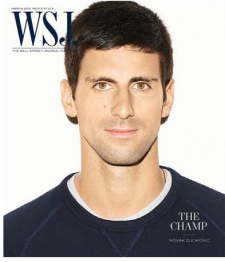


PRESSBOOK

Xavier VEILHAN

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AUDIOVISUAL CLUB
Veilhan (right) and an assistant working with producer Rick Rubin in his Malibu, CA, home.

BEHIND THE MUSIC

Using cutting-edge 3-D imaging technology, French artist Xavier Veilhan makes sculptures depicting the world's top producers—giving voice to the industry's often unsung heroes.

BY DAVID SWANSON

ON A BRIGHT AFTERNOON last December, Xavier Veilhan found himself in a modernist mansion perched high above the Pacific Ocean, marveling at the long path that had led him to this moment. As '60s psychedelia played on the sound system, music producer Rick Rubin—co-founder of Def Jam and former co-head of Columbia Records, as well as one of the artist's heroes—lay motionless on a bed as a team of Veilhan's assistants worked to capture his image, turning their boss's creative vision into reality.

The 51-year-old Veilhan was at Rubin's Malibu, California, compound to work on his portrait series "Producers," a collection of sculptural pieces

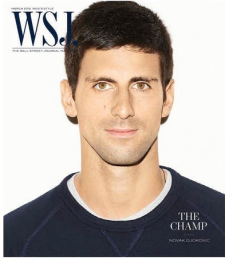
devoted to the music makers hidden behind the curtain. ("Producers" will be shown as part of a joint exhibition of Veilhan's musically inspired artwork held simultaneously at Galerie Perrotin's New York and Paris locations this spring.) "I'm interested in the idea that a lot of main decisions are taken by people that you may not really know," says Veilhan, likening the producers' anonymity to that of a visual artist like himself.

"What he's building captures the essence of who we are without necessarily focusing on the specifics of our physical bodies," says contemporary hit maker Pharrell Williams. "Xavier is a genius."

For the past decade, the Paris-based artist has

been using 3-D imaging to create striking, often monumental sculptures in some of the world's most conspicuous locales: London's Barbican, Midtown Manhattan and the Palace of Versailles, where he mounted works inspired by architects. The parallels between music and visual art have long fascinated Veilhan, who grew up in Normandy listening to Devo and crafting sailboats alongside his father. But Veilhan's passion, like that of so many music fanatics, was coupled with a lack of aptitude. "Maybe that's why I became a visual artist," he says, laughing. "Music is like a foreign country. I love to explore it, but I'm not a citizen."

For the exhibitions, Veilhan traveled the >



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world, seeking out a who's-who of music visionaries, capturing a 3-D image of each using a scanner that operates as both a camera and a laser, and turning the results into renderings in materials ranging from aluminum-charged resin (for reggae legend Lee "Scratch" Perry) to sequoia wood (for Pharrell). "With Rick Rubin, I wanted to use solid gold, but it was too expensive," says Veilhan, who settled for oak. The entire series forms an alternate visual history of contemporary music—the producers have worked with everyone from Frank Sinatra and Michael Jackson (Quincy Jones) to Paul McCartney and Radiohead (Nigel Godrich).

Scanning sessions last up to an hour and require subjects to stay perfectly still in poses, an ordeal not unlike 19th-century portrait photography. "I love that era, because it was exploring a new medium," says Veilhan, "and when people were photographed, they had to be involved in the process.

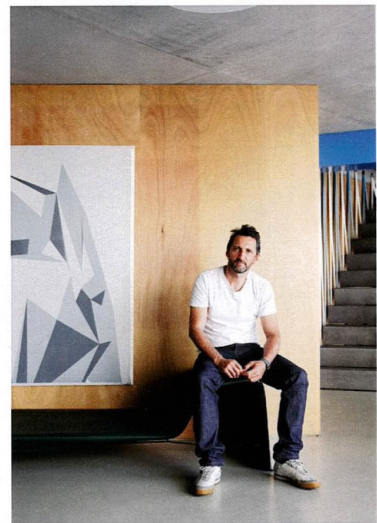
"It's an interesting moment in the development of this technology," he says of 3-D scanning. "I started using it 10 years ago, and the process took so much longer. But 10 years from now, you will be able to take your iPhone and make a 3-D scan."

While many of Veilhan's previous sculptures appear almost cubist in their profusion of angles and planes, for the producers cycle he sought to render his subjects in a more realistic mode. After all, his thinking went, people whose faces have been obscured by the glare of the artists with whom they work deserve to be depicted with clarity.

For music fans, the most anticipated of the sculptures may be those of Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Thomas Bangalter, together known as Daft Punk, who have never appeared publicly or been formally photographed without their signature robot-like helmets—until now. "I actually asked them to pose in the helmets, but they said, 'No, we should do the scan like we are,'" says Veilhan. "And the only way to see



WALLS OF SOUND Clockwise from above: Veilhan's 30-inch sculpture of Lee "Scratch" Perry, who famously worked with Bob Marley; the artist with Rick Rubin; photographed in New York this year.



us will be to see the sculpture."

While the dual shows at Galerie Perrotin run until April 11, Veilhan sees no end in sight for the project. "I've been surprised with the response from the producers," he says. "When I started, I thought maybe I'd have five, and now I think when the series is completed there will be about 20." He's currently in discussions with Nile Rodgers and Sir George Martin, among others. Ultimately, he'd like to see the entire cycle displayed for the public in New York, Los Angeles or Hong Kong—an urban expanse of modern-day Easter Island giants.