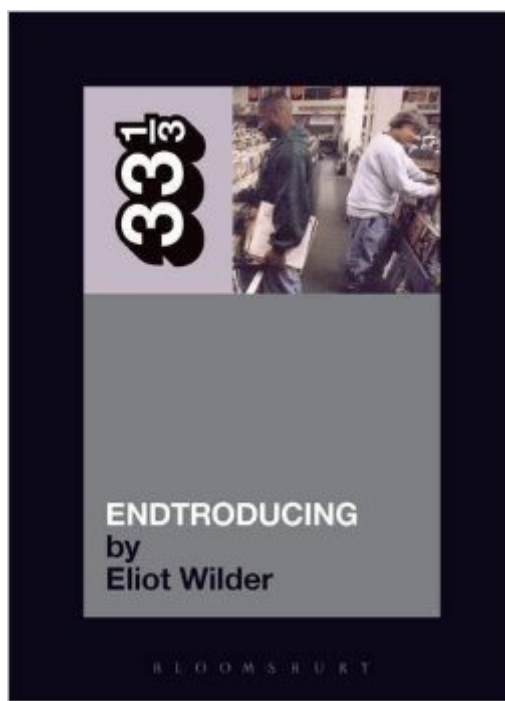


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DJ Shadow's Endtroducing... (33 1/3)



Synopsis

What resonated about *Endtroducing* when it was released in 1996, and what makes it still resonate today, is the way in which it loosens itself from the mooring of the known and sails off into an uncharted territory that seems to exist both in and out of time. Josh Davis is not only a master sampler and turntablist supreme, he is also a serious archeologist with a world-thirsty passion (what Cut Chemist refers to as Josh's "spidey sense") for seeking out, uncovering and then ripping apart the discarded graces of some other generation - that "pile of broken dreams" - and weaving them back together into a tapestry of chronic bleakness and beauty. Over the course of several long conversations with Josh Davis (DJ Shadow), we learn about his early years in California, the friends and mentors who helped him along the way, his relationship with Mo'Wax and James Lavelle, and the genesis and creation of his widely acknowledged masterpiece, *Endtroducing*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is essentially a long interview by Wilder with Josh Davis, and if you've seen *Scratch*, you know that Shadow can be very articulate. In essence, Wilder guides the story and gives it context, but is basically letting Shadow speak for himself. They go the whole nine yards: delving into Davis' childhood, how he discovered hip-hop, how he started making his first mixes and tracks, who he met and when, and how he made the album in question. The focus is one *Endtroducing*... but you get the arc of his whole career up to *Private Press*. A very worthwhile read, in my opinion.

supplemented my reading with the liner notes from the deluxe edition of *Endtroducing...* and also listened to the album and *Preemptive Strike* and all the b-sides. It's a fast read, you could finish in one sitting. Sold!

Endtroducing... by DJ Shadow is one of the best albums of the 20th century, period. A lot of words have been said about it, but it was Eliot Wilder who, through a combinations of interviews with the artist, was able to get a closer look and listen to an album that is still an intense experience from start to finish. It feels like having an extended set of liner notes with you, as Shadow reveals facts about his childhood, his eventual obsession of all that is vinyl, and what moved him to turn that love of rap music into something he could add into the mix. He talks about his experiences with his early work, all of which contributed to what would become "the album". As with many artists, he does keep himself slightly guarded but Wilder is able to have Shadow reveal things about the album that even the most diehard fans might not have known. Had I written the book, I would've went in deeper, much deeper, but Wilder's book is able to dig up as much as possible from the artist himself, who is open into sharing his experiences, dreams, fears, and outlook into a piece of work that he calls his album of hope, and he formally thanks in full everyone who made an impact on him and his debut album.

Unlike *Endtroducing* the album, which is essentially flawless, Eliot Wilder's book has its pros and cons. I'm going to throw out four items I think any prospective buyer of the book should know, and then briefly comment on what I found to be the pros and cons of each item.

1. The author is an old white guy. Pro: This was certainly a unique perspective. I mean, I guess I'm an "old white guy" too, now, but I grew up in the 80s and 90s, and Eliot Wilder grew up in the 1960s. In fact, he spends the first 22 pages of the book talking about how he grew up listening to the Four Tops, the Kinks, and Buffalo Springfield on AM radio. Con: Since the book is basically a long interview with Shadow, I feel like better questions would have been asked by someone more familiar with hip-hop. How unfamiliar is Wilder? Well, despite being an obvious fan of *Endtroducing*, he seems to not really understand that it is a hip-hop album! On Page 88, Wilder asks Shadow whether he was drawing on post-modernism or "some sort of hip-hop aesthetic" for inspiration. Shadow answers by basically saying (and I'm paraphrasing here), "Uh, I'm a hip-hop artist. Duh."
2. The book is one long interview with the artist. Pro: We hear directly from Shadow much more than any other hip-hop artist covered in the 33 1/3 series. After Wilder's 22-page intro about himself, the rest of the book consists of approximately 80 questions (I counted 77 but I probably missed a few) asked over 76 pages.

Basically, Wilder asks a one- or two-line question, and then Shadow fills between a half-page and 2.5 pages with his answer. This is even more of a "pro" if you consider Wilder's lack of hip-hop perspective to be a con, as I do. We learn a lot of interesting things: First and foremost on that list, in my opinion, is DJ Shadow's early relationship with the militant pro-black rapper Paris. Con: The book lacks the expert's insight found on other 33 1/3 books. I got much deeper levels of understanding from all four of the other hip-hop books in the series. Also, it seems maybe even a little bit disingenuous for Wilder to be credited as the "author" of this book, since it is Shadow's words that fill the pages. All but the first 22, that is!3. The book really isn't about Entroducing, but more about DJ Shadow in general. Pro: We learn a lot about Shadow growing up in California; collecting his first records, getting his first turntables, getting put on a college radio station, his first experiments with beat-making, and his first forays into the recording industry (with Paris of all people). All 33 and 1/3 books contain artist background information, but this one definitely went deepest of the ones I've read. Con: There are approximately 80 questions asked in the interview, and it is well past #40 before we get into the Entroducing era. Fewer than a third of the questions are specifically about Entroducing. I would have liked to know more about the album, the conditions under which it was recorded, the techniques Shadow used and experimented with using his MPC 60 and the recording technology of the day, etc. We get some insights into some of this, but they occupy well under one-fourth of the book.4. The book is short. Pro: Easy, quick read. Con: Less filling. Need I mention, again, the 22-page intro about the author's childhood, which takes up more than one-fifth of the pages?So there you have it. This is a very good book, and I'd recommend it without reservation if not for the fact that it must be compared to the other hip-hop books in the 33 and 1/3 series, to which it is inferior. If you are a major Shadow fan, then by all means, buy this now. But if you're more of a general hip-hop head who likes Nas, A Tribe Called Quest, the Beastie Boys, and Public Enemy just as much or more than Shadow, then you should still buy and read this -- but not until after the others.

From the 33 1/3's, I've read David Bowie's LOW, Eno's ANOTHER GREEN WORLD, Neil Young's HARVEST, and The Pixies DOOLITTLE. This is by far my favorite title in the series. And to be honest, I'm not a big hip hop fan. The book is basically an extended interview with DJ Shadow as he tells his story of roaming the used record stores as a youngster, experimenting with scratching and mixing cassettes as a teen and finally making his first album, Entroducing... His passion and creativity came through to make it a great success story. I played Entroducing... and his next project, UNKLE, while I read this in one sitting. Great fun. If you like the 33 1/3 books, get this one.

Entroducing...is a great album, if you don't have it, get it.

The book is very easy to read as it comes in a Q&A format with the artist, however the author does not dig deep into any point... one ends up knowing just a little bit more about the album (e.g. overall theme, how long it took to be put together). If you're looking for a track by track insight, or even a more concrete idea behind the sound of the album and how it was put together... it won't find it in this book. It might be a good one for those who do not like the artist, but I can't imagine someone who is not into DJ Shadow reading this book :P

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