

# DJ Taye: Still Trippin'

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Daniel Bromfield

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DJ Taye's *Still Trippin'* is one of the most replayable albums from DJ Rashad's Teklife crew, and it has a lot of personality. Much of this latter factor owes to Taye's decision to rap over many of his tracks. He's far from a jaw-dropping rapper; his raps are mostly about getting stoned, and they're as showy as GRiZ pulling out a sax during a DJ set. But they're amiably boyish, and they give a human voice to the master of the machines.

Taye described *Still Trippin'* as a way to bridge the gap "between footwork and some of Chicago's rappers being the biggest rappers in the world." Indeed, with its woozy, shimmering chords and occasional Dillaesque sense of arrested momentum, it's probably the best starting point for those who heard the footwork influences on Chance the Rapper's recent tapes, like *Coloring Book* and *Merry Christmas Lil' Mama*, and wanted to learn more. But *Still Trippin'* isn't really trying to break into the mainstream, and any engagements with the chart world are in the service of its own hermetic vision.

In addition to hip hop, Taye tries his hand at drunken Brainfeeder funk ("Smokeout," aptly named) and jungle ("Need It," with DJ Manny). But he also loads the back end of the album with dyed-in-the-wool footwork tracks like the formidable DJ Paypal collabs "Pop Drop" and

“Truu.” This means the album becomes more alluringly prickly as it goes on—it seduces you with chordal haze and blunt smoke, then drops you in the middle of a scrap heap. It also means those Chance fans who fall in love with “Trippin” or “Smokeout” might hit a roadblock as the snares get sharper and the samples get louder.

*Still Trippin’* is popmusic and mostly accessible, but it’s also uncompromising. It’s not a dilution of footwork but an expansion of it, using as a baseline the music made by old-guard DJs like Rashad, RP Boo and Traxman and opening up a dialogue with the world.

In another world, this might have been footwork’s “mainstream moment,” when it stops being a niche concern and finds itself on playlists next to Hiatus Kaiyote and Kali Uchis. But footwork’s never really had a “mainstream moment”—and, most likely, never will. Footwork’s been around since the ’90s, but it only really started bubbling up out of Chicago early this decade with the *Bangs & Works* compilations on venerable British label Planet Mu. The music on those collections was often described as impenetrable, difficult, unyielding – music that challenged the way the casual listener responded to it.

Since then, it’s found a lot of raver and hipster fans and spawned a voracious fandom in Japan. But its best-known practitioners remain Chicagoan, and though some like RP Boo and DJ Clent remain purist, Teklife has embraced prettier sounds and broader influences. *Still Trippin’* is in the vein of albums like DJ Earl’s *Live Love Teklife* and DJ Paypal’s *Sold Out* that actively encourage casual listening rather than challenging it. But I suppose in a genre as weird as footwork, the best way to innovate is to go pop.