

Dustin Wilcox (Admin) 7 days ago

## An Interview With Aaron Turner, the Arcade- and Anime-Inspired Lo-Fi and Future Funk Artist



Last week, I had the pleasure of speaking with an Aaron Turner, a lo-fi and future funk artist who operates under the pseudonyms of Aviscerall and Groovy Kaiju, respectively.

I first discovered Turner a few weeks before that when his cleverly targeted Instagram advertisements first graced my feed. These videos—featuring a jamming Turner juxtaposed with footage of deep-cut arcade games like After Burner Climax and the original After Burner Climax—immediately caught my eye, so much so that I couldn't help but purchase his entire discography in one fell swoop.

Because of the very specific influences he showcased in said advertisements, I couldn't help but highlight his work on my blog. Without further ado, let's more about the beat-driven musician who's been at it since 2010.

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### How did you get started making music?

I got started making music because I had a bunch of friends who would all skate together—I'm a big skateboarder. Because we didn't have cars—we were 13—we would have to walk to every skate spot, and while we were walking, they would all freestyle rap. Then, one of my buddies was like, "You're good with computers. You should make beats for us." And I was like, "Oh, I'll figure it out." Now, 14 years later, here we are.

### Is skateboarding something you still consider when making music?

Definitely. The song "For My First Love" off the "Still Groovy" album is about skateboarding, and that's why if you listen to the background of it, there's a lot of skate noises in it. It's actually audio ripped from clips of me skateboarding. The entire intro is my friends hyping me up off of various skateboarding tricks. I even chose that sample in particular because the chorus says, "When the wood winds cry." It's kind of like woodwinds because skateboarding is wood.

So yeah, skateboarding will influence a song that deeply, but I also feel like skateboarding culture is always music and fashion-forward. A lot of music that I find sometimes is through skateboarding. I'll even say that I think skateboarding was way ahead on vaporwave compared to anything else. There's an entire 40-minute skate video with vaporwave influence called "Solo Jazz" that came out in 2012 when vaporwave was only two years old.

### What are the primary musical influences that shape the kind of music you're making now?

In terms of vaporwave, I was really early into the big three of the subgenre future funk at the time, which were Yung Bae, Saint Pepsi, and Macross 82-99. I would say Saint Pepsi was probably my biggest musical influence starting out, but these days, I just pull from everything, every little place. It'll be anime I watch; it'll be video games I play; it'll be maybe artists like J Dilla. Sometimes, I'll hear drum and bass stuff that inspires me.

Influence could be from anywhere, any sounds. The other day I saw someone arguing with someone on the internet, the way they inflected their, "You're wrong." I was like, "That's cool. I would love to sample that. The audio that exists in the world."

**Do you have any unexpected favorite music genres that aren't related to what you make?**

I'm a big metalhead. In fact, when I was growing up, my buddy's parents were huge System of a Down and Tool fans. There's a Scars on Broadway music video where they show the crowd panning, and there's a 13-year-old me and my best friend in the crowd. I had my afro still before I had the dreadlocks.

So yeah, I'm a huge metalhead. I've gone to multiple music festivals. I live in Long Beach where there's a giant boat called the Queen Mary. They used to throw death metal festivals on there. My buddy broke his arm by the Carnifex set, so I was there for it.

I just bought The Fall of Troy's "In the Unlikely Event" on CD so I could play it in my car. I love A Skylit Drive. I do have a vaporwave/post-hardcore thing I was playing around with. Some people are like, "It sounds terrible. Why are you doing that?" And some people are like, "That is the greatest thing. You need to release this." I'm still fifty-fifty on it.

**Why did you decided to operate under two musical personas, and how do you decide which album is more appropriate for each?**

The two different names are Groovy Kaiju and Aviscerall. I started off as Aviscerall making hip-hop beats, and the only reason why I made them separate is because, back in 2014 or something, I was like, "Wouldn't it be funny if I made another alias and they collaborated together?" And then people would go, "Whoa, you're both people?" It was a horrible idea. It's not worth the joke because now I have two completely separate fan bases, and all the time, I have to do all this work to be like, "Hey, I also make this stuff." And people are like, "What? I didn't know, and I've been following you for a decade."

For now, it's more like the vibe to the music. I tend to do my more upbeat, dance-y, happy stuff as Groovy. If it's more reflective and chill—thinking about life and the universe—I put that on the Aviscerall side of things. I've been trying to do more in the middle—where it's still kind of upbeat and vaporwave sounding but also reflective so I could collaborate with myself more—but it's rare when there's something that I think perfectly matches both aliases. It either leans toward one or the other most of the time.

Oceanfront Online [Turner's online storefront] actually is me. Because I have the two aliases, I needed one store to contain both of them, so I needed a whole new name. It's way too complicated. I screwed myself. I feel kind of bad because sometimes I look at emails from emerging artists who are like, "Oh, can I join your label please?" And I'm like, "It's just me. There is no label actually." And they're like, "Aw, man, what?"

**What does a typical album production cycle look like for you?**

That's actually changed recently. But normally, for Groovy Kaiju in particular, it's been making a bunch of songs and then trying to wrap up a concept afterwards of like, "Okay, I made these songs because I was feeling this way when I made them." Maybe here's what's been happening in the last year or two of my life, and let's try encapsulate that into one theme.

Recently, I started doing more of the skits and stuff just to be funny, and that's been a nice way of me trying to build a lore. Ironically, the inspiration for that comes from Filthy Frank, if you're familiar with the very not-safe-for-work thing where they would drip in little lore stuff. After a while, I was like, "I don't even care about the mean-spirited jokes. I just want to what happens in this story with the rice fields." So I wanted to start doing that with Groovy.

With the new album I'm going to drop—hopefully this summer—it is very pre-planned. Like, "Okay, these are the things that are happening in my life. How can I best express that in metaphors, and what does that mean, and how do I encompass this all into one central theme and feeling?" The general idea this time is it's a space funk album about love, but not just love of people—love of things, love of ideas, love of our jobs, love of music. Exploring the concept of how we as humans do funny things because of love that maybe don't make sense at first, and how it feels to not have love but also to want love for the wrong reasons and things like that.

**There seems to be a big crossover between your interests as a collector and your distribution methods as an artist. How did you decided that you wanted to be so collector-focused?**

I think that comes just from the vaporwave genre in general. It has been because of the whole nostalgia of it and wanting to remember a time that either you experienced or didn't experience. A lot of it came down to cassettes and vinyl and trying to get back. Especially with cassettes, people were buying Walkmans and stuff like that.

If you look into music in general, especially when it comes to sampling, there's this weird thing where we're always nostalgic for 20 years ago. So in the '90s, they were sampling '70s music. In the 2000s, there was a lot of '80s. In the 2010s, it was lots of '90s influence. Now that we're in the 2020s, what's popular? The 2000s, Y2K, the weird DVD menus and stuff. People are like, "Why are those popular?" And it's because that's just how we as humans feel. The 2000s is the era of the CD, so I've been trying to do more of that, trying to get ahead of that.

Another theory I have is all the '90s cars that had cassette players are all too old now to run, so what's next is people are buying old 2000s cars as their first car, and those all have CD players in them. People have access to these devices again now that it's about 20 years ago.

For me personally, I'm a big retro gamer, so I have one of my albums on Game Boy Advance Video. Another thing about vaporwave is exploring all types of different formats. To me, that's amazing. I watched it on my Game Boy Advance that I got secondhand. I try to incorporate that back into my music in funny ways because it's part of the scene in general.

**Do you have a favorite listening format yourself?**

Lately, it's been CD because, as much as I love vinyl, I'm so lazy. I don't like flipping the record. If there was a record player that would flip itself, I would buy that so fast. Also, because my car plays CDs, it's the format that I listen to the most often. Every single day, I listen to some CD.

**I also noticed in your music, especially in the titles of Groovy Kaiju songs, a lot of pop culture influences. What are some of your main non-musical influences?**

Space Dandy is number one, no doubt. It's just everything I like in one anime. I'd even go as far as to say my whole Groovy Godzilla experience has been a lot of trying to recreate the magic that is within the Space Dandy soundtrack. With this next album, I'm like, "I finally nailed it. Now, I can go do something else with my life."

Video games, for sure. One thing that really inspired me is the Scott Pilgrim video game. Anamanaguchi did the soundtrack for that, and I could recite the way the drums are on the pause menu off the top of my head at any moment in time.

The reason why I chose arcade games for advertisements is because, when I was talking to an old co-worker and friend of mine, she was like, "You know that whole vaporwave thing you're doing? You should check this out. I think it matches the aesthetic of what you're doing." And she sent me clips of Ocean Hunter.

The whole thing about arcade games or an Instagram feed or just art in the digital age is like, "How do you capture attention?" Well, the whole goal of arcade games is to be the loudest, most flashy thing in this building surrounded by other loud, flashy things. How we grab someone's attention to go, "I'll give it a quarter."

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So I was like, "This is the perfect visual for music, especially when you're trying to get someone's attention. Whatever those arcade games are doing, that's what you want to do. And on top of that, I'm a big gamer. I still got to arcades to this day. I'm really big into pinball now, and the Ninja Turtles arcade game.

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To learn more about Aaron Turner and his music, follow him on Instagram at @torch2424, or visit him on the web at oceanfront-online.com. You can also find his discography on Spotify under both the Aviscerall and Groovy Kaiju monikers.



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