



Ultra Gets Live

Ultra Music Festival

4 p.m. Friday, March 26, and noon Saturday, March 27
 Bicentennial Park, 301 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
 Tickets cost \$89.95 and up; ultramusicfestival.com

BY JOHN HOOD

Everyone knows Ultra brings to our town the crème de la crème of world-class DJs. It always has and always will. But in recent years, a live-performance element has crept into the festival's equation, whether it's from head spinners branching out or straight-up bands. Here's a look at some of the best of the best of 2010.

Friday, March 26

Passion Pit

By now, the story of Michael Angelako sitting in his Emerson dorm room and composing songs for his college girlfriend is the stuff of legend. Those songs became the *Chunk of Change* EP, and they would put Passion Pit in the hearts and minds of just about every indie hipster. A mere two years later, Angelako, now backed by a full-fledged band, is headlining tours and taking the main stage at festivals, and his chipmunk-voiced electro-pop songs threaten to become mainstream. Why? Because they're as rousing as a weekend night and about as catchy as a cold. Expect those songs to rouse the Ultra throngs into a wide-eyed fervor.

Crystal Method

Last year, when Crystal Method drove its Divided by Night tour into Revolution, the band nearly blew the roof off the joint. But Ken Jordan had warned we "should be prepared for a massive video and audio onslaught," so we weren't completely taken by surprise. Still, to hear and see and feel all of that energy spring from the fingertips of two men did take us aback. If the Method gave us an onslaught then, it'll surely mow us all down now, under the Miami sky.

Disco Biscuits

It's tempting to tag Disco Biscuits a simple jam band, albeit one heavily tinged with electronics. You might even be tempted to call them "trance fusion" or "livetronica." But after a few disco biscuits of your own, genre tags seem to be well beside the point. Yes, the Philly boys are the perennial festival favorites of a certain neo-hippie type. And yes, they sometimes make you want to bang a bong. Still, the Biscuits are crowd pleasers, and they have been for a decade and a half. That their crowd just so happens to consist largely of the great unwashed is hardly their fault. You try living in a tent and see how clean you stay.

Little Boots

"Unforeseen circumstances" have forced Little Boots to cancel all of her North American

dates after next month's Coachella appearance, so this might be the last time for quite some time that you get to see the diminutively named British lass. Propelled by swoon-worthy tracks such as "Stuck on You" and "New in Town," last year's *Hands* LP hit the Top 5 in her native UK. The same songs helped ensure her *Illuminations* EP was warmly welcomed stateside. A clubby kind of new-age knockoff of Kylie Minogue (that's good) with a sass that's at once brash and beaming (that's better), Little Boots' music is made for dancing.

Groove Armada

If you haven't yet heard Groove Armada's collaboration with legendary crooner Bryan Ferry on the song "Shameless," you should be ashamed of yourself. It's the first time the dapper Roxy Music frontman joined forces with someone outside his stately realm, and it's a dreamy piece of sophisticated pop. It's also a good indicator of the esteem the duo has engendered over the many years, whether the two are drafting tracks to accompany sublime singers or hosting their annual LoveBox event in London. Groove Armada has a new LP out, *Black Light*, and another new look at a world best seen with your eyes closed, your mind unplugged, and your feet moving to the beat. And because this appearance is one of only five North American shows, it's probably the only chance you'll have this year to take in the heady view.

Afrobeta

One of Miami's hardest-working and highest-caliber electro party bands, Afrobeta certainly

Music

The mammoth dance fest has more than DJs.

deserves to perform at Ultra. And if the songs on the dynamite duo's brand-new *Do You Party?* EP make their way onto the airwaves, this will be but the first of many festivals to come. Catchy but not inane, upbeat but not uptight, Afrobeta's tunes provide the kind of uplifting good time smart folks long for in a continuously dumbed-down world. That the pair happens to hail from sunny South Florida makes it only that much more special.

Saturday, March 27

Faithless Sound System

Five albums and 15 years into their career, the members of Faithless are relatively old hands at this festival game, but their most recent single, "Sun to Me," proves they can still spin out new sounds with the best of them. This marks the British outfit's first Florida appearance, and beamed up into Sound System mode, the band will undoubtedly put on a debut to remember.

Faithless Sound System and Orbital will play their first Florida shows at Ultra.

You don't last in this business without having something to offer, and Faithless offers more than its fair share. And just think: They even make you feel good about losing your mind.

Orbital

Here's another Florida first from another group of festival veterans. In fact, many

people say it was Orbital's initial appearance at Glastonbury in 1994 that changed the way rock folks looked at electronica. The duo is set to reprise its legendary performance later this summer for that UK festival's 40th anniversary, but not before it takes the main stage at Ultra. Word is that the tag team has new tracks to add to its long and heralded hit list and that catching the act live will be the only way you'll hear them — for now, anyway. After 20 years of head-tripping wonder, it's a cinch that Orbital will wow the crowd. What isn't so certain is just how long it'll take to un-wow yourself the next day.

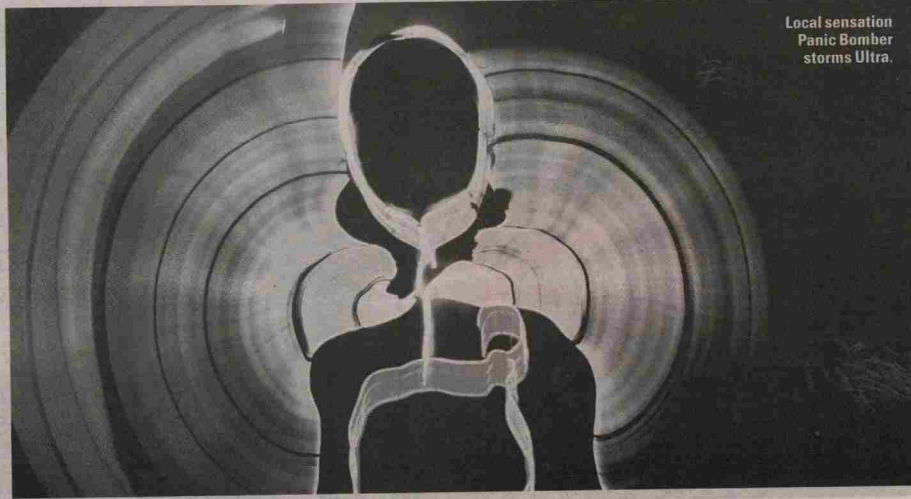
The Bloody Beetroots

It's highly likely folks would be drawn to the Bloody Beetroots' set even if this weren't their first American show. But it is, and that makes the draw all the more magnetic. Yeah, we know these Italians have stormed our shores before, yet they never did so like they will this time. For Ultra, they're tagged "the Bloody Beetroots Death Crew 77" and beamed up by drummer Edward Grinch. The Venom-masked men who seem to score the soundtrack for all of our darker selves should shake the night into a beautiful oblivion. And isn't that what it's all about anyhow?

Panic Bomber

New Times has previously described him as "a live dance music act that performs in the DJ booth." Translation: Miami-based electro-thrasher Panic Bomber is kind of counteracting the sad fact that live bands don't go down so much in clubs anymore. He's also amply illustrating the irony of his act. Onstage, and backed by a gang of like-minded maniacs, Panic Bomber (born Richard Haig) will undoubtedly counteract anything else you care to mention. With a new EP, *Discipline*, to hawk, and a manifesto to hang on every lamppost, Panic Bomber might just counteract the live act itself and in so doing bring it to new heights.

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Local sensation Panic Bomber storms Ultra.

