

DAFT PUNK

In similar company with new-school French progressive dance artists such as Motorbass, Air, Cassius, and Dimitri from Paris, Parisian duo Daft Punk quickly rose to acclaim by adapting a love for first-wave acid house and techno to their younger roots in pop, indie rock, and hip-hop. The combined talents of DJs Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Thomas Bangalter, the pair's first projects together included Darling, a voiceless indie cover band; their current recording name derives from a review in U.K. music weekly Melody Maker of a compilation tape Darling were featured on, released by Krautrock revivalists Stereolab (their lo-fi D.I.Y. cover of a Beach Boys song was derided as "daft punk"). Subsequently ditching the almost inevitable creative cul-de-sac of rock for the more appealing rush of the dancefloor, the pair released their debut single, "The New Wave," in 1993 on the celebrated Soma label. Instantly hailed by the dance music press as the work of a new breed of house innovators, the single was followed by "Da Funk," the band's first true hit (the record sold 30,000 copies worldwide and saw thorough rinsings by everyone from Kris Needs to the Chemical Brothers).

Although the group had only released a trio of singles ("The New Wave" and "Da Funk," as well as the 1996 limited pressing of "Musique"), in early 1996 Daft Punk were the subject of a minor bidding war. The group eventually signed with Virgin, with their first long-player, Homework, appearing early the following year (a brief preview of the album, "Musique," was also featured on the Virgin compilation Wipeout XL next to tracks from Photek, Future Sound of London, the Chemical Brothers, and Source Direct). As with the earlier singles, the group's sound is a brazen, dancefloor-oriented blend of progressive house, funk, electro, and techno, with sprinklings of hip-hop-styled breakbeats and excessive, crowd-firing samples, similar to other anthemic dance-fusion acts such as the Chemical Brothers and Monkey Mafia. In addition to his role in Daft Punk, Bangalter operates the Roule label and has recorded under his own name (the underground smash "Trax on da Rocks") as well as Stardust (the huge club/commercial hit "Music Sounds Better with You"). After four long years of eagerly awaiting a follow-up to their brilliant debut, Daft Punk finally issued Discovery in March 2001. The live record Alive 1997 followed near the end of the year, and a by now predictable four-year wait preceded the release of Human After All in early 2005. One year later, the duo released a compilation, Musique, Vol. 1: 1993-2005, and in 2007 their second live record, Alive 2007.

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