

MEANRUSE

By Jimmy Ether

Photos by Dazy Lenz



Zamir Stills is an Atlanta producer who's been making upbeat techno for a few years now. But recently, he's ventured into hip-hop under the moniker **MEANRUSE**. The debut EP, *Character*, is a very strong volley. His vocal delivery is reminiscent of the smooth precision of Zeroh or Mickey Factz. The lyrics are full of wordplay and double meaning. And there is a sonic consistency throughout the five tracks, with each building upon the previous song.

Record Plug Magazine: How did the **MEANRUSE** concept develop?

MEANRUSE: I've kind of always wanted to make a rap record. I've been telling my friends about it. "I'm gonna make it, I'm gonna make it!" And they're like, "Well, you actually gotta make it, dude." So, I finally did it. I'd already built up this Zamir image. And it thrives a lot on like very colorful, upbeat, electro-pop sort of songs. For a rap record, I wanted to do something experimental and dark. Sort of another persona. Another character. So that's **MEANRUSE**.

RPM: Is this your first attempt at

rapping in general? If so, I gotta tell you, this is strong for this being your first release.

MEANRUSE: Thank you very much. When I was in high school, I delved into rapping a little bit. But it did not sound good at all. I don't even think I kept any of it. If I were to listen back now, my soul might jump out of my body.

RPM: You were probably trying to mimic things that you liked at the time.

MEANRUSE: 100%. Yeah. A lot of what I heard on the radio, and I was also kind of going through sort of an identity crisis in general. Trying to be something that I wasn't. It didn't come off as genuine. The lyrics were not stuff that related to me at all as a 13-year-old, rapping about cars and clothes that I definitely could not buy.

RPM: Well, lyrically, this is not typical of a first release. I know you're into Tyler the Creator, and stuff like that. But where are these lyrics coming from?

MEANRUSE: I actually have always liked poetry and literature. I would put together

a collection of people that I would study. Asking, "Why does this appeal to me?" It could be anything, not only lyrics. But cadence, energy, and stuff like that. I pull from Beastie Boys, Gangsta Boo, and Three 6 Mafia. And then with lyrical stuff, I go MF DOOM, Rakim, Q-Tip, and stuff like that.

RPM: You are saying all the right words.

MEANRUSE: There we go. Good taste. I knew I sent it to the right people.

RPM: Yeah, the wordplay from MF DOOM. The Beastie Boys humor. I hear it. Are you making your own beats?

MEANRUSE: Yes, I do. All the production on there is me. And going forward it's likely going to be like that. If I get enough support, I could see doing some collaborations. But for right now I'm going to focus on doing it myself. No one's gonna be able to make a beat for me better than me.

RPM: Right. You gotta establish your track record first. That's wise. Are you doing any sampling at all?

It sounded like you're recording your own piano progressions and working off of that.

MEANRUSE: Technique-wise, it is sampling. But like, for example, the "Uncle Dennis" and "Atlas" tracks are loops that I had made five years ago. But everything else is synthesized by yours truly.

RPM: Are you gonna be touring around with any of this?

MEANRUSE: I would love to. I did a performance in Athens for a student-run late-night show. And that was a lot of fun. That was the first time I'd ever performed any of these songs live. And I did an event at a bar in Atlanta called Joystick. But I have plans to play out a lot more.

RPM: Well, I hope to see you opening at 529 and some of the other Atlanta spots that do hip-hop shows. They'd be smart to give you some consideration opening for some national acts.

DIVINING ROD

ROSE HOTEL *The House That We Knew*

LABEL Cold Lunch Recordings

Five tracks, 14 minutes, released 02/24/23 | EP

After the charming debut full-length *I Will Only Come When It's a Yes* that channels Francoise Hardy and all-things Dean Wareham, Jordan Reynolds returns with this EP that's occasionally devastating, always sublime, its beauty disrupted by electronic blips and wrinkles. Her vocals have never sounded so assured, the centerpiece of windswept production that gives Reynolds the space to find melodies in her poetry.

Fondly reminds us of: Tara Jane O'Neil, Dean & Britta, Jessica Pratt

Produced by Jordan Reynolds and Graham Tavel | Engineered and mixed by Graham Tavel | Mastered by Jesse Mangum

Jordan Reynolds *vocals/guitar*, Breshon Martzall *additional vocals*, Chris Childs *piano*, M. Rich Ruth *additional guitar*, Macie Stewart *violin*, Lia Kohl *cello*

MEANRUSE *Character*

LABEL Self release

Five tracks, 17 minutes, released 03/01/23 | EP

Character is the hip hop debut of techno producer Zamir Stills, who takes on the anti-hero persona of MEANRUSE. The moody and atmospheric beats sound like they are pulled from a Björk record. It's a pleasing contradiction to the frenetic precision of the vocal barrage. The lyrics are laser focused and inspired by quirky greats like MF DOOM and André 3000. *Character* starts strong and gets progressively stronger, coming off as more of a singular statement than a collection of songs.

Fondly reminds us of: Zeroh, Blu, Mickey Factz, Tyler The Creator

Engineered, produced, mixed, and mastered by Zamir Stills

GEL *Only Constant*

LABEL Convulse Records

Ten tracks, 16 minutes, released 03/31/2023 | full length

Setting fire to everything in sight, Gel takes a no-holds-barred approach. Heavy noise rock and hardcore vocals coalesce. Female-led bands are stepping to the forefront of today's heavy music scene, and this is a prime example of what's to come. Casting forth one banger after another, *Only Constant* is perfectly titled.

Fondly reminds us of: Drain, Initiate, Incendiary

Produced by Trish Quigley at Landmine Studios | Mixed by Zach Miller | Mastered by Will Killingsworth at Dead Air Studios

Sami Kaiser *vocals*, Anthony Webster *guitar*, Maddi Nave *guitar*, Bobko *bass*, Zach Miller *drums*

WORLDS WORST *Worlds Worst*

LABEL Smoking Room/Julia's War Recordings

Ten tracks, 30 minutes, released 03/31/2023 | full length

Worlds Worst maintains the band's shoegaze-like musical quality while bursting into your eardrums with unsettled energy reminiscent of a 90s emo/punk classic. The band's most recent album exudes a tense, sad energy that fuzzes through each song and hits you with some of the band's catchy hooks to date. Each and every note is meticulously arranged together as if their lives depend on it.

Fondly reminds us of: The Promise Ring, Braid, Small Reactions

All songs written and recorded by Worlds Worst | Mixed and mastered by Corey Coffman

Jake Phillips *vocals*, Zach Mayo *guitar*, Andrew Aronson *bass*, Max Schoenfeld *drums*

DEERHOOF *Miracle-Level*

LABEL Joyful Noise

Eleven tracks, 35 minutes, released 03/31/23 | full length

Always reinventing the wheel, Deerhoof kicks off *Miracle-Level* in Japanese. And then they stay with it through the whole album. But this album has everything else too – all genres are on the menu. For those who don't know, if you travel with the soundwaves of Deerhoof you get everything, all together at one time: melody, angst, chaos, control, complex rhythms and soothing tempos. Describing one of their albums is difficult at best but Deerhoof is a treasure.

Fondly reminds us of: Creedle, Urge Overkill, Heavy Vegetable

Produced, recorded and mixed by Mike Bradavski at No Fun Studios in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Satomi Matsuzaki *bass/vocals*, Ed Rodriguez *guitar*, John Dieterich *guitar*, Greg Saunier *drums*

SPACED *Boomerang / Cycle Killer*

LABEL New Morality

Two tracks, 4 minutes, released 04/07/2023

Spaced kicks out a consistent barrage of far-out, noisy hardcore tracks that are filled with rage and poignancy. Lexi's voice in fierce, and heads will bobble when the grooves kick in. This latest collection of songs delivers a quick one-two punch right to the face. The only problem with such a quick KO is lacking enough time to enjoy the fight. Luckily, with music, you can always start again at the beginning and re-enter the ring.

Fondly reminds us of: Jive Bomb, Buggin, Anklebiter

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Davis Maxwell

Lexi Reyngoudt *vocals*, Joe Morganti *guitar*, Donny Arthur *guitar*, John Vaughn *bass*, Dan McCormick *drums*

SCOWL *Psychic Dance Routine*

LABEL Flatspot Records

Five tracks, 10 minutes, released 04/19/2023

Scowl's latest EP masterfully combines elements of riot girl, indie rock, punk, and hardcore. With only five songs to play with, the band showcases their adept understanding of how influences can meld together to create something truly their own.

Fondly reminds us of: Drug Church, Military Gun, Nirvana

Recorded and Produced by Will Yip at Studio 4

Kat Moss *vocals*, Malachi Greene *guitar*, Mikey Bifolco *guitar*, Bailey Lupo *bass*, Cole Gilbert *drums*

BELL WITCH *Future's Shadow Part 1: The Clandestine Gate*

LABEL Profound Lore

One track, 83 minutes, released 04/21/23 | full length

Future's Shadow Part 1: The Clandestine Gate is a story, a film score, a long journey. And you have to commit at the beginning to see it through. This is now becoming a viable, accepted way to compose songs that simply couldn't be recorded and released previously on vinyl or even CD (with a maximum of 74 minutes) without interruption. Will we one day see a six hour composition? But as presented, *Future's Shadow Part 1: The Clandestine Gate* provides the slowest burn possible. Doom metal is the raw ingredients but the final composition is tribal, orchestral, haunting and really, really long.

Fondly reminds us of: Yob, landcape north of the Arctic circle, Sleep

Engineered by Billy Anderson at Avast Recording Studios | Mixed by Billy Anderson at Flora | Mastered by Justin Weis at Traxworx

Dylan Desmond *bass/vocals*, Jesse Shreibman *drums/vocals*

WASHER *Improved Means To Deteriorated Ends*

LABEL Exploding In Sound

Fifteen tracks, 35 minutes, released 04/28/23 | full length

This duo's songwriting charm takes a minute or two to grow on you but just like 2017's *All Aboard*, *Improved Means To Deteriorated Ends* pulls the listener in and the individual vignettes come together in an addictive fashion. The homespun lo-fi melodies are endearing. "Coward" is a standout track.

Fondly reminds us of: Sebadoh, Guided By Voices, early Rob Crow

Recorded and mixed by Nick Dooley at The Barn in Panton, VT | Mastered by Amar Lal at Macro Sound in Oakland, CA

Kieran McShane *drums*, Mike Quigley *guitar/vocals*

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