the opening track "Hi-Water," which peaks into a psychedelic explosion, but be confused by the obnoxiously coy, endless ringing of "Telephone Love" (perhaps playing off fellow Frenchies Daft Punk's "Digital Love"). After the friend-uniting club-closer "Till We Got You and Me," the album trails off some, but it's nowhere near a disappointment. *Au Rêve* is testament to the fact that these French boys are not fried. They're a long way off from allowing anyone else to houseit the funky foundation to which they're still adding.

**Jen Boyles**