



BLADE

2.0

With their dazzling, kinetic Blade 2.0 live show, The Glitch Mob once again set the bar for live electronic music...

Words: ANDY HERMANN

When The Glitch Mob take the stage in the early morning hours at the Lightning in a Bottle festival in California, it's a homecoming of sorts. Except for 2014, when they were off touring the globe in support of their second album, 'Love Death Immortality', the bass trio or its component members — Justin Boreta, Edward "edIT" Ma and Josh "Ooah" Mayer — have played the boutique camping festival every year since its inception.

"They've been supporting us since day one, really," says Ooah of the festival that's become a rite of passage for every major West Coast bass artist, from Bassnectar to Tokimonsta. "They've been a very instrumental part of our whole upbringing as artists," Boreta agrees. "They were some of the first promoters to put us on at a festival."

The performance is special for two other reasons: It takes place, to the day, on the eighth anniversary of the release of the group's 2010 debut album, 'Drink The Sea'. And it marks the festival debut of 'The Blade 2.0', an expanded and even more eye-popping version of the live stage show they rolled out with 'Love Death Immortality'.

At LIB, the sheer visceral impact of The Blade 2.0 is almost overwhelming. Taking the stage to the epic, menacing sounds of 'Drink The Sea' opening track 'Animus Vox', the trio rotate between hammering away at massive taiko-like drums and playing outsized electronic pads that resemble a giant's MPC. For the next 90 minutes, they barrage their audience with waves of percussion and bass, building to the electrifying climax of a track whose title sums up their go-for-broke approach to live performance: 'We Can Make The World Stop'.

There are no video screens; the focus is squarely on the three performers and their banks of custom instruments. In the era of EDM, too much emphasis has been placed on live visuals that, however much they may dazzle, are divorced from the music they accompany. The Glitch Mob's show rebukes that trend. "We want to put on a spectacle, but we also want to be honest about our music," Ooah explains.

"The idea is to create a connection with people where they can see what it is we're doing up there," adds Boreta. To that end, the pads are tilted forward, towards the audience, and all laptops are hidden, so there are no screens separating performer and spectator. "Our music lends itself to that," says Boreta. "It's not music that really makes sense for us to go out and DJ. It's something that needs to have the energy of a live band."

Not that the trio has anything against DJing. Several hours before they hit LIB's Lightning stage for their headlining set, two-thirds of the group, Boreta and Ooah, step into the DJ booth at the much smaller Favela Bar for the festival debut of 29 Palms, a new DJ project Ooah describes as a "psychedelic, slow house thing." They'll spin later this summer at Electric Forest and Shambhala, as well.

29 Palms is "influenced by a lot of the tribal, melodic house that's been happening over the last few years," Ooah explains. "We kind of stumbled into our little version of that."

"If I go out to dance, I don't actually go out to bass music personally, just because we do so much of that," Boreta adds. "I like the repetition of house and techno. So this is our take on that."

Before either performance, the three old friends sit side-by-side on a purple foam couch in the artists' lounge behind the Lightning stage, greeting other artists and





talking to press about *The Blade 2.0* and their third album, *'See Without Eyes'*, which came out in early May. Their complementary energies mirror the sometimes contradictory dynamics that make their music more complex and intriguing than that of most of their peers. Boreta is the most upbeat and boisterous of the three, peppering his speech with colorful turns of phrase. He hails Lightning in a Bottle's producers, The Do LaB, for their "reckless creativity," and describes *The Blade 2.0* as having "its own musical force field." Ooah is just as talkative but more intense, while edIT, sitting between them, is the group's calm center of gravity, rarely speaking but making it count whenever he does.

"In the songwriting process, we never want to be limited when we're writing songs by the fact that everything has to be playable on *The Blade*," edIT notes. His black shorts are covered in a repeated pattern that, upon closer examination, spells out the words "Fuck It" — a two-word summation of the risk-taking philosophy that has guided his group. "So with *'See Without Eyes'*, there's a lot of songs we wrote — especially the mellower, emotional songs — we might potentially never play on the *Blade*, ever."

With so many bangers from their first two albums, it's a luxury they can now afford. *'See Without Eyes'* is still recognizably a Glitch Mob album, but after the anthemic *'Love Death Immortality'*, it represents a turn inward, into moodier, more emotional terrain. "Yeah, we went deep with this one," says Boreta. "It's funny, because some people hear a darker record and some people hear a lighter record."

"It's nice to hear from people how it's affecting their lives," Ooah adds. "They can connect to it in a deeper, emotional way."

As on *'Love Death Immortality'*, which featured crucial contributions from Sister Crayon (who return on *'See Without Eyes'* under their new name, *Rituals Of Mine*) and Nico Vega's Aja Volkman, collaborations played a key role on *'See Without Eyes'*. Half the album's tracks feature guest vocalists, all of whom were given free rein to add their own lyrical and melodic ideas to the Mob's nearly finished tracks, pushing songs into territory the trio never could have found on their own. "We're interested in the thing that's bigger than all of us," Boreta says. "That is the magic of music and creativity and awe and wonder."

He singles out Elohim's wistful, pensively delivered lyrics on *'I Could Be Anything'* and Tula's haunting, heavily filtered vocals on the percussive *'Keep On Breathing'* as examples of that magic. "Her take on it had flipped up the vibe so much that we loved it right away," says Boreta of the latter track. "That's the reaction that we're looking for."

That's not to say that *'See Without Eyes'* is all introspection and no catharsis. The album's instrumental centerpiece, *'Come Closer'*, rages as hard as anything the group has ever recorded. "That's a fun one to play," edIT agrees.

Later that night, the new track ignites the LIB crowd, achieving the seemingly impossible task of raising the energy even higher after they drop their blistering remix of The White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army." LED-bedecked Mob fans bounce in unison as the track's choppy bass riffs give way to a four-on-the-floor stomp. Onstage, Boreta, edIT and Ooah work their glowing pads with the intensity of soloing rock guitarists. Eight years to the day since their debut album was released, *The Glitch Mob* have returned to the festival that helped launch them — and it's good to be home.