

— MUSIC REVIEW —

# British label makes smashing U.S. debut

By Sarah Baker  
Senior editor

In the land where all hail to H.M. the Queen, "skint" is slang for being flat out, undeniably broke, without one thin dime to your name.

Thankfully, that isn't the case for Skint Records, Britain's most up-and-coming DJ label.

Promoting the likes of America's most loved Brit (aside from Robbie Williams) Fatboy Slim, a.k.a. Norman Cook, and the Lo Fidelity All Stars before they were signed to major labels, the buzz across the pond is all about the label's uncanny knack at making itself rich with DJ talent.

Skint's first American release, "Brassic Beats USA," compiles 12 cuts, which, although including Fatboy Slim and the Lo Fidelity All Stars, show the label has much, much more to offer.

Skint, which Damian Harris founded in 1995, quickly has become one of Britain's hottest dance labels, even with its being located

in Brighton, a town far outside London, the country's traditional music hub.

Crowds regularly pack the label's Big Beat Boutique nights at a club in Brighton, and major record labels are scurrying to catch the label's newfound talent.

It's easy to see why.

The best thing thus far, it seems, that Skint offers the listener is a welcome break from mediocrity. Although the 12 offerings all have the same familiar backbeat, that's where the similarities end.

"Brassic Beats USA" offers the listener a crop of DJs spanning the scope of dance music — some are undeniably rooted in hip-hop, while others shimmy closer to the lines of trance and even show some traits of being in debt to down-home, American pop.

But it wouldn't be fair to generalize the album as just another compilation.

Songs use original mixes, cool sound effects and campy additions — such as gobbling chickens and electronic voices chanting "I need the

disco doctor" — all working toward an album that's hard to listen to while sitting still.

Two cuts from Fatboy Slim — "Sho Nuff" and a remix of Midfield General's "Devil in Sports Casual" are standouts among standouts, offering the DJ's trademark funk mixed with swaggering hip-hop.

Midfield General's "Devil in Sports Casual" offers lyrics that will lead many a club kid to smile, not to mention beats that will make them want to shake it.

Cut La Roc's "Fallen" is extra funky, with a trance-like tendency to fade in and out and melodic lyrics to match the smooth backbeat.

It's difficult to single out any one track, or even a few, because they're all that good.

The whole album works as a cohesive unit, with harder tracks next to funkiness, soft lyrics next to chants and a dance format that can't fail.

Now all we can do is hope and pray the label's Big Beat Boutique dance nights will soon make their own American debut for a real taste of clubber heaven.

## REVIEW Brassic Beats USA

ARTIST: Various artists

LABEL: Skint Records

GRADE: B+

FIVE WORDS: Skint offers rich D.J. selection.

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## Lennon piano up for grabs

LONDON (AP) — The piano on which John Lennon composed "Imagine" is to be auctioned on the Internet in July, online company eOffer.com said.

The 30-year-old upright Steinway was expected to fetch \$1.6 million and could become the most expensive item of pop memorabilia ever sold, the company said.

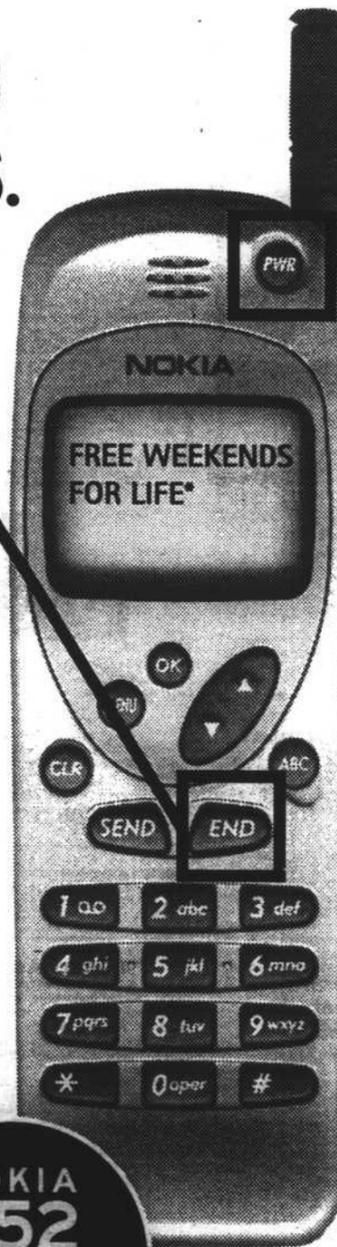
The wood-finished piano was unveiled to the public Thursday at The Beatles Story museum in Liverpool. The piano is to be sold on a new Internet site, which is being set up by Fleetwood Mac musician Mick Fleetwood and auctioneer Ted Owen.

"The owner is a private collector and a great Lennon fan, and he's had it now for nearly 10 years," said Owen. "He feels, like we do, that it needs to be in a museum, and that's why it's being shown at the Beatles museum until Oct. 9, which would have been Lennon's 60th birthday."

"Imagine," originally recorded in 1971, became a number-one hit when it was re-released shortly after Lennon's death. The former Beatle died outside his New York home, the Dakota building, 20 years ago at the hands of obsessed fan Mark Chapman.

The piano was built in Hamburg in 1970 and bought by Lennon later that year. Video footage has been recorded of Lennon playing "Imagine" on the piano for the first time to Yoko Ono and the Plastic Ono Band in 1971.

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