

## MUSIC

# THE KLEPTONES

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One day, you open an email to find that someone has sent you a dozen songs that look like mislabeled Flaming Lips tracks. Not having anything better to do, you load the songs into your iTunes and press play. To your surprise, 50 Cent is boasting, "We gon' party like it's yo birthday!" over the head-bouncing jubillance of "Fight Test," followed by Dead Prez proclaiming, "This is bigger than hip-hop," over the swooning, futuristic pop of "One More Robot." This is bigger than hip-hop—it's Lip-hop.

These two mash-ups are part of a full-length album created by the Kleptones, an underground U.K. music collective. The foursome—Eric, Stephen, Holly (not pictured), and Alex—have matched classic raps with *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* (the Flaming Lips' 2002 masterpiece) and, in the process, deftly created the perfect hip-hop album for iPod-toting metropolitan bohemians.

The mash-up is hardly a new phenomenon. Tracks like "A Stroke Of Genie-us" (Christina Aguilera warbling "Genie In A Bottle" over The Strokes' "Hard to Explain") and "Smells Like Booty" (the plaid-clad boys of Nirvana backing up the scantily clad ladies of Destiny's Child) have gained widespread Internet acclaim, while deejay and producer Danger Mouse found himself receiving the press of his career for *The Grey Album*—a combination of rhymes from Jay-Z's *The Black Album* paired with samples made

from The Beatles' so-called "White Album."

The Kleptones' bizarre audio experiment began when Eric purchased an instrumental copy of the Lips' album on eBay. "It had a plain cover with a Warner Brothers logo on it, so maybe someone left the company under a cloud and swiped a box on their way out," he theorizes. The idea to use the music for an album of mash-ups didn't come up until they locked down an a cappella version of Busta Rhymes' "Woo Hah (Got You All In Check)" over "Ego Tripping at the Gates of Hell." Pleased with the results, they recorded the entire album in two weeks so as not to lose momentum or motivation.

Employing rhymes from the likes of The Streets, Missy Elliott, Eric B. & Rakim, and the Beastie Boys, as well as quotes from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and comedian Bill Hicks, the Kleptones created what they have chosen to dub, *Yoshimi Battles the Hip-Hop Robots*. And somehow it seems that the Lips would approve since the esoteric, boundary-pushing trio have covered songs as disparate as Kylie Minogue's "Can't Get You Out of My Head" and Radiohead's "Knives Out," while inserting video clips of the *Late Show with David Letterman* and *Beverly Hills 90210* into their supercalifragilistic live shows.

It's unlikely, however, that *Hip-Hop Robots* will be taken on the road because the Kleptones aren't interested in making money with the album.



