

BUD MELVIN



Blending cutting-edge 8-bit music with Americana smarts, banjoist/programmer Bud Melvin is an unequivocal original, even among the sonic renegades of the Game Boy scene. Though bending Nintendo's devices to unintended ends offers an inherently technological commentary, Melvin is something more: a good, old-fashioned songwriter. Discovering that the warm, staccato bleeps of a vintage handheld--sequenced with special software--were a perfect match for high, lonesome Scruggs-style fingerpicking, the Albuquerque-based musician invented a new vocabulary for himself and the world.

Clashing the suburban nostalgia of 8-bit with the rural nostalgia of bluegrass, Melvin produces music that sounds like a clear and pure present, a droll summation of the here and now. Recalling the subversive spirit of Devo with the irony-drenched baritone of an exotica crooner, Bud Melvin is novelty music for a world that has transcended normality.

A dynamic live performer, Melvin accompanies his banjo playing with sequenced Game Boys. A favorite on the chiptunes circuit, Melvin has headlined Blip Festivals from New York to Prague, and plays regularly with the influential 8bitpeoples crew (including favorites Nullsleep and Bit Shifter). He's appeared on the DVD of Seth Gordon's acclaimed King of Kong, as well as Reformat the Planet, Paul Owens' Blipfest documentary. A compilation favorite, Melvin's mondo cheeky "Bexxlaws" was a highlight of the Rock the Plastic Like A Man, a highly unauthorized response to Beck's appropriation of 8-bit for his own remixes.

Already a veteran pedal steel player--he continues to gig with bands like the Blue Rose Ramblers and the Grave of Nobody's Darling--Melvin became even more prolific after discovering 8-bit music in 2001 via a musician's page on mp3.com. Stumbling on spoken word recordings made with Commodore 64 speech synthesis, Melvin followed links from the Finnish musician's site and found the wide world bit-jacking. Soon, he had a Game Boy and copies of Nanoloop and Little Sound Dj, and soon after that was transposing a banjo part to the Game Boy and unconsciously picking out a harmony line for it. Beginning with 2003's The Return of Bud Melvin, the songwriter has pioneered new territory. He's got a right to sing cowboy songs.

That Melvin should be the one to realize that a banjo and a Game Boy are equally mathematical should be natural. The 38-year old songwriter had digi-pulses bleeped into him at a young age, his father bringing home a sonorously pinging Pong machine when he was just five. Though it took some time, the 8-bit aesthetic entranced Melvin.

"The initial appeal was just the raw quality of the sounds," he says, "but as I got deeper into it, it's really become more about how people are utilizing things in new ways for their own creative expression." Exploring different facets of the technology, Melvin has also spent time taking pictures with a camera Nintendo manufactured for the handheld device in the early '90s. He has even recorded a disc of pedal steel/Game Boy arrangements of jazz standards, including Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" and Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade."

With a rapidly expanding discography, Melvin has recorded prolifically since his 2001 discovery, including four full-lengths (including the new Popular Music), a live EP, a soundtrack (for Paul Owens' Nightside), collaborations (with non-Game Boys, like the Atari Synthcart), and numerous compilation appearances and snark-laden covers (including his Katrina-reaction, Mountain's "Mississippi Queen"). As Melvin's experiments grow more mature, so does his songwriting, and Popular Music presents the most accessible chiptune fusion yet.

For more information, please visit <http://www.budmelvin.com>

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8 bit + Banjo, one of the best performances! - Make Magazine

He was definitely a riot and a fun listen. Entertaining for sure.
- Game Set Watch

Unique aspiring works which show his sense of pop out of the ordinary - VORC

Bud Melvin offers something different. His music is emulating the standards of finely woven pop we're programmed to enjoy but the idiosyncrasies keep us about an arm's length away, not to keep you away so much as to give you the opportunity to get closer if you want to. It is interesting to hear how close this motley assortment of instruments and their unusual juxtaposition within his songs risks bringing him close to novelty, but keeps him in a place of sheer sincerity. Its such a shame stuff like this doesn't surface more often.
- SEA-LIVING

A real hoot, super fun and creative. If you are looking for something fun and fresh, I would highly suggest getting this one. - CD Baby review



I wasn't expecting all that much but his banjo-laden songs and self-depreciative charm did much to woo me. - The New Gamer

For other stylistically left-field chip music, try Bud Melvin, who regularly overlays his Game Boy music with live banjo which, for all it's anachronism, actually works. - BoingBoing Offworld

WOW! I have to say, I didn't see this coming. Bud's one weird mother. I've seen "weird chiptune guys" before but Bud takes the cake for originality. He plays BANJO over glitchy / mathy electronic tunes, and sings semi-unhinged lyrics along with 'em. And he has a great beard. Bud didn't make the audience bounce so much as, well, trip balls. Yes, you read that right, a banjo picker over chiptunes. Yes, it's everything you imagine. - Big Lion Music

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