

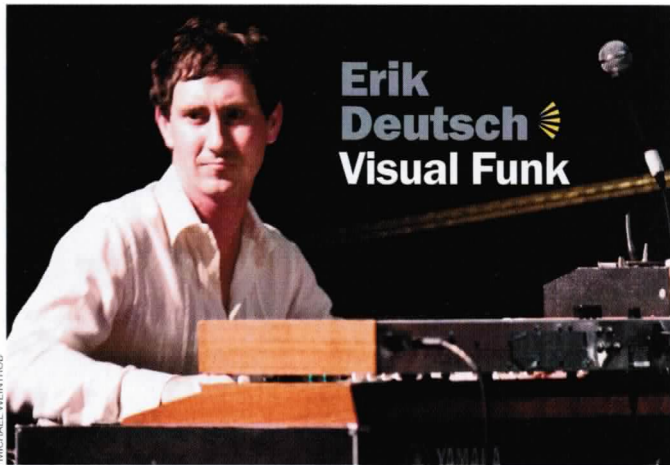
# DOWNBEAT

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# Players



## Erik Deutsch Visual Funk

The music on keyboardist Erik Deutsch's *Hush Money* (Hammer & String) inhabits that rare realm where jazz, funk, pop and chamber music coalesce. The bottom end on his compositions such as "Black Flies," "Dirty Osso Bucco" and "India Rubber" struts with rugged funkiness while ballads such as "Flytrap" and "Get Out While You Can" evoke the diaphanous allure of film scores.

One would think that Deutsch took notes from producer David Axelrod, whose baroque r&b albums from the late '60s and early '70s provided source material for left-to-center hip-hop artists such as Madlib, J Dilla and Ali Shaheed Muhammad. Still, Deutsch says that he knows Axelrod only by name, and not his music.

Deutsch does admit, however, that there is a through-compositional vibe that permeates *Hush Money*.

"I do like to write parts for people," Deutsch said. "Although I don't

consider myself an expert, by any means, I enjoy experimenting with counterpoint, interweaving lines and harmony."

The keyboardist goes on to explain that the inclusion of bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck and reedist Mike McGinnis played an indelible role in affording the music a decidedly chamber-music mystique. But Deutsch's compositional pen didn't just stop with them; it scripted notes for the rhythm section, too.

"Drummers may notice that there are drum parts on my records," he said. "My records are sort of poppy from that angle."

Having played a crucial role in guitarist Charlie Hunter's trio, Deutsch argues that his experience with that group influenced the sound on *Hush Money*. Deutsch claims that it was Hunter who helped him get his groove back.

"Spending three years with Charlie Hunter was a rebirth, because I had spent most of my 20s, focusing so much on the harmonic language, especially lyricism, and definitely the technical aspect of the playing," Deutsch said. "When I look back at my musical history, I realize that I may have been a better groove player when I was younger; I was a funkier piano player. With Charlie, I remember, 'Oh yeah, I used to be really good at that.'"

It's no surprise that Deutsch also describes himself as "a movie hound who hung out in video stores" while growing up in Washington, D.C. When he attended University of Colorado, he complemented his music studies with courses in film.

"When I was in college, I wrote a paper on sound design using David Lynch's movies," Deutsch said. "It was about the mixture of score, soundtrack and sound effect in film and how all of that can be influential to a viewer and create such an intense experience. I love to watch things like Fellini movies, just getting into the visuals and how the music complements the visuals. My music is not so much about a person; it's about an image."  
—John Murph