The Last Angel of History

Theater Two

The Last Angel of History

1995

Single-channel color video, sound, 45 minutes

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British, born 1957

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The Last Angel of History follows the quest of a man known as the Data Thief, who seeks the keys to the future. He turns to his computer as a new source of access to knowledge in the 1990s. On the screen, he finds interviews with and performance clips by many innovators, including musicians Sun Ra, George Clinton, and Derrick May; critic Kodwo Eshun; and writers Octavia Butler, Samuel R. Delany, Ishmael Reed, and Greg Tate. All offer insights into the ways they have found to overcome the stigmas of cultural displacement—initiated originally by slavery—and the underestimation of their capabilities. This gathering of talent and imagination is considered a defining exploration of Afrofuturism. 00:02

Transcript for <u>The Last Angel of History</u>

[music]

00:07
Narrator: We came across a story of a bluesman from the 1930s, a guy called Robert Johnson. Now the story goes, that Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil at a crossroads in the Deep South. He sold his soul, and in return, he was given the secret of a Black technology, a Black secret technology, that we know now to be the blues. The blues begat jazz, the blues begat soul, the blues begat hip-hop, the blues begat R&B. Now, flash forward 200 years into the future. Next figure, another hoodlum, another bad boy, scavenger, poet figure—he's called a Data Thief. 200 years into the future, the Data Thief is told a story: If you can find the crossroads, a crossroads, this crossroads, if you can make an archeological dig into this, you'll find fragments, techno-fossils. And if you can put those elements, those fragments together, you'll find the code. Crack that code, and you'll have

the keys to your future. You've got one clue and it's a phrase: Mothership Connection.

01:33
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01:39
Kodwo Eshun, Critic: The Mothership Connection, it's kind of George Clinton's obvious 1974 album in which you have an alien—you have George Clinton who's like an alien and kind of silver foil and he's kind of getting out of this spaceship. You can't work out whether he's getting out of the spaceship or getting back into the spaceship.

01:56
George Clinton, Musician: By this time, Black music—Black itself had become commercial. You know, it was hip to be Black, dance like James Brown and all of that. And rock 'n' roll had just like, faded out, you know in '69, so it was time to make a change.

02:17

Narrator: This figure is a thief—he's a Data Thief. And he's surfing the internet of Black culture, breaking into the vaults, breaking into the rooms, stealing fragments—fragments from cyber-culture, techno-culture, narrative culture.

02:46

Narrator: The Data Thief has two gadgets that's he's going to use to navigate his way through our present. A black box and a rather special pair of sunglasses.

03:01

Derrick May, Musician: G. Clinton, George Clinton, Parliament Funkadelic, funk, UnCut Funk, Da Bomb. George Clinton, I think, is a fucking maniac.

03:15

George Clinton: I was always fond of Star Trek—I was a Stark Trek freak, a sci-fi freak. So, the next record, I had to find another place that he hadn't perceived Black people to be. And that was on a spaceship. So,

I pictured him lying in there like it's a Cadillac, sliding through space, you know, chillin'. You know, having come here from the planet Sirius.

03:53
Derrick May: I went to see a concert when I was a little kid at this place called the Olympia Ballroom here in Detroit—I'll never forget it. I mean that was like—for me that was the first concert I had ever been to in my life. And I'll remember it because I'll never forget this man coming out of the top of the roof on a cable, dressed in a diaper, and big white platform boots, playing a guitar, and he called himself Starchild. And this other dude walks out of this so-called spaceship that lands onto the middle of the stage. And these guys are playing this music. When I think about it right now, I'm there.

04:30
Kodwo Eshun: The Mothership Connection is Clinton's symbol for what happens to funk when you pass it through the studio, and when it becomes kind of a

astro, or space, or it becomes extraterrestrial. The Mothership Connection is like a link—Africa is a lost continent in the past, and between Africa as an alien future.

4:57
Narrator: Roaming the internet, the Data Thief discovers a new word—Africa. Somewhere in these streets is the secret of the Mothership. The Data Thief knows that the first touch with science fiction came when Africans began playing drums to cover distance. Water carried the sound of the drums, and sound covered the distance between the Old and the New World. This was the Data Thief's first visit, his first clue. It took him back to the New World.

05:37
George Clinton, Musician: P-Funk is pure funk, okay? I mean, it's an uncut... um... undiluted—it's pure funk. No cut, no extra ingredients, no additives.

06:00
Narrator: He’s in a land of African memory. In the history vault, a woman says, “It’s after the end of the world. Don’t you know that yet?” Confused, the Data Thief returns to the future.

06:38
Sun Ra, Musician and composer: The music is different here. The vibrations are different.

06:43
Derrick May: Sun Ra. Hm, George Clinton’s mentor. Period.

06:51
Narrator: In the New World, the Data Thief finds two rooms, marked “Lee Perry Black Arc” and “Sun Ra Arkestra”.

07:00

Ishmael Reed, Novelist: You get everything with Sun Ra. You get ragtime, you cover all those periods. You get swing, get bebop, and you get—he admired John Cage, so you get some of that European avant-garde tinge to his music. It was very difficult to have a conversation with him. You know, I recall having a discussion with him during one of his rehearsals. Every time I was prepared to answer one of his long monologues, he started the band, so I'd be drowned-out.

07:26

Narrator: The Data Thief asked Sun Ra and Lee Perry for the secret of the Mothership Connection. And they said, "Our music is a mirror of the universe. We explore the future through music."

07:38

John Corbett, Critic: The Black Ark, which is Lee Perry's studio and also his label, Arkestra, which was from about 1955 on Sun Ra's band, and the

Mothership—the Mothership Connection was George Clinton's major earth tour of about 1977, are three spaceship images that these musicians are using as vehicles for this kind of subversion that I'm talking about of exploration.

08:22
Lee "Scratch" Perry, Musician: I am the firmament computer. I am the sky computer. I am the avid computer.

08:33
George Clinton: Lee Perry? I've heard the name but I'm not quite sure who that is.

08:40
John Corbett: It's interesting to look at Lee Perry in reggae, George Clinton in funk, and Sun Ra in jazz. As three figures who are working with a shared set of mythological images and icons, I think it's uncanny that they're all using space iconography, and certain tropes of madness, and extra-terrestriality, largely

independent of one another—largely without having come in contact with one another's work.

09:10
Sun Ra: [singing] I cover the earth and hold it like a ball in my hand.

[music plays]

10:00
George Clinton, Musician: You know space, for Black people, is not something new. I believe that we've been there. That we're returning to that and that the consciousness of Black people—all mankind is striving to return to where the essence of where the roots have come from. Whether somebody came in and gave us our intellect genetically by cloning us or switching on our genes to start evolving the way have, or that we are descendants from the stars.

10:44

Narrator: The Data Thief knows there's a connection between music, space, and the future. Entering a room marked, "Space Exploration", he finds the name, Bernard Harris, astronaut. He asks him, "What does Mothership Connection mean to you?"

11:05

Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., Astronaut: Well it means to me, number on in college, we used to party off this album quite a lot. But it is also a reflection of one man's vision of the future. And that is of us as human beings exploring space, but more importantly, a Black man exploring space—Black people exploring space. We're doing that now, we're going to be doing that in the future. I have always wanted to be an astronaut since I was about eight years old. I was one of those kids that was fascinated with science and science fiction. I always tout myself as one of the original Trekkies or Trekkers, or whatever they call themselves these days. So through that fantasy of imagining being in space, I started reading about it, I started

researching NASA and finding out what it was all about. And when I saw the first human beings walk on the moon, I was hooked. That was it.

12:16
Nichelle Nichols, Actress: I remember being so excited and in awe that we stepped on the moon, but coming out of it—that glorious moment—I didn't see my brother, I didn't see us there, and I decided to have a part in that. When they called me in and asked me to assist them in recruiting the first women and minority astronauts for the space shuttle program, I could not say no.

12:45
Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr.: I knew that Nichelle was involved with the early recruitment program that went on at NASA. In fact, from her efforts and a lot of folks here at Johnson Space Center's efforts, and also probably some efforts of some of the civil rights leaders that we've had in this country, we got our first three African American astronauts.

13:25

Nichelle Nichols: I walked in and I saw men and women of all colors working at every level. Scientists, administrators, secretaries, photographers, journalists, all the way down to maintenance engineers, were Black and white. I thought, “Why in the world is this not being represented for the public to see? That this NASA that I’m seeing represents all of us—it looks like Star Trek!”

14:02

[music]

14:20

Narrator: The Data Thief wanders through the ruins, the detritus, the wastelands of our late 20th century, and he comes across a little piece of stone—a fragment. Written on it is a strange phrase: The line between social reality and science fiction is an optical illusion. Puzzled, he wanders off in search of people who will confirm the strange theorem.

14:50

Juan Atkins, Musician: The guy behind me, to my right is here, is “Mad” Mike Banks from Underground Resistance, one of the pinnacle techno forces in Detroit at the very moment. We perpetuate the technological revolution through music. Music, being something that people listen to—that’s the first thing they hear if they’re going to be ready for a technological future. I think music better prepares them—technological music better prepares them for the future.

15:25
Derrick May, Musician: I think the original philosophy of the music that we were doing—Detroit techno, whatever it’s called now, however it’s been called—I think really, honestly it stems from Juan Atkins. He had an idea that he wanted to infiltrate the music industry as a Black artist, doing electronic music. At the time, there were no Black artists really doing it other than George Clinton Parliament Funkadelic age. There were a couple other people—there was George Duke, Stanley Clarke, they were experimenting with

it every now and then, but there were really no Black artists moving down that lane.

16:03

Juan Atkins: What synthesizer was to me, was the first breakthrough for electronic music. And by me frequenting the music shops and being very enthusiastic about science fiction and all things futuristic, of course the synthesizer represented the ability to make these futuristic sounds, space sounds, and UFO sounds, and implement that in the music and over the tracks because I wanted to land a UFO on top of the track.

16:36

[music]

16:53

Kodwo Eshun, Critic: The connection between the architects of Afrofuturism, between Sun Ra, and Lee Perry, and George Clinton, and between techno and jungle later on in the 80s and the 90s, is simply that

they pulled nothing in common with the common idea of Black music, which is that it belongs to the street or to the stage. They need a live music nor they—kind of muses that exists out in the urban. They're studio music, they're impossible, imaginary music. And yet, because they're imaginary, they're even more powerful because they suggest the future. They don't reflect the past. They imagine the future.

17:35
DJ Spooky, Critic/DJ: Detroit is a symbolic location in American culture because it's where the American automotive industry's heart was. It was, you know, this sort of industrial space. But once one encounters the information in the streets, which are now in decay, so now Detroit becomes a relic. It's a decaying structure at a crossroads, so to speak. Techno coming out of Detroit represents that kind of urban youths' view of change, saying, "No longer do we have this industrial kind of base. No longer do we have this kind of security. Everything is flux."

18:15

Carl Craig, Musician: I think Detroit techno started because of the type of music that Detroiters were exposed to. Because of the love the DJs in Detroit still have to this day for Kraftwerk. The Kraftwerk influence helped the sequencing and the rigidness of it. The rock, the crazy sounds of it. P-funk, the funk of it. Black Bone, the groove.

19:11

Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., Astronaut: On my first mission, as a tribute to my heritage as a Black person in this world, I flew a flag that was a combination of all the countries' flags of the continent of Africa. So I have this and my hope is that this summer, when I'm visiting Africa that I will take it around to the different countries and display this. And why? Because this is my heritage and to say that I know—I acknowledge that I know that Black people were the first astronomers and mathematicians in this world. And it seems only natural that one of their sons would come back from space and say, "Hey, look what we have accomplished together."

20:16
Kodwo Eshun: Ever since the 50s, you’ve had electronics, which summoned up the alien, the monster. In the 70s, you had disco, which summoned the idea of the clone and the robotic. By the time you get to the 80s and Derrick May, techno is now like a species jump.

20:32
Derrick May, Musician: Techno to me means, um—I think the idea for me, has always been to express man and machine. You know, intertwined. Kraftwerk—they did an album based on that philosophy of man and machine, and they called the album Man-Machine. I think to bring these two elements together and to take technology to a level of human—human instinct has always been the most important for me, you know? To make people see the human side of the technology.

21:05
[machine whirring]

21:12

Derrick May: Most people that are making this music, or trying—or attempting—to make this music, have no idea of you know, those two very simple elements. Just take the salt, take the pepper, mix it together, and what you come up with is a nice piece of soup. You know, you put some onions in there and some croutons, and you sit back, and you sip it. And it's good.

21:37

Goldie, Musician: For me, I came in really, to Breakbeat when Breakbeat music was the main you know, rebel drive. I wanted to be rebellious with music from the start. Hip hop was generated by Breakbeat and I think from the point of view I am—where I'm at, we had a European background to look at over our shoulder and we had an American dream to look at in the forefront. But I think the American dream you pursued is no longer the American dream.

22:08
[Voice: After the end of the world. Don’t you know that yet? It’s after the end of the world. Don’t you know that yet? It’s after the end of the world. Don’t you know that yet?]

22:20
Greg Tate, Writer: Well, I’ve always contended that the Black existence and science fiction are one and the same. And that’s as someone who has obviously experienced life as a Black person who has been reading science fiction since he was maybe nine or ten year-old.

22:35
[Voice: After the end of the world. Don’t you know that yet?]

22:41
Greg Tate: The form itself, the conventions of the narrative in science fiction—in terms of the way they

deal with the subject, it’s usually someone who is at odds with the apparatus of power in the society, and whose profound experience is one of cultural dislocation, alienation, estrangement.

23:09
Ishmael Reed, Novelist: We’re not believed. We’re like aliens trying to tell our experience to earthlings. People don’t believe us. You see, we live in—there’s a normal life in this country. The police don’t plant evidence, they don’t lie, you know and um, drug dealers call ahead and make appointments before they execute people. This is the upper-class, white world. You know, we try to tell them this isn’t happening in Oakland where I live. You know and they say, “Well, you’re experience is so incredible. You’re making this up and you’re paranoid.” So I think living in this country, for African Americans is a far-out experience.

23:50
[music]

24:02

Ishmael Reed: When I began to go to Europe, I'd come back and say, "Not all white people are the same." I can go to Germany, Italy, places like that, and have much more credibility. We can have much more credibility there than here. And I think one of the reasons for that is that there's a lot of denial on the part of the American-European population, do you understand me?

24:25

Kodwo Eshun, Critic: Greg Tate is the writer who argued that Black people, in American certainly, live the estrangement that science fiction writers kind of talk about. All the stories about alien abductions, all the stories about alien space ships taking subjects from one place and taking them to another, genetically transforming them—Greg is really saying that—Greg is re-casting American history in the light of science fiction and saying, "Well look, all those things that you read about alien abduction and genetic transformation, they already happened." How

much more alien do you think it gets than slavery? Than entire mass populations moved and genetically altered, entire status moved, forcibly dematerialized? It doesn't really get much more alien than that.

25:11
DJ Spooky, Critic/DJ: The first touch with sci-fi is what the slaves were using drums to communicate over the distance. So the slave owners would institute reforms that slaves were no longer allowed to play certain rhythms, if at all. And they weren't even allowed to speak their own languages, and they had to learn the slave masters' language, which is English...in Jamaica, the States, or Spanish, or Portuguese. But there was always a sense of displacement of the original "code", you know, the language. And drums with the new code—the downloaded new information—downloaded into the cortex or whatever.

25:47
Greg Tate, Writer: Most science fiction tales dramatically deal with how the individual is going to

contend with these alienated, dislocating societies and circumstances. And that pretty much sums up the mass experience of Black people within, um, post-slavery, 20th century world.

26:10
Narrator: Rumor has it that before Robert Johnson made his deal with the devil at the crossroads, he couldn't play to save his life. He sold his soul, in return he got his secret. [sound of machine gun] Our thief from the future gives up the right to belong in his time in order to come to our time to find the mothership connection. The thief becomes an angel, an angel of history. The Data Thief can visit the Old world and the New, but he cannot be a part of either. He doesn't know this is his problem. But when he makes his last trip to Africa, he will.

27:13
Kodwo Eshun: In the '50s and '60s, there was a young writer who came along called Samuel R. Delany,

and he's like a bohemian, Black, gay figure, who introduced a lot of different Black and Native Indian characters into science fiction. And his key book is Dhalgren, and that's a key book for Black science fiction because that's the first time Black characters in science fiction aren't merely protagonists, but as it were, changed the entire terms of how science fiction is written.

27:41
Samuel R. Delany, Novelist: The cities that I have in mind for the side of the dialogue that my novel Dhalgren represents, um, as I said are New York, Los Angeles, Cincinnati—I can't think of a major American city where half the city has not be in ruin. In fact, the term inner-city, which at this point is an American term, is that term for that burnt-out section of your city; where the people do not live, where the general functions of urban life go on at a very depressed rate.

28:23

Goldie, Musician: Any music which comes from inner-city, which derives from inner-city, and comes from different areas from the city, being a city which is now developed so far along the line, its multicultural status is changed. And I think that the moral freedom of it is that we have no—we want to be free with our music and we want to take from wherever we want to take from. And I think the rebelliousness before was that, "Fuck everybody else. We want to take music from wherever we want to take it, 'cause we can make something with it, which is a new rhythm to your ears, but you can't hear it."

28:53

DJ Spooky: I've heard jungle songs of classical music, jungle songs of bits and pieces of TV commercials, jungle songs of sounds of water running. You know what I mean? It's a true urban response in another sense of accelerated culture as viewed through a lens of pot and LSD, which are also ways of exploring your environment too.

29:19

Narrator: Every day, the Data Thief finds new words and phrases. Today, he finds “inner-city” and “the blues.”

29:30

Goldie: Blues came out of a Depression, without a doubt. It was singing about the situation and what was going on, and playing rhythms about those kinds of things. But it didn’t necessarily have to have too many vocals in it or a lot of vocals to say anything. The mood of that music was blue, its frame was sad, it meant a lot of different things with certain people. And I think when that music is conceived, it doesn’t really have any effect on the outside world until later on.

30:10

Ishmael Reed, Novelist: We are considered as outsiders. We are considered as people who are not part of the American experience. As a matter of fact, in the 19th century, African Americans were excluded

from Fourth of July celebrations. So there's always been this feeling in this country that we're aliens—that we don't belong here. There's always people who want us to go back to where we came from. I don't know where I would go. Maybe I'll go to Dublin because some of my ancestors are Irish or maybe I'll go to Tennessee because some of my ancestors are Cherokee. Maybe I'll go to Yorubaland because some of my ancestors are probably from West Africa. I wouldn't know where to go. There's always this mention of, "Send us back—send us back to some other place. Send us back to the planet of our origin."

30:57

Samuel R. Delany: I've often written that science fiction doesn't try to predict the future, but rather, offers a significant distortion of the present. And what I mean, I guess, is that a lot of people, when they hear the word, "science fiction," the first thing that they assume is that this is a story or a novel that's going to tell them what's going to happen sometime tomorrow or the day after. And I just don't think that's

what science fiction writers are really interested in doing. I think we sit around and we look at what we see around us, and we say, “How could the world be different?”

31:38

Octavia Butler, Novelist: Back when Ronald Reagan had just become president, people were talking about winnable nuclear wars. And I thought, “If people were falling for this kind of thing, there must be something basically wrong with the human species.” So, I thought about it and what I wound up doing really, was putting the thing that I came up with into the mouth of my main character. Um, I had—or not my main character, my aliens. I had them arrive right after a nuclear war so that I could make my point and I had them tell my character that human beings had two characteristics that didn’t work well together. One, they were intelligent, and that was good, no problem. And two, they were hierarchical. And unfortunately, the hierarchical tendencies were the older and so sometimes the intelligence was put at the service of

the hierarchical behavior.

32:45
Narrator: Isn't it strange that in the Second World War, computer technology was used to aid and abet the military-industrial complex? But by the end of our century, that technology has mutated, devolved, and diversified to such a degree, that African American musicians, young Black British musicians can use computer technology to construct a soundtrack to the end of the industrial epoch. That is strange and is something that puzzles the Data Thief.

33:27
Kodwo Eshun, Critic: Well yeah, I think it's very true that computer technology started out of the military sphere in the post-war period. By the time you get to the '80s and '90s, it's true that computer technology, cheap software, has now created what we could call an ecology. An analog or digital ecology by which you can use technology, can use synthesizers, sequences, programmers, work stations—you can

now use them as ways to create sonic worlds. Some of those sonic worlds will secede from mainstream worlds and some of it will be antagonistic towards it. The point is that uh, the root through the cybernetic, the root through the drum machine allows you much more possibility for that. The point is the explosion and the proliferation and mutation of the African-derived rhythms. So yeah, techno and Underground Resistance, uh yeah, they are warring on mediocre audio-visual programming.

34:30
Narrator: New words: sonic warfare, sonic Africa, Afrofuturism, digitized diaspora, analog ecology. He's in a land of African memory. Every entrance into these vaults brings new information of victories and defeat, dreams and catastrophes. New words: alien, slave.

35:02
Greg Tate: Well I think what sampling technology has allowed in this area of Black musical production is the creation of digitized race memory. And I think that

what sampling allows—for a generation that wasn't, that didn't have access to musical education—is a way of collapsing all eras of Black music onto a chip. You know, and being able to freely reference and cross-reference you know, all those areas of sound and all those previous generations of creators, um, kind of simultaneously.

36:04
Kodwo Eshun: Traditionally speaking, the record player was an inert object. It simply played the records. The vinyl—it was like this kind of slab of material that you played and just played the contents of it. It's only when you get to hip hop that you get the record player then you use the instrument in its own right. Then you get the vinyl, you get vinyl being selected right down to the particular Breakbeat, and then sampled, and then scratched, and then used in all kinds of different terms. And we could say that one thing that, uh, Black producers do, is that they release, what I call, the entelechy of an instrument. They release the potential energy, which lies inert in any

kind of technology.

36:55
Goldie, Musician: To remain on the cutting edge, you must have—there's a certain aggression with this music, which remains on the cutting edge. To root out a tune, to rinse it out, to make you pay attention there and then. You know, not to be melt down time and time again where it becomes something which, you know...on the cutting edge, you get it straight first off, straight in information and straight out in dance, straight out in aggression, in movement, you know?

37:29
Narrator: Africa, the Data Thief's last visit. He would like to return home, but cannot. No escaping from this time, this space. He continues collecting information, wandering the boundaries between science fiction and social reality. This is the Data Thief's new home. The zone of optical illusions.

37:57

Goldie: Technology has broken time down, ‘cause we are the future. ‘Cause the time we’re in is the future. Because in this technology we’re living in now, if I go to a little Tutsi tribe in Africa right down in some real neck back of the woods and show her this recordable instrument or show her this [hove] of mine, or show her this camera that can—I can press it and I can show her an image of her there and then. We’re then God aren’t we? We’re then some kind of like, super being. We’re like something else. Who are we? In their eyes, we are. But they’re still there, they still exist. Those people are still alive, who are out in the middle of fucking nowhere. And when you show them technology like that, it is an optical illusion because we’re always looking for the future. It’s right underneath our nose, you know? It wasn’t then, but it is now.

39:06

A guy called Gerald, Musician: Jungle describes a changing world. You know, it’s changing from

something that was more analog into something that is turning totally digital. I think jungle is using, well the rhythms anyway, rhythms that came from drums, normal drums, which had been like put through a process—digitized and manipulated digitally to create sounds unheard before, you know, really.

39:39
Goldie: I feel that's where the difference between techno jungle and I jump to techno when I'm ready to play. There's no difference. It wasn't what techno is, it's what we took from techno. It's like anything else. It's not what hip hop is, it's what we take from it. You know, stuff that Derrick May made and stuff Carl Craig made because it was—it came from somewhere. It was something in which had a better meaning to me.

40:02
Derrick May, Musician: Jungle…I hate the way—I hate the word "jungle" if you want to know the truth about it. What the fuck does jungle mean? Okay, it was called Breakbeat before, now it's called jungle. Where

does jungle come from? What is jungle? What does that mean?

40:18

A guy called Gerald: Jungle actually comes from an area in Jamaica that they call The Jungle, you know? And MCs from there, I think elaborated on that. So…it's sort of like when it came out on sound system tapes, people latched onto it and started using it as a name.

40:40

Derrick May: Gerald. Hm. Sad inside, happy face on the outside. Put all his heart and love into some big record company and they sold him out.

40:56

A guy called Gerald: Derrick May, I mean me, to me it's like he kicked me off, you know? Without listening. It is what it is. Feels surreal—all the early like, transmit stuff, I would've been lost. I was lucky to, sort of like, to hear his things on the radio and think, "Yeah, that's

like...a direction—that's where I want to go otherwise I don't know what I'd be doing now."

41:21
[music]

41:50
Goldie, Musician: Music's made us look at music through a microscope—technology has made us look through a microscope without a doubt. Um, people are saying now, "Is this the future of music?" We are the future now, we are in the future. You know blues wasn't made on a sampler so how can it be relevant to us? It was just music and rhythms. Those rhythms were never recorded on various technical equipment, so therefore we can then catch it and put it in its place in history because it's there, recorded. Done. And because of technology, being able to then take from any of those eras, time's irrelevant—completely irrelevant for that mannerism.

42:30

Juan Atkins, Musician: Well I think that information and technology is moving at breakneck speed right now. The techno music is definitely gonna be more advanced. That goes along with the way information is traveling now. I think it's unconceivable as to where we will be in the next five years, but I see just a lot of new ways of listening to music, new ways of buying music through computer networks. And techno music is definitely the sound for this environment.

43:17

Kodwo Eshun, Critic: In the 18th century, slaves like Phillis Wheatley read poetry to prove that they were human, to prove that they weren't furniture, to prove that they weren't robots, to prove that they weren't animals. In that sense, a certain idea of cybernetics has already been applied to Black subjects ever since the 18th century. I think what we get at the end of the 20th century in music technology is a point where producers kind of willingly take on the role of the cyborg—willingly take on that man-machine interface.

Just to explore that mutation that's already happened to them and to accelerate them some more. Now the question is like, kind of, cyborgs for what? Well the reason is of course, to get out of here. To get out of this time here, this space now.

[End Credits]