



BIO ULTRA NATÉ

August 19, 2008 sees the release *Alchemy: G.S.T. Reloaded* double-CD/download by Baltimore-based singer, Ultra Naté. It is the follow-up—and perfect companion album—to her critically acclaimed 2007 album, *Grime, Silk & Thunder*.

Disc 1 is a set of spanking new—as well as previously unreleased—mixes from her “Grime, Silk & Thunder” album by a posse of the world’s top remixers, among them Bimbo Jones, Kenny Dope, Quentin Harris, Morgan Page, Craig C., Mood II Swing, DJ Spen, Tilkaro and DFA. The first single, just released, is the “Automatic 2008 Remixes,” released due to popular demand by DJs and fans alike. The next single/video is new promo favorite, “Twisted.”

Disc 2, marks Ultra’s first ever commercially released DJ mix compilation—“The Sugar Sessions 01”—a sah-lamming set of additional remixes from the “G.S.T.” album, mixed by DJ Ultra Naté herself.

Here follows the original, updated, *Grime, Silk & Thunder* bio.

Grime, Silk & Thunder may serve as the ideal, if intriguing, title of Ultra Naté’s new disc, but something along the lines of Resilience, Regal and Real could best describe her well-established position in pop and dance music.

Ever since Ultra released the internationally renowned deep house classic, “It’s Over Now” with the esteemed Basement Boys in 1989, which led to her equally eminent debut album, *Blue Notes in the Basement* (Warner Bros., 1991), Ultra has been a perennial force in dance music, regardless of idiomatic styles. Considering the ephemeral nature of dance/electronic music (e.g. Hot today, gone tomorrow), Naté’s endurance attests to her musical acumen. She attributes solid songwriting and being a true artist, as opposed to an anonymous voice, to her longevity. “I’m a songwriter. I’ve written about 95 percent of my material,” Naté explains. “In that music, there’s a very specific personality that comes across, which really

transcends the dance-floor moment and becomes a part of people's lives."

Ultra's music not only "transcends the dance-floor moment," it traverses various styles. Next to her instantly recognizable husky voice, her sheer versatility serves as a high trump card. On *Grime, Silk & Thunder*, she covers the waterfront of pop, club and DJ culture, ranging from glittery, anthemic, crystal ball swirling gems like "Give It All You Got," "Star," and a revisited Naté classic "Scandal" to the technosoul of the Pointer Sisters cover "Automatic" and the bouncy, electro pop ode to her new son, Izaya with "Falling" to seductive, R&B-inflected midtempo joints like "Feel Love," "This House" and an inspired makeover of her breakthrough single, "It's Over Now." Ultra admirably channels early-'80s club reggae (think Sly & Robbie's work with Grace Jones and Gwen Guthrie) on "Love's the Only Drug" (which simultaneously alludes to the legendary Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte), "Lethal Shot" and "Slow Grind" then effortlessly channels vintage Philadelphia International soul with the Teddy Pendergrass' inspired "Getaway."

With all its stylistic variety, *Grime, Silk & Thunder* proceeds like a bona fide album versus a collection of unrelated singles. Naté and longtime manager and co-producer Bill Coleman also made a conscientious decision to ensure that each song showcased Ultra's distinct and varied personalities but were state of the dancefloor. "I definitely wanted it to be a DJ-oriented record, because people are really checking for the DJ-ready songs. There's a possibility to play every track on the album in various club atmospheres or on the radio," she says.

Naté and Coleman also recruited an international cadre of A-list producers alongside some very talented newcomers. The 14-song collection features contributions from the likes of Eric Kupper, Quentin Harris, Dajae, Andre Levin (Yerba Buena), Mood II Swing, N'Dea Davenport (Brand New Heavies), Morgan Page, 2007 Grammy nominee GoodandEvil (Naty Botero), The Muthafunkas, Double Deuce, Funky Junction, Chris Willis (David Guetta) and Jens Bergmark. The legendary StoneBridge not only produced the infectious international club and Top 10 pop hit "Freak On" but also mixed the entire album. As stated before, Naté is no mere ingénue singer; she was hands-on in the production of all of the tracks, particularly the studio wizardry of her voice. "As an artist, you really want to grow. I know my musical abilities and I'm trying to expand upon them. All of these songs went through many stages of evolution," Naté.

When asked about the new disc's provocative title, Ultra again illustrates her enormous musical swath by mentioning the heroic '90s grunge band Nirvana. "The idea came from a *Rolling Stone* magazine article about Nirvana," she says. "They said *Nevermind* was a great mix of grime, silk and thunder. That's a real cool concept of what a record should really be about. In relationship to me, it had an elemental feeling, kind of like earth, wind and fire but in an edgier form."

Naté's edgy artistry at once recalls the fierceness of Grace Jones, the sensuality of Donna Summer and the riot girl soulfulness of Nona Hendryx. Adding more ammunition to Ultra, the singer, songwriter and producer, is being a DJ and record producer.

Rocking the decks for over five years at Sugar (her Friday night party at the 1722 Club in her hometown of Baltimore) Ultra has secured gigs in Australia, Montreal, Brazil, the UK (at Ministry Of Sound, no less) and France, where she drops a regular radio mix on the respected dance station, Radio FG. [More: Read the "10 Q&As With DJ Ultra Naté" on penetrationinc.com.]

On the production tip, Ultra owns Blufire (on which she releases her own records via Tommy Boy) and the Deep Sugar Music label, an imprint which is released under the Strictly Rhythm umbrella that is affiliated with her Sugar party. Releases are scheduled for singles by R&B /Dance diva Sybil ("Shining Star") and two new artists: Jada ("Beatutiful") and Lisa Mack.

The residency at Club 1722 is very close to Ultra, because Baltimore is her hometown, where she first came in contact with the club scene. While in college, she intended on pursuing a career in medicine. But one life-alternating night at Baltimore's O'Dells changed that. "I had never really been exposed to nightclub life until I went to this club. The energy was so powerful and incredible! It was just a completely overwhelming experience. I was immediately addicted," she recalls.

At O'Dells, Naté met producer Thomas Davis (who reunites here with Ultra on the song "Falling"), formerly of the Basement Boys, who were in search of various singers to accompany their house tracks. The first song Ultra recorded with them was "It's Over Now," which first spread throughout the underground deep house scene, from Baltimore to Tony Humphries in New Jersey and New York City to across the Atlantic with Norman Jay in London. The song became a global phenomenon that led to Ultra being signed to Warner Bros. in the U.K.

1991's *Blue Notes in the Basement* kicked off Naté's career as an artist who could deliver albums as opposed to a string of singles. Songs like "Deeper Love" and "Rejoicing" became instant DJ staples. Her follow-up Warner Bros. album, *One Woman's Insanity* (1994) also garnered critical praise, thanks to its club smashes, "How Long" "Joy" and "Show Me." Ultra's following two albums, *Situation Critical* (1998) and *Stranger Than Fiction* (2001) were released on the venerable Strictly Rhythm label, both of which solidified her reputation as an enduring songstress and a platinum selling artist with radio, video and club favorites such as, the now-classic "Free," "Found A Cure", "Desire", "Twisted" and "Divine Love." Contributions to films such as the cult mainstay "Party Girl" (Ultra wrote and performed its title theme) and '54' (Ultra along with Amber and Jocelyn Enriquez ushered in the soundtrack's hit single "If You Could Read My Mind") continue to endear fans around the globe.

Over the last 16 years, Ultra has had the fortune of working with an array of acclaimed and varied producers / collaborators and visual artists including such luminaries as Nellee Hooper, Masters At Work, David LaChapelle, Lenny Kravitz, Deee-lite, Murlyn Music, Blaze, Eric Johnson, Armand Van Helden, Charles Stone, Soulshock, Cutfather and Karlin, Nona Hendryx, Dah-Len, the Berman Brothers, 4 Hero, Bart Everly, Attica Blues, D-Influence, Brooklyn Funk Essentials, World Of Wonder and Robert Clivilles.

The sparkling *Grime, Silk & Thunder*, Naté's fifth album and now *Alchemy*, her sixth amount to another benchmark in that its released, in partnership with Tommy Boy Records, on her own boutique imprint, Blufire. In an era of 15-minute divas, the album is an apt and passionate portrait of a remarkable, versatile singer, songwriter, producer, who's survived the cutthroat music business by being resilient, regal and real. •

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