



KUDU
 L.E.S. MAINSTAYS USHER IN
 THE ERA OF TROPICAL GOTH.
 WORDS: JESSE SERWER PHOTO: AR STUDIO

Kudu's Sylvia Gordon and Deantoni "D" Parks

It's a gift and a curse. Break boundaries, navigate diverse styles creatively, and no one knows what to call you. Such has been the plight of Kudu, the NYC-based trio centered around drummer Deantoni "D" Parks and vocalist Sylvia Gordon (but also including keyboardist Nick Kasper). They've drawn everyone from John Cale to Beans to their homebase at Nublu, the remotely located East Village eclectic music outpost where they've held a long-running Tuesday night residency. While those who've caught Kudu's hypnotic sets from Baltimore to Turkey are often instantly hooked, no one seems able to describe them to their friends.

"They are usually such long explanations," groans Gordon, a diva-ish stunner who combines the Texan twang of Erykah Badu, the quirky-cool style of Siouxsie Sioux and the scale command of a cocktail lounge jazz singer (on record she also splits sequencing/keyboard duties with Parks). "Somebody [actually *Rip It Up and Start Again* author Simon Reynolds, on his blog] called us 'tropical goth.' I like the image that puts into my head: goth people on the beach."

"Urban new wave" is another appropriate, if somewhat awkward, description that's been thrown around. With a

sound centered around buzzing, Gary Numan-like synths—but informed by hip-hop, funk, jazz and drum & bass—Kudu could be to New York's robotic white New Wave revival what Prince and his disciples were to the icy British sounds of two decades ago.

Everything comes together on the group's first single, "Bar Star," on the newly launched Nublu label, which, without the aid of a remixer or producer, sounds remarkably dancefloor-ready for a band that sort of rocks live. Centered around a pulsing, housey throb, Gordon breaks it down with Salt-N-Pepa-informed directions to "Ahh...push it" and lets out a banshee-like wail reminiscent of Vanity's "Nasty Girl" climax before an apocalyptic synth rumble washes the song out.

Holding Kudu down is the remarkably restrained D, a former child protégé (and, like Gordon, a Berklee School of Music grad) who, at the age of six, appeared on *Star Search*; as a child, he was also a member of a touring funk band (until his parents caught the 30-something members taking drugs). The Georgia native—who's backed Cale and Me'shell N'dege Ocello, among others—might be the "drummer in New York most frequently asked by musicians and bands to join them."

"Fusion types are always like 'You're such an amazing drummer, you've got to realize your skills—we'll rule the world with our music!'" Gordon says of her partner. Parks adds, "They don't really get that this is about songs."

Kudu's *Death of the Party* is out now on Nublu Records.

www.kudu2u.com, www.nublu.net