



CLUB CRACK

BY THAT GUY

A street-style tastemaker whose work with Lucien Pellat Finet gets compared to Warhol and Basquiat, Aaron LaCrate, with his partner, Debonair Samir, is also the steam behind B-More Gutter Music. Check your HBO.

You've had your own clothing line, MilkCrate Athletics, since 1997. What's with that?

Aaron: It's a small creative company that allows me to express x-amount of ideas a year or season. We were the first to incorporate DJ sh*t into clothing. It's made to be not popular, for people who know their music, their record covers, etc. I've also got a sneaker collaboration with Vans. Myself, Vans, and Lucien Pellat Finet, who's sort of a high-end cashmere sweater designer from France. He makes these weed-leaf cashmere sweaters that sell for, like, \$1000-\$2000 dollars. I had a long term design relationship with him. Vans wanted to work with him and knew that I knew him, so they hired me as a consultant to design the shoe. It became a three-branded thing.

How do you feel about the sneaker game right now?
Aaron: Boring to me. I'm about to go bare feet.

You're also an ambassador for the Baltimore music scene. What do people need to know about the history of B-More music?

Aaron: What I knew growing up, the history, was Technics, Scotty B, Rod Lee, DJ Equalitzer, Kenny B, of course Frank Ski. Since then there have been many more people playing a role, like K-Swift. It's music that's been cultivated locally for years. I really

don't know why it's been bubbling out the city.

Samir: Can I interrupt? The reason why it's been bubbling out of the city is him. He's the one that exposed it. There's been a culture in Baltimore for, like, 20 years,

but no one has been brave enough to expose it to a bigger audience.

Aaron: It's one of those things that I've loved since I was a kid. You start to love those things more as you get older and you want to re-live your youth. That's kinda what I do all the time, re-live my youth. These people made some amazing records, by any means necessary, out of their basement. It was a local, really urban street scene. If you wanted to go to a club, that was all there was.

Does that ambassador-status put weight on your shoulders?

Aaron: No. Not really. For me it was something I wanted to do. I wanted to put out the *Bmore Gutter* record. It was important for me to team up with someone like Samir. I grew up there and have a real attachment to the city. My whole family still lives there. It's not like I'm detached from Baltimore, even though I don't live there anymore. People don't realize that you have to leave so you can rebuild.

Where is B-More in its growth stages?

Aaron: We've done a tremendous amount of remixes this year, official remixes. We did an MTV thing, got a record coming out on Koch. We've sort of laid the foundation for gutter music, which we consider the next level of B-more.

That's more of the uptempo crazy thing.

Samir: People will watch *The Wire* on HBO and see the reality. All we're doing is bringing our brand of hip hop. We're about to bring it to the forefront. Everything we tell is the truth.

Aaron: We're not trying to water it down.

Samir: I'm hoping people are ready 'cause it's gutter, just like *The Wire*. The show didn't exaggerate anything.

So you like the show?

Aaron: I love it. Some people in Baltimore didn't really like it because it reminds them of how f*cked up their neighborhood is.

Samir: I didn't really watch it until we got some songs on there. But that's because I don't like to dwell on what I live in. The attitude is really gutter because you've got a whole generation of not caring, abuse, drugs, spousal abuse.

Does the music reflect that or is it a getaway from that?

Samir: This first volume reflects that. The second volume I want to get away from that.

Aaron: I really like that gutter sh*t.

Samir: That's what makes us a team. By me living in it and seeing the results of the environment and what it's done to my family.

And what's coming down the pipeline?

Samir: *Club Crack*, coming in spring.

Aaron: The new sound of hip hop.

Samir: And it's called gutter. Hip hop is something you live, so I think this is gonna be the first time in a while for realistic hip hop.

Aaron: It should put Baltimore on the map.