

This Transmission is Coming to You...

Scott Kirkland and Ken Jordan of the Crystal Method

Interview by Dorothy Parvaz

Photography by Rodney Gitzel

Surprise, surprise, Las Vegas produces something besides shot-gun weddings and Elvis impersonators. It produces the Crystal Method -- no, not a new way to smoke crank, but an electronic music act.



The duo of Scott Kirkland and Ken Jordan were in town for a performance at the Palladium, recently, and had a few minutes to chat after completing their sound check.



Ken first grabs something atrocious from the vending machine in lieu of dinner (geez, don't they feed these guys?) and is joined by Scott, who somehow managed to find a peanut butter sandwich, and who is worried about how his breath smells. A stick of gum later, the guys start talking about how they got their name, which interestingly enough, has more to do with a beat-up cars, a bad rapper and a considerate friend.

"We were working as producers with this rapper, who wasn't a really good rapper, but had this one

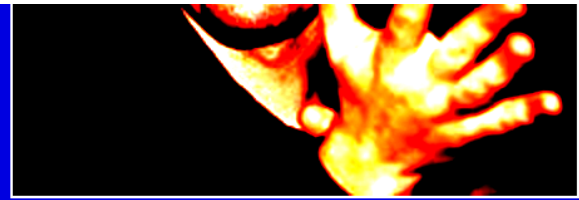
moment... we were talking about this girl, Crystal, who Ken and I used to be friends with, who used to drive us around because our cars were always in the shop," says Scott. (They had a Volkswagen Rabbit GTI and an 83 Mazda RX7 that always broke down. Then there was Ken's '64 Rambler, which he says he bought for about \$800 and sold for \$5.)

"So anyway," says Scott, trying to bring us back to the story, "we were talking about this girl, and this rapper says, 'Oh, the Crystal method,' referring to our way of transportation," says Scott.

Ken figures the guy probably meant it as a pun, some sort of drug reference, but it sounded like a great name for a band. "It was one of those magic moments when he actually said something that made sense... the first time this rapper was ever poetic," says Scott, laughing. "He still owes us money."



Both Scott and Ken seem so laid back and low key that it's hard to imagine them sweating over slot machines, which surely they must, being from Las Vegas, that massive arcade in the desert, right?



"When you grow up there, you realize 'Wait a second, there's *that* new hotel, and *that* new hotel, and all these people are working, and all this money is coming in because there are a *lot* of losers,' and kind of immediately -- unless you're retarded -- you get the idea that if you decide to gamble, you're going to lose," says Scott.

Of course, that said, he also admits that both he and Ken "have been retarded for a few hours" now and then. Roulette and black jack are the two games that suck them in, with a bit of video poker now and again to "reap the benefits of free drinking," says Scott, feeling homesick already. The two of them relocated to Los Angeles years ago, back in their deejaying and producing days. Of course, they don't really deejay anymore. Well, except occasionally for food and some tequila or Rolling Rock.



The last really big tour the Crystal Method were on was the Electric Highway tour -- the first mass-marketed all-electronic concert, the Lollapalooza of the techno world. That's right. It was a *concert* -- not a rave, or a party, or whatever. Sure, it went all night, but it was sponsored by *Spin* and BF Goodridge, so there were tires all over the place. Very odd.

The Phoenix stop on the tour was held at a race track on the edges of the city limits, and featured this emcee guy hollering, "Yo motherfuckers, rush the stage and put your hands together for the Crystal

Method!"

"That guy was a clown, I dunno what he was doing," says Scott. Ken can't stop laughing, obviously remembering the stunned look on the faces of about 3,000 party kids, who realized that they were being treated as though they were at a [Wu Tang Clan](#) concert. But it wasn't *all* bad.

"That night will forever live in magical infamy to those who were there," says Ken, lamenting the fact that they have no photos or videos of what was probably their most visually spectacular show to date ("You were there? Did you have a camera?" No, unfortunately.).

The Crystal Method went on at about 3 a.m., just as one of those amazing thunderstorms Arizona is famous for broke out. The storm glowed purple and blue behind them, and man were they ever getting soaked. But they played on -- until the tarp above the sound booth broke from the weight of the water and the soundboard got drenched and shorted out. Not that

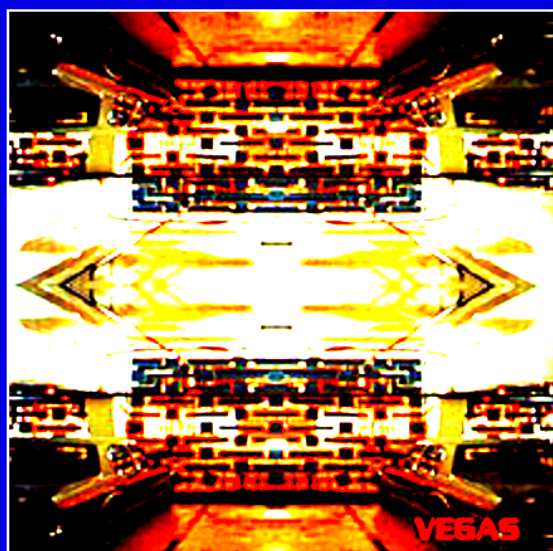


the guys lost any sleep over losing an expensive piece of equipment. "It wasn't our board!" Scott says, as both he and Ken chuckle. "It was the Electric Highway's board!" they laugh even harder.



Although they're aware that they are part of a new breed of techno artists who perform in concert venues (as opposed to at raves), Scott and Ken don't really feel that their shows are compromised by the rules surrounding legitimate venues.

"We're just trying to bring the best elements of both worlds. There's lots of good elements to a rave; but, then again, there's really serious negative elements like they're not dependable, there's shady promoters, whether or not the deejays and the acts that are listed are gonna be there. So we want the reliability, the dependability, the consistency of the legitimate concert world. We also want the good elements of raves, like deejays, longer events, different styles of music involved," says Ken. He has a point. The likelihood cops busting their gig at the Palladium is pretty slim.



Still, they don't seem too happy with how traditional concert venues work, when it comes to stuff like assigned seating and uptight security guards.

"In the regular rock world, you might have problems with people jumping up [on stage] or people getting themselves in a position where they might endanger the band or the audience, but with these crowds... everyone's happy to be there... no one's screwing anything up," says Scott.

"We only play in places where there is a dance floor right in front of the stage," adds Ken. And where there are no security barriers to keep the crowd from the stage.

"Actually, a little while ago a guy came in and said 'Okay, we got the barrier, where would like the barrier up?' and Arthur, our tour manager, is like 'No, no barrier,'" says Scott. Of course, the barrier guy wasn't going to let up that easily.

"He goes 'What? What do you mean no barrier? There's gonna be 800 people here...' and Arthur's like 'Well, never had a barrier, they don't like barriers, they don't need barriers,' and the guy's like 'Are you sure?'" laughs Scott.

"Everybody expects something... they reflect back to some bad moment where [Marilyn Manson](#) was on stage and everybody died..." says Scott, figuring that must be the reason for the Gestapo security tactics at some venues.

The Crystal Method's debut, [Vegas](#), has a real upbeat sound to it. Nothing too spacey or moody. Just lots of synthesizer bounce and happy loops. I'd try to pop some label on their music (like say, big beat), but I won't. They just want you to call their music "electronic," not even "electronica," and don't ask them to get more specific than that -- or else.