



# Wall of Sound

Goldie talks to *Kasha Van Sant* about hot-footing between the nozzle and the stylus

"I listen to classical music, I play with the huskies. That's all I really do."

I doubt very much that is all, as I listen to the man who pioneered drum and bass and the Metalheadz label - defining the music of a generation. Goldie is in fact an incredibly busy man and he has more feathers in his cap than most. Upon his own admission his one day off sees him itching to create.

"I just think from an artist's perspective you have to do as much as you can. I find that I get really bored if I'm not doing anything and so I conceptualise what I'll be doing next. I think it's when you get to an age when you feel purposeful."

At 42 Goldie is rather youthful. Having found the "boy inside" could be partly to blame, and the rest could be reclamation of the spray can that brought him to prominence. The return to his roots as a graffiti writer means an impending exhibition at the Maverik Showroom in London, which sees that 'The Kids Are

All Riot' and a culmination of 15 years of work. Old and new working in tandem, but this duality is not unintentional and it pops up frequently in his work. There is heavy symbolism at play here, the paintings are not just pictures that tell a story - their cathartic leanings depict the state of their creator. Pointing to the wall he even admits that his children can interpret this.

"See that one there, my daughter said to me, 'Daddy that looks like your mind'. Yes it's a kaleidoscope of colours and I thought, 'Yeah you're right'. She was only seven years old at the time."

I see complexity, turmoil, sparking synapses and constant states of flux - and the aforementioned duality. But unlike most dualities that work in parallel or simultaneously never to coincide, Goldie's work and thoughts collide explosively onto the canvas and meet somewhere in the middle. Cerebral snapshots, unexpected and surprising.

At the very time when Goldie became a massive name



From clockwise: Apocalypse Angel, That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore, The Kids Are All Riot

in the music scene his work as a visual artist was left behind and he could only watch his, mentor graffiti legend, Brim Fuentes of Universal Zulu Nation fame, go on to make art his lifeblood. Goldie went down a different path, joining the likes of Portishead, Tricky and Massive Attack in the musical hall of fame. He ponders the inextricable links between the two media.

"Once you've aurally explored stuff you need to visually explore stuff and with me it was always having the puritan aspiration that most graffiti writers have, which is not just engrossing yourself in the letter form as the main subject matter and in terms of the entire wall as a piece of work."

And thus music has morphed into visual art and vice versa in audible protest: from the wildstyle graffiti pieces that most will recognise from the safety of train carriages to the graphic bubble-written reverse victory 'V's that challenge the art world. Having painted prolifically in the last three years, its rediscovery being catalysed by a car accident and a divorce - all served with a large dose of humility. Being master of an art form that insists upon this, that comes as no surprise. He adds: "Thinking in the mentality of a young graffiti writer you want your piece to last forever but then you know that it won't and that someone will go over it and



change it."

This mass deconstruction of pride and ego, is possibly an acceptance of the transient, but is a staple for the graffiti writer. Incredibly self aware he adds: "When people look at me as an artist they think of me walking in a straight line, but if they look closely they will see that I am actually walking at a left curvature, which means I am walking in a very large circle."

I see the cyclical pattern reappear, flux, rebirth, deconstruction all metaphors for the man, all suggestions of being at peace. He explains: "I fought East Midlands council to get commissions and I did my first Wolverhampton art gallery show when I was 19 and that was 22 years ago.

It's kind of weird that it's come full circle - now it's kind of trendy to paint, anyone can be an artist."

It's not about the council estates and painful childhood, the "egotistical trap" in the guise of the Ferraris of his youth. It's not about coming through the Hoffman Process, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying. It's about not being "ready to give up the ghost", and celebration. Thus Goldie concludes on a poignant note:

"I've had such a painful life that in a sense I want to spend the rest of my life celebrating it." ■