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At time when the dance music community is going through many changes, Fort Knox Five brings something fresh and innovative to the scene. The rousing and honest excitement of this group proves that the upswing is coming, so get ready for it.

Consisting of Steve Raskin, Sid Barcelona, JonH, Rob Myers and Steven Albert, the quintet has released three 12-inches on its own Fort Knox Recordings imprint. The members belong to a number of other overlapping projects. Raskin and Barcelona are the masterminds behind Thunderball, a funky-down-tempo project on the Eighteenth Street Lounge Music label. JonH and Raskin release music on Red Menace Records under the name JonH and Raskal. Myers plays sitar and guitar in Thunderball, and plays sitar for ESL Music heads Thievery Corporation. Albert plays drums for Thunderball and has recorded with Thievery Corporation. And

together with Thunderball vocalist Miss Johnna M., three of the Fort Knox Five members – Raskin, Myers, and Albert – are part of Liftoff, a project that recently remixed Thunderball's "Welcome Back Cooper."

Fort Knox Five is pretty eclectic. How would you describe your sound?

Steve Raskin: We've been saying beats and breaks, but again, genres themselves are part of the problem of music in a way; they start alienating. I think what we've always tried to do is blur the lines. Take elements of house that we like and put it into drum 'n' bass, take elements of soul and put it into a ska song. It's just this idea of experimentation to blur the boundaries of genres.

JonH: Which is why we invented "cross beat." Cross beat is our new anti-genre.

SR: Cross beat, cross tempo; it's a non-adjective. It's really not a description, it just says that it crosses tempos, and that's really what we do. We do songs that are hip-hop tempo, breakbeat, we do drum 'n' bass. We'll do whatever is necessary to capture the idea of the song.

JH: The only thing that is necessary for everything is breakbeat, whether it's breakbeat slow or breakbeat fast. When we DJ now, we try to be very eclectic with the whole cross beat thing. We'll play new and old stuff that has got that funk, got that flavor.

SR: We've been saying funk and soul in the feeling sense, not in the terms or genre. It's got to be funky. Jon and I were just in Germany and this kid came up and asked what it is we called, our music...

JH: It happens to us all the time, any time we play: "What kind of music is this, where can I find this, what is it under?"

SR: Funky. It's not under anything; it's funky.

JH: There's a lot of new stuff coming out in Europe that [uses] live instrumentation. I think that's the next generation of electronic music; that's where you get the funk feeling. You can't get the funk feeling playing with a computer all day long. You get that with a live guitar player, a drummer, and various samples. We all use computers to make this music -- it's very important -- but the fact of the matter

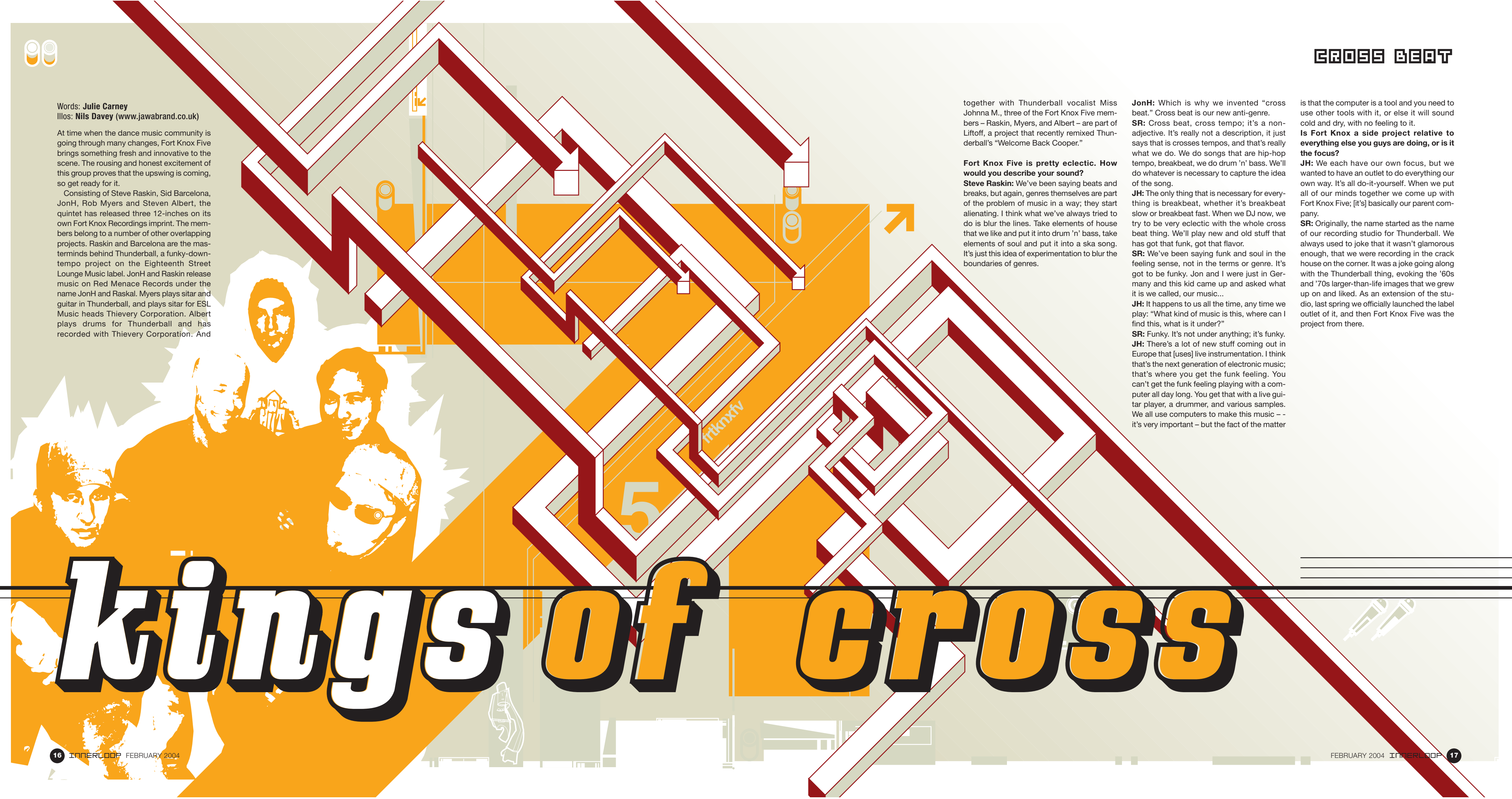
CROSS BEAT

is that the computer is a tool and you need to use other tools with it, or else it will sound cold and dry, with no feeling to it.

Is Fort Knox a side project relative to everything else you guys are doing, or is it the focus?

JH: We each have our own focus, but we wanted to have an outlet to do everything our own way. It's all do-it-yourself. When we put all of our minds together we come up with Fort Knox Five; [it's] basically our parent company.

SR: Originally, the name started as the name of our recording studio for Thunderball. We always used to joke that it wasn't glamorous enough, that we were recording in the crack house on the corner. It was a joke going along with the Thunderball thing, evoking the '60s and '70s larger-than-life images that we grew up on and liked. As an extension of the studio, last spring we officially launched the label outlet of it, and then Fort Knox Five was the project from there.



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