The Range
Potential

The internet inspires everything around us. It's changed the world we live in, simultaneously showing us how much there is to know and how close to our fingertips it is now. We communicate with dizzying volume and speed, via ones and zeros on a scale unthought-of of even fifty years ago. As **The Range**, James Hinton has made a record as part of the last generation that will remember going online for the first time. The magic of *Potential*- his first album for Domino - is as a document of its time. It is a notebook from 2015, when someone took stock of the expansive and strange world being opened up in front of us and set it to music, to move us.

The Range began in a basement in Providence, in 2011. A physics graduate of Brown University, Hinton made the computer his primary instrument after falling under the spell of Baltimore club, bringing in his broader sonic influences from early '90s jungle, early '00s grime and mid '00s electronica to a new sonic whole. The software was the thing at home, but what excited the young producer was the network, and where he spiraled was YouTube. "I remember thinking, this is insane, and special. All of these people are sitting in their bedrooms, spilling out their guts, and I'm all the way over here, in my room, listening. I knew the music I wanted to make was like the music I loved – different, disparate but defined – and here were all of these collaborators, in cities I had never even visited."

Potential uses as its backbone a series of vocal samples that Hinton has found in the forgotten corners of the site, guiding us around the hinterlands of YouTube, introducing us to unknown artists expressing themselves unfettered by the constraints of industry, lost in the infinite potential of an audience unknown. But his are human stories: he might be fascinated by the code that determines his journey, but what really grips him are the real stories behind the samples. "I am very conscious that these people who I have sampled elevate what I do, just as much as my record brings their work somewhere else."

This is modern day storytelling. On '1804' he harkens back to grime's dancehall influences, sampling Kingston, Jamaica's Naturaliss (88 views); on 'Falling Out Of Phase' he makes use of a Keyshia Cole cover performed in front of a shower curtain (12,623 views); on opener 'Regular' he employs spare, impactful synth and

beats as the backdrop to a monologue from London MC SdotStar (45 views). "Right now I don't have a backup plan for if I don't make it / But even if … / I'll just decide to move on to something bigger and better."

Hinton's work holds those raw human elements dear within his digital pathways but *Potential* is still malleable, unique. There's a hyper-modern streak to The Range's work, one that owes as much to DJ Rashad as it does international influence from his introduction to the works of Kieran Hebden and his experiences with the grime scenes of London**.** "It speaks to me first and foremost in an intellectual way," he says, "but it's obviously so much more a club experience. It was so cool to hear it in that way. In New York you don't really get that so much – just people absolutely losing their minds." In his drum programming it is easy to hear footwork influences, another genre he says opened him up to a whole new world of musical possibility: the skittering hats, the triplet inflections, especially on tracks like 'Florida'. But while footwork is made for ankle-breaking nighttime scenes, *Potential* is as much for the bedroom as it is for the club. There's something beautifully downtempo, unhurried, about his explorations, recasting those found vocal samples as ethereal, otherworldly backbones around which gauzy, melancholic tracks can be built.

With *Potential*, The Range has a made an electronic record ultimately full of heart. The story is of the internet as the junction where humans from either end of the connection meet at the nexus and something else, something unique arrives. *Potential* is a record steeped in histories – of its characters, of its forebears – but is startlingly new and alive: the network may be ones and zeros but the circuitry here runs on blood, still.