

Music Update

Daft Punk—new album, new sound, new collaborators

But never fear: They still wear the helmets. Since you're probably wondering, electronic dance's most famous duo doesn't look so different from your standard-issue rock band. Thomas Bangalter, 38, is tall, slightly ruffled, bearded, handsome in a professorial kind of way, funny and palpably eager to make himself understood. Today he's wearing fashionable motorcycle boots, black jeans, an unstructured suit jacket, and a big drapery scarf, perfectly tied, framing a neat Daft Punk pyramid of bare chest. Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo is one year older, and a lot shorter. He has long stringy metal-guy hair and weary pale eyes, and his black boots have gold spurs. Everyone calls him Guy-Man.

They are rusty at being Daft Punk. They've been gone for a long time. Since their last release, 2005's *Human After All*, they've done just a handful of interviews—three, maybe four, tops—and they're badly out of practice. They're still answering questions like Bangalter and de Homem-Christo, instead of like Daft Punk, which is a problem, because they'd prefer that you not think of them as people at all.

That's partly what the robot helmets are for. It's why you've never seen their faces.

"I remember when I was a kid, I would watch Superman, and I was super into the feeling of knowing that Clark Kent is Superman and no one knows," Bangalter said. "We always thought as we were shaping this thing that the secret was actually more exciting than the idea of being the most famous person in the world."

Nevertheless, they are sans helmets—finally—because, after eight years, there is a new Daft Punk record to talk about.

It's called *Random Access Memories*, Daft Punk's fourth release in sixteen years, not counting the soundtrack work they did on Disney's 2010 sequel to *Tron*, and the first that the duo, who recorded their first three albums at home, have made in a true studio. It's a big and lush and opulent '70s-disco record, both glamorous and



The helmeted duo Daft Punk

gritty, much like the '70s itself. It's got choirs and flutes and some of the same guys who played on *Thriller* and *Off the Wall*, and Nile Rodgers from Chic, and a gang of other collaborators—Italian disco god Giorgio Moroder, "Rainbow Connection" writer Paul Williams, pianist Chilly Gonzales, house titan Todd Edwards, the Strokes' Julian Casablancas, Pharrell Williams singing about sex and ancient Greek mythology. It sounds like it cost about a million dollars to make, if not more, an estimate they don't deny but also won't confirm.

More to the point, *Random Access Memories* is a calculated departure from past Daft Punk records, even for Daft Punk, a band that, over the course of its lengthy reign as the most well-known and critically revered dance-music act on the planet, has made a point of never making the same record twice. Only a handful of people have heard the album thus far, but the duo is already resigned to the possibility that no one will like it.

"In *Scream 2*, they have this discussion about how sequels always suck," Bangalter said. "The thing we can ask ourselves at some point is like: We've been making music for twenty years. How many bands and acts do you have that are still making good music after twenty years? It always

sucks—almost always, you know?"

"So our new album is supposed to really suck," de Homem-Christo added.

To be sure, it doesn't.

If the blow-up success of the album's lead single, the irresistibly

plucky "Get Lucky," is any indication (demand for the track has flooded streaming music service Spotify's servers) *Random Access Memories* may well prove to be the most important album of 2013.

Promo Only Top 20

for May, 2013

1	Just Give Me A Reason	Pink f./ Nate Ruess
2	Mirrors	Justin Timberlake
3	Can't Hold Us	Macklemore f./ Ray Dalton
4	Stay	Rihanna f./ Mikky Ekko
5	Heart Attack	Demi Lovato
6	I Love It	Icona Pop f./ Charli XCX
7	When I Was Your Man	Bruno Mars
8	Feel This Moment	Pitbull f./ Christina Aguilera
9	Come & Get It	Selena Gomez
10	Alive	Krewella
11	22	Taylor Swift
12	#THATPOWER	Will.I.Am f./ Justin Bieber
13	My Songs Know What You	Fall Out Boy
14	Cruise	Florida Georgia Line f./ Nelly
15	The Way	Ariana Grande f./ Mac Miller
16	The Other Side	Jason Derulo
17	Suit & Tie	Justin Timberlake f./ Jay-Z
18	Next To Me	Emeli Sande
19	Troublemaker	Olly Murs f./ Flo Rida
20	Here's To Never Growing Up	Avril Lavigne

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257 S. Lake Destiny Drive
Orlando, FL 32810
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