

## Jam Palace

The Clubhouse redefines the home office

▷ The first rule for guests at The Clubhouse is make yourself at home. Its permanent hosts, producers Andrew Thomas and Pace Rivers don't mind, nor do their eight other housemates now used to rappers dining in their kitchen or crashing for the night. It's a small package deal for the price of creating a recording space with a high degree of Southern hospitality in Flatbush, Brooklyn. For the past seven months, since Thomas and Rivers turned the key to their three-floor, Victorian mansion, their good nature has attracted drop-ins and collaborations from local heroes like Homeboy Sandman and Theophilus London. "You enter knowing that whenever you leave, you will have created something beautiful," says rapper Sene, who with Thomas and Rivers is *Recess*, the trio having just released their debut album. "I liken it to Charlie waiting at the chocolate factory for the gates to open," he adds.

The Clubhouse's beatmaking reputation lies in the experimental approach of repurposing their own original jazz compositions into rap-friendly breaks. "We're creating our own crates of records to dig in," Rivers says. The vintage stylings of their sound is matched by their home's décor, channeling the



roaring '20s and the psychedelic '60s. Thomas and his girlfriend painted an entire wall of his bedroom a bluish gradient, floor to ceiling fading into lighter shades of itself. "Color waves equals feeling, equals music waves," Thomas says. Making visual art regardless of its thematic connection to Clubhouse's music is part of the ongoing productivity in their home office, blurring the lines between professional and recreational.

The absence of a television ensures one less distraction, but for movies, a projection screen is installed in the Handsome Room, named after the futon cushions stitched together from fancy suit fabric. When brainstorming song ideas, Rivers and Thomas hit the house library, replete with books, antiques and sewing machines last used by a fellow resident to create leather binding for a journal. "The house is one big installation piece," Thomas says. "It ignites my brain." Decades ago, that creativity wasn't the kind of accompaniment to a neighborhood better known for rap tales of stick-up kids, Flatbush's gun-toting gangsters immortalized by former area regulars like Red Cafe and Shyne. Now, Rivers and Thomas' cul-de-sac home is a boon to the neighborhood, espousing the age-old mantra that trees still grow in Brooklyn, just like the one planted in their studio made of papier-mâché with origami leaves.

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