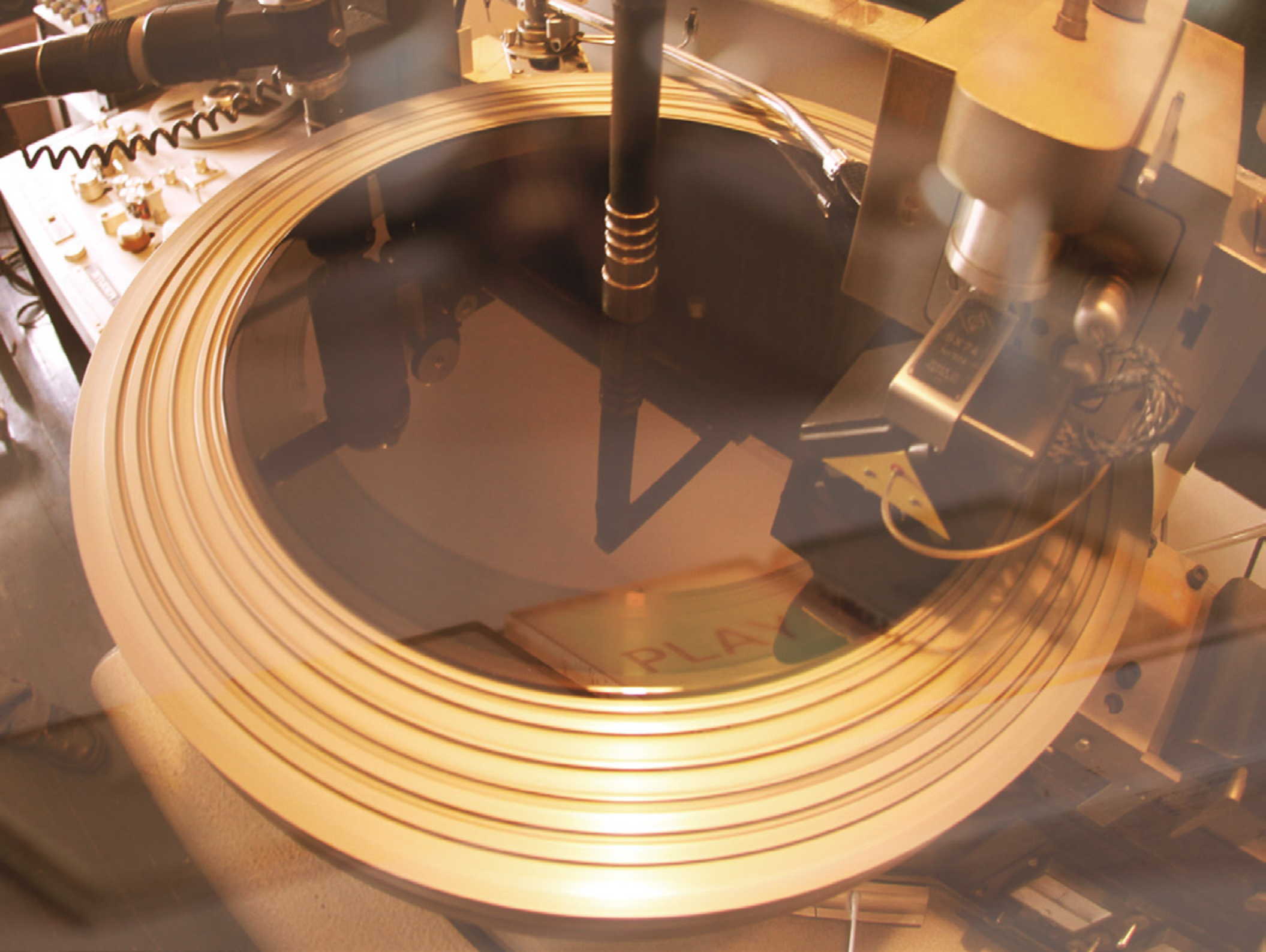




Pretty Lights

A Color Map
of the Sun



A COLOR MAP OF THE SUN

Pretty Lights are the moments that catch our eyes. They are the things that make us look twice, think twice or inspire us to create our own version of beauty. They are everywhere and all the time. During the massive musical project that was making this album, I learned of an experiment performed by Isaac Newton in the 1670s. He was conducting tests with light and prisms when he discovered that all color exists within white light. Using a prism to separate a thin beam of sunlight into all the colors of light, he witnessed the entire spectrum of visible color disperse across the room. He described what he saw, quite poetically, as “a color map of the sun”. That phrase resonated with me and eventually took on a broader meaning, a kind of a romantic description of the vibrations by which we perceive the world. Light is vibration, sound is vibration and we are beyond lucky to be able to experience and manipulate both.

With ***A Color Map of the Sun*** I set out to create an album that was everything I wanted to hear in an album: diversity and consistency, cohesiveness and unpredictability, beauty and sadness and optimism... but mostly, really, I just wanted to make good music. I wanted to manifest my vision of an evolved Pretty Lights style that was fresh and original with a sound that was old, warm and soulful.

In the past I would produce music by fusing live instrumentation and electronic synthesis with sampling old, obscure vinyl. I would use upwards of 25 samples from different records for a single song and through a process of chopping, tuning, stretching and a multitude of other techniques, I would make all of the pieces sound as if they were meant to exist together from the beginning in a completely new and original song.

To make ***A Color Map of the Sun*** I first created an entire collection of records of my own compositions. It wasn't as simple as recording a bunch of music and pressing it to vinyl though. To truly recreate the sound and feel of old vinyl, it was absolutely crucial to pay the utmost attention to every detail. Everything had to be right; the instruments, the microphones, the mixing board, the tape machine, and especially the studio and the vibe. I was attempting to compose music from so many genres and make the recordings sound like they were from several different time periods. I did this because I wanted to have as many options as possible while digging through the recordings later when producing songs for the actual album. All of the composition and sound design happened on the fly, in the moment, and with the single intention of creating amazing sounding music. I emulated the recording process of small soul record labels from the sixties by recording an entire band in the same room to stereo tape with all analog gear, no multi-tracking and no computers. By putting together different groups of musicians on a daily basis, different bands were formed with the purpose of playing styles from funk, soul and jazz, to folk, rock and classical. I searched out the most bizarre instruments and the most original instrumentalists to capture extremely unique sounds... sometimes with instruments I'd never even heard of, marxophone, koto, nyckelharpa, music boxes, toy piano, trumpet-violin, harmonium and on and on. I searched for vocalists that could take my lyrics and put their own incredible soul and emotion into them. I made beats for some of my favorite rappers in exchange for the ability to chop up the lyrics they wrote. Through all of this, I absolutely fell in love with the sound of analog. I'm not sure I could really tell the difference before this massive experiment but I most definitely learned to. Because of that, there was no way I could use anything but completely analog synthesis for the electronic sounds throughout the entire record. I built a modular synthesizer for this project and taught myself how to use it while on tour. Every electronic sound on the record was created with that modular synth.

After spending a year making vinyl, creating sounds, recording vocals and learning how to use an analog modular synth, I spent the next year crafting and producing songs. I did so in basically the same way I had before this project but I had a very different relationship to all the sounds I was using. I had forgotten about a lot of the music and sounds by the time I got around to producing with them but I always remembered how the sounds were created. Even the smallest pieces had a story and a memory I could look back on. The process was truly inspiring in and of itself. I learned more than I thought possible about music, about people, about myself and mostly about life. I really learned to appreciate slowing down and trying to enjoy every moment for what it is rather than always looking forward to the next thing, the next milestone in life. It's all life and it's all beautiful.

-Derek Vincent Smith





















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A COLOR MAP OF THE SUN

All songs written, composed, sampled, mangled, reconstructed, flipped, chopped and arranged by Derek Vincent Smith.

All lyrics written by Derek Vincent Smith (or re-imagined from traditional gospel and folk songs).

Recorded at Studio G in Brooklyn, Piety Street Recording in New Orleans, PL Studio in Denver, and the PL Tour Bus Studio all over the United States.

All songs produced by Derek Vincent Smith.
All songs engineered by Derek Vincent Smith and Joel Hamilton.
All songs mixed by Joel Hamilton and Derek Vincent Smith except “Prophet”, “So Bright”, “Vibe Vendetta” mixed by XOQ and Derek Vincent Smith.
A Color Map of the Sun Mastered by XOQ.
Live Studio Sessions From ***A Color Map of the Sun*** Mastered by Brian Gardner at Bernie Grundman Mastering.

Front and back cover art by Scott Hansen aka ISO50.
Art Direction of photo booklet by Krystle Blackburn and Scott Hansen.
Layout by The Uprising Creative.
All Photography by Krystle Blackburn.

STUDIO G SESSIONS BROOKLYN, NY

Derek Vincent Smith - Producer, Music Director
Joel Hamilton - Engineer, Analog Mastermind
Francisco Botero - Assistant Engineer
Matt Labozza - Assistant Engineer
Mike Jinno - Assistant Engineer
Alexis Berthelot - Assistant Engineer

MUSICIANS

Adam Deitch - Drums, Percussion
Nigel Hall - Wurlitzer, Hammond B3, Piano
Eric Krasno - Electric Guitar, Electric Bass
Derek Vincent Smith - Electric Bass, Wurlitzer, Rhodes, Resonator Mandolin, Flute, Modular Synthesizers, Music Box, Piano, Toy Piano, Thai Accordion Reeds, Hawaiian Art Violin, Marxophone, Harmonium, Live Analog Effects, MPC2500
Phil Salvaggio - Electric and Acoustic Guitar, Wurlitzer
Dave Smoota Smith - Trombone

Jason Crosby - Viola
Garth Stevenson - Upright Bass
Jordan McLean - Trumpet
Matthias Bossi - Piano, Percussion
Carla Kihlstedt - Nyckelharpa, Trumpet Violin, Violin, Vocals
Stu Brooks - Electric Bass
Mike Deller - Keys
Joe McGinty - Wurlitzer, Hammond B3
Joel Hamilton - Waterphone, Drums, Live Analog Effects
Ches Gordon Smith - Vibraphone

VOCALISTS

Yolanda Hagins of the Harlem Gospel Choir
Shakira Jones of the Harlem Gospel Choir
Nigel Hall
Jedediah Parish
Connie Petruk

PIETY STREET RECORDING SESSIONS

NEW ORLEANS, LA

Derek Vincent Smith - Producer, Music Director
Wesley Fontenot - Engineer
Earl Scioneaux III - Assistant Engineer

MUSICIANS

Brian Coogan - Piano, Rhodes, Wurlitzer, Hammond B3,
Toy Piano
Ben Jaffe - Upright Bass, Tuba
Derek Vincent Smith - Electric Bass, Wurlitzer
Simon Lott - Drums
Detroit Brooks - Electric Guitar
Carl LeBlanc - Electric Guitar
Mario Abney - Trumpet
Rod Hodges - Electric Slide Guitars
Andrew Baham -Trumpet

MC's

Talib Kweli - Featured on "Around The Block"
The Grouch - Appears on "Let's Get Busy"
Eligh - Featured on "So Bright" and appears on "Let's
Get Busy"
Lyrics Born - Appears on "Vibe Vendetta"
Cl of The Foodchain - Appears on "Go Down Sunshine"

ORCHESTRATION AND STRINGS

Philip Sheppard - Cello, Electric Cello, Violin, Viol

DRUMS

All live drums that were sampled, chopped and flipped on *A Color Map of the Sun* were played by Adam Deitch.

Jeff Albert - Trombone
Wes Anderson - Trombone
Earl Scioneaux III - Wurlitzer, Hammond B3

VOCALISTS

Big Al Carson
Thais Clark
"Uncle" Lionel Batiste
Thomas Singleton
Glen David Andrews

THANK YOU

This project started as a light bulb flickering above my head in the beginning of 2011 and took over two years to bring to completion. Along the way there have been so many people that have been completely integral in making this record a reality, without whom this idea/project/experiment/album would never have been possible. First of all, I want to thank the love of my life, Krystle Blackburn, who has been by my side every step of the way, always giving me truthful opinions, wise advice and sincere encouragement. Also for taking beautiful photos and documenting the entire process with a keen and ready eye. I want to thank Joel Hamilton for being the best and coolest engineer I ever could have dreamt of working with. Joel opened my mind to so many sounds and ideas and he was the mastermind who made it possible to make the tape recordings actually sound like sessions that were recorded several decades ago, amazing skills! I want to thank Adam Deitch and Eric Krasno in Brooklyn, and Ben Jaffe and Brian Coogan in New Orleans for not only being incredible musicians on the record but also for introducing me to the massive variety of musicians that I wanted to work with during the recording sessions. I want to thank Randy Reed, Adam Foley, and Sheneza Mohammed for managing this project (and me) and working tirelessly behind the scenes so that I could focus as much of my energy on the MUSIC as possible. Damn. I am realizing how many people I really want to thank so I am just going to list everyone off in no particular order. Thank you so much for everything you've done, just know that I am incredibly grateful. I want to thank every musician, singer and lyricist involved in this project for working with me and helping make the sounds in my head come to life, Phil Salvaggio for countless amounts of help in so many aspects of the recording process and in the PL touring world (especially his incredible flight booking skills), Greg Ellis aka the Lazer Shark for being the world's best lighting designer and an awesome friend, my entire touring crew for making all the live shows go off incredibly smooth, David Najarian and his team at RadioEdit for working on all the beautiful visuals to accompany the songs and Scott Hansen aka ISO50 for beautiful album art. I want to thank my whole family for being so understanding regarding how busy I am and always being extremely supportive, especially my mother, my little brother Joseph and my nephew Isaac. I want to thank Ginger Perry, Sophie Reeves and Amy Neale for being awesome assistants throughout and making everything less stressful, Hunter Williams (and his team) for being an incredible agent and friend...and always working on making me extra busy even when I'm trying to produce an album ;-), Matthew Brown for his help on the album documentary, Michael Fiebach and his team at Fame House, the entire Red Light team, Ambrosia Healey and Erin Cooney at The Fun Star, Kevin Wortis at Girlie Action, everyone at Studio G, everyone at Piety Street Recording, Barry & Linda Blackburn for their support and love, Paul Gold at Salt Mastering, Dwight Wiles and Katie Cline at Smith Wiles & Co, Reid Hunter and David Gold for amazing legal support, Dr. Buzz & Dr. G for keeping me healthy and being great friends, and of course, the entire PLM crew of artists for being incredible friends and always inspiring me and each other. Oh and Krystle and I's kitten, Neko, she is the shit and she goes everywhere that we do. I want to give a massive thank you and shout out to the PL Family and all the loyal and supportive fans everywhere. I am infinitely appreciative. I make this music for us; without all of you, there is no way this album would have ever materialized. Keep it fresh. Peace.

-Derek Vincent Smith



A Color Map Of The Sun

Live Studio Sessions from A Color Map Of The Sun

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Color Of My Soul | Reel 15 Break 5 |
| Press Pause | Reel 5 Break 3 |
| Let's Get Busy | Reel 9 Break 6 |
| Around The Block (featuring Talib Kweli) | Reel 11 Break 2 |
| Yellow Bird | Reel 6 Break 4 |
| Go Down Sunshine | Reel 8 Break 2 |
| So Bright (featuring Eligh) | Reel 18 Session 1 |
| Vibe Vendetta | Reel 17 Break 4 |
| Done Wrong | Reel 4 Break 3 |
| Prophet | Reel 12 Break 2 |
| One Day They'll Know | Reel 6 Break 5 |
| Always All Ways | Reel 3 Break 3 |
| My Only Hope | Reel 7 Break 1 |
| Where I'm Trying To Go (Bonus) | |
| All I've Ever Known (Bonus) | |
| Sweet Long Life (Bonus) | |