

Underground Resistance [UR] appear as the hardcore techno militia of a Detroit that is at odds with the music industry. Their DIY aesthetic grew out of an avoidance of the mistakes made by the prior generation—Detroit's 1st wave... Belleville Three. UR decidedly cut out middle-men; contacted distributors, retailers & DJs themselves, seeking to avoid being taken advantage of by any of the major labels. Anonymity was their strategy of choice: refusing market logics, they moved in shadows, with their faces masked behind bandanas. They saw no need to play the same game as the others.

In fact, none of it was a game to UR: Mad Mike, Jeff Mills & Robert Hood. Etched on their records & printed on record sleeves were militant messages of refusal. It was a way to instigate a response to the vile treatment of Detroit's Black communities. The city was imploding from negligence of its politicians, alongside layoffs in the automotive industry & the crack epidemic. The city was becoming apocalyptic, & UR's music became the soundtrack to this fate.

the deep listening club
lovers & lollypops

UR released music from artists beyond its founding members. Artists like Drexciya & Suburban Knight [James Pennington, a huge influence on UR] furthered UR's universe. The former created their own sonic mythos where pregnant slaves thrown overboard on transatlantic trafficking expeditions are the mothers of aquasassins [Drexciyans]: the prime movers of afro-futurist techno. The latter, Suburban Knight, develops the themes of nocturnal predators, leaning in to UR's racially motivated 'Dark Energy'.

The echoes of Public Enemy's LP Fear of a Black Planet are intentional. UR exchange hardcore hip hop for hardcore techno. The lyrics of rebellion appear mostly written or as a sample cut-out of its context. UR are faceless & don't care about the funk, or soul, unlike Public Enemy. & yet, both share a vibe of Black musical resistance. A mood that does beyond to a way of life, of overcoming the continual duress.

#7: underground resistance

2025

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UR's production techniques complement the political urgency. The sequence is hyper-quantized then destabilized with a micro-timing shift & jittered delays, such that repetition feels like controlled collapse. Low frequencies become tectonic events as sub-bass pushes speakers to their limits. Resonances make rooms vibrate like hulls. Sonic experimentation as an alternative & subcultural catalyst to a renegade event.

As time passed & the music industry seems to have caught up with UR, a strange feel has reinforced their legacies. The albums have become collectables, fetching absurd amounts on Discogs or other record fairs. The name UR [& Drexciya] has become known throughout the club scene beyond anything like an underground. UR & affiliates have put themselves on the map, & on their own terms, but the industry at large has also absorbed them into a subcultural industry that preys on the legacies of the 'GOAT'.

What does it mean to resist when capitalism usurps everything under its networks?

UR was a moment, a crew, a label that did away with Detroit's binding structures to construct an alternative to standardized, homogenous music-making. Their strategies serve as a DIY model of advancing without entering into the channel of those above, of those that want to control when & how.

As a specific form of Black resistance UR has spread out to be a global affair: the Black Atlantic becoming a site of raving, rioting & commune that infiltrates sound-systems. UR: the sounds of inhospitality.

Some of what was heard:

underground resistance.....RIOT EP

&

drexciya.....mad mike

x-101.....x-102

suburban knight.....dj rolando

aztec mystic.....aquanauts

public enemy.....scan 7

the infiltrator.....perception

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why have you done today?

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