

OrchestRAM

An Orchestral Journey Into Drum & Bass

Start time: 8pm

Approximate running time: 110 minutes, plus 20 min interval.

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Martin Aston talks to signed RAM Records artist Raiser and label manager Jim Gash ahead of the record label's anticipated restaging of their orchestral drum & bass project, OrchestRAM.

All genres of music share values, from notes and scales to the ability to inspire emotion. But still, classical music and drum and bass appear to have little in common. Not so, says drum and bass label, RAM Records.

'Classical and drum & bass are both inspired by other genres and styles, to reach every corner of musicality,' they note. 'it's a match made in heaven.'

The two genres go head-to-head at the Barbican for OrchestRAM, an event that was first staged in September 2022 at Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Milton Court Concert Hall, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the legendary drum and bass label, RAM records. Guildhall Session Orchestra returns this March, accompanied by a keyboardist, drummer, vocalists and RAM artist Raiser in the role of DJ, adding samples, effects and backing tracks – a dynamic audio experience matched by a programme of projections, lasers and extra lighting. Raiser says, 'It's not just drum and bass played by an orchestra, it's an audio-visual immersive experience.'

The idea of OrchestRAM came from Dan Shorten, the creative director for Guildhall Live Events, an award-winning multi-media designer and digital specialist, and a drum and bass fan since his teens. 'Milton Court is a fantastic space, and I'd wanted to do a project there for a while,' he says.

RAM Label manager, Jim Gash, admits he was initially apprehensive in light of other orchestral events that had taken place before this due to their success. 'I wanted to make sure we did the RAM catalogue as much justice,' Jim says. 'But once I saw & heard OrchestRAM rehearse, I was blown away.'

OrchestRAM's other crucial advantage is the concert hall stage, with all the benefits of acoustics and sightlines. 'The Barbican is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,' says Jim. 'But we couldn't do the same show again, so we've made changes and improvements.'

Raiser calls the new show, 'OrchestRAM 2.0.' An additional 15 tracks and new edits take the number to over 40, which will be presented in two halves, each an hour long. 'We were inspired by responses on RAM's social media,' says Raiser. 'For example, what is their favourite RAM moment or tune? Or to name five things that come to mind when they think of RAM. We want to represent what the label means to its fans.'

barbican

Dan Shorten is one such fan. 'The first RAM track I heard was 'Valley Of The Shadows' from 1993, by Origin Unknown (AKA Ant Miles and RAM co-founder Andy C), which seemed so enormous and different to the rest of drum and bass out there. Ever since, RAM have their classic artists but they're still innovating and experimenting.'

Artists represented by the new OrchestRAM setlist span legends such as Sub Focus, Culture Shock, Chase and Status, DJ Fresh, Wilkinson and Andy C, plus newer sensations such as Mandidextrous, SyRan, Upgrade, Chords and Junk Mail. Raiser highlights, 'RAM is regarded as the best drum and bass label; you'd be hard-pressed to find another with such anthems, hits and classics. The music transcends generations. And with OrchestRAM, they're exposing new audiences to the music.'

Shorten is similarly motivated. 'I'm continually championing bringing new audiences into our building with more diverse work, to show them what a concert hall is all about,' he says. 'Here, we're creating a dancefloor vibe and the community of the electronic music scene but in a more classical setting.'

OrchestRAM is also an opportunity to showcase the talent of students from Guildhall School of Music & Drama, who will be gaining invaluable experience, from production design to orchestral scoring. The groundbreaking Guildhall Session Orchestra is a fully professional ensemble of Guildhall alumni, and two of the three featured singers are graduates of the school.

OrchestRAM promises to be a spectacular evening. Says Shorten, 'I know it's a cliché, but we intend to take the audience on a journey, so it's not four to the floor energy all the way. And though, to the untrained ear, it might all sound the same, drum and bass fans will notice the craftsmanship.'

Raiser singles out the visual craft accompanying his track 'Lonely Day' ft. Spiralus: 'a gun click represented by stage lighting from left to right. The attention to detail is amazing.'

At the same time, the audience might be having too good a time to notice. 'At the Milton Court show, the audience were sitting down at first, but were up on their feet going crazy,' says Jim. 'By the third Milton Court show,' Shorten adds, 'I was relaxed enough to spend most of the time just watching the audience, and what really stood out was how happy everyone looked.'

To anyone thinking they can experience OrchestRAM via social media, Jim warns, 'OrchestRAM is an experience you have to witness in person! Drum and bass like you have never heard it before.'

Performers

Guildhall Session Orchestra conducted by **Sam Dinley** and **Sam Storey**

Raiser executive electronic producer, DJ

Vanela vocals

Baobei vocals

BRAVVN vocals

Marc Pell drums

Mike Roberts artistic director, keys

Sam Dinley assistant producer, score preparation

Sam Storey orchestration lead

Rob Southby music production lead



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