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Pushing Forward

Janaka Seleкта comes back to India this month, taking his much acclaimed debut album live
By Margot Bigg

FOR MOST ELECTRONIC MUSIC DJs, MOVING on to production is the next logical step after mastering the decks. This has certainly been the case for Sri Lankan musician Janaka Atugoda aka Janaka Seleкта, who is bringing a live set of his debut album, *Pushing Air*, to India this August.

Although *Pushing Air* is difficult to pigeonhole into a genre, Atugoda's influences – electronic, reggae, Indian classical and Asian Underground – resonate in its tracks. Atugoda composed the album during a time of personal transformation in his life, which he expresses through emotive tracks that range from maniacally bouncy to downright gloomy. "It's centred around this whole idea of birth, life and death," he says. "I translated what I was feeling into the album."

The San Francisco-based artist has brought his sounds across the world since he first got involved in music in the late Nineties. He's toured across the US and Europe, playing alongside artists such as Asian Dub Foundation's Dr Das and the MIDlval Punditz. He performed at Mumbai's Aurus and Blue Frog clubs last year, where he dropped thumping sets of DnB, breakbeat and dubstep, introducing his audience to a selection of new tracks. This year, in addition to deejaying, Atugoda will perform *Pushing Air* in a one-hour live set, but with a more upbeat flair than what appears on the album. "Parts of my album will be taken out of their original context and put into contexts that are more dance friendly, more percussive," he says. He does this using Maschine, a new tool that allows musicians to break a track down into its musical components, assign each part to a pad, and then use those pads to trigger the sounds manually during a live show. "You can use it to create a sense of dynamics, of continuous motion and a sense of the show being live, because everything that's happening there is happening in real time," Atugoda explains.

After his India tour, Atugoda will return to the US to rehearse with his newest live project, Mighty Dub Killaz, which he recently formed with Chicago musician JC Stokes. The band "takes reggae sensibilities, hip hop sensibilities, some dubstep sensibilities and puts it together in a very song-oriented format which can be played as one continuous set." Mighty Dub Killaz will tour the US music festival circuit this summer with Karsh Kale on percussion, and if all goes well, Atugoda plans to bring the band to India in December for a tour. When asked how he thinks what he refers to as "electronic reggae" will fare here, Atugoda smiles. "It's a very new sound," he says. "I don't live in India so it's hard to gauge. But we've played for a very diverse audience and the reaction's been great so far."