

## Organic Type Treatments and the Gax EP Packaging //

The 2009 single “Gax,” by Boys Noize, is an ambient electronic introduction to a series of harder and darker tracks from his second studio release “Power.” It represents a departure from the artist’s traditionally formulaic style, and exhibits an eerie sound-scape that conjures up images of vintage science reels on cellular growth, adventures into the microcosm and deep space exploration. Additionally, one can expect to hear this sound filtering through a sea of bodies at a crowded venue with vibrant lights sweeping through a thick hanging fog.

Initial concepts for the Gax EP packaging included references to molecular structure and simple expressions of the cleanliness of electronic music as a genre, but were flat and inorganic when executed. While still working with type exclusively, finding a solution for that flatness required a certain willingness to experiment with previously static letterforms in three dimensions.

The letters of “GAX” were backlit on a glass surface, in front of which smoke was wafted. Each letter was cut from mat board, and in the process, left behind dust and paper shavings on the glass — these particles resulted in what appear as stars in the photo. On a tripod above the surface, a camera was set to take exposures of one-third second to capture the movement and thickness of the smoke. The camera was triggered by a shutter release cable so as to retain sharpness and avoid any tripod movement. Post processing of the RAW files was done in Photoshop, as well as the colorization. The result operates as both simple type and a likeness to nebulae and epic star-scapes.

Unsatisfactory photos resulted from the first two shoots. While successfully demonstrating that the organically-derived type treatment was possible, they failed to achieve the striking presence that the cover required. For the final shoot, the letters were sanded with a high-grit paper to smooth any rough-cut edges, re-aligned and kerned on the table top, and the orientation of the light source and camera were adjusted. The lens’s aperture was stopped down to create the radial highlights that were absent in earlier shoots. Dust from the original photos was a “happy accident,” but for subsequent setups, the effect was manufactured with the debris from sanding.

The package’s type is set primarily in varying weights of Hoefler & Frere-Jones’ Gotham. Odeon is present on the album’s back for the track numbers and the artist’s name on the cover and inside panels. Caecilla makes an appearance in the information and barcode section. Logos in the production information section were also created specifically for the Gax EP. The 45-RPM adapter was inspired by the prevalence of vinyl records in live electronic music mixing, and its purported superiority in richness and clarity over digital audio.

This project represents an exploration into the alternatives to computer generated type treatments, and the positive impact they have on the quality of graphic design solutions.