

Ask Seattle hip-hop producer Jake Dutton, aka Jake One, what beat he's made that, to him, feels the most like his hometown, and he'll pause. "That's tough," he says over a club sandwich at the Broadway Grill on Capitol Hill on a chilly midweek night. "If there's a Seattle sound at all, it's [defunct local rappers] Ghetto Children, from the early '90s. "In a Minute Doe," from Gab's record, is the closest I've come to that. That sound—it wasn't [A] Tribe [Called Quest], but it was close."

"In a Minute Doe," released earlier this year on the solo debut of Bay Area MC and Blackalicious member Gift of Gab, Fourth Dimensional Rocketships Going Up (Quannum), is not the first time Dutton has evoked early '90s hip-hop on a record, and it probably won't be the last. But while a lot of indie-minded rap producers have made an oft-honorable practice of sticking to that particular period, Dutton isn't interested in staying put, at least musically. "People in New York think [hip-hop] is all about New York; nothing else matters," he says. "Same in L.A. Growing up here, Sir Mix-a-Lot was dope, but it wasn't all we liked. Coming up, I liked E-40 and De La Soul equally," Jake one told Michaelangelo Matos and Ethan Padgett of [Seattle Weekly](#).

As it turns out, not only does Dutton's hefty, wide-ranging catalog flit between those sonic poles, the 28-year-old producer has worked with both of his stated heroes. "Rock Co.Kane Flow," the last song on The Grind Date (Sanctuary), the first album in four years by New York rap stalwarts De La Soul, is outfitted with a striking, near-militaristic Jake One beat. And the producer has also recently hooked up with Bay Area gangsta icon E-40, who recently asked Dutton to cook him up a beat in the style of '80s electro-rap legend Mantronix.

This eclecticism comes naturally to a guy who grew up outside hip-hop's major cultural centers. "It's a result of living here," says Dutton. "It's like, the Bay Area, L.A., and the East Coast are all equal. I like doing gangsta stuff and hardcore East Coast stuff; I'm starting to do more West Coast-sounding stuff, and I'm starting to branch out into R&B. If I understand it, I should be able to do it. I don't just bite one person [as a producer], I bite everybody," he laughs. "I'm-a steal from everybody I like! I'll put five producers' styles that I look up to on one beat, and then it becomes mine. Not so much taking their sound but using their approach. I'll steal Vitamin D's stuff! The people [whose styles I model my beats on] hear it and don't even know you've done it."

Dutton grew up in Capitol Hill, where he lived with his father until he was 15; when his dad left the state, he moved in with his mom in the North End. "I started making beats then, because I moved away from the city and had nothing to do. I didn't even tell anybody—nobody knew I was making beats. I bought a sampler and didn't ask anybody for any help until a couple of years later."

That changed shortly after Dutton began attending the University of Washington. One day, he handed a tape of his beats to a friend who worked in a record store. The tape caught the ear of one of the store's other employees, DJ Mr. Supreme, Seattle's beat-digging king. Soon after, Supreme began Conception Records, and Dutton was put into duty making tracks for the label's roster.

Soon, Dutton's beats began traveling beyond the city's borders. In 1998, he sold his first beat to an out-of-towner, San Francisco MC Planet Asia. "That was the first check I ever got; at the time it was a lot of money," Dutton recalls. Bigger paydays would soon follow, including one from Dr. Dre's Aftermath label, who picked up one of his tracks in 2001. Still, Dutton maintains his day job at the King County Courthouse—partly because the rap game is notoriously fickle and partly due to prior experience.

"I was working as a mailman and got laid off in 2000," says Dutton. He then spent the next five months "playing John Madden football and making beats. Only, when I had all that time off to make beats, they weren't any better—they were worse. Now it's something I look forward to coming home to, and that's when the beats got better and things started happening."

As Dutton's name spread, his workload diversified (see Ethan Padgett's sidebar). 2004 has been a banner year: Hot producer of the moment Alchemist (who's worked with Mobb Deep and Jadakiss as well as having a recent hit with "Hold You Down") recently name-checked Dutton as one of his favorite producers in Scratch magazine, and he's gotten plenty of critical praise for his work on Gab's Rocketships ("The first record I've done that my mother likes," Dutton beams, "because it's really melodic and pretty") and "Rock Co.Kane Flow."

Jonathan Moore of Jasiri Productions, Dutton's manager, hooked up the De La collaboration. "Vitamin D had been doing a bunch of stuff for them, so I called Jon and said I wanted to get a CD to them. [De La rapper] Posdnuos called; I'd sent him some lighter, more bass-line-driven beats, stuff I thought they'd be feeling, and he wanted more types of beats—he wanted it all. I didn't hear "Rock Co.Kane Flow" as a De La beat, but it turned out to be perfect for them."

"Flow" also features MF Doom, whose new MM Food will be tailed by a Jake One–remixed single.

And there's more in the works—most recently (and oddly), Dutton recorded a half-dozen songs for the new album by WWF wrestler John Cena. "I think one of the songs is gonna be his entrance music," Dutton says with some bemusement. Still, if the gig doesn't exactly promise a truckload of hip-hop credibility, it's made the producer popular in other quarters. "I've got a couple friends who are wrestling fans, and they tell me he can rap, so who knows?" he says. "And my wife's niece and nephew are die-hard fans, and I got them autographed pictures, so I'm a hero to them."

A primer of his production work:

Rah Digga ft. Lloyd Banks: "Party Over Here"

Lloyd and Digga blessed this funny track off last summer's game-changing Green Lantern Invasion Pt. II, with Jake One demonstrating a crucial mastery of unshowy mixtape beats.

E-40 ft. B Legit & Rankin Scroo: "Bust Yo Shit"

Jake laces the Ballatician with sub-bass DJ Quik squelches and tinkly, "Who Shot Ya"—style piano in what's hopefully the first of many future trips down to the Bay.

Lord Tariq & Peter Gunz: "Eyez on the Prize"

For any head who ever wanted those "Déjà Vu" intro horns teased out to a whole track, Jake sets a low milky bottom in the mix that's very subtly professional, even (or especially) for the '99 middle ground.

Snoop Dogg ft. J.T. the Bigga Figga and Kutfather: "Trump Tight"

A stretchy, silken West Coast track for a rejuvenated No Limit–era Snoop, who should probably holla back at Jake again now for that nü G-funk instead of poppin' useless twitches with the Neptunes.

De La Soul ft. MF Doom: "Rock Ko.Kane Flow"

## Beatsmith Jake One

Written by Keith ID347

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You could always hear the Ummah warmth of a Jake One beat even before he ever officially hooked up with De La, but this cut off their new Grind Date connects the Stakes Is High/Beats, Rhymes & Life dots to Doom's own weirdo time-travel experiments.

Planet Asia: "As Long as I'm Alive"

An effortlessly pretty blend of C-N-N's "Live on Live Long" and Ja Rule's sublime "Mesmerize," where the '80s R&B hits and twinkling keyboards prop up a stunning backdrop for Asia's dedication to fallen soldiers.

Krondon: "Feels Good"

It's just a 2Pac/Scarface piano lope, cut "Crooklyn Dodgers"—style (or maybe "NY State of Mind"—style, with that Illmatic chorus scratch), but for respected Westside lyricist Krondon, Jake was able to fall back to '90s feel-good sincerity without getting faded or watery.

Encore: "Layover"

Encore was originally spitting his Big Daddy Kane sound-alikes over number-one Premier biter Architect's tracks until Jake's beats on his sophomore LP put him in the modern context he needed, dripping crate-digger soul onto rattling drums and hard, Cali underground bass hits to bang like King Tee or '90s Xzibit.

Semi Official: "P.A.A. (Remix)"

I Self Divine of Atlanta's Micranots does a cop killer all over Jake's sputtery remix, with enough stabs and gully menace to approximate the paranoid Efil4zaggin-era Dr. Dre.