

FEATURE

## Haitian Drums Meet Frankenstein Violin?

Daniel Bernard Roumain on his new album by Lindsey Rose | May 10, 2010



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What do Haitian kompa music, the Bronx and Viennese compositional schools have in common? They're all influences Daniel Bernard Roumain cites as inspiration for his newest album, *Woodbox Beats and Balladry*.

The son of Haitian immigrants, DBR (as he likes to be called) grew up listening to traditional Haitian music, but later learned to play the violin and studied classical music composition.

Known for his innovative techniques for coaxing unique sounds out of the violin, DBR now uses his own specially made instrument. With six strings and extra amplification, "It's kind of a Frankenstein monster!" he says. "It allows me to literally play notes and do things that other violinists can't do."

For *Woodbox*, DBR says he wanted to create a "sonic tour de force." "It's very danceable," he explains, "but there's also a lot of very laid-back vibe on it as well." On each track, DBR layers smooth violin with textured turntable beats to create a complex mélange that's easy to get lost in. His special violin allows him to add some grungy distortion that blends seamlessly into his more classical playing. From the evolution of each track, it's clear that they were crafted with a composer's ear.



DBR recently sat down with Encore to answer a few questions:

**What was it like to work with Lady Gaga and perform on *American Idol*?**

You know, we did what we always do. I think the way it translates on television is just as exciting for us as it's for everyone watching it, but the actual experience of recording the show—all that shit was nothing. I think the thing that is probably on everybody's mind is that after it's in the camera, it's being sent to millions of people. But it doesn't really register when you're doing what you love to do, what you've been trained to do.

**What music have you listened to recently, other than your own?**

Just this afternoon, I heard a French rendition of an old Sex Pistols tune, and it was wonderful because, literally, there were accordions, and piano and guitar, and a very acidic Frenchman's voice. It was wonderful to hear that kind of aggression, that kind of punk music, but in a much different way.

DBR will be playing in the Central Park SummerStage concert series this summer. For more information, visit [www.dbrmusic.com](http://www.dbrmusic.com) or [www.summerstage.org](http://www.summerstage.org).