

# HOURS

Thursday, November 8, 2007

dailyiowan.com



For Daniel Bernard Roumain and his band, the mission is clear: Unite hip-hop and orchestral music without drifting from the roots of either genre.

## Across the great divide

By Meryn Fluker  
THE DAILY IOWAN



DAILYIOWAN.COM

**GIVE A LISTEN**  
DBR and the Mission

24 Bits: Hip-Hop Studies and Études

**Featured track:**

- "Hip-Hop study in C Major"

One part Public Enemy, a dash of Björk, add violin to taste. Odds are no one watching "Flavor of Love" expects Joanna Newsom to pop up as a contestant, but this recipe has resulted in considerable success as the foundation of DBR and the Mission, a nine-piece outfit lead by multi-instrumentalist and composer Daniel Bernard Roumain. The fusion of different styles doesn't end with the notes he puts on the page, it extends to the members responsible for transforming them into sound. The whole collaboration will be visible, and audible, when the group takes the stage in Hancher Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

The orchestral staples of cello and violin emerge in DBR and the Mission, but a turntable, a bass guitar and, yes, even a laptop find residence alongside them. While the group receives praise and attention for its signature blend of styles, Roumain clarifies that it isn't a gimmick — rather, the group's sound is born from the two genres that have shaped him.

His influences aren't solely musical.

"Both of my parents were born in and left Haiti," he said in an e-mail interview. "And the impact and impressions of that exodus to everything they consider 'American culture' is only now revealing itself to me."

Blending comes naturally for him, who spent his adolescence dividing time between playing violin in Florida's Broward County Community Orchestra and working for "Me So Horny" rap outfit (and First Amendment crusaders) 2 Live Crew.

"As a composer, I simply wanted to combine the two musical loves of my life into a unified and, I hope, compelling musical voice and vernacular," he said.

Just as every hip-hop group has its essential parts, the DJ and the MC, DBR and the Mission also has its own necessary players. The group was co-founded by Roumain and music director Wynne Bennett, who is also

responsible for the keyboards, laptop, and the groove box, a loop-based, electronic music contraption. Elan Vytal, as the DJ, adds the turntables and further laptop artistry, helping to bring a distinct urban flavor.

"We try to keep it funky and sounding good — I think that's the bottom line," Vytal said. "I think outside of that, we really try to explore everything. It's kind of like this Benetton ad of music and people. We all have different backgrounds, and we bring them together — we really try to construct ways in which we can keep our own identities within the holistic aspect of the music."

Roumain agrees about the group's sound, writing that, "a Sony executive and good friend once said to me, 'Daniel, your music is neoclassical soul.' I'm not sure if that's the best or most accurate description, but [it] appealed to me then, and now."

That description of DBR and the Mission's sound may evoke an image of a famous composer rolling in his grave, powdered wig in a twist over classical music with a hip-hop edge, but UI music Professor David Gompper says combining classical and orchestral music with elements of an era's popular music is a theme within classical music.

SEE MISSION 4C

**DBR and the Mission**

24 Bits: Hip-Hop Studies and Études

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Hancher Auditorium  
Admission: UI students \$15-\$20, Adults \$25-\$30, senior citizens \$22.50-\$27, children \$15-\$20



Graphic by Nette Dunlap/Daily Iowan

coming UP this weekend:

Check out 2B for a complete list of Iowa City events

**A History of Violence**

Hanalei Ramos, a New Jersey spoken-word artist, will perform "Guns and Tampons: A History of Violence Against Women I Know," today at 7 p.m. in 348 IMU. And for a hopefully lighter experience, students can join her again on Friday for a free creative-writing workshop in the Asian Pacific American Cultural Center.



also inside

3C — Illinois band finally graduates

5C — Carlos Mencia sucks, but how hard?