

= The Return of Dr. Octagon =

The Return of Dr. Octagon is the tenth studio album by American rapper Keith Thornton , better known as Kool Keith . Released in the United States on June 27 , 2006 , it is his second studio album under the Dr. Octagon alias , following Dr. Octagonecologist . The album revives the character of Dr. Octagon , who was killed off on Thornton 's 1999 release First Come , First Served . Production for the album began in 2002 under the title The Resurrection of Dr. Octagon with producer Fanatik J.

Thornton signed a contract with CMH Records to release the album . Following a contractual dispute , Fanatik J was released from the project . The album 's production was completed by the One @-@ Watt Sun production team based upon three completed vocal recordings and older unfinished recordings . Thornton had little involvement with the production of the album . He later stated that he liked the completed product , but that it hurt his musical reputation .

The Return of Dr. Octagon initially received great reviews . The first single Aliens garnered the coveted Guardian Single of the Week in the U.K. , and also was given a place among Wire Magazines top Hip Hop records of the year , but what followed were much more polarized reviews . The album did not chart . Much praise and criticism centered on the production , with HipHop Dx stating " This is Kool Keith 's best album in years--arguably even better than his classic Octagonecologist , " and Newsweek stating that " If this album surpasses its predecessor , full credit goes to the Berlin production trio One Watt Sun , who come off sounding like a cross between Parliament @-@ Funkadelic and Kraftwerk . " Yet others felt that the production fit neither Thornton 's lyrical style nor the Dr. Octagon character .

= = Origins and recording = =

Keith Thornton , best known by the stage name Kool Keith , released the album Dr. Octagonecologist in 1996 , under the name Dr. Octagon , produced by Dan " The Automator " Nakamura . Thornton later expressed some frustration with the " Dr. Octagon " nickname , saying , " Octagon wasn 't my life ... I 've done a lot of things that were totally around different things other than Octagon . Are some people just afraid to venture off into my life and see that I do other things which are great ? I think people stuck me with something . " In 1999 , Thornton released the album First Come , First Served , which featured a track in which the newly introduced character Dr. Doom murdered Dr. Octagon . Thornton had intended to move away from the Dr. Octagon character , but later decided to record another album under the Octagon name .

In 2002 , Thornton announced The Resurrection of Dr. Octagon , a proposed sequel to Dr. Octagonecologist that would reintroduce the character . Los Angeles @-@ based producer Fanatik J was chosen to create the music for the album . Thornton himself took part in the production of early material for the project , playing bass , guitar , and keyboards on many of the tracks .

Thornton signed a contract with CMHRecords to release the album . On July 23 , 2002 , Rolling Stone reported that a new Dr. Octagon album would be released in February 2003 . Explaining his choice of label , Thornton said , " I chose to go with somebody that [would] take this as a creative project , not a marketing project . Major labels tend to let inexperienced people oversee your projects . Your innovation goes down because they have [too much] input . You don 't see anybody going into the studio to tell James Brown what to do . Even though he can adapt to certain things , nobody tells him how to sing . That 's the way I feel about myself . "

Preceding the production of the album , Thornton told Rolling Stone that " this album is fine @-@ tuned with instruments , deeper and more spaced out . The last one was cool , but I didn 't like it because it wasn 't funky . When I don 't work on a project , it 's not that funky . When I do work on it , it 's funky , and it has soul to it ... I 'm proud of my funky sounds right now . " Fanatik J was not named as the album 's producer . Thornton stated that with Dr. Octagonecologist , Thornton had given Nakamura his first successful album as a producer , and that with The Return of Dr. Octagon , he would " make another person and create another star . "

As production on the album was underway , Thornton had a falling out with Fanatik J over contract

rights . Thornton referred to Fanatik J as " greedy " and stated that " He went out of his level of producer 's ranking . Maybe he thought he was an overnight Quincy Jones , that he was the Automator . " Fanatik J later engaged in a legal battle with CMH over contractual terms that did not give him input on remixes .

Following Fanatik J 's disputes with the label , CMH contacted San Francisco @-@ based producer John Lindland and Melbourne @-@ based producers Simon Walbrook and Ben Green to produce material for the album . Lindland , Walbrook and Green began creating material for the album under the billing of One @-@ Watt Sun . Thornton was briefly involved with the project , recording vocals for three tracks : " Trees , " " Ants , " and " Aliens , " based upon rough sonic and lyrical themes created by the production team . After Thornton had a falling out with the label over contractual terms , he gave the label recordings he had made two years previously , consisting of Thornton rapping and goofing off , in order to complete his contract . The album was completed without his involvement .

= = Music = =

= = = Production = = =

One @-@ Watt Sun met at various points in Berlin , Prague , Melbourne , and Byron Bay to work on the album 's music tracks with Pro Tools software . The music and structure of the vocal recordings were completed the following year . None of Fanatik J 's production work appeared on the final album . According to Allmusic reviewer Marisa Brown , One @-@ Watt Sun 's production incorporates elements of " pop , dirty blues , rock , and R & B " .

Some critics felt that the album 's production was inferior to that of Dr. Octagonecologyst . KutMasta Kurt , a frequent collaborator with Thornton , disliked the album 's production , stating " The Dr. Octagon character was rapping over sounds that were dark and sinister , but they turned the album into this dancey electro @-@ pop . A lot of it had this Euro @-@ dance feel , and I was like , ' Wait a second , not only did they change the music , they changed it into something [to which] I couldn 't relate . ' " KutMasta Kurt also recounts a conversation with Thornton on a European flight in December 2006 , in which Thornton stated that The Return of Dr. Octagon does not sound like a Dr. Octagon album . Thornton himself said that he liked the album 's production , but that the album hurt his reputation as a musician . According to Thornton , " I 'm not mad . But I don 't repeat words when I rap . They cooked up some electronic stuff , you know , WORD ! WORD ! WORD ! making me sound like triple people . It 's interesting . "

= = = Storyline and lyrical themes = = =

Although Thornton 's vocals were largely edited without his involvement , a background story for the album was created by the label and published in a series of eight segments , each revealing a new chapter and featuring an exclusive remix by the likes of Prefuse 73 , Aesop Rock , Kid Loco , Spank Rock and others . The remixers appear in the story as " interpreters " hired to decipher the meaning of each remixed song , reportedly sent in a package to the offices of OCD .

The story begins three weeks after OCD received the package . Still unable to decode its meaning , the record company receives a phone call from an unknown source , tracked to Los Angeles , New York , Australia and Saturn . The caller claims to have received the same package five years ago and that it had brought destruction and chaos upon his society , and warns that they are coming after Octagon .

OCD then receives a message from a hacker identifying himself as Cassettes Won 't Listen , who states that eight years ago , himself and five friends were abducted by aliens , tortured , cloned , and kept in isolation . The last survivor was killed by one of the clones , whom Cassettes Won 't Listen then went underground to fight . Cassettes Won 't Listen reveals that Dr. Octagon was imprisoned in the cell next to him , as " a prime candidate to study all things regarding grills , pills

and bills " . Octagon was cloned : his clones have been sent out to destroy the universe .

Rob Sonic learns that the clones were created by a giant gorilla driving a pickup truck , who intends to steal the package to prevent the world from hearing Octagon 's message , allowing him to destroy the Earth . The story concludes with the remixers and OCD 's staff escaping with the package on Kid Loco 's plane . An intern briefly sees a figure standing on OCD 's rooftop , wearing a labcoat with a stethoscope around his neck , holding the head of " some black hairy creature " in his hand .

PopMatters writer Michael Frauenhofer wrote that " Dr. Octagon ? s lyrics on this album typically appear to be unconnected , but over the course of each track can be seen building around a general theme , be it conservation , societal conformity , American militarism , or , yes , his characteristic fascination with sex . "

According to Allmusic reviewer Marisa Brown , Dr. Octagon has matured and his focus has broadened since Dr. Octagonecologist , in which the character focused largely on sex . Brown writes that Octagon is now " truly worried about the state of humankind , both physically and musically ; in short , someone who could truly save the world " . Brown also states that while the album focuses on science fiction and abstract themes , " there are also as many , if not more , songs about man 's own behavior toward himself and his environment . "

Frauenhofer referred to " Trees " as " a definite highlight " in which " the doctor drops his trademark off @-@ kilter raps on , surprisingly , environmentalism . " Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan wrote that the song " Ants " compares " the humans infesting Earth to ants in a colony , enthused and disgusted at once " . Frauenhofer , describing the song " Eat It , " wrote that Princess Superstar " constantly references sex " while Dr. Octagon " confusingly interjects with his complaints about how women only want to go out and talk and eat " , but Frauenhofer states that the sexual content of the album 's lyrics is not as explicit as previous Thornton albums , such as Sex Style . Dallas Observer writer Geoff Johnston described the song as being " as profane as one would hope for . "

= = = Singles and music videos = = =

" Aliens " was released as the first single from the album . A remix of " Aliens " by British drum and bass producer Sub Focus was chosen as compilation of the month in the May 2006 issue of Mixmag . Music videos were produced for the singles " Aliens " and " Trees " , in which Thornton did not appear . The music video for " Trees " was produced as a public service announcement for MTV 's " Break the Addiction " campaign , as well as a promo video for the album .

= = Release = =

OCD International was created as an imprint of CMH to release the material . On October 12 , 2004 , a bootleg consisting of material produced by Chilly Chill from the Lench Mob was released under the title Dr. Octagon Part 2 by Real Talk Records . It was discontinued by court order .

On June 27 , 2006 , OCD International released One @-@ Watt Sun 's material under the title The Return of Dr. Octagon in the United States on compact disc , although the completed work more closely resembled a remix album than what Thornton had originally intended . In the United Kingdom , the CMH @-@ completed album was released by Buttercuts Records on compact disc and vinyl .

CMH distributor World 's Fair promoted The Return of Dr. Octagon as the official sequel to Dr. Octagonecologist , and claimed that Thornton would tour in support of the album . Early news stories reported by outlets such as The Guardian , MTV2 , MySpace , Remix Magazine , and The Washington Post endorsed the label 's claims . Internet rumors began to spread that the album had been released without Thornton 's authorization via what turned out to be an unsubstantiated piece of journalism by David Downs . In August , Thornton performed under the Dr. Octagon billing , but did not promote the album . According to Thornton , " This ain 't the record I did . It was totally new music . I was really pissed off about people wanting me to go out and tour and do these songs . " OCD originally intended to ship 50 @,@ 000 units during the first year , but halted the plan due to the remarkably high volume of downloads received by the online remixes .

In September , Thornton stated that he had not received royalties from CMH Records . According to Thornton , " I hope they 're sending them . You have another interview if they don 't send me a check . Honestly , with the next single , I want them to leave me a sparkling diamond . "

= = Reception = =

Metacritic , which compiles reviews from a wide range of critics , gives the album a score of 61 % , denoting generally favorable reviews . The album did not chart .

The earliest reviews of the album , published by the LA Weekly and Newsweek , were positive . Rolling Stone critic Christian Hoard wrote that " Octagon 's verses often feel unfocused and random , but when he bears down he can be mesmerizing , channeling his quick @-@ tongued rhymes with streetwise brassiness and cosmic vibrations . " Allmusic reviewer Marisa Brown wrote that the album " doesn 't always make a lot of sense , but that 's the beauty of it . It 's a kind of concept album that concentrates more on the actual overall sound than the concepts . Its elements are all on the very edge of control , which is both exhilarating and terrifying at the same time ; if it works , it could bring us to where we 've never been , protect us from what may be , but if it fails , it could kill us all . " Hip Hop DX reviewer B. Love wrote , " This is Kool Keith 's best album in years ? arguably even better than his classic Octagonecologist ? and marks a fine return to form for one of rap music 's most distinctive and original talents . "

Other reviews were mixed . Pitchfork Media 's Tom Breihan wrote that " Keith himself is responsible for all of the album 's good moments . Even when he 's in unhinged @-@ rant mode , Keith 's imagery often remains lucid . And so the album 's best song is " Ants , " where he comes off frantic but omnipotent ... It 's dense and fascinating stuff , a tantalizing glimpse of what might 've happened if Keith hadn 't treated the reemergence of his most popular persona like an easy payday . " PopMatters writer Michael Frauenhofer wrote that " The Return of Dr. Octagon is still better than anything Kool Keith 's done in a little while , but apart from its best tracks , it 's not close to the level of his finest work of the past , and it doesn 't really build much on the legend of Dr. Octagon , which still rests most firmly on the good doctor 's debut . "

Negative reviews came from Billboard writer Ron Hart and Michael Pollock of Prefix magazine . Hart wrote that " Kool Keith has dropped nothing but disappointment and at an alarmingly steady rate . " Pollock wrote that " Despite all the stupid records he 's put out before , The Return of Dr. Octagon is the first one that plunges wholly into self @-@ parody . He 's now a fully realized clown , a prop , a joke and , most disappointingly , a sub @-@ par rapper whose forced ideas and personality obstacles have devolved into flimsy , uninspired character sketches . "

Dan the Automator criticized the release , stating " That wasn 't a Dr. Octagon record . Dr. Octagon is me , Kool Keith , and Q @-@ Bert . The label didn 't have the legal right to use the name , but I didn 't want to get involved in a legal battle ... Keith 's my man , just trying to make a little bit of money . " KutMasta Kurt stated that Thornton was reluctant to perform songs from the album , because the lyrics did not fit the music . John Lindland , who coproduced the final album under the name One @-@ Watt Sun , stated in defense of the album , " People say it 's a fake . We don 't have that feeling . We think that those are great tracks . It wasn 't about remixing anything . They were our ideas , and Keith went on grooves that we sent to LA . " In response to Fanatik J 's criticism of the album , One Watt Sun referred to him as being disgruntled as a result of the label discarding his music . According to Lindland , " If we were him , we 'd have [a] beef too " .

Dr. Doom 2 , Thornton 's 2008 follow @-@ up to First Come , First Served , was produced in response to The Return of Dr. Octagon . According to Thornton , " I 'm one of those artists that people take my music without my consent . People love to snatch my music and do things on their own . You got people that put me on beats I never rapped on . I just feel that it 's a bad thing . "

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

The following people contributed to The Return of Dr. Octagon :

= = = Musicians = = =

Kool Keith ? vocals , lyrics

Princess Superstar ? vocals , lyrics

April McClellan ? vocals

= = = Additional personnel = = =

One Watt Sun ? songwriting , production , mixing

Mike Letho ? mixing

Nilesh " Nilz " Patel ? mastering

Tomá? Soch?rek ? additional mixing

Francois Tetaz ? additional mixing

Argee Geronca ? artwork design

Brent Wadden ? artwork design

Mario Campos ? artwork design

Michael Tullberg ? photography