



## SECRET WEAPONS

WITH THEIR DISSONANT, RANTING, MANIACALLY CONFRONTATIONAL BRAND OF MUSIC, THE BAND A.R.E. WEAPONS IS PROTECTING THE DOWNTOWN SOUND SCENE FROM THE EVIL FORCES OF GENTRIFICATION

Downtown Manhattan is a youth-culture wasteland. In 2001 there are pricey his-and-hers retail stores where there were once subversive underground newspaper headquarters, and there are sleek lowlit designer bars where there were once illegal artist studios and clandestine afterhours clubs. People in New York still talk about a scene as if there is one, as if there were anything beyond the stretch of Houston Street with its heap of billboards, tourists, and 24-hour discount emporiums. Unless, of course, you happen to cross paths with A.R.E. Weapons.

A.R.E. Weapons is part of a small, stylish New York contingent that knows how to transform evening into out-and-out nightlife. Matt McAuley, Brain F. McPeck, and Thomas Bullock make up the alley-cat trio, and all three can often be found spinning records to an equally tuned-in Lower East Side bar crowd on regular weeknights. But the real A.R.E. music is, of course, their own. With a sound that's all at once a potent cocktail of dancehall reggae, hip-hop, and punk, and a look that edges the territory of late-'70s Suicide, this band may very well be the most innovative, hardcore thing that has happened to New York music in a long time. This ain't Indie rock.

Matt and Brain grew up outside of Boston and played in various garage bands together since age twelve. Two years ago in New York, they decided to put together a group with hip-hop DJ Thomas. "We all had like five different bands

going at the same time," Matt recalls. "We used to get fucked up at Thomas's parties and then all realized we just wanted to make some different kind of music." Brain tends to sing, Matt plays bass, and Thomas works the drum-machine or sampler, but the collaboration is more-or-less free form. Anything goes and usually it all does. "It's aggressive dance music," Matt says. "We want to make people dance." If you've ever caught one of their live performances, you'd understand exactly where he's coming from. The act is wild, and the crowd is turned on to it. "Sometimes people get hurt. Usually it's Brain. But it's all for fun."

A.R.E. Weapons might sound dangerous, but they look damn good. This month they release their first CD, which has all of the kick of their live set, so you can finally avoid the risk of a black eye and enjoy them in the safety of your own living room—that is, if you want to. A slight abrasion may be a worthy sacrifice. "New York is a wide open place," says Matt. "It feels like you can do whatever you want to do here. And as for the band, everything up to now has been a warm up."

It's pretty to think so. **CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN**

For info: 646.263.3602 CD sold at Kim's Music, New York (212.598.9985) and Colette, Paris ([www.colette.fr](http://www.colette.fr))

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