

# RECORD RUNDOWN

Soulection's Joe Kay selects twenty-three records that inspire the label's "Sound of Tomorrow."

by Alice Price-Styles

Joe Kay has the most inspiring and infectious enthusiasm for music you are likely to encounter. He cofounded the Soulection radio show and record label with Andre Power from his college radio station KBeach at Cal State, Long Beach, and despite the project growing at a meteoric rate to its current status, his sense of wonderment has remained beautifully intact.

Originally intended to be a creative platform for friends and artists he had connected with through early podcasts, Soulection has expanded and solidified itself as one of the most exciting and forward-thinking collectives around today. With an in-house roster of producers and DJs, a popular radio show, label, and sold-out live events, Soulection has been moving from strength to strength while sharing music they believe in with listeners all over. Though based in Los Angeles, their reach and fan base is worldwide. This is due in great part to the ever-connected digital era they are tied to.

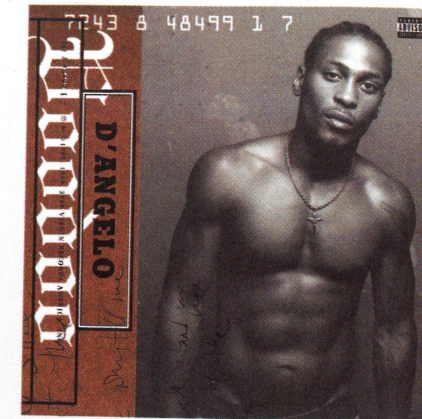
Their motto is "The Sound of Tomorrow," and we asked Joe Kay himself to share some of the records that influenced how Soulection got to where it is today.

## Describe "The Sound of Tomorrow."

Anything future or undiscovered. Undiscovered doesn't have to be new. The concept of tomorrow is always the future, it's indefinite. It's about discovering new music that people aren't familiar with. Something that feels good, something that makes you think. It could be something old or classic, a random dig from the '70s you never knew, and I still consider it the sound of tomorrow.

## Your selections balance traditional soul music with more modern production-oriented work. Do you feel "soul" is something that can permeate all music?

I actually talk about this all the time. Yes. Soul to me is heartfelt. It was categorized as a genre, but when you think about what soul is, it comes from the heart. Without our soul, we're just physical form. When it feels good, when it's heartfelt, when it hits you and it gets you moving, that's soulful. It could be the most energetic song or a heavy song, but still have soul in it. It doesn't have to be analog; it can be reflected and inspired and infused through electronic music. I truly feel that.



## D'Angelo Voodoo (Virgin) 2000

One of my favorite records ever. There's a song called "The Line," and the neo-soul sound of it really moved me. His uniqueness as an artist moved me. I like the *Black Messiah* album that came out, but I think *Voodoo* is the definition of a timeless record. You can play it from start to finish, and no matter what era, it brings you back home.

## Arthur Verocai

### Arthur Verocai (Continental) 1972

A Brazilian record that a lot of people may or may not be familiar with. Hearing how people like Madlib sampled it a lot really opened me up. At first, I thought, "Is this Madlib making original music?" But then I digged and realized it came from this amazing source. It has soul, and [the singing is] beautiful.



## Madvillain

### Madvillainy (Stones Throw) 2004

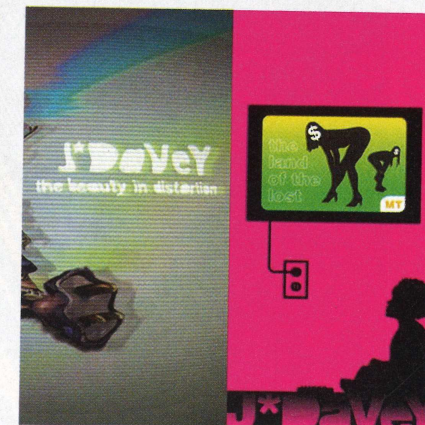
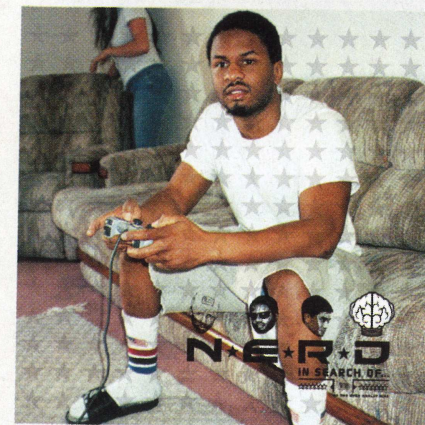
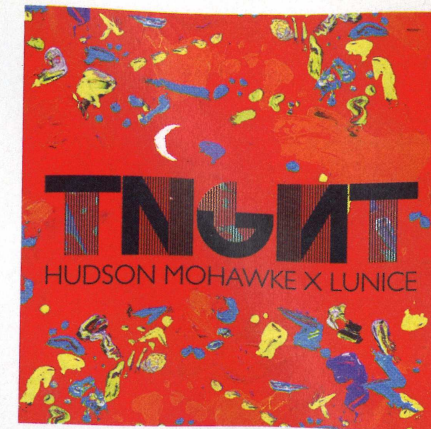
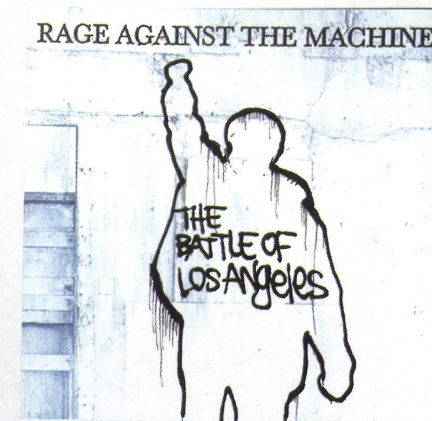
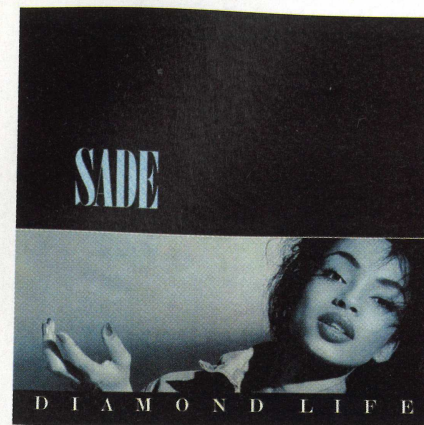
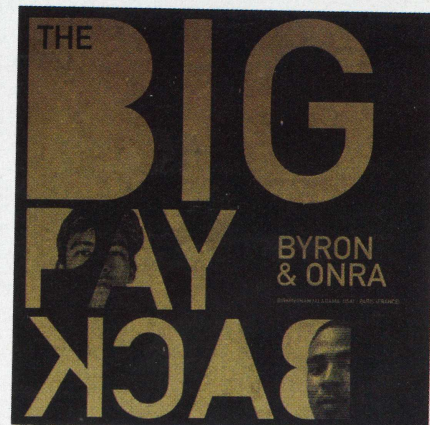
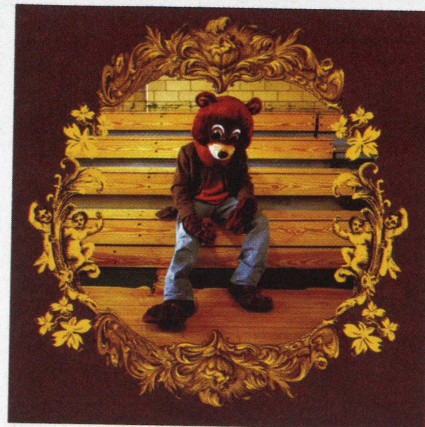
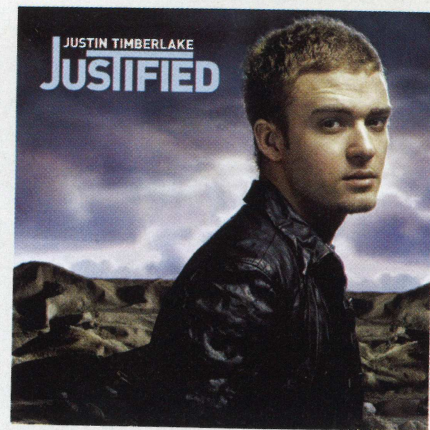
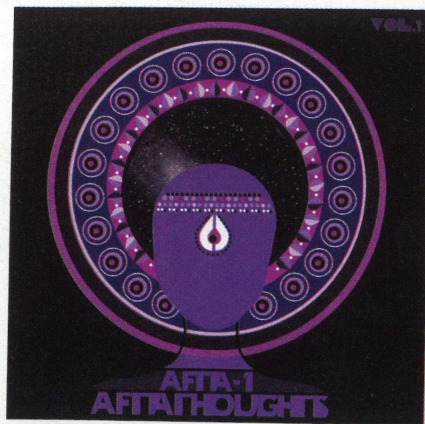
The whole Stones Throw era, with Madlib, Dilla, Quasimoto, and DOOM, was a big part of my life growing up, and was when I first got exposed to instrumental hip-hop. I was fifteen, sixteen, trying to find out who I was in life and going through all types of weird stages. The album cover shot is by one of our good friends and mentors at Soulection, Eric Coleman. Coleman actually got us our office space where we're currently at, and right across from us are Coleman and Madlib in the same building. It's kind of crazy, like it came out of a dream of mine.

## Slum Village

### Fantastic Vol. 1 (Donut Boy) 1996

### Fantastic Volume II (Good Vibe) 2000

Crazy records that I consider timeless and still play in my sets. Just the production on them alone! Dilla and the original Slum Village crew inspired my sound a lot.



**Afta-1**

**Aftathoughts Vol. 1 (Circulations) 2008**  
If there was anyone I thought would blow up like Flying Lotus, I thought it was going to be him. His sound was so ahead of its time for 2008. It was futuristic and very soulful, very modern and very feel-good—and something that was progressive from Dilla instrumentals or Pete Rock.

**Various Artists**

**Beat Dimensions Vol. 1 (Rush Hour) 2007**  
Around 2006, 2007, Jay Scarlett and Cinnaman, both guys from Europe, put together a compilation of all these producers worldwide. It was my first exposure to these crazy futuristic beats. Flying Lotus and Samiyam, when they were FLYamSAM, had a song called “Green Tea Power.” It was very lo-fi but very spacey, and it totally got me thinking.

**Flying Lotus Los Angeles (Warp) 2008**

That was 2008 and when I was going to Low End Theory every week. Flying Lotus wasn't as big as he is now. Being connected to the scene and watching him bloom was a big source of inspiration to me. The title *Los Angeles* is special as that's where we're from, this melting pot city of so much talent and competition that you have to do a lot to stand out.

**Kanye West**

**The College Dropout (Roc-A-Fella) 2004**  
Again I was in school and going through this crazy time. The irony was, I was about to go to college at the time. It's another timeless record. He had more of his own original production on it—that was his day. Seeing that he produced and rapped triggered me to realize that you have to be versatile in order to make it.

**Justin Timberlake Justified (Jive) 2002**

Another special one. Pharrell and Chad [Hugo] had such a major hand in the music world in the 2000s, all the production they had on the radio, and that sound was so soulful and heartwarming.

**The Big Payback [Byron and Onra]**

**The Big Payback (Just Like Vibes) 2007**  
In about 2007, 2008, they were the first ones to really do future soul music. They had this crazy post-neo-soul vibe; it felt from the future and it felt good. Very wavy and downtempo. Specifically, there's a song on there called “The Return” and it really opened my mind as an instrumental song.

**Sade Diamond Life (Epic) 1984**

Sade has a very special place in my life. I love all her albums, but *Diamond Life* moved me a lot. The artwork, her message, and the production. And I appreciated how as an artist she always gave her saxophone player, Stuart Matthewman, a little time to shine. I love that.

**N\*E\*R\*D In Search Of... (Virgin) 2001**

Taught me to express myself. To hear the Neptunes be experimental and break away from the traditional sound that they were doing, and have bits of soul and funk and indie and punk at times, was amazing. I was starting to get the idea of production, and understanding more of the people behind the beat.

**Rage Against the Machine**

**Evil Empire (Epic) 1996**  
**The Battle of Los Angeles (Epic) 1999**

The energy of those records helped me to fight my battles and express myself. Zack de la Rocha was such a thinker, so liberal, and such a rebel. He wasn't about the fame, it wasn't flashy, and yet they were so popular and inspirational to so many people. I feel like he really opened up a lot of peoples' minds. Their whole sound was so monumental. I actually wish they were still together putting out records.

**J\*DaVeY**

**The Beauty in Distortion / The Land of the Lost (Interdependent Media) 2008**

I remember going to see them play a show with the Cool Kids at the Roxy, probably 2006, and at the time they weren't that big. She reminded me of Erykah Badu, but she still had her own sound, and as a duo had this wavy-futuristic-punk sound. That record had some amazing production on it that allowed me to open up my mind.

**Erykah Badu Baduizm (Universal) 1996**

**Mama's Gun (Motown) 2000**  
Hearing her voice soothed me, and hearing her stay true to the sound. I was exposed to amazing artists through her: Questlove and Dilla, all these great producers that she was working with.

**Dwele Subject (Virgin) 2003**

All those songs on there really moved me. Taking inspiration from the D'Angelo era and keeping it still alive at that time was super important.

**TNGHT [Hudson Mohawke and Lunice]**

**TNGHT (Warp) 2012**  
They spawned this whole sound that we're still hearing on a more modern level currently. You still hear so many producers trying to replicate that deeper, darker trap sound that's heavy and has so many elements and so busy and so experimental, but still beat friendly. That record today is still one of the most influential records from the beat world that I think people try to replicate or put into their music.

**The Roots**

**Do You Want More?!!!??! (Geffen) 1994**  
A classic, one of those records you can play from start to finish. It opened me up to the live instrumentation and the message, more conscious rapping.

**Common Be (Geffen) 2005**

Seeing Kanye go from doing his albums to going and doing a whole album for another artist was very inspiring to me. The message and Kanye's production are so good.

**Kendrick Lamar**

**good kid, m.A.A.d city (Aftermath) 2012**  
Seeing [singer] Anna Wise from sonnymoon, who came from the beat-scene era around 2008, put on the album was like, “Damn, it's not that far away.” This whole sound that we've been trying to build can easily be on Kendrick or anyone's album nowadays. I thought Kendrick had a great message, and being someone that's in a huge spotlight but still able to bring a more soulful sound. I think that was important for music in the past couple of years. ●